

Success both ways

By DOM COSENTINO
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Dan Shirey thought he could do it, no problem. He thought he could play both ways as a tackle on Neshaminy's offensive and defensive lines this season, and that it wouldn't be that difficult.

Then came his first game.

I was done, Shirey said. I was so beat. I just wanted to go home and lay down.

Shirey, a 6-foot-3, 275-pound senior, didn't want to stop, however. He's played on both sides of the ball all season with much success to anchor the offensive and defensive fronts for the third-seeded Redskins (12-1), who play No. 1 North Penn (13-0) in the PIAA District One Class AAAA championship game Friday night at 7 at William Tennent's Claude Lodge Field.

Mark Schmidt, the Redskins coach, went so far as to compare Shirey to former Neshaminy linemen Chris Daino and Tom McEowen, who wound up at Delaware and Penn State, respectively.

Right now, he's been playing the best offensive and defensive line we've had in a long time, Schmidt said.

Shirey's abilities on both sides of the ball were on full display in each of the last two games.

Two weeks ago, against Ridley in the district quarterfinals, he fought through a double-team at one point to get a sack.

And last week, when the Redskins overcame an early two-touchdown deficit to thwart then-undefeated Garnet Valley, Shirey and his O-line mates center John Zavorski, guards Nick DiDonato and Isaac Bailey, tackle Dan Wenclewicz and tight end Paul Carrezola gradually wore down the Jaguars as the game progressed.

That dominance was rather evident on the opening drive of the second half,

when the Skins marched 52 yards on 11 plays 10 plays on the ground to score what wound up being the game-winning touchdown.

In the beginning of the game I felt that the line of scrimmage was even and that's not good for us, said Brian Titus, the Neshaminy quarterback. Were Neshaminy; were a power-running team. But I felt in the second half, I could see guys being pushed off the ball three yards.

Shirey, who has received some interest from Football Championship Subdivision (formerly Division I-AA) schools, said the biggest reason he was able to adjust to the rigors of playing both ways for an entire game was by keeping himself hydrated. He now drinks more than a gallon of water on game days.

Like many players on both teams, Shirey is thrilled by the prospect of playing North Penn a former league rival, and the other dominant program in the district in this century in Friday night's title game.

Were real excited, he said. They're big-time rivals, and it's going to be a great game.

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