

Is Redskin 'Ridge Really A Jinx To Falcons' Baugher?

By DICK DOUGHERTY
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Pete Cordelli, in his first year as head football coach at Neshaminy High School, got the message early in the year. It was like pouring ice cold water on him during a deep sleep.

Cordelli observed camp fires of the enemy burning on distant hills many months ago. And he didn't need field glasses to identify the sentinels. Pennsbury High School's bird dogs haven't missed a move Neshaminy has made since early September.

Coach Erle Baugher and his troopers have been watching the gates of Neshaminy's plush gridiron, located high on Heartbreak Ridge in Langhorne. Their tracking missions have been so extensive that Cordelli has seen shadows on moonless nights.

Pennsbury is on the brink of the Section One championship of the Lower Bucks County Football League. Neshaminy is its last roadblock.

"We've looked at them a number of times," Baugher said in a statement drenched with caution. "They looked well-coached to me. They're tough on defense. They are real tough. They have impressed me."

That's Baugher's observation of the team he plays tonight — a squad with a 3-5 record. Baugher

should worry about a club with five defeats? Hardly impressive if you go by wins and losses.

'Ridge Is A Jinx Field

That's exactly what has Baugher concerned. He doesn't want to strike off the Redskins just on that basis.

"You can never tell what will happen," Baugher said thoughtfully. "Anything can occur. And they're (Neshaminy) not out of the running either."

Neshaminy has an 0-1 mark in Section One, losing 28-26 to William Tennent. A victory tonight, in a match slated to start at 8 o'clock, is crucial for the Redskins. If Cordelli can mastermind an upset it will throw the Section One race into a wild scramble. Pennsbury enters the skirmish with a 2-0 log, needing a tie or victory to claim the title.

Baugher doesn't put any stock in superstition and readily discards any talk about Heartbreak Ridge being a "jinx field." But it's a fact. Baugher has taken his Falcons to Langhorne twice and has yet to walk off the 'Ridge a winner.

His first failure was in 1963. Time ran out on the Falcons as Neshaminy prevailed, 21-20. Two seasons later Pennsbury crumbled in a bruising 7-0 collision.

Pennsbury visits Neshaminy on the odd years.



PETE CORDELLI
... "got the message"



ERLE BAUGHER
... "taking no chances"

And it's '67 and no one can change it.

Rebuilding The 'Skins

Cordelli, like Baugher, doesn't have to be reminded of past performances or records. He's at the helm of Neshaminy, rebuilding the once powerful Redskins.

Cordelli was a long time assistant during Neshaminy's heyday, a span of 15 years, when the Redskins didn't know the word defeat. But it's a different story today. Neshaminy suffered through a 2-6-2 campaign a year ago.

Now Cordelli is working to re-establish Neshaminy's football legend. "Our record doesn't show what our kids have done," Cordelli said fearlessly. "We have come a long way this year. The kids have given us 200 per cent. We're not big but just gully and scrappy. And we have determination."

Pennsbury is now on the doorstep. The Falcons will arrive in Langhorne breathing fire — hoping to increase their record to a 7-2 level.

Cordelli doesn't have to beat the drums to arouse his eleven. "Our kids realize they have Pennsbury and a tough game is on hand. There's no question it is a big game and we know we're the underdog. But that doesn't bother us at all."

Neshaminy has only lost to a Baugher coached Pennsbury unit once in five seasons. The defeat came last year in a 60-0 massacre. Neither coach dwelled on the subject. It's a new year and another game and past scores carry about as much water as a sieve.

Like Thanksgiving Day

Cordelli considers his collision with Pennsbury as something special. "It's been a good rivalry and we expect a hard-fought, interesting game tonight. And our kids think of this game as a Thanksgiving Day game. It has a lot of meaning."

Baugher has similar feelings. Neshaminy is like a neighborhood dogfight for the Falcons. It's most satisfying to emerge the winner. It can cap the season in grand style.