

LOCAL SPORTS

FLAWLESS EXECUTION

Ridley takes out Neshaminy, advances to district championship

By STEPHEN CORNELL
THE INTELLIGENCER

FOLSOM — Up until now, Neshaminy had been the team playing at its peak.

On Friday night, it was Ridley's turn. The Green Raiders executed almost flawlessly in an impressive 27-7 win over the visiting Redskins in a District One Class AAAA football semifinal at Phil Marion Field.

Football

Senior quarterback Steven Egee completed 15 of 20 pass attempts for 209 yards and two touchdowns to lead unbeaten Ridley (12-0) into next week's district championship game against West Chester Henderson. The winner of the game will become the first Class AAAA District One champion from outside the Suburban One League National Conference since 1996.

"It's a great win for the school and the program," Egee said. "The line did a great job opening up holes and giving me time to throw."

Ridley senior running back Andrew Hodges rushed 24 times for 122 yards and two touchdowns.

The combination of Egee's pinpoint passing and Hodges' power running kept Neshaminy's defense off balance. The 27 points was the most scored against the Redskins all season.

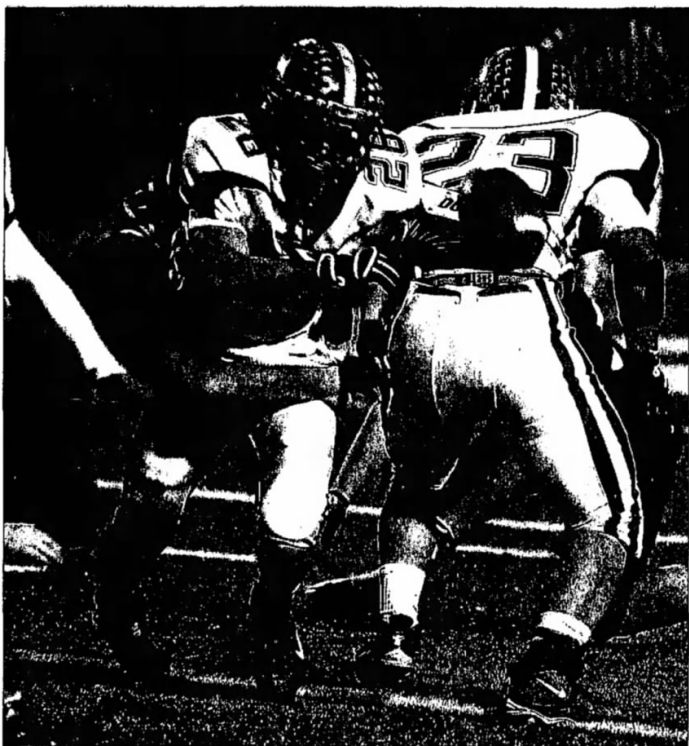
Ridley's offense controlled the ball for about 30 minutes overall, and for about 29 of the first 42 minutes over 3½ quarters.

"They kept our defense on the field a lot," said Neshaminy defensive back and quarterback Justin Kinney. "They made some big third-down and fourth-down conversions."

Ridley converted an important fourth-and-10 on its very first possession. On fourth down, Egee hit senior receiver Rob Lamey for 11 yards.

That's the way it seemed to go all night. Every time Ridley needed 5 yards, it gained 6. Every time the Green Raiders needed 10 yards, Egee spotted a receiver 11 yards downfield.

Those receivers weren't necessarily open. The 6-foot-2,



Steve Gengler/The Intelligencer

Neshaminy running back Jason Ulmer (28) loses the ball to Ridley's Kevin McLaughlin during the first half of their playoff game at Ridley. The fumble was recovered by the Green Raiders.

185-pound Egee, a likely Division I college basketball recruit, squeezed passes through solid coverage and hit his receivers in the hands from the opening snap.

Even when Neshaminy's defenders put pressure on Egee, he managed to dance away from it. Egee avoided a half-dozen strong pass rushes and more often than not found receivers while on the run.

"(Egee) is a great athlete," Kinney said. "He's tall. He can find receivers. He's just a good quarterback."

Although he made a bunch of tough plays, Egee also made it look easy at times.

With about three minutes left in the first half, the Redskins were still within a touchdown, 7-0, despite having been outplayed.

On second down from the Neshaminy 23, a Ridley penalty nullified what would have been a touchdown pass for Egee.

Unfazed, the Green Raiders

quarterback threw a perfect 36-yard touchdown pass to Jake Cahill on the very next play. The Redskins had good coverage on Cahill, but Egee lofted the ball perfectly to Cahill down the right sideline for the score.

Neshaminy's offense finished with just 183 total yards and turned the ball over four times. The Redskins entered Friday night averaging 36.8 points a game and had scored 125 points in their previous three games.

But Neshaminy never really got its running game going and senior back Jason Ulmer finished with only 53 yards on 12 carries. Ulmer carried just twice in the second half for 5 yards.

Kinney completed 10 of 17 passes for 81 yards, but threw three interceptions. Those turnovers came after the Redskins fell behind and were struggling to catch up and regain some kind of momentum.

"I don't even know what happened. Ridley's a great football program. They came out pumped up," Kinney said. "We came out on our heels. Our heads weren't in it."

The Green Raiders opened up the third quarter with a 12-play, 60-yard drive that took more than seven minutes off of the clock. Hodges scored from 1 yard out with 4:55 left in the third quarter to make it 20-0.

Neshaminy answered with a 60-yard scoring drive. Kinney ran three times for 35 yards on the drive and threw a 5-yard touchdown pass to Gary Renson with 1:17 left in the third quarter to make it 20-7.

"Give Ridley credit. They played marvelously," Neshaminy coach Mark Schmidt said. "They played super. I feel bad for our guys. They had a great season. I wish Ridley luck."

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