

Franchella credits character for rally

By Jay Nagle
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Impressed as he was with the blocking and tackling, running and throwing of his North football team Saturday night, head coach Joe Franchella, upon closer inspection, found an additional ingredient that made his squad just a little bit special.

"I thought the character of these kids was just unbelievable," said Franchella after the North, putting together a gutsy fourth-quarter touchdown drive, rallied for a thrilling 23-19 victory over the South in the Bucks County Lions Club All-Star Football Game at War Memorial Field.

"I think what they did showed the caliber of the types of kids we had here tonight and the quality of the programs they come from. They're class programs, they're good kids, they're coachable and they're willing to work hard.

"That's what these games are all about," said Franchella. "You have 38 kids — all of them great athletes — coming together for just one game. When you have that, those are the types of things that can happen."

Happen they did Saturday for the North, which played come-from-behind football almost from the opening whistle. Placed in a 19-16 fourth-quarter hole following a one-yard touchdown run at 12:57 of the final stanza by Council Rock's Jamy Franco, the North spent the entire fourth quarter battling back.

The effort, which had Franchella marveling afterwards, finally paid off in the final 21 seconds, when Central Bucks West quarter-

back Steve Clarke, a tower of strength the entire evening, hooked up with CBW teammate Chris Westcott for a 10-yard touchdown pass.

The scoring strike not only set off a wild victory celebration on the North bench, but also climaxed a dogged 16-play, 70-yard drive, one which featured the dig-deep mentality that is the stuff of pre-game locker room talks. It also consumed 6:42 of the game's final 7:03.

That they did it all in a disciplined fashion suggesting poise and composure well beyond their years was perhaps the game's most pleasing aspect to Franchella well aware of the fact that points, not panic, win football games in the fourth quarter.

"You had a lot of leaders out there," said Franchella, the Philadelphia Catholic League Northern Division's Coach of the Year in 1985.

"But I think the most important thing is you had a lot of kids from a lot of great programs that are not used to losing and simply did not want to lose. You saw what happened.

"The kids from Central Bucks West, they're what, 21-0 (over the last three years), so you know they're not used to losing. The CB East kids, they had a great year last year. We had a good year last year.

"You could just tell," said Franchella, "that these kids did not want to walk off that field in their last high school football game a loser. When their backs were up against the wall, those kids really did a super job."

Call Morrisville the Little School That Could.

The Bulldogs' football team had 28 players in 1985; seven of them were on the South All-Star Squad that lost a heart-breaking 23-19 decision Saturday night at Doylestown War Memorial Field.

But despite feelings that they were the under-'Dawgs; throughout the two weeks of South practice, the Morrisville Seven acquitted themselves very well on the field.

"This game was easy," said defensive back Bill Zoldi, who doubled as the 'Dawgs' QB. "During the season, I would come off after a tough defensive series and I'd have to call signals. I'd be going huff, huff, huff, tired and out of breath. This was easy. I was off the field half the time."

Zoldi said he and his teammates felt they had more to prove than players from Pennsbury, Neshaminy or Bensalem.

"They (coaches) would almost automatically put the kids from the bigger schools in ahead of us during practice. The feeling a lot of people have is that we don't play anybody, so it doesn't matter what our record was. Well, maybe we didn't play that many schools, but we're a small school, too.

"It's tougher going both ways. If I played at Pennsbury, I could just concentrate on playing one position. We only have 28 kids and seven of them were here tonight. I didn't see one who didn't belong out there."

The Morrisville delegation to the South squad comprised Zoldi; wide receiver Gerald Toney (6-1, 175); running back Tony Bethea (6-0, 175), who scored two touchdowns; center-defensive lineman Mike Christ (6-5, 215); lineman Wes Terkay (6-0, 215), who had a sack and tackled another runner for a loss; lineman-punter Bart Brelsford (6-5, 220) and end Dan Capiello (6-1, 215).

Toney, who caught five passes for 62 yards, agreed with Zoldi's assessment.

"Being that we're from a small school," he said, "everybody questions how good we are. Coming into these two weeks, we wanted to show them that Morrisville can play. This is the first time we had more than three players in this game. Everybody seems to wonder if little Morrisville can play with the big guys. I think we made our share of big plays.

"At Morrisville, we have to play both ways. Here, you have depth, the best in Bucks County. I had a major responsibility to run my routes, block and catch the ball. I could probably go an extra

two quarters because of that."

Zoldi made a couple of big plays, breaking up two passes that would have been first downs. The second came in the fourth quarter, while the South was clinging to a 19-16 lead. The North had driven to the South 32, where it faced a fourth-and-eight. North receiver Kevin Kershner ran a little pattern right down to the 22 and leaped for the pass from QB Steve Clarke.

Zoldi arrived just as the ball did. He levelled Kershner and the ball bounced harmlessly away.

"I was going to go for the interception," Zoldi said. "But then I thought I'd better not. On that kind of play, I have to go through the receiver. There's no way he can catch it. He was in between me and the ball, so I demolished him. That way, nobody catches it and he's a little afraid the next time."

Unfortunately, the South ran only three plays before punting. The North then embarked on its seven-minute, 78-yard drive for the game-winning score.

"We were getting tired," Zoldi said of the defense, which had little rest between possessions. "We had come off the field thinking we had it won, that the offense would be able to eat up some clock. Then we had them on third-and-long (third-and-20 at the South 42) and we gave up that pass over the middle. That killed us."

The play, a pass to wide receiver Tom Parker, gave the North a first down at the South 9-yard line and set up the game-winning pass from Clarke to Chris Westcott.

The South had 21 seconds left, but couldn't get anything going. After two sacks dropped them to their own 3, the Lower Bucks stars

tried a reverse, with Toney going around left end. He was knocked out of bounds around the 16.

"I just wish I could have cut back on that last play," Toney said. "He was the last guy there and he had the angle on me."

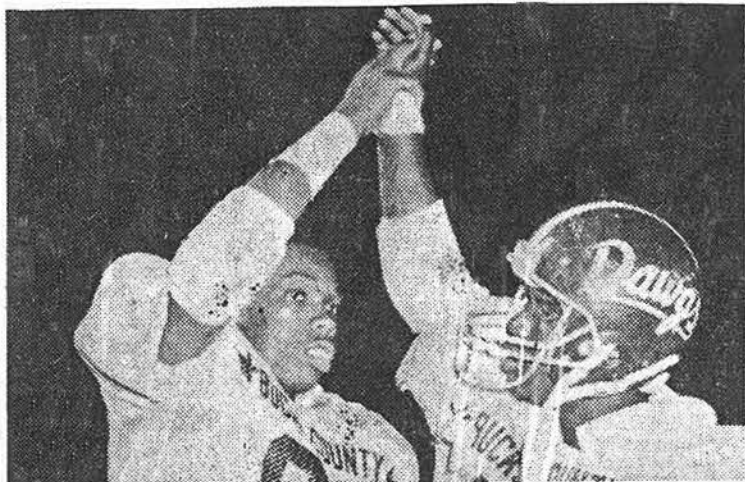
The South had erupted early, scoring 13 of its points in the first half. Both touchdowns were set up by long receptions by Pennsbury tight end Andy Anderson, who will play at Duke in the fall. The first was a 35-yarder from Neshaminy's Tim Ford. Two plays later, Bethea scored from the 3.

In the second quarter, Anderson went 25 yards on a pass from Bristol's Bob Long to put the South in business at the North 17. Three plays later, Bethea went in, again from the 3.

"Their cornerback was dropping back and the middle was open," Anderson said. "It was that way the whole first half. We tried to come back with it once, but they corrected it and were closing it up."

For Anderson and the other members of Pennsbury's 10-0 team, it was the only loss of the year. It came in an exciting, hotly-contested game that saw several scuffles break out.

But the big fight was the battle waged by the Morrisville Seven, who had a chance to put to rest any doubts about their abilities. They came away feeling those doubts will rest in peace



Wayne Keys (left) and Tony Bethea celebrate touchdown

■ For complete coverage of the North's 23-19 win over the South in the All-Star Classic, turn to Page 53