

# Outmatched Redskins did all they could



*Kevin Cooney*  
**Commentary**

FRANCONIA — So this is where the road ended for Neshaminy, on the right hash mark of the 35-yard line of the artificial turf at Souderton High School on a chilled November night.

But before they broke for the winter and headed back to the buses, Mark Schmidt wanted to turn the season-long issue of slow starts into a life lesson that goes well beyond the football field.

"I told them to get going, get moving and get started," Schmidt said. "In life, get started and grab the opportunity."

The opportunity to advance deeper into this District One tournament escaped the Redskins on Friday night. North Penn was too quick, too physical and way too good during a 35-22 victory over Neshaminy in the D-I Class AAAA quarterfinals at Souderton High School.

"We knew that we had to play a perfect game against them," said Redskins wide receiver Rick Brebner, who scored two touchdowns on the night. "And we didn't do that."

No, they didn't. But asking this Neshaminy team to find the answers to down a team like the Knights was asking a lot.

On paper, one tried to come up with different scenarios on how they could pull this off. Maybe Bryan Dean could run about 30 times for 200 yards. Perhaps Corey Majors would power over the lighter Knights' line.

But when you sat and watched the game move off paper and onto the artificial turf at Souderton, you understood that just wasn't going to happen. North Penn's line was marginally lighter. The speed edge that the Knights enjoyed was enormous.



Neshaminy's Dylan Lange (42), Brian Titus (10) and John Rizzo (56) walk off the field Friday night after losing to North Penn in the PIAA District One Class AAAA quarterfinals at Souderton Area High School.

CARL KOSOLA / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

When you throw another slow start into the equation, the chances went from slim to none in a hurry.

"I've tried everything, guys," Schmidt said. "I'm not going to

lie to you. We changed the pants, played the music.... the next time, I'll run around naked if I have to."

But the truth of the matter was — Neshaminy was a 9-3

football team that played like a 9-3 football team.

There's that old saying about how you are what your record says you are, and there's an amount of truth in it. In fact, if

you look at the pieces of the puzzle, this Neshaminy team probably wrung the most out of its talent of any group within the National Conference.

Consider that the Redskins

didn't have those Division I players that had been around the roster over the past few years. They didn't have a stable quarterback situation, with Schmidt being forced to rotate both Brian Titus and Charlie Marterella for the entire season. They had one great running back — Bryan Dean — and a roster filled with solid players.

"I've been here long enough now, and I can tell you that these kids were special," Schmidt said. "Every day, they showed up at practice and worked their tails off. And every week, they've gotten better and they've improved. ...

"But I think at times, you saw what we can do. But we didn't do it enough. Not against that club."

There are some players who will be coming back into the mix. Marterella looks to be the starting quarterback next season, although we thought about that with Titus last year. Dwight Williams and Shane Quinn will return as well. With the other teams in the division taking hits due to graduation, it would hardly be stunning to see Neshaminy back here next year.

The last game of a current season, however, is always about the seniors. Afterwards, Brebner — a baseball prospect who likely played his final competitive football game — looked around and understood that this was the end.

"I think it's hitting me right now," Brebner said as he looked around into the empty Montgomery County night. "You spend so much time with these guys and you understand what they mean to you. And now, it's all over."

It ended right here on this turf, at the 35-yard line of the artificial turf in Souderton.

Ironically, it is the same spot that they will gather again for the non-league opening kickoff on a warm September evening in 10 months, trying to start the journey all over again.

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