

Marple falls in final seconds

By GENE GOMOLKA
Daily Times Staff Writer

MARPLE— Winning the prestigious Central League championship would seem to have its own rewards. But, going into Thursday's game against Conestoga, Marple Newtown coach Bob Kenig also had his sights set on an undefeated season.

On a day when families across the country were pulling on wishbones, Kenig came up with the short piece of the bone.

"It's going to be a little tough eating turkey tonight," Kenig said after Conestoga rallied for a 15-14 win in the last 26 seconds.

A 14-yard pass from Pioneers quarterback Gary Schofield to Mark Trudel gave Conestoga its ninth win (against two losses) and erased Marple's chance to become the first team in the history of the school to go undefeated.

Kenig, although disappointed with the sudden turn of events, was philosophical about the defeat which left the Tigers with a 10-1 mark. Marple clinched the Central title against Penncrest Nov. 12.

"Sure, it's going to bother me that we didn't go undefeated," Kenig said in the quiet of the school's gymnasium. "But, I'm so proud of our kids. We told them that before the game.

"We said, 'Win or lose, you're still champions.' They played their hearts out all season. We really weren't that big a team. Everything they got, they got on sheer guts and determination."

The Tigers demonstrated what Kenig meant after trailing Conestoga, 8-0, at the half. Marple, sparked by the gutsy performance of its quarterback-safety Jock Peterson, roared back to take a 14-8 lead on two passes from Peterson to Bob MacLaughlin (33 yards) and Steve Tatios (11 yards).

"That's what I mean about courage and character," Kenig said. "Another team would have quit at the half. Not this group. They came back out fired up and put it to them.

"How many teams can come back and score two touchdowns on a club like they've (Conestoga) got? There's no need for them to cry or hang their heads about this one. They played like the champions they are.

"There were six other times during the season when we could have lost in the last couple of minutes. But, we pulled it out. This time we didn't. It's a game of inches and seconds."

Marple seemed to have the game clinched after driving to

Conestoga's 46-yard line and then punting out at the 26. Only 1:17 remained to be played, the Tigers had a 14-8 lead, and the Pioneers would have to go 74 yards to score.

"I told them to keep passing for short yardage, get the first down and go out of bounds if they could," explained Conestoga coach George Cockerill. "I knew we couldn't run it in against them in such a short time."

Working out of a 'shotgun' formation which, Cockerill said, was installed less than two weeks ago because he feared the charge of Marple's offensive line, the Pioneers headed home on Schofield's arm.

The 6-3, 185-pound junior quarterback completed a 30-yard pass to Brian Holland who was stopped on an ankle-high tackle by Chris Horton at the Marple 44. A 15-yard pass-interference penalty against the Tigers brought the ball up to the 29 where Schofield threw a release pass to Tim Lambert to the 14.

After one incompletion, Schofield then hit Trudel for the winning touchdown.

The Tigers had 19 seconds to get the ball into play but an interception at midfield by Rick Shirkness ended Marple's final effort of the season.

"Marple's a good, tough team," Cockerill said. "I looked forward to playing them on a dry day and a dry field. Playing in this mud worked to our disadvantage. We couldn't shake Holland loose."

The muddy conditions didn't stop Holland, a 6-0, 185-pound junior who was converted from quarterback to halfback five winning games ago, on a 63-yard free kick return after Marple's Peterson was caught for a safety at 2:23 of the first period.

Tim Poore punted out from his 20, the ball sailing to Holland who waited at his own 37. As Marple defenders converged to the center of the field, Holland seemed to squirt through the middle and, after reaching the Tigers' 45, went the rest of the distance untouched for an 8-0 Conestoga lead.

The Tigers refused to fold, however, and, after a 'give 'em hell' halftime speech by Marple assistant Joe Motta, came out fighting.

Peterson's passes (five for 51 yards) brought the Tigers to the nine-yard line where Marple's first drive stalled. But, after forcing a Conestoga punt, Marple had the ball back on the Pioneers' 35.

With fourth-and-eight, Peterson

then connected on a 33-yard touchdown pass to MacLaughlin and Peterson's pass to Kurt Worley for the two-point conversion brought the Tigers back into an 8-8 tie.

"Bob MacLaughlin has played very little for us," Kenig said. "We put him in when our tight end Craig Wolf came up with a sore ankle. We told Bob to read the secondary and fly. Jock (Peterson) made the same read and let it go."

Peterson got the Tigers sailing again when he intercepted a Schofield pass on the ensuing series and returned it 15 yards to Conestoga's 33.

On the third play following the turnover, Peterson found Tatios for a 25-yard gainer to the ten. And, after losing a yard, Peterson connected with Tatios again for a 14-8 lead, sending 10,000 Homecoming, partisan fans into near hysteria.

But, it just wasn't to be as Peterson scored again and Tom Spector kicked the winning point with 0:26 on the clock.

Peterson, who played a stand-out game on both offense and defense, completed 13-of-21 passes for 183 yards and two touchdowns. Fullback Joe Wenner, curling out of the backfield, caught five passes for 54 yards, Tatios five for 75 yards and one touchdown.

A combination of Marple's strong defense and a sloppy field held the Pioneers to minus-13 yards rushing. Schofield completed 10-of-17 passes for 163 yards and one touchdown.

"Conestoga did a great job," Kenig said. "They also showed a lot of guts coming back the way they did with less than two minutes to go.

"But, God has been good to us this season. We've had other games we could have lost in the last seconds and won, instead. This was one time when we didn't. I'm very proud of our kids and of our 10-1 season.

"But, I'll tell you this. I know there'll be a lot of nights when I'll be laying in bed thinking about the last minute of this ball game."

CONESTOGA 8007-15
MARPLE-N. 0086-14
C- Safety. Peterson tackled behind goal by Mike Machikas.
C- Holland 63 free kick return. Run failed.
M- MacLaughlin 33 pass from Peterson. (Worley pass from Peterson).
M- Tatios 11 pass from Peterson. (Kick failed).
C- Trudel 14 pass from Schofield. (Spector kick).



Billy Edwards of Chichester picks off a Sun Valley pass.

Staff Photo by WALT CHERNOKAL

Sun Valley stops Chi

By GREG GREENDAY
Daily Times Correspondent

ASTON — On September 9, 1977, a last-second Sun Valley pass play terminated on the St. James one-foot line, and a valiant comeback attempt by the Vanguards fell short as they dropped an 8-0 decision to the Bulldogs.

Sun Valley fans remember it well. It was to be the last time their team would end up on the short end of a score.

Since that misty Friday evening, Sun Valley has bulldozed its way to 10 consecutive victories and a Section Two title.

Many of the wins during that streak were of the cliff-hanging variety. But perhaps none were as exciting — or important — as the Vanguard's 13-6 win over arch-rival Chichester, here Thursday.

"The most important thing to these kids at practice this week was keeping the win streak alive," said a jubilant head coach Bob Fithian.

"Sun Valley has a lot of pride, much like a Ridley, and these kids like the idea of playing for a winner," Fithian added. "They wanted this game very much and they turned in a gutsy effort to produce it."

Despite the dismal weather and sloppy playing conditions, the Vanguard faithful had plenty to cheer about. One of their primary targets to applaud was senior running back Jeff Owsley, who rushed for 160 yards on 27 carries, thereby gaining membership into the elite 1,000 yard club.

Owsley, much like the Sun Valley teams of recent years, seemed to possess a flair for the dramatic as he picked up the necessary yardage to put him over the top on the last play of his high school career when he slashed for four yards as time ran out.

"I wasn't thinking about the 1,000 yards," Owsley admitted afterwards. "My main concern

was winding up the season with a 10-1 record. It wasn't until I heard the guys on the sidelines yelling that I realized that I had a shot at it."

Another important factor in the Vanguard's triumph was the sparkling play of defensive back Dave Cranston, who picked off three Chi passes. Cranston, who stands 5-10 and weighs 160 pounds, turned in what may have been the defensive play of the game when he leveled Chi's big Mike Howard (6-4, 175) as he was about to latch on to a crucial third-and-ten pass from Eagle QB Jamie Miller late in the final quarter.

Neither team could muster any type of offensive threat in the first half as turnovers took top billing in the swamp-like conditions. Chi, however, under first year head coach Chip Carroll, had the better of the going in the first 24 minutes as it threatened on several occasions.

Early in the second period, Chi had an excellent opportunity following a Bill Edwards' interception, but the SV defense sucked it up and thwarted the Eagles' attack. Marty Bruce's 27-yard field goal effort slid off to the left and the first half ended with no further scoring threats.

The third stanza seemed destined to go the route of the same type of three-plays-and-punt action until Mr. Owsley decided to take matters into his own hands.

Following another brilliant Vanguard defensive effort, when the Section Two champs stopped Chi on a fourth-and-inches situation from their own 36-yard line, Owsley darted through a hole off right tackle and motored 64-yards for the game's first score. Dan Hutchinson's conversion gave SV a 7-0 lead and, at the time, a seemingly winning margin.

The scrappy Eagles, however, bounced right back when Miller lofted a perfect pass to Ralph

Cirillo who outdistanced the Sun Valley secondary en route to a 72-yard scoring play. A high snap from center and a kamikaze-like rush from the SV defensive line foiled the all important extra point attempt and the Vanguard's held on to a seat-squirring 7-6 lead.

Matt Serge supplied the medicine that gave Sun Valley fans a sigh of relief when he recovered a fumbled snap in the end zone moments later to complete the scoring.

"We were pleasantly surprised by the play of the offensive line this year," Fithian said. "We expected the defense to do a good job, but we weren't returning a single starter from last season's offensive line and we were a little concerned. They really did the job for us all year long.

"You've got to give Chi a lot of credit," he continued. "Bocella (quarterback, Mike) was only sacked a few times the entire season, but Chi must have caught him a half-dozen times today.

"There's no doubt in my mind, though, that our kids wanted this game to keep the streak going. Today, you saw a game that was played straight from the gut."

It was also a game that will go a long way in helping Vanguard fans forget about September 9, 1977.

Vanguard Views: Sun Valley team physician, Dr. John G. Walichuck, was honored prior to the start of the game and was kept very busy during the contest as he had to make numerous trips out to the battlefield to tend to injured players... Dave Cranston's three interceptions gave him a total of seven on the year — a new school record... A damp, chilly morning couldn't stop the thousands of fans who braved the conditions to witness another typical Sun Valley-Chi Thanksgiving Day meeting... The Vanguard's 10-1 mark is school's best since the 1973 team went undefeated with an 11-0 mark... After Bob Fithian accepted the "Moose" Weber Memorial Trophy given to the winner of the

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Widener hosts Albany

CHESTER — Widener College's football team battles Albany State College at noon Saturday in an NCAA Division III semifinal game.

Albany State, which moves the ball well on the ground from its Wishbone offense, defeated Hampton-Sydney, 51-45, in the opening round of the playoffs while Widener, which has been strong defensively all season, blanked Central Iowa, 19-0, in its playoff opener.

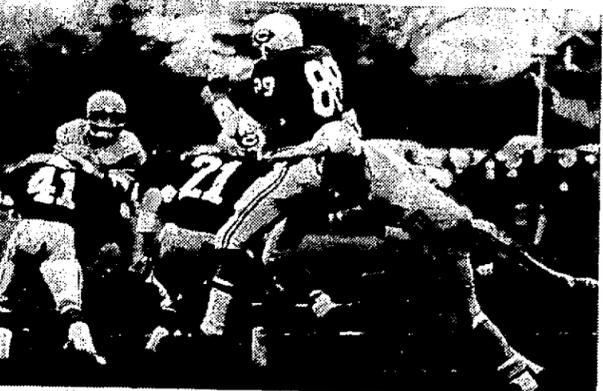
Chip Zawolski, Widener's Player of the Year, has averaged 134.0 yards rushing per game (fifth best average in Division III) and was the leading Division III scorer with 19 touchdowns.

Glen Sowslskie, a 6-0, 175 pounder, paced Albany State's attack last weekend with 225 yards rushing on 25 carries. He scored a pair of touchdowns and threw a 32-yard touchdown pass.

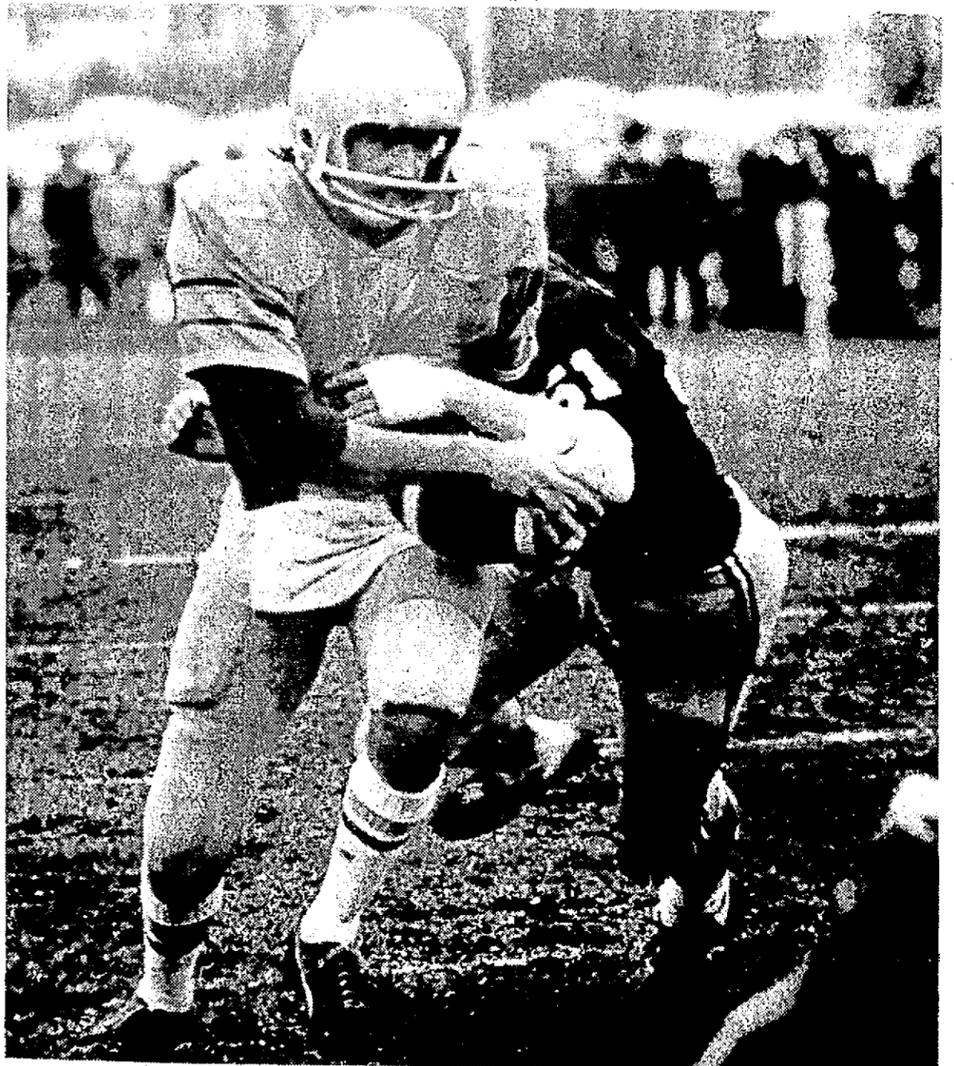
The winner of the game will meet the winner of the Minnesota-Morris-Wabash clash next weekend at the Stag Bowl in Phenix City, Ala.



Jeff Owsley of Sun Valley, heads toward his 1,000th rushing yard.



Mike Howard of Chichester is about to be hit by two Sun Valley defenders.



Sun Valley quarterback Mike Bocella is sacked by Chichester's Brian Meekins.