

Knights escape 'Skins in 14-13 win

By Rick O'Brien

INQUIRER SUBURBAN STAFF

LANGHORNE — Maybe North Penn was looking ahead to its Suburban One League National Conference showdown with Norristown. Or it simply might have been that Neshaminy, trying to play the role of spoiler, was putting forth its best effort of the season.

Whatever the case, the Redskins were on the verge of pulling off a major upset Friday night at Harry E. Franks Stadium. And the visiting Knights, trailing by 13-7 with less than five minutes to play, were facing the possibility that their bid for a Class AAAA district playoff berth was nearing a shocking end.

However, a high snap from center on a punt attempt by Neshaminy gave North Penn the break it desperately needed. The Knights took advantage, scoring on the ensuing play, and escaped with a 14-13 victory.

"That's just the way the whole season has been," Neshaminy coach Mark Schmidt said afterward. "It's really incredible."

After a drive stalled at the Neshaminy 28-yard line, the Redskins lined up for what they thought would be a routine punt. Instead, Jesse Lamberth's snap from center sailed over the head of punter Steve Bejak. His only option was to fall on the ball at the 9-yard line.

On the next play, North Penn junior quarterback Joe Talese dashed nine yards into the end zone. Junior placekicker Wes Heinel converted the extra-point attempt, and the Knights hung on for the National Conference win.

"You win as a team, you lose as a team," Schmidt said. "The guy who's snapping the football [Lamberth] is a great kid, one of the hardest workers on this team. He would give anything to have that play back."

North Penn coach Mike Pettine could relate to the frustration Schmidt and his players felt. Three weeks earlier, the Knights (8-1 overall, 7-1 conference) were overcome by Central Bucks West, 13-12.

"That's part of football," Pettine said. "You're going to win games that way, and you're going to lose games that way."

North Penn, ranked No. 2 in the area by The Inquirer, marched 57 yards on nine rushing plays in its opening-game series, and grabbed the lead on Mike Kapusta's 1-yard scoring plunge. The visitors, however, showed little life on offense for the remainder of the first half.

"We had a big target on our chest, and they were going to give us everything they had," Pettine said.

Neshaminy (3-6, 3-5) tied the contest early in the second quarter on a 12-yard run by Chris Vincent. The hosts moved ahead, 10-7, shortly before intermission on Rob Fryer's 28-yard field goal.

The Knights were staring at a 13-7 deficit when Fryer booted another field goal, this one from 27 yards, less than a minute into the fourth quarter. Talese's touchdown and Heinel's game-winning conversion came with 4 minutes, 42 seconds, remaining in the game.

For the Redskins, senior tailback Mark Esposito gained 124 yards on 19 carries.

North Penn	7	0	0	7	—	14
Neshaminy	0	10	0	3	—	13

NP: Kapusta 1 run (Heinel kick)

N: Vincent 12 run (Fryer kick)

N: FG Fryer 28

N: FG Fryer 27

NP: Talese 9 run (Heinel kick)