

PHS feels ready for playoffs

Little Tigers top South for 7th win

By Bob Nuse
Sports Editor

Win or lose, the Princeton High football team was already in the

FOOTBALL

Central Jersey Group III playoffs regardless of what happened against West Windsor-Plainsboro South on Saturday.

But the Little Tigers still had a little something to prove to themselves in the game, which they did



Photo by Stephen Goldsmith

Princeton High's Nick Miranda breaks free for a long gain during the Little Tigers' 31-17 win over West Windsor-Plainsboro South on Saturday.

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with a 31-17 win over the Pirates.

"I have 20 seniors that have bought into what we have been preaching and teaching around here," said Princeton coach Steve Everette, whose team improved to 7-2 with the win. "They have done a fantastic job. They were so focused on what we had to do today. They started well, they finished well, and we played well in the middle. They wanted to make sure people knew they were a playoff caliber team.

"West Windsor South has been to the playoffs every year. They are a Group IV playoff team this year. We wanted to prove that we're a playoff caliber team as well."

The Little Tigers will join the other three Packet-area teams in the playoffs that begin this weekend. It is the first time all four programs in the coverage area have qualified for the playoffs in the same season.

Princeton, which has not won seven games in a season since 1992, will be the seventh seed in CJ III and play at No. 2 Monroe. Also in CJ III, WW-P North is the No. 8 seed and will play at No. 1 Middle-

town South. In CJ IV, WW-P South is seeded fifth and will play at East Brunswick. Montgomery is the No. 7 seed and will play at Howell. All four games will be played on Friday night at 7 p.m.

For Princeton, making the playoffs is the first step in what the Little Tigers hope is more than a one-game appearance.

"We've never really won anything in the playoffs," said senior offensive tackle Omar Yousef. "The last time we were there was two years ago and we got beat pretty bad. That still stings a little bit. We're going to give it our all and we have no thought in our mind that our season is going to end next week. We'll have a tough team to play but that is what football is all about."

Yousef and the offensive line helped the Little Tigers put 31 points on the board, thanks to 132 yards rushing from senior Trevor Barsamian, who carried the ball 26 times with leading rusher Josh Gordon sidelined by an injury. The Little Tigers also received a season-high 264 yards passing from Mike Olentine, including an 83-yard touchdown pass to Nick Miranda.

"We were not even sure Trevor would be able to go

until this morning," Everette said. "We tried to limit him a little bit. We threw the ball more than normal to try to get him some rest. And our offensive line did a tremendous job.

"We put our big kid (the 6-6, 280 pound Yousef) on their big kid (Zach Hundertmark, who is 6-5, 275) and he did a good job blocking No. 75 today. They created some holes and Trevor felt good and got it rolling a little bit."

The game was tied, 17-17, after WW-P South opened the second half with a quick three-play scoring drive capped off by a 33-yard Chris Evans to Andrew Manley touchdown pass. The score remained tied until a Barsamian touchdown run gave Princeton a 24-17 lead. The Little Tigers then recovered the ensuing kickoff and four plays later Olentine ran the ball in from the 6-yard line.

"Everyone did well today," Yousef said. "The offensive line stayed on their blocks. I can't say enough about Trevor. He gave it everything he had. He was hurt all week and we were not even sure he would play.

"Zachary Hundertmark is a very good player. I like to have a challenge like that. It keeps you focused and keeps

you on it. If you don't like having someone like that who matches up with you well, then why bother playing? It's fun going against a guy like that."

Now, Yousef and his 19 senior teammates are heading back to the state playoffs, anxious to make a statement.

"When I first came in I just wanted to have fun," Yousef said. "I try to give 110 percent effort and whatever happens, happens. When you give 110 percent effort out there we all win. I was very proud of our team."

WW-P North heads into the playoffs on a good note, topping Robbinsville, 14-7, on Saturday. Sean Reed rushed for 188 yards, including a 75-yard touchdown run. In the second half, Ryan Phelan connected with Killian Brackett on a 14-yard touchdown pass. The Knights improved to 6-3, the most wins since winning six games in 2004.

Montgomery dropped 35-28 decision at Ridge on Friday night. The Cougars led, 28-14, heading into the fourth quarter surrendering three straight touchdowns. DJ Ruhlman threw touchdown passes to JT Tartacoff and Taylor Mulligan, while Kevin Azimi scored two touchdowns.