

Falcons end unbeaten to capture SOL title

By Bob Weaver
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A team with a 9-0 record, heading into its last game with the league championship on the line, isn't likely to make many changes, regardless of the opposition. It's going to go with the things that brought it to that point.

The top-ranked Pennsbury Falcons pretty much subscribed to that philosophy, going into Saturday's encounter with Neshaminy for the Suburban One League National Division football title. However, during the final week of practice, the Falcons did add one new wrinkle to their offense. They called it the 17 bootleg.

When it was executed in the fourth quarter, it produced a tie breaking touchdown for the Falcons on a 66-yard scoring bomb, and enabled the Falcons to nip the second-ranked Redskins, 14-7, before an enthusiastic crowd of about 7,000 at Falcon Field in Fairless Hills.

The win enabled Pennsbury to complete its season with an unblemished 10-0 record (7-0 in league play). It was the Falcons' third such season (Pennsbury was 11-0 in 1972 and 1974 under Chuck Kane).

It was the Falcons' second consecutive SOL title and the 14th league title they have won or shared since 1939. Neshaminy, which lost the SOL title to Pennsbury for the second straight year, fell to 7-3 (6-1).

On the scoring pass, which went from Falcon quarterback Dave Fisher to wide receiver Bob Filotei, Pennsbury Coach Jim Dundala said, "We had real balance (offensively) this year. The play we used today, we set up with the bootleg. We just put it in this week and decided (in the fourth quarter) it was time to pull the trigger."

"Once it was called, I was thinking touchdown," Filotei said. "Their safety was always coming in, so I knew if I get by him, I would be okay. I just hoped the

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ball would be where I could catch it."

The Falcons needed that play, because nothing else was working. The Neshaminy defense, not as publicized as that of the Falcons, took a page from the Falcons' success story and swarmed all over the normally potent Pennsbury ground game. The Falcons were able to gain just 90 yards rushing overall, and 1,000-yard rusher Scott LaBrecque gained just 55.

Neshaminy, on the other hand, ran the wishbone quite effectively behind Tim Ford. The Redskins gained 198 yards on the ground, by far the most gained against the stingy Falcon defense this season.

"We did bend, but we didn't break," Dundala said. "Our first defense has given up only three touchdowns all year, that includes three scrimmages and 10 games. When you look at our schedule, you can see what kind of kids we have (to accomplish that)."

Both teams appeared to have the jitters in the game's early going. Neshaminy lost the ball on a fumble on its first possession and Dan Santhouse intercepted a Fisher pass four plays later. Neshaminy also fumbled two other times in the first quarter, but recovered both.

On the first play of the second quarter, Neshaminy had the ball on its own 48. With a second-and-three, Ford threw into a strong wind and the ball seemed to drift backwards into the waiting hands of Pennsbury's Todd Stefan. Stefan returned the pilfered pigskin back to the Neshaminy 26. Four plays later (10:01), LaBrecque swept left end on a 5-yard scoring run. Joe Kiefer added the extra point.

Neshaminy tied the score at 7-7 on its first possession of the third quarter. A 12-yard punt into the wind by Pennsbury's Daryle Dobos gave the Redskins the ball on

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their own 33. Aided by a personal foul (unnecessary roughness) against the Falcons, the Redskins drove 67 yards in 12 plays. Tim McClave ran the final yard with 3:21 showing on the clock. Tom Waterbor kicked the extra point.

Pennsbury standout linebacker Galen Snyder commented on Neshaminy's effectiveness at running the ball. "They weren't blocking straight up, they were cracking back. They were running traps, doubling up on (Dave) Harrison when they ran to his side, and doubling up on me when they ran to my side."

In the final period, the Redskins drove the ball from their own 20 to the Pennsbury 24, where they faced a fourth-and-six situation. Neshaminy opted for the field goal. Waterbor attempted the 42-yarder, but was outmatched by the gusting wind. The ball fell about 10 yards short and off to the left.

With 5:46 remaining in the game, Pennsbury got the ball on its own 20. Fisher ran a bootleg to the left for four. LaBrecque threw a halfback pass incomplete. On third-and-six, LaBrecque was apparently stopped short of the first down, but Neshaminy was flagged for defensive holding, giving the Falcons a first down on their 34.

On the next play, Fisher again ran the bootleg to his left, but set up and threw a perfect spiral to Filotei, who was at least 15 yards behind the closest Neshaminy defender, for the winning score.

Neshaminy Coach Dick Bedesem took exception to the holding call. "I'm not an official baiter, for the most part I have a good rapport with them. But let's face it, the outcome of the game was decided by that call."

The Redskins made one last gasp attempt to tie the game, but ran out of downs on the Falcon 48.

When asked to compare his two championship teams, Dundala said, "I don't like to compare teams. I think this is a great football team. Every week we play teams that are sky high. My assistants and the players have to face that pressure every week and they've responded."