

Back in business

By KEVIN COONEY

Bucks County Courier Times

October 21, 2007 7:20 AM

They were the last two members of the Neshaminy traveling party left in the stadium at Central Bucks South last Friday night.

And with the lights being turned out all around them, Mark Schmidt put his arm around a clearly agitated Justin Kinney's shoulder to get a message across to his quarterback.

I felt like that I was the one who let the team down, said Kinney, a senior who has watched his two older brothers, twins Jarred and Jason, go through the Neshaminy program. But he wanted me to remember this feeling and build from it because there was an awful lot of season left and we could still do great things.

Kinney remembered this story while standing in the bright sunlight at Heartbreak Ridge, just moments after Schmidt had placed a firm pat on those once-slumped shoulders.

The best Kinney we've ever had, Schmidt exclaimed. He's something special.

Against arguably the best team in District One at least coming into the game Justin Kinney and the Redskins had a special day.

Kinney rushed for one touchdown and provided a back-breaking 59-yard interception return for a score as Neshaminy demolished previously undefeated North Penn, 31-7, in a Suburban One League National Conference showdown at Harry Franks Stadium.

This was an incredible win for us, said Kinney, who was 5-for-10 for 104 yards passing on the day. Now, we have a chance to finish strong and maybe get a share of the league title.

The entire face of the National Conference and district playoff races changed, thanks to the Redskins. Central Bucks South now stands alone atop the heap with an 8-0 record (5-0 SOL). But the Titans still must make a trip to Lansdale to play the Knights (7-1) on the final Friday night of the regular season.

If North Penn wins that game and the Redskins win their final two games (Bensalem at home, followed by a trip to Pennsbury), there would likely be a three-way tie for the conference title. The three also likely would be among the top five in the District One standings heading into the Class AAAA playoffs.

We've given ourselves a chance, Schmidt said. We told our kids that except for an undefeated season, all of our goals were still there ahead of us to try and go get. And we still have that chance at a league title.

Neshaminy won this game in an astonishingly workmanlike fashion. The Redskins seemed to neutralize North Penn's speed and were dominant on the line, especially against the Knights' rushing attack.

We all were [angry] after last week's game, said running back Jason Ulmer, who rushed for 89 yards and two touchdowns Saturday. We knew that we were a better team than that, and we couldn't allow it to happen again.

The turning point of a squeaky clean game there was one penalty all afternoon took place late in the second quarter. Neshaminy had built a 10-0 first-quarter lead, but North Penn appeared to re-gain control with a 16-play, eight-minute scoring drive, capped off by Mike Katch's 4-yard touchdown run.

But before the end of the half, North Penn quarterback Justin Davey floated a ball intended for Jarett Brown. The ball went over Brown's head and right into Kinney's waiting arms. Kinney then broke through two different groups of white North Penn jerseys and scored with 23 seconds left in the half to make it 17-7 Redskins.

That was huge for us, Ulmer said. When you see what he was able to do, it just got everybody fired up.

The play obviously deflated North Penn.

That was just a bad pass by our kid, and give them credit, because they took advantage of it, Knights coach Dick Beck said. They played a great game.

Nobody knew that better than Kinney. And afterward, the anger and hurt from last week had melted into a full-fledged, ear-to-ear grin.

This is the type of feeling that you work all that time for, Kinney said. Now, we know that we control our fate and we can do great things.

Kevin Cooney can be reached at kcooney@phillyBurbs.com.

October 21, 2007 7:20 AM