

# Call Marple Newtown's Rutecki a mudder

By JOSEPH SANTOLIVITO

For the Daily News

THE DOWNPOUR didn't come until midway into the third quarter. The field was already murky and muddy by then. Ideal conditions for John Rutecki.

The senior fullback plowed through the Radnor defense for a career-best 173 yards and two touchdowns in leading Marple Newtown to a 22-0 Central League victory. The victory snapped Marple's three-game losing streak, and it strengthened the Tigers' position for a District 1 Class AAA playoff berth, improving to 5-3 overall and 4-3 in the league; Radnor fell to 2-6 and 1-6.

This hasn't been the easiest season for Rutecki, who has had to run behind a piecemeal offensive front that has been ravaged by injuries. Last night marked the fourth different starting offensive line. The conditions didn't help much, either; most of last night's games were canceled because of the torrential rain yesterday afternoon.

But Rutecki seemed to love slogging through the mud. He carried workmanlike 22 times, scoring a pair of touchdowns in the third quarter to create some distance in what had been a close game.

"I'm not the fastest guy in the world, and I'm certainly not going to beat anyone running outside," said Rutecki, flicking away specks of mud on his face. "So, yes, I enjoy playing in the mud, playing in these kinds of conditions. It gives me a chance to lower my shoulders and run straight at people. I can get a chance to get low and move forward."

Rutecki has been hampered by sore ankles, and he and his teammates missed Penn State-bound Pete Massaro, who has not played the last two games because of an arm injury.

"Our line really did a nice job," Rutecki said. "It has been tough sometimes this season. We've struggled the last couple of weeks moving the ball, but we've been banged up. This was very nice, very nice."

Another bright point for the Tigers was the play of junior linebacker Dan Giordano, the younger brother of starting quarterback Steve Giordano. Dan had an interception, fumble recovery and a sack in spearheading the Marple Newtown defense.

"My brother always gets the attention, because he's the quarterback," Dan joked. "This is about the seniors, and this win was great, especially after losing three straight. Coming into this game, it felt like forever since we last won a game. Getting the shutout, too, was a big boost for us. I know for John it was big. Teams had been keying on him, stuffing him. Not tonight."



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Marple Newtown rolled up 298 yards on the ground and 321 yards of total offense. But the game didn't break open until the third quarter, when Rutecki scored on consecutive drives late in the period.

It marked the sixth straight loss for Radnor, which still is greatly improved since last year under new head coach Tom Ryan.

"They ran hard and passed at the right times, and just gave up big plays," Ryan said. "We were in the game. We just have to put it all together. Once we start putting drives together, then we put quarters together. The league is up this year, and at times we played really well tonight."

Radnor quarterback Tyler Andersen threw for 131 yards, completing passes to six receivers. \*

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