

DISTRICT ONE CLASS AAAA FOOTBALL QUARTERFINAL:

North Penn 35, Nesquehony 22



ROCK KURTZ / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER
North Penn's Dom Taggart (left) and Nesquehony's Andy Lynch fight for possession Friday.

Knights' defense cuts Redskins down to size

By Dan Dunken
STAFF WRITER

FRANCONIA — Nesquehony's significant size advantage on the offensive line appeared to give the Redskins a fighting chance going into their District One Class AAAA playoff game with North Penn on Friday night.

But it was the Knights' defensive speed and flying-around hitting that ruled the night, negating up-front size and taking away almost everything the Redskins wanted to do offensively for three quarters. North Penn also picked off three passes during that span to further frustrate Nesquehony and feed the monster that was the Knights' offense in an impressive 35-22 North Penn victory.

It was 35-7 after three quarters, when some of the North Penn starters took a rest. For a defense that allowed only eight points per game coming into this one, it was business as usual. Sophomore Ralphie Reeves helped lead the charge from his inside linebacker position. He's an impressive athlete with strength and speed who likes to hit and has a propensity to make plays. He made a few, but like passing around the credit to his teammates, especially the under-sized but big-hearted guys up front.

"I've everybody kept saying was all high Nesquehony's offensive line was," Reeves said. "I think our D-line took it personally. They worked hard all week."

Nesquehony's O-line had a 60-pound-per-ster advantage vs. North Penn's D-line, but you couldn't tell. To win, the Redskins had to pound their ground game, but it never got on track. The Knights' two ends, Chuck Knowler and Andre Poo, and tackle Dave Jackson created heavy penetration while Reeves and fellow "backers" like Mike Culbreath and a swift secondary swooped in to swarm the Redskins' quarterback in the Knights' third interception.

"The D-line played a great game," Reeves said. "They were punting off blocks, and they tackled, made the job of the linemen easy."

"(Nesquehony's) double-teams from the 'backers' to make plays. Defense played great. We were flying around all night. We knew we had to come out and Dean Lane in the second before they did something big."

Reeves made an interception of a Charlie Materella pass in the minute that led to a North Penn field goal late in the first half. Safety T.J. Gill picked off a deep halfback pass by Bryan Deane Lane in the first quarter, a play that was symbolic of Nesquehony's desperation prompted by North Penn's six straight plays that the run-oriented Redskins had called a pass.

Aside from a 30-yard reception that keyed Nesquehony's only scoring drive in the first half, Deane did little damage. Averaging 121 yards rushing per game over the previous 11 outings, he ran the ball only 12 times for 56 yards.

Dan Dunken can be reached at dondunke@phillyburbs.com



North Penn's Dylan Harris (left) and J.D. Zurko celebrate after scoring during Friday night's District One Class AAAA football quarterfinal against Nesquehony on Friday.

North Penn's the big kid on the block

FRANCONIA — On the sideline Friday night, as the North Penn football team was in the process of finishing what it started by beating Nesquehony, Steve Tribanus turned to J.D. Zurko and said this game in hand had given him a new kind of confidence.

"He proved to himself," Zurko said, recalling the conversation, "that he can push around kids that are bigger than us."

North Penn (12-0 overall) is again in the District One Class AAAA semifinals after its 35-22 quarterfinal victory over the Redskins (9-3) at the new Souderston stadium, and this is probably as good a time as any to point out that the taxpayers of the Souderston Area School District have paid for a sparkling new facility for

North Penn to host playoff games whenever rain comes rolling in, even if it's the night before the game is actually played.

Anyway, where were we? Oh, right: The top-seeded Knights are probably not going to elicit much sympathy from anyone else in District One for harboring the perception that their offensive and defensive lines are comparatively small in relation to their opponents, particularly Nesquehony's.

Redskins coach Mark Schmidt, your thoughts on the matter? "Doubtful?" Schmidt began. "Have you looked at the size of them guys? They're bigger than our guys. Come on now. Don't start that crap. They're big, and they're good."

And Schmidt was just getting started. "You know, everybody says they're not very big — that's a bunch of excuses," he continued. "Their offensive line's very thick, and good. Did you see (Zurko)? He's a beast. I don't have a guy like him."

It's true that Zurko takes the scales at

a robust 6-foot-3, 275 pounds, and that he's likely to be named all-state by more than a few people after the season is over. And while Kevin Harrell is 5-11, 270. Will Kye is 5-11, 245; Tribanus is 5-10, 235; and Tyler Scherer is just 5-11, 210.

Tight end Ralphie Reeves, though a very talented sophomore, is 6-1, 215.

For comparison's sake, Nesquehony's defensive tackle — Nick DiDonato and Ryan Katona — are listed at 5-10, 297, and 5-10, 260.

Bigger yes, but not significantly so. Zurko, a tackle speaking for

Tribanus, the Knights' center, still felt Nesquehony had the edge, size-wise.

"These were some big, talented kids," Zurko said, "and we drove them back."

And it's pretty much what North Penn has done to everybody, all season long.

But let anyone forget, the Knights are the defending District One Class AAAA champions. They also want that title by beating shutting out Nesquehony,

28-0, in last year's final. The idea that they're at a disadvantage of any kind — against anyone — is certainly a hard sell, no matter what they themselves perceive. And while NP continues to rely on its wondrously gifted offensive skill players — the Knights scored five touchdowns and a field goal on their first six possessions Friday night — all of that starts with the guys up front.

"I thought offensively we played as well as we have all year — for the first three quarters," said Dick Beck, the North Penn coach. "This team, it won't be successful unless we're versatile. If we can't throw the ball and run the ball with any consistency, we will struggle offensively."

"We're not going to be able to line up people and say, 'Here we go, stop us.' It's just not that type of team."

Maybe. But it sure is starting to look like one, isn't it?

Dan Cosentino can be reached at dancosenti@phillyburbs.com



Dom Cosentino

Local View

open at the 3. Needhamer scored on the next play. A Reeves interception set up Harris' field goal to give the Knights a 21-7 lead at halftime.

"We take pride in being resilient," said Semolinsky. "We can't hang our heads and get down when the other team scores. We came right back and scored right back at them."

North Penn 35, Nesquehony 22
Nesquehony 10:00 - 6:15 15:00
North Penn 6:15 - 6:30 15:00

SCORING SUMMARY
NP — Nesquehony 1 run (Dan Lane)
NP — Brian Wynn (Dan Lane) (kick)
NP — Nesquehony 3 run (Dan Lane)
NP — PD 2 run
NP — Nesquehony 1 run (Mattie Hill)
NP — Nesquehony 3 run (Mattie Hill)
NP — Nesquehony 1 pass (Dan Lane pass)
Total — NP — 35; Nesquehony — 22

NP — Wilson 1 run (Mattie Hill)
Total — NP — 35; Nesquehony — 22

NP — Wilson 1 run (Mattie Hill)
Total — NP — 35; Nesquehony — 22

NP — Wilson 1 run (Mattie Hill)
Total — NP — 35; Nesquehony — 22

NP — Wilson 1 run (Mattie Hill)
Total — NP — 35; Nesquehony — 22

NP — Wilson 1 run (Mattie Hill)
Total — NP — 35; Nesquehony — 22

NP — Wilson 1 run (Mattie Hill)
Total — NP — 35; Nesquehony — 22

NP — Wilson 1 run (Mattie Hill)
Total — NP — 35; Nesquehony — 22

NP — Wilson 1 run (Mattie Hill)
Total — NP — 35; Nesquehony — 22

NP — Wilson 1 run (Mattie Hill)
Total — NP — 35; Nesquehony — 22

Knights

Continued from Page 1
"We just wanted this game so bad. We were so focused. We came out and we were able to make our check-offs on what defense they were in and made the throws."

Previous winning North Penn teams had simply ground out victories with a dominating running game, but coach Dick Beck wants this year's squad to pass more.

"This team has to be versatile to be successful," he said. "We're just not a line up and say, 'Here we are, stop us.' We have to be able to run and throw."

"Todd was great. He made all the right choices. He's been like that all year for us. He's actually a good runner as well, but he didn't show it (Friday)."

For the first three quarters, North Penn was dominant, holding a 35-7 lead entering the fourth. The Knights scored five touchdowns and Dylan Harris booted a 36-yard field goal in their first six possessions.

The key moment of the game may have come late in the first half.

North Penn held a 12-0 lead, but Nesquehony junior quarterback Charlie Materella hit senior wide receiver Rick Brechner with a 14-yard touchdown pass and Ricky Domino's extra point cut the Knights' lead to just 12-7.

The key moment of the game may have come late in the first half.

The Knights took less than two minutes to drive 62 yards for a touchdown. Semolinsky hit T.J. Gill with a 25-yard pass to the Nesquehony 34, then found sophomore tight end Ralphie Reeves

Courier Union

Find the hidden words:

BEAST
BEAUTY
DONKEY
FRIG
FRINCE
GARBAGE
LEPETTO
LETTER
LIES
MEXICO
NOSE
PALACE
PIROCCHIO
POND
PRINCE
PRINCESS
ROSE

Storybook Musical Theatre

from Storybook Musical Theatre & NIE - 4 lucky winners!

this season's shows

H Y B E A U T Y C R G P
M F R O G P R I N C E A
K U C N G R T T R U P L
P O N D A I T E X F P A
I F R Y R N S N O S E C
N R O S C B E E N P T E
O O S H A E I N C E T E
C S E I J G S V M A Q O V
C E L I E S A B E A S T
H L E T T E R G R P A E
I G A V M I R R O R E I
O N K Z W S D O N K E Y

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____

Parent's Name: _____ Daytime Phone #: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

PRIZES: Complete the word search and fill in the contest envelope. Contest runs Nov. 17 to 22 and on the NIE website at www.bostonjournal.com. All students in grades pre-kindergarten through grade 8 in the Courier Union & The Intelligencer circulation areas are eligible. Activity and contest must be filled out completely, mailed or delivered to the address indicated. Entries must be in our files by 12:00 noon, Nov. 20. Responsible families is acceptable. Winners will be randomly drawn from all completed entries and will be notified by phone. Winners must pick up prizes at our office during regular business hours. Winners must agree to have their entries published in promotional programs. Employees of Courier Union and their immediate families are not eligible to win. Transportation to the promotional program is the winner's responsibility. A limited number of tickets consists of 1 child and 2 adult tickets.

NIE

Michael's Learning Center
100 West 12th Street
New York, NY 10011-34

To purchase tickets in advance call 800-444-8322

PAC #0 **PRITCE** **Beast**

Stuart London can be reached at slondon@phillyburbs.com