

SPORTS

Fighting mars a showcase football game

Thanks to the superb play of both teams, Saturday's 15th annual Bucks County North-South all-star football game was one of the most exciting in recent years.

Led by quarterback Steve Clarke and tight end Chris Westcott of Central Bucks West, the North rallied from a 3-point deficit to win in the last 21 seconds, 23-19.

Unfortunately for everyone, the game was marred by two fights. Sometimes you can call these interactions scuffles. Sometimes you can call them skirmishes that occur during the "heat of the battle." These were fights. They were instigated before they occurred and they interrupted play.

Both fights happened in the fourth quarter. A minor one erupted after the South was penalized for grabbing the face mask of a North player during a tackle. But the worst one came with just 21 seconds to play after the North scored the winning touchdown.

Visibly upset by its failure to stop the North from scoring the winning

By GARY MILES



points, the South crashed into the North's line with a little too much enthusiasm in an attempt to block the extra-point kick. The kick was good and the South was penalized for roughing the kicker.

Immediately after the play was over, several players exchanged blows, and coaches and referees were needed to restore order. It nearly got out of hand.

After the game was over, several of the South's players stalked off the field, rejecting the chance to participate in the traditional post-game handshake. The whole scene was disconcerting.

The identity of the individuals re-

sponsible isn't as important as the trend the fights represent. Sure, emotions and routine taunting can get out of control during such an event. But aren't these players the most talented and disciplined Bucks County has to offer?

Apparently, it is becoming more acceptable for athletes to vent their frustrations in verbal and physical assaults during the game.

It may not be nice to think about it, but it's worse to watch it.

The Phillies are finally becoming involved with local baseball teams in the formation of the Carpenter Cup — a 12-team high school tourney that pits the best senior players of 12 leagues against each other. But it seems that in the formation of the tourney, the Bicentennial League was left out.

"We don't know what happened," said Rich Stetler, the athletic director and baseball coach at Jenkintown. "We were never contacted about it. We have 10 teams in this league, so you'd think that we could

get enough seniors to play. The Inter-Ac League is playing and they have only five teams.

"We felt slighted and we'd like to work it out so it doesn't happen next year."

Apparently, the whole thing was an oversight. Although the organizers included the Suburban One American and National Conferences, the Inter-Ac League, the Catholic League, the Bux-Mont, the Del-Val, the Ches-Mont, the Public, the Central, two teams from New Jersey and one from Delaware, the Bicentennial slipped through the cracks.

"We certainly didn't mean to offend the Bicentennial League and we'd like to extend an offer to them to participate next year," said Dick Connolly, the baseball coach at Frankford High School and one of the principal architects of the tourney. "We organized the 12 leagues by county at first and the Bicentennial League's name never came up. Many of us are from the city, and the suburban leagues are unfamiliar to us. Actually, we wanted 16 teams

instead of 12, but we couldn't think of enough leagues to fill it. I apologize to the league, but it was definitely not intentional."

Although the Bicentennial League members are a bit miffed about being left out, some of the American Legion coaches are a bit miffed about their players losing valuable time from their teams to play in the "exhibition."

The Carpenter tourney — named for the Phillies' former owners, the Carpenter family — is set to run from June 16 through June 22. It means that some players may be left out for up to three Legion games.

"That tourney may not be such a good idea after all," said one Legion coach.

Connolly disagrees. "The pluses far outweigh the minuses," he said. "We considered the Legion players from Day One. We know they might miss game or two, but we'll be having 30 professional scouts and college coaches here, so the exposure will be great. How could a coach be against that?"