

# Linebacker Fills In After Neshaminy Loses 3 Centers

Paris (Pal) Allison had a choice of either a cheeseburger or pizza in the school cafeteria yesterday. He chose pizza.

"It's tough enough developing a solid offensive line, particularly in high school football," the Neshaminy coach said between bites. "With us, it's been one change right after another . . . just unbelievable."

Neshaminy started the season with three centers, for example. But Walt Freiling suffered a leg injury, and Jim Kennedy came up lame, too. Even Allison's third-string center, Keith Benhavon, fractured his ankle.

Finally, Tom Conroy, a 5-9, 180-pound linebacker, offered to give the position a shot. He's been the club's starting center since Neshaminy's opening game.

"It's been one maneuver right after another," Allison said. "Hopefully, we're beginning to get stabilized."

Allison, 48, had been an assistant coach 17 years before landing Neshaminy's head coaching job three years ago. And, after last season's 4-7 finish, there were indications that Allison's job was on the line this year.

After all, Neshaminy was once the area's leading football power. Remember John Petercuskie, who is now Princeton's defensive coordinator?

Petercuskie's Neshaminy teams were 59-1-5 during a six-year span, including a 53-game winning streak. And Jack Swartz, one of his successors, didn't do so badly himself with a five-year record of 43-11-1.

Allison's record, including this season's 4-2 start, has been 14-14.

Still, Allison isn't the type of guy who goes home to his wife, Jean, and three daughters, Karen, 21; Kathy, 17, and Kim, 13, and broods about a defeat.

"I've never been that way and never will be," Allison said. "I'm not going to get an ulcer about winning and losing . . . although I may get a headache, now and then.

"The thing that bothers me the most, though, are some of the spectators at our games. Certainly, they represent a minority — but they are the ones who cry for blood, the ones you always hear from the stands."

Neshaminy and Pennsbury compete in two leagues — the Big Eight Conference and Section One of the Lower Bucks County League. Both teams have already had a pair of Big Eight losses but are undefeated in Lower Bucks County competition.

"Providing we continue to play as well as we have, our final game (against Pennsbury) should be another bell-ringer," Allison said.

Even last year when Neshaminy was 4-6 and Pennsbury was 10-0, the season's finale between the two arch-rivals attracted 10,000 spectators. This year, if both teams keep on winning in Lower Bucks County play, the game figures to attract between 15,000 and 20,000.

"Despite all our injuries, I'm really looking forward to playing Pennsbury this year," Allison conceded. "In the meantime, though, I don't want our players looking ahead.

"There are still two teams — Council Rock and Woodrow Wilson — that could knock us off. We certainly can't get cocky at this point."

Allison finished his pizza and then sipped a cup of coffee, thoughtfully.

"A lot of my starters were juniors last year when Pennsbury really poured it on," Allison recalled.

"Why did they do it? I don't know. Ask Chuck (Chuck Kane, the Pennsbury coach). But they gave us a real whipping (49-13), that's for sure."

Allison took another sip of coffee and chuckled.

"In a way, it was kind of funny," Allison said. "The game was so out of hand that the only thing I thought about in the last quarter—when he

By EDDIE OLSEN



High Schools

still had his starting lineup in there—was what his reserves, particularly the seniors, were thinking."

Allison is an easy-going sort who prefers to avoid controversy. But when the school board met earlier this year to consider discontinuing busing student spectators to such far off places as Allentown and Reading, Allison defended the additional expenditure.

"Do you realize that we are promised a \$1,000 minimum for playing those (Big Eight games)," Allison recalled telling the school board. "It just wouldn't be fair for either our students or the home school if we discontinued the busing."

The school board agreed although Neshaminy's principal, Dr. David Marrington, had supported doing away with busing student spectators.

"I've reached the point, I suppose, that I'm not afraid to speak out," Allison said. "Yes, they can fire me as head football coach . . . but they can't fire me as a teacher since I've got tenure.

"Frankly, it kind of gripes me. Every time the school wants to cut back on expenditures — and I don't mean Neshaminy, I mean any school — it's always the sports programs they whack away at immediately."

Allison has a truckload of talent this season with the likes of quarterback Terry Gallagher (5-11, 178), running back Rick Rynkiewicz (5-11, 205), end Ell eWissman (5-10, 176), linebacker Fred Calkins (5-10 182), tackle Bill Foster (6-1, 251) and end Steve ShHull (6-1, 195).

And no matter how Neshaminy fares in its next four games, the Game of the Year figures to be Nov. 22 when it opposes Pennsbury.

You could tell yesterday — even through the pizza and coffee — that last year's 49-13 score was still on Allison's mind.

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Division One—Germantown-Kiss vs. Gratz, Clarissa and Huntington Park, 3 p.m.; Edison vs. Robbins, Glendale and Bishop, 3 p.m.  
Division Two—Bartram's, Olney, Front and Duncannon sts., 3 p.m.; Oak vs. Overbrook, 3:30 and Elmwood, 1:30 p.m.