

Neshaminy seeking consistency

By KEVIN COONEY
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LANGHORNE Some coaches keep pictures of their kids all around their office. But on the walls above Mark Schmidt's desk are team portraits for some of his favorite squads.

At some point in the not-too-distant future, the 2008 team poster will be framed and placed upon the walls. And Schmidt will look upon this squad with fondness reserved for just a few teams.

These kids have been remarkable to be around, Schmidt said. They have been great to coach, and they are just great to associate yourself with. These are good kids.

Those good kids have tuned into a pretty gosh-darn good football team. And just by advancing to the PIAA District One Class AAAA semifinals at Garnet Valley on Friday night, they have reversed a recent strange trend in the program.

If there's been one minor flaw that has gnawed at Schmidt over the past few seasons, it has been the Redskins' inability to group together consistently good campaigns.

On two separate occasions, the Redskins have made the postseason tournament in back-to-back years (2001-02, 2004-05). The first years of those tandems resulted in trips to Hershey for the state championship games. The second year resulted in early district tournament exits. In 2003 and 2006, the Redskins failed to make the playoffs at all.

(In fairness, both came at a time when the District One playoffs were only eight teams deep and not 16 as it currently stands.)

When that happens, you criticize yourself as a coach more than anybody else, Schmidt said. Most of the time, it's your fault. You will never hear me getting on kids that way. But we took that upon ourselves, and the guys understood the standard that we strive for here.

It's a fact that the current group of seniors some of whom were players on the '06 team that missed the tournament don't take lightly.

I think the one thing we learned that year is no matter how good a program you have, you still have to work hard, senior lineman/fullback Jay Colbert said. Nothing comes easily. You have to dedicate yourself each and every week and not look any further down the road than the game you are playing.

Colbert remembers talking to Neshaminy alums after missing the playoffs that season.

They kept saying that's not how we played football at Neshaminy, Colbert said. And it really motivated us. I think when you hear that and you understand just how much the program means to people.

Still, there is a sense of work to be done. Garnet Valley enters this game undefeated at 12-0, having held on against Pennsbury, 14-12, last Friday night at the same time that the Redskins were dispatching Ridley, 31-3.

They have a really good and well-coached football team down there, Schmidt said. I mean, the kids are tough, and they are really talented. I know that we're going to have our hands full on Friday night.

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