

D'Agostini shines

'Stoga tops W.C. East in opener

Junior quarterback passes for pair of touchdowns, gets coach John Vogan a victory in his first outing.

Daily Local News

September 1, 2001

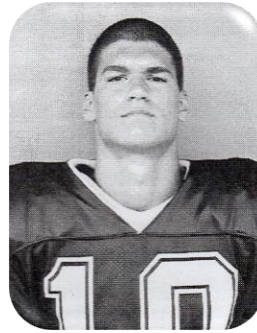
By **LIZ SULLIVAN**, Staff Writer

WEST GOSHEN—The John Vogan football era at Conestoga High School got off to a good start Friday night, albeit a shortened one. Conestoga defeat West Chester East 22-0 in a nonleague contest that ended late in the third quarter because of threatening weather.

This was the Pioneers' first game with Vogan as the head coach. Vogan was an assistant coach under Matt Gibson last season. Gibson recently became Conestoga's Athletic Director.

The Pioneers scored on the game's opening series. Quarterback John D'Agostini connected with Dewey Burke on a 26-yard touchdown pass with about a nine minutes left in the first quarter. The pass was thrown into coverage, as three East players surrounded Burke, but none could come up with the interception.

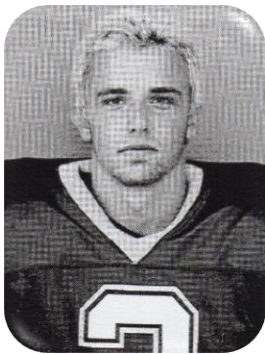
On the extra-point attempt, Conestoga used a fake with the ball hiked right to Lamont Smith, who ran for



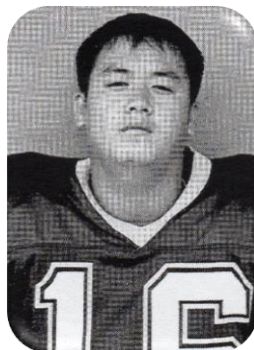
**JOHN
D'AGOSTINI**
Junior 6-3, 215
Quarterback

the two point conversion and the 8-0 lead. The Pioneers closed out the first quarter with a very big play. D'Agostini connected with Pat Himes on the 73-yard touchdown pass. Eric Hildenbrand's successful extra point kick gave Conestoga a 15-0 lead with 31 seconds left in the quarter. D'Agostini 91-yards passing in the first half and finished with 160 yards. East held runner Steve Shea to 10 carries for 40 yards for the game. Last season, Shea rushed for 1,276 yards.

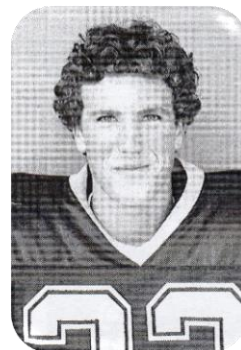
Himes capped the scoring for the Pioneers with a 4-yard run in the second quarter. Also for Conestoga, Smith added an interception of a Tom Duncan pass in the third quarter.



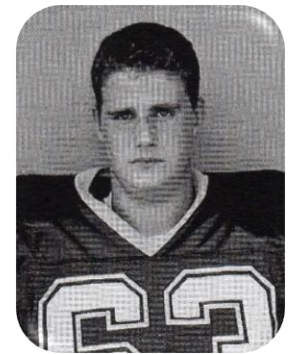
BLAKE AVERY
Senior 5-6, 170
Running Back
Strong Safety



QUYEN DANG
Senior 5-10, 170
Running Back
Cornerback



WILLEM REITSMA
Senior 6-1, 175
Running Back
Free Safety



**RYAN KINCAID-
CREAN**
Senior 6-4, 240
Offensive Lineman
Defensive Lineman

Conestoga gets defensive in Central League opener

Pioneers top Springfield, earns first league victory

Daily Local

September 9, 2001

By **PETER DIGIOVANNI**, Staff Writer

SPRINGFIELD—The Conestoga High School football team served notice to the rest of the Central League it will hit anything that moves. “I can’t say enough about our defense,” Conestoga head coach John Vogan said after the bruising 26-7 win. “The physical nature of our team started in the offseason weight room.”

But it was the Conestoga offense that was roaring early in the game. After a Cougar three-and-out series to start the game, Conestoga received a 26-yard punt return from Dewey Burke to set the Pioneers up at the Springfield 25-yard line. Pioneer quarterback John D’Agostini then hit Pat Heim over the middle for a 19-yard score.

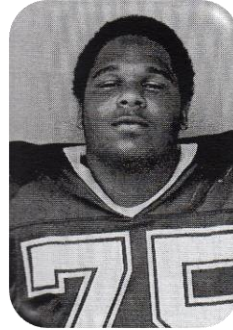
Conestoga took an 8-0 lead after a two-point conversion. The Conestoga defense took over from there. Mike Messina hit Cougar quarterback from the blind side, forcing a fumble which was recovered by linebacker Andrew Colbert. The fumble put the Pioneers in shape as Steve Shea went untouched around right end for a 16-yard score.

Another two-point conversion put Springfield behind the eight-ball, 16-0, after just five minutes had



ANDREW COLBERT

Soph 6-0, 210
Running Back
Linebacker



ARIS BYRD

Senior 6-1, 215
Offensive Lineman
Defensive Lineman

elapsed. Colbert, who was all over the field, along with Messina, Eric Hildenbrand and Aris Byrd—who had three sacks—said picking up the fumble was easy. “I just went after the ball and fell on it,” Colbert said. “We are a lot more physical than last year. We are stressing physical play and being tough late in the game.”

Colbert then came up big again when he stopped along Springfield drive with a nice interception on the right side at the Pioneers four-yard line. “I just stayed on my man and did not let up,” Colbert said.

Vogan was very impressed with his entire defense—Colbert in particular. “This is a kid who was hurt last season and worked very hard to get back,” Vogan said. “He worked hard in the weight room and is doing a good job at inside linebacker.”

Conestoga put the game away with Eric Hildenbrand’s 26-yard field goal and Shea’s four-yard run. Shea finished the game with 107 tough yards on 14 carries, to go along with D’Agostini’s 127 yards passing.

But Conestoga figured it had a potent offense coming into the season. What most impressed Vogan was the tenacity of his defense.

Big plays key 'Stoga by Haverford

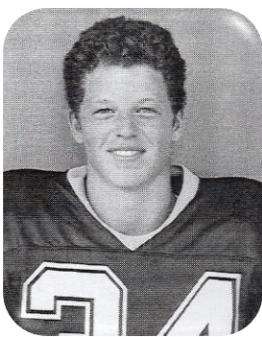
Daily Local

September 16, 2001

By **KEVIN LEITZELL**, Staff Writer

HAVERFORD—The Conestoga High School football team made just two big plays in the air against a stingy Haverford defense on Saturday night. But the passes of 50 and 32 yards were enough as Conestoga fought off a tough Fords' secondary in a 14-3 Central League victory at Haverford.

"I'll be the last to deny the fact that we live on the big plays," Conestoga coach John Vogan said. "But the kids are making the big plays."



JON WELLER
Senior 6-0, 175
Wide Receiver
Cornerback

Battling a stifling Haverford defense, the Pioneers (2-0 Central League, 3-0 overall) struggled on the ground in the first half against the Fords. The Pioneers managed just 31 yards on the ground. But the Pioneers were able to make one big play in the air. Pioneers' quarterback D'Agostini connected on a 50-yard strike to Jon Weller inside the Haverford five yard line with just under five minutes remaining in the first quarter.

The 50-yard pass set up a five yard touchdown run by Steve Shea for the 6-0 Pioneer lead. A 37-yard field goal late in the second quarter cut the Pioneers' lead to 6-3.

D'Agostini launched the second long pass of the game for the Pioneers with 19 seconds remaining in the third quarter. After the Fords' 10-yard penalty put the ball at the Haverford 32 yard line. D'Agostini faked the hand-off to Shea and connected over the middle to wide out Dewey Burke inside the five yard line, who ran the ball in for the touchdown. A two-point conversion pass from D'Agostini to Chase Bower set up the 14-3 score.

D'Agostini credited the quick strike in the second half and the yards gained on the ground to a strong offensive line. In the second half, the offensive line created holes for Steve Shea to move through. Shea rushed for 126 yards, including 84 yards in the second half. Shea busted up the middle to pick up needed first downs against the stingy Fords' defense.

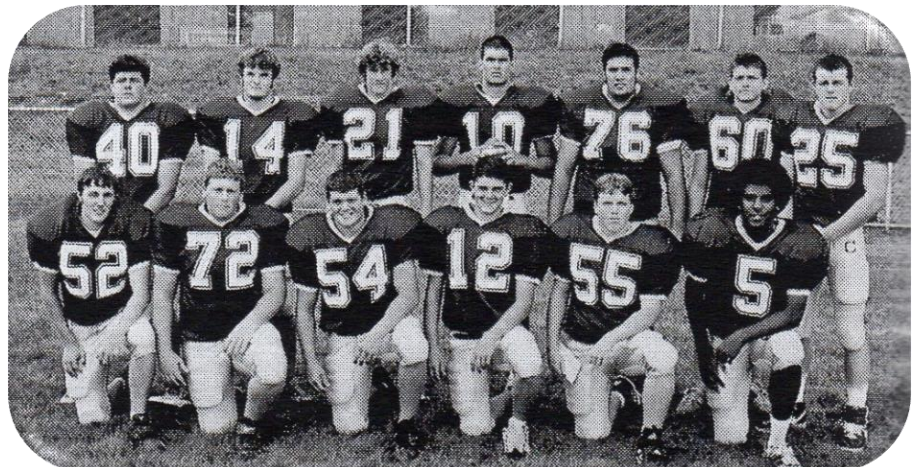
"We told the line in the locker room that this game is up to you and they really stepped it up," D'Agostini said. "They gave Steve Shea and I the chance to make plays." Conestoga needed all the offensive yardage that they could get in the second half.

Vogan said, "I told our kids that this is going to be a hard-fought game. We earned every inch of yardage that we got."

Juniors

Front Row: Doug Jamieson, Travis Dalton, Brian Kennedy, Tom Parry, Kevin Woods, Lamont Smith

Back Row: Andrew Colbert, Greg Dougherty, Ryan Randels, John D'Agostini, Matt Lyons, Charles Scott, Pat Heim



Strath Haven doubles up Conestoga

Daily Local

September 22, 2001

By **PETER DIGIOVANNI**

Staff Writer

BERWYN—Like two heavy weight fighters, the Strath Haven and Conestoga High School football teams went at each other for 48 bone crushing minutes. When the dust cleared, the two-time defending Class AAA state champion Panthers, downed the Game Pioneers, 28-14 Friday night in Central League action.

“We took it to them, we hit and were physical all night,” Conestoga head coach, John Vogan said. “Strath Haven is a state champion but, they knew they were in a game tonight.” That fact was laid on the Panthers early, as Conestoga took the first drive of the game 53 yards for an early 7-0 lead.

Steve Shea, who rumbled for 128 yards took the Pioneers down the field, and quarterback John

D’Agostini dove over from the one-yard line. The Panthers tied the score in the second period. Strath Haven came out blazing in the second half, scoring on their first two drives of the third period.

Conestoga would have none of it, however, sandwiched between two D’Agostini interceptions, the Pioneers pulled to within 21-14 in the fourth period. After the ‘Stoga defense forced a punt, D’Agostini hit Dewey Burke for a leaping grab at the Panther one-yard line.

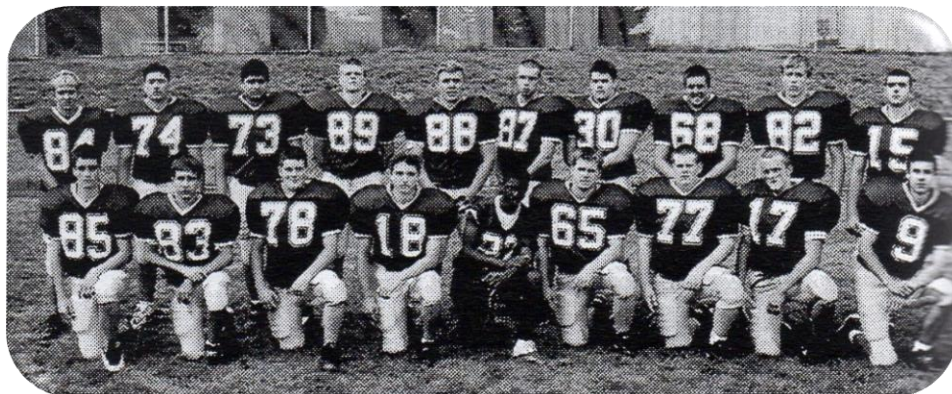
The junior quarterback dove in for the score, one play later. “D’Agostini (John), got picked twice by Dan Connor who read the pattern well,” Clancy said. “Conestoga will be in the Central League race all year. They have a multi-dimensional offense and a tough defense,” an obviously impressed Clancy said.

Vogan was very proud of his Pioneers and said they will regroup for next week’s battle with Penncrest.

Sophomores

Front Row: Sean Kincade-Crean, Jay Fannelli, Mike Ford, Brent Bonstingl, Sean Floyd-Bethune, Jeremy Crandall, Bill Quirk, Bill King, Ivan Kosolapov

Back Row: Brad Obee, Alex Shi, Kevin Johns, Shawn McMackin, Shane Seaver, Brian Chidester, Scott Watson, Travis Walklett, Ty Swarts, Mike Bond



Conestoga shows it character in key league win over Penncrest

Daily Local

September 29, 2001

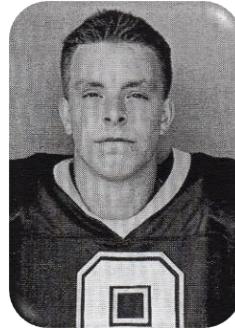
By **CHRIS OROSE**, Staff Writer

LIMA—Conestoga head coach John Vogan was right on the money when he said, “This was a character game, it really tested our team’s resolve.” Vogan’s Pioneers, coming off of their first loss of the season last week, to Strath Haven, rebounded by beating another Central League foe, Penncrest, by a score of 20-13.

Conestoga got off to a roaring start, going up 20-6 at the half. Penncrest hung around, even scoring a touchdown with 54 seconds left in the game, but the Pioneers’ defense and the rushing of Steve Shea were the keys in the Conestoga win.

Shea carried the ball 27 times for 96 yards, and scored the first touchdown of the game, a 1-yard run at 1:24 of the first quarter. On Conestoga’s last possession of the fourth quarter, he was integral in a drive that ran valuable time off the clock and put the game out of reach for Penncrest.

Shea said, “The offensive line and fullbacks did a great job tonight. We kept running it right up the middle. Slow and steady won the race.” Vogan said, “Steve just ran really hard, and the whole team was clicking offensively.” Indeed it was, especially in the first half. Pioneers’ quarterback John D’Agostini threw touchdown passes of 21 yards and 41 yards, respectively, in the second quarter alone. D’Agostini was 8-17 for 123 yards overall.



DEWEY BURKE

Captain

Senior 5-11, 190

Wide Receiver

Cornerback

D’Agostini’s first touchdown pass was a 21-yard completion to Dewey Burke, who finished the game with four catches for 67 yards. Burke said, “We knew we could throw against this team. The offensive line gave John D’Agostini time, and when he has time, he’s really dangerous.”

Conestoga managed the clock extremely well in the second half and didn’t allow the Lions to get into a rhythm. Penncrest added a touchdown with 54 seconds left in the game, but the Pioneers recovered the ensuing onside kick to close the door permanently.

Vogan said, “The kids showed tonight why I’m so proud of them. Last year’s game (when Penncrest won, 30-28, on a late touchdown) had to be on their minds. But, they showed their character tonight. We bent, but we didn’t break.”

Burke said, “There is no such thing as an easy Central League game. We knew coming in that Penncrest was underrated as a team, and they showed how tough they really are tonight.”

Conestoga moves step closer

Remain in hunt for share of Central League Crown

Pioneers handle Upper Darby

Daily Local

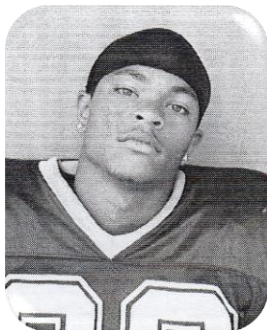
October 7, 2001

By **JOHN LOHN**

Special to the local News

BERWYN—Upper Darby has opted for the alternate route. Chasing their first Central League title since 1967, the Royals hit a major pothole Friday night, dropping a 21-7 Central League decision to a Conestoga team that rates among the biggest surprises in District 1.

As for Pioneers (5-1, 4-1), they moved a step closer to qualifying for the District 1 playoffs. Conestoga unveiled a balanced offensive attack en route to 308 yards in total offense, Steve Shea powered his way to 126 rushing yards on 25 carries while quarterback John D'Agostini repeatedly found holes in the Upper Darby secondary for 163 passing yards.



**TERRANCE
SMITH**

Senior 5-9, 165
Running Back
Cornerback

“We weren’t able to do anything on offense, but somehow, though, Upper Darby was in the game until late in the fourth quarter. Trailing 8-7 at the intermission and through three quarters, Upper Darby (4-2,4-1) fell behind 15-7 with 5:17 remaining in the fourth following a 1-yard run by Conestoga’s Pat Heim.

An unintentional squib kick on the ensuing kickoff was recovered by the Pioneers’ Terrance Smith, setting up a 34-

yard scoring jaunt by Shea on the next play to make the score 21-7. Believe it or not, the same scenario played out on the next kickoff as Smith recovered another squib kick, this one mishandled by Upper Darby.

By then, the game was over. “I have to look at the film to see exactly what happened,” Gentile said. “But for whatever reason (stuff) like that happens to us. When was the last time you saw two unintentional onside kicks recovered.”

Regardless of the tough breaks encountered by the Royals, Conestoga did everything it needed to pull off the upset. Offensively, the Pioneers clicked. The same could be said defensively. With one loss, a hard-fought defeat to Strath Haven, the Pioneers could share the league title with four more Central wins and an Upper Darby triumph over Strath Haven. More, the Pioneers are in a position to land a PIAA Class AAAA playoff berth.

“I know it’s cliché, but we’re going one game at a time,” said Conestoga coach John Vogan. “We’re not even going to mention (the playoffs). Right now, we’re just worried about playing Coatesville next. At camp, we talked about climbing the staircase. If you run to the top of the stairs, you’ll fall. We’re going step by step.

“This team has risen to the occasion. We knew if we wanted to play with Upper Darby, we were going to have to be physical. We had to hit like we’ve never hit. That’s what they do to you.” Despite the loss, Upper Darby has not given up hope for a Central crown or a second consecutive invitation to the playoffs. Still, it knows the task ahead is a difficult one.

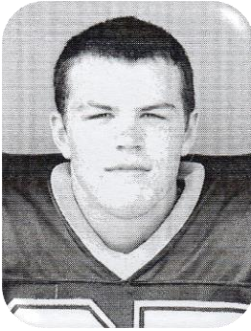
Back carries 'Stoga past Coatesville

Daily Local

October 13, 2001

By **RON D'ORAZIO**, Staff Writer

BERWYN—One who think after a major win over Upper Darby in the Central League, the Conestoga High School football team was in for a letdown. The Pioneers, who shellacked Upper Darby last week, came into Friday's nonleague game with a struggling Coatesville team riding high. The Red Raiders were 2-4 before taking the field at Conestoga.



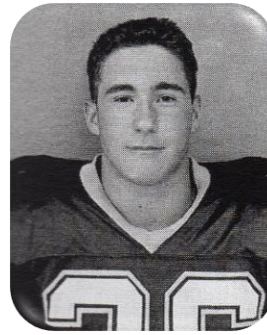
PAT HEIM

Junior 6-1, 190
Wide Receiver
Linebacker

Instead, the Pioneers strode onto the field, determined to make a statement against the Ches-Mont League team. Led by Patrick Heim's two touchdowns and Steve Shea's 177 yards, Conestoga made itself known, beating the Raiders 19-7.

The win moved the Pioneers to 6-1 overall and one step closer to the District 1 playoffs. Conestoga did not take long to start its offensive game. On its first series, Shea and Eric Hildenbrand moved the ball 27 yards in five plays prior to John D'Agostini's 25-yard strike to Heim for the touchdowns.

Coatesville engaged the Pioneers in a physical football game that, until the second half, stalled their



ERIC HILDENBRAND

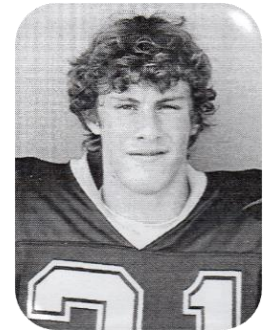
Captain
Senior 5-11, 195
Running Back
Strong Safety

the offense opened up for Conestoga. Shea gained 128 yards in the second half and helped a D'Agostini-to-Ryan Randels touchdown to seal the game.

"It was a hard-fought physical game," Conestoga coach John Vogan said. "We outplayed them in the second. Our offense took the ball and drove it." "I was worried not about a letdown, but I was worried about Coatesville's speed. Everyone on that team can run. We held them at the line."

opposition's attack. Doug Spann's score briefly tied the game, but the Pioneers got it back on their next series. Heim's 37-yard reception keyed his eventual five-yard scoring run.

"They (the Raiders) were tough," Heim said. "They talked trash. So, we wanted to prove something." After Heim's second score,



RYAN RANDELS

Junior 6-1, 165
Tight End
Linebacker

Conestoga pounds LM

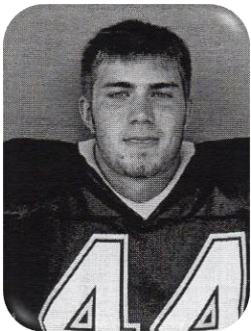
Daily Local

October 21, 2001

By **PETER DIGIOVANNI**, Staff Writer

LOWER MERION—The Conestoga High School football team does not look past any team on its schedule. The Pioneers did not take Lower Merion lightly, and the Pioneers quickly dispatched the Aces, 63-7, Saturday in Central League action.

Conestoga jumped on the Aces' early when John D'Agostini hit a streaking Dewey Burke in stride for a 45-yard touchdown. "We wanted to jump on them early and get on them," Burke said. "I just broke down the middle and their man did not get over."



CHASE BOWER

Captain

Senior 6-3, 215

Tight End

Linebacker

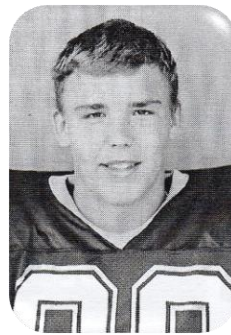
Lower Merion fumble and danced 40 yards for the fourth 'Stoga score, the game was over, right then in the first period.

Things worsened for the overmatched Aces from there. Jon Weller stepped in front of a Dan Wake pass and galloped 34-yards for a 15-0 'Stoga lead. Then, D'Agostini fired a bullet to Weller, who was going down the right sideline for a 46-yard score.

Lower Merion could not get anything going against the Pioneer defense all day. When Chase Bower picked up a

"I am so proud of this total team effort," Conestoga head coach John Vogan said. "We came down here to take care of business and we did." "Give Lower Merion credit. They never quit."

Give Vogan credit for taking out his starters at halftime with 42-0 lead. Steve Shea, who went over the 100-yard rushing mark again, scored twice in the second period to give the Pioneers the fat cushion.



SHANE SEAVER

Soph 6-1, 205

Tight End

Linebacker

Conestoga's second team went wild in the third period, with Terrance Smith, rushing for two touchdowns and 78 yards. Shane Seaver picked off a pass and went in for 40 yard score to end the carnage.

Conestoga now needs two wins in their last two games to do something no other 'Stoga team has done. That is, qualify for the Class AAAA District 1 playoffs. Coach Vogan calls it the 'P word'.

"He is adamant about taking

things one game at a time and not letting us think about it."

Vogan only is thinking about the next week's game with Radnor, not the playoffs. "The Radnor game is biggest game of the year," said Vogan. "Radnor will come at us with everything they have. They run the ball well and we will have to be at our best."

'Stoga holds off Radnor in Central

Daily Local

October 27, 2001

By **KEVIN LEITZELL**, Staff Writer

BERWYN—Although he is a man who only wants to talk about the current task at hand, Conestoga High School football coach John Vogan could not help but tell his team that Friday night's 15-6 win was just one more step up the proverbial staircase.

It was one more win away from where no Conestoga team has ever been—the playoffs. Conestoga reeled out another impressive victory on a powerful run game of 174 yards and one touchdown by running back Steve Shea and a strong Pioneers defense to take out a feisty Radnor team.

Conestoga only led 8-6 with four minutes, 17 seconds left to play in the game when the Pioneers stopped a Radnor run threat on fourth-and-three at the Conestoga 38 yard line. That play set up a Conestoga drive which was sealed by a three-yard touchdown run by Shea that clinched the win with a minute left in the game.

"Our kids hung in there," Vogan said. "We bent, we bent, but we didn't break. We gave up one lone run but for the most part, we made them drive the length of the field. Our offense couldn't find a way to push it in there early. The defense rose to the occasion in the fourth quarter when we needed it."

Conestoga got on the board early in the first quarter. The Pioneers drove 73 yards down the field on a series of long runs up the middle by Shea. Conestoga's quarterback John D'Agostini scored the

first touchdown of the game on a keeper up the middle. A two-point conversion run by Lamont Smith gave Conestoga an 8-0 lead with 1:42 left in the first.

"We were relying on the run to take us down the field it seemed like throughout the game," D'Agostini said. "The passing was just like a bonus. We did what we could and the two times down the end zone, they really packed it in. The defense did a great job. The line pushed but it just didn't fall our way."

Each time, Conestoga went for the score rather than kicking a field goal. "I didn't think about kicking," Vogan said. "In a game like this, you've got to put points on the board. We knew we had an explosive ability to score on one play."

Radnor scored their lone touchdown on an 85-yard run by fullback Scott Kirker. After Conestoga stopped Radnor on their last drive of the game, the Pioneers ran the length of the field on their last drive. Included in the drive was a 42-yard completion from D'Agostini to Pat Heim. That set up a three-yard touchdown run for Shea.

"Everybody blocked phenomenal tonight," Shea said. "There was a hole every single time that I got the ball. Sometimes, I was just lucky to break some tackles and just stay on my feet." But at 8-1 overall, the Pioneers should be assured of a spot in the playoffs with this win.

"It's bringing the team a lot closer together," D'Agostini said. "We have a chance. We're really starting to smell it now but we're not allowed to talk about it. We just have to play hard and Marple is the last step."

RB Shea romps for 167 yards in a slim victory over Marple

Daily Local

November 4, 2001

By **TERRY TOOHEY**

Special to the Local News

MARPLE—Officially, the first football playoff game in Conestoga history is not scheduled until next week. However, the Pioneers' 21-19 nail bitter over Marple Newtown Friday night at Harry R. Harvey Field gave Conestoga an idea of what the playoff atmosphere will be like. The Pioneers (9-1 overall, 7-1 Central league) took advantage of four first half turnovers and a big

defensive play by linebacker Mike Messina to hold off the Tigers and clinch the first football playoff berth in school history. "Man," Captain Steve Shea said, "that was a lot closer than we thought it was going to be. We knew they would play us tough. They always play us tough, but that was like a playoff game." In more ways than one.

The Tigers came back from a 15-0 fourth-quarter deficit to put a scare into the Pioneers. Marple halfback Andy Albero

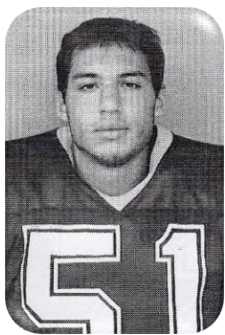
raced 52 yards for a touchdown with one minute, 43 seconds to go in the game to cut Conestoga's lead to 21-19. A two point conversion was all that stood between the Pioneers and overtime. Conestoga, though, was not about to play any longer than necessary. The senior linebacker blew in on a blitz and batted down a

two-point conversion pass attempt by Marple Newtown quarterback Gabe Maiocco to keep the Pioneers in front. "You have to give Marple all the credit in the world," Conestoga John Vogan said. "Pat Clark had those kids ready to play. They played inspired, emotional football. They came to play and gave us all we could handle."

Three of Marple Newtown's four turnovers came inside Conestoga territory. Conestoga, meanwhile, overcame an inspired Marple Newtown defense to take a 15-0 lead into the fourth quarter. Dewey Burke pulled in a 30-yard touchdown pass from quarterback John D'Agostini in the first quarter to get the Pioneers on the board. Tyler McCraw drilled a 35-yard field goal as the first half came to a close and Eric Hildenbrand raced 15 yards for the TD early in the third period to put the Pioneers in front, 15-0.

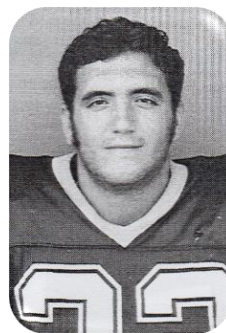
Shea, who gained 167 yards on 28 carries, appeared to put the game away when he scored on a 5-yard run with 3:42 remaining in the game.

"They called the right blitz at the right time," Clark said. That blitz secured the first football playoff berth in Conestoga history. "It's such an honor to be part of the first team in school history to make the playoffs," Shea said. "I'm so excited. I can't wait. It's going to be a great experience."



MIKE MESSINA

Senior 6-0, 195
Offensive Lineman
Defensive Lineman



STEVE SHEA

Captain
Senior 5-11, 190
Running Back
Free Safety

Pioneers make their playoff debut memorable by rolling over Quakertown

Daily Local

November 10, 2001

By **PAUL MOSER**, Staff Writer

BERWYN—The slight did not go unnoticed. All week the Conestoga football team heard the whispers around District 1 that it was not good enough, its Central League schedule was too weak, when push came to shove it simply was not big enough come the Class AAAA playoffs.

Forget the fact that the Pioneers entered their first district playoff game Friday night at Teamer Field with a 9-1 record, a mark that included wins over PIAA post season hopefuls Upper Darby and Ridley, and the one loss coming in a close 28-14 setback to two-time Class AAA state champ Strath Haven.

Well, Friday Conestoga decided to let its play do the talking against first-round opponent Quakertown and the Pioneers spoke in volumes during a 42-6 whipping of the Panthers. "A lot of people didn't give us a chance," Conestoga coach John Vogan said. "I'm not going to sit here and crow, but people think so poorly of the Central League and our schedule has people questioning us getting in. I'm not trying to pull this pressure off my head because it really kind of steamed me for my kids to hear that." that."

"I'm just glad we came up and executed well. Offensively we did what we wanted to do. Defensively after their first drive, we were able to shut down

(Quakertown back Paul) Weiber. They played with a lot of emotion tonight." The victory was the Pioneers first postseason triumph and set up a date with today's winner of Abington Heights and Cheltenham.

The second quarter was more of the same for Conestoga offensively as Heim (44 yards) and Hildenbrand (28) added rushing touchdowns that capped perfect 5-for-5 touchdown performance on the Pioneers' first five drives.

So, after an early scare the Pioneers entered intermission in the midst of a rout thanks to arguably the offense's defining moment and a defense that completely turned it around after the opening drive.

"We tried different stunts and stuff," linebacker Heim said. "Once we found something that worked, we stuck to it." After intermission Shea added his second touchdown on a one-yard plunge that gave the Pioneers a rolling clock and a date in the District 1 Semifinals.

Something the Pioneers (10-1) felt they were able to do all along, even if not many agreed prior to kickoff. "I hear we're soft, haven't played anybody and hear we have no right being in the playoffs," Vogan said. "I'm not saying we arrived and are a powerhouse in the state, but I hope this will give some credence to our league and maybe some people will think we play a good brand of football down here."

Friday night around 9:30 p.m. it was hard to argue that point.

Resilient Pioneers are three wins from PIAA title

Double OT win over Cheltenham

Conestoga advances in thriller

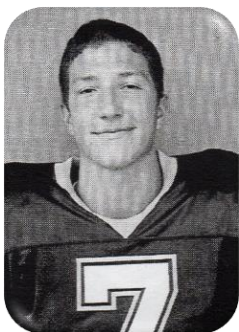
Daily Local News

November 18, 2001

By **PAUL MOSER**, Staff Writer

CHELTENHAM—Conestoga's football team was supposed to be unprepared for the postseason. Some thought the Pioneers too untested to shine in close playoffs games. Others believed them unable to make the big plays championship squad pull off just a few wins from a state title.

That's nice, but it seemed someone forgot to tell the Pioneers that in the first round of the Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association Class AAAA playoffs Saturday. Because despite falling behind Cheltenham twice, allowing a two-touchdown lead fall in the fourth quarter and missing a golden opportunity two yards from the goal in overtime, the Pioneers still gritted out a 34-31 decision in double overtime for a trip to the state quarterfinals.



**TYLER
MCCRAW**
Senior 6-2, 195
Kicker

Two field goals by kicker Tyler McCraw in overtime proved to be the difference as the Pioneers (11-1) grabbed just their second postseason victory ever and a date with Neshaminy, 37-20 winners over Downingtown Friday, on the road at a time and day to be determined.

"If you want the truth, I didn't envision this," Conestoga coach John Vogan said with a grin. "I envisioned us having success, being competitive.

However, I think the season changed for us with our win over Upper Darby. We came of age when we came back to beat them earlier in the season and from that point on our kids have been playing with confidence.

"Now they believe they can win every time they go out." That attitude was evident early in the contest and often by late afternoon as the Pioneers had to pull out everything they could against a favored Cheltenham (10-2) squad. On the opening kickoff 'Stoga wide out

Jon Weller fumbled the ball and the Pioneers recovered on their own three-yard line.

After a three-and-out drive, the Panthers took over on the Conestoga 28 and eight plays later, scored a touchdown when quarterback Christopher Hawkins found wide out Paul Sandher in the end zone on a busted field goal attempt.

But instead of falling apart after the shocking touchdown, as inexperienced playoff teams shook off some dropped passes to execute a masterful 10-play, 59-yard drive capped by a 26-yard touchdown strike from D'Agostini to Weller.

"You can't let dropped passes effect your passing game," D'Agostini said. "All my receivers can catch and they want to catch and run." After tying the contest, however, the Pioneers failed to take advantage of two Cheltenham turnovers on the Panthers' next two possessions. As a result the failed opportunities led to a late drive that the Panthers converted for a score.

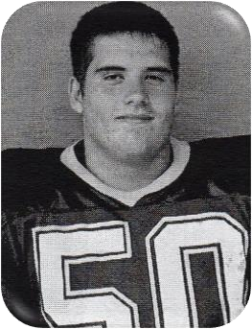
The score left the Pioneers trailing at the half, but not out. They had gone too far to fold. "In the locker room (Vogan) challenged us and asked if we were going to give up," said Conestoga running back Steve Shea, who collected a game high 169 yards on the ground. "We said no way and we went out to prove it."

The Pioneers did just that with three unanswered touchdowns in the third and fourth quarters. To start the half, Shea scored on runs of one and 12 yards. D'Agostini capped the scoring as he collected his second touchdown pass on a beautiful fade pattern toward the corner of the end zone to Pat Heim from eight yards out with nine minutes, eight seconds left in the game to give the Pioneers a 28-14 lead.

After allowing dropped balls and varying line play keep them from sustained drives in the first half, the Pioneers simply blew Cheltenham off the ball during the third quarter and early into the fourth as Shea collected yards in chunks and D'Agostini used his time in the pocket to find receivers with ease.

"The offensive line, was the difference and there was no doubt about it," Shea said. "They blocked unbelievably to open up holes for me and to give (D'Agostini) time. Their blocking was outstanding.

With its playoff lives up for grabs, Cheltenham answered the Pioneers' run with a two-touchdown flurry of its own on magnificent drives—knotting things up when Patterson walked into the end zone with just 55 seconds remaining.



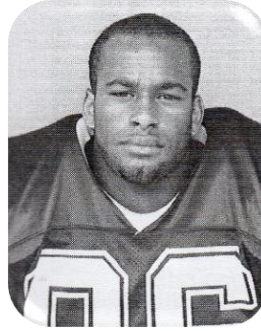
**CALVIN
CORVAIA**

Senior 6-3, 235
Offensive Lineman
Defensive Lineman

Though as it proved earlier, Conestoga was not done with the postseason as two parts of the Pioneers' attack which had appeared shaky in the fourth quarter came back in big ways in the overtime.

The first was kicker McCraw, who kicked field goals of 22 and 32 yards, respectively, to keep the Pioneers alive in the extra session. The second was the defense which had twice held

Patterson and the Panthers out of the end zone and intercepted the ball on Cheltenham's second try at the goal when Pioneers end Calvin Corvaia tipped the ball into the hands of tackle Ron Shepard.



RON SHEPHERD

Senior 6-2, 185
Tight End
Defensive Lineman

The stop erased a failed attempt to win it from the two yard line on the previous possession and gave the Pioneers the victory. "We were just able to come back and keep our composure," Corvaia said. "We knew we had to make the stop to win the game and it was just a huge stop."

And after that stop, the Pioneers stand just three victories from the school's first PIAA Championship.

Needless to say the Pioneers are not glad just getting to this point, regardless of the fact not many picked them to do so.

"Getting here has hit a couple of people, but it hasn't really hit me," D'Agostini said. "At 12:01 tonight I'll be thinking of the next game. None of us are happy to just get here, we came to win."



2001 Captains: Dewey Burke, Chase Bower, Eric Hildenbrand, Steve Shea

Neshaminy grounds Conestoga

Vogan's crew falls in District I final

Daily Local News

November 24, 2001

By **PETER DIGIOVANNI**, Staff Writer

LANGHORNE—The Conestoga High School football team has had a magical ride all the way to the District 1 Class AAAA championship game. But Friday night, the Neshaminy Redskins (13-0) pulled the carpet out from under the Pioneers (11-2), in a 28-12 victory.

The loss ended the most successful Conestoga season ever. Quarterback Jason Waiter, also had his short passing game going. After a three-and-out for the Pioneers, a 6:55 Redskin drive made the score 14-0.

'Stoga showed some life in the second period. Quarterback John D'Agostini, under pressure the entire first half, hit Chase Bower with a 22-yard pass to put 'Stoga in Redskin territory. But the quarterback threw into coverage.

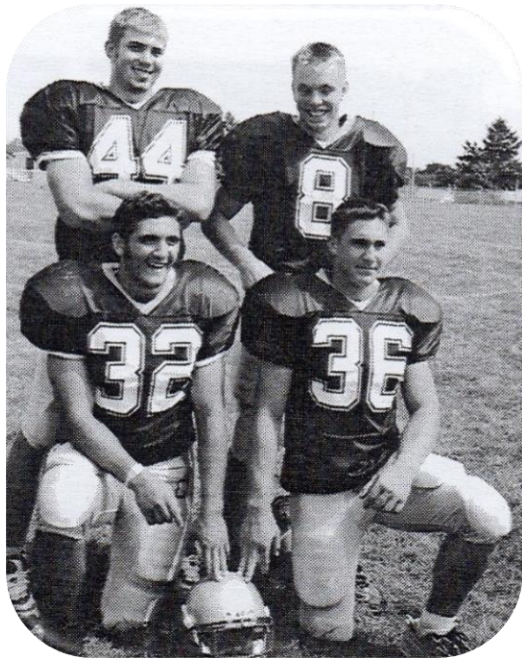
D'Agostini started to get time and time and brought the Pioneers dep into Redskin territory but a pitch to

Steve Shea was picked up by Chuck Koch, which led to another Neshaminy score. Behind the rifle armed D'Agostini, and a trio of receivers in Dewey Burke, Pat Heim and Bower, and Jon Weller all making big catches, Conestoga scored two second half touchdowns.

"We made some offensive line adjustments at halftime and we started to get going," D'Agostini said. "We needed to not get behind like we did."

Neshaminy defense was very quick to the ball and their pursuit kept Steve Shea under 100 yards for only the second time this season, and forced 'Stoga to go to the air on almost every play in the second half.

"It was a game of two halves," Vogan said. "But, give them credit, they are one very good football team. I am really proud of everything we accomplished this season.



Captains

Kneeling: Steve Shea, Eric Hildenbrand

Standing: Chase Bower, Dewey Burke



Steve Shea, Eric Hildenbrand
#26 Terrance Smith

The 2001 season's articles were exciting ones to read. The Pioneers opened with three wins. In their fourth game, they met Strath Haven Panthers, the AAA defending State Champions, and they lost 28-14. However, sheer determination, energy and enthusiasm formed a close-knit brotherhood who took the Conestoga Pioneers to new heights. They won their remaining six regular season games and moved into the District I championships. They handily defeated Quakertown 42-6 to quiet all of their doubters. Tyler McCraw's two field goals in overtime proved to be the deciding factor in the 34-31 victory over Cheltenham.

Then according to the DLN (11/24/01) "The Conestoga High School football team has had a magical ride all the way to the District 1 Class AAAA championship game. But Friday night, the Neshaminy Redskins (13-0) pulled the carpet out from under the Pioneers (11-2), in a 28-12 victory. The loss ended the most successful Conestoga season ever."

Long time assistant coach and Conestoga grad John Vogan took over as head coach this season. Captains were Chase Bower, Dewey Burke, Eric Hildenbrand and Steve Shea. Instrumental in the victories were the offensive line and the defense. Unfortunately their names were not always mentioned in the articles. Other seniors mentioned were lineman Aris Byrd, running back/ cornerback Terrance Smith, wide receiver/ cornerback Jon Weller, lineman and linebacker Mike Messina, lineman Calvin Corvaia and tight end Ron Shepherd. Underclassmen who made their mark on the season were juniors John D'Agostini – quarterback, Pat Heim – wide receiver/ linebacker, Ryan Randals – tight end/ linebacker, and sophomores Shane Seaver – tight end/ linebacker and Andrew Colbert – running back/ linebacker.