

Princeton 'fun' ends with loss

Seniors finish standout careers

By Ken Weingartner
Special Writer

MONROE — The outcome of Princeton High's state sectional playoff football game might have spoiled a Friday night, but it did not diminish the Tigers' feelings about the previous four months — or years, for that matter.

"We had a ton of fun with our senior class," Princeton senior quarterback Mike Olentine said after the Tigers' season came to an end with a 42-0 loss at Monroe in the opening round of the NJSIAA Central Jersey Group III playoffs. Monroe, which improved to 8-1 with its seventh straight victory, was the No. 2 seed.

"We had a great season, 7-3; the most wins since 1992," Olentine added. "I'm really happy. It couldn't have been a more fun season for me. Two of our goals were to win our (CVC) Valley Division and make it to the playoffs. Every year we make it to the playoffs it's a big stride for Princeton football. So it was a good year."

Princeton was not at full strength against Monroe. The Tigers' top run-

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ning threat, Josh Gordon, was hampered by an ankle sprain (likely made worse by the slick turf at rain-swept Hugh Walsh Field) while senior defensive end Josh McNulty suffered a shoulder injury prior to the game.

Monroe, led by the 308-yard rushing effort of Blake Bascom, scored on its first six possessions. The Falcons, who face Ocean Township in the sectional semifinals, have reached 40 points four times this year and posted three shutouts.

"I wouldn't be surprised if they win the sectional championship," Olentine said. "They were the better team. They came out strong and just overpowered us with their speed and size. We just couldn't

match up with them on offense or defense. (Bascom) played a great game for them and their defense was like an iron curtain."

Senior fullback Trevor Barsamian provided much of the offense for Princeton, rushing for 112 yards on 11 carries.

This was Princeton's second postseason appearance in three years after going a 14-season span without a trip to the playoffs. The Tigers have not had a losing season since 2006.

"I think the program is on the rise," Olentine said. "We're going to lose 20 seniors, but we have some good guys in the sophomore and junior classes. I think they'll continue the success and go to the playoffs a couple more times in the near future."