

Homework really pays off for Neshaminy's defense

Tony Varacallo is not a man driven by impulse.

He's more the bloodhound type. Once he sniffs a fox, he's relentless.

So when it came time for Neshaminy to prepare for Central Bucks West, Varacallo, the Redskins' defensive coordinator, dug through his archives. His nose picked up a keen Bucks' scent on things such as CBW screen plays, options, formations and such.

"We gave our kids their tendencies both from this year and as far back as seven years," Varacallo said. "Then we let them compare it.

"I told our defense to study them as if it were homework. You could tell how they recognized formations. We let them call the defense on certain formations versus distances because they had studied them and knew what to expect."

Seven years of CBW tendencies. It may have been the most exhaustive defensive game plan anyone has used against a Mike Pettine-coached team in this decade.

After all, the last time CBW lost two in a row was in 1982.

Neshaminy's defense — Varacallo's defense — was primarily responsible for the Redskins' 27-13 win Friday night at War Memorial Field.

That defense held CBW running back Puddy Gilbert to just 45 yards rushing. Although sophomore quarterback Greg Moylan

By **TIM PANACCIO**



threw for 96 yards, Neshaminy's defense intercepted two passes.

On several occasions, Varacallo's V's defense made the critical play. West tried a fake punt in the third quarter and Neshaminy snuffed it out. West fumbled a first-half punt and the defense recovered. Five plays later, Neshaminy had its first touchdown.

The killing blow — the one that devastated CBW — came with less than 10 minutes to play when Moylan threw a screen pass to Gilbert on the left sideline.

Mike Frederick, doubling at tight end and linebacker, knew what was going on.

"I heard the CBW coaches yelling, 'screen left, screen,' and I figured it out right away," Frederick said. "It seemed they were all screaming it on their sideline."

Moylan threw the ball and it ricocheted off Gilbert's hands. We'll let Frederick tell you the rest.

"It was the darndest thing," he said. "The ball smacked me right in the facemask; it hit so hard I wasn't sure what it was. Then it pops straight up in the air. I grabbed it and ran."

And ran. All the way back, 40 yards for a touchdown that sent a deafening silence all through the Bucks' bench. From that moment on, CBW was a defeated team.

Pettine later conceded he may have been the one who tipped off Frederick.

"Someone out there was lined up improperly," Pettine said. "In desperation, I may have did it. Maybe they heard it. We were trying to get them lined up for the screen."

Frederick, who this year began going both ways by lining up at tight end, also had a 9-yard touchdown pass from James Franklin in the second quarter.

"They had taken Jon Hall away from our offense with double coverage," Frederick said. "James said to me that if I could get open, he'd throw me the ball. All I had to do was catch it. They were doubling up and let me free out there. You couldn't ask for more than that, could you?"

Perhaps not, but there is something Neshaminy would ask of CBW — a little respect.

Granted, the Bucks of 1989 are not the dominating club of a year ago, which was left out of the state playoffs while Neshaminy got the nod. Had these two teams met in 1988, CBW, in all likelihood, would have won.

Now they meet a year later and Neshaminy

wins convincingly. Thoroughly. No holds barred.

But will people give Neshaminy its due? Or will they say it's a tainted victory because West had already lost to Cardinal O'Hara and West was banged up and West wasn't as strong as it was a year ago ...

"We needed respect in this game and I believe people doubted that we had as good an offensive line as West had," said Vince Sannelli, an offensive tackle who has blown apart some gaping holes this season for running back Rob Latronica.

"We wanted to prove to people that we can win a game as a team and that we can be respected as a whole," Sannelli said.

Frederick says public opinion will swing the other way.

"This win means teams will start respecting us now," he said. "Really, our only goal is to someday command the kind of respect that CBW does. What a reputation they have built. Maybe we could do something like that."

On the other side of the locker room wall from where Frederick spoke, Pettine was lauding Neshaminy for having overcome a 13-point deficit. A little respect, eh?

Meanwhile, Tony Varacallo was standing outside three school buses, hustling players to their seats.

"These kids studied hard," he said. "They're real students of the game."

No wonder. Their teacher is an archivist.