

North wins Valor Bowl

By DAVE ZEITLIN



Staff photo by Tom Kelly IV Todd Eagles of Downingtown East gets by the attempted tackle of Avon Grove's Kyle Johnson to score in the third quarter of the ninth annual Valor Bowl All-Star Game on Thursday.

EAST WHITELAND -- Mike Milano, head football coach of Downingtown West High, knows the Valor Bowl is all about big plays.

Good thing he had a bunch of big-time players at his disposal.

In the ninth edition of the Chester County Senior All-Star Game on Thursday at Great Valley High, Milano's explosive North squad rode the skills of its talented offensive players to a 24-10 win over a gritty, hard-nosed South team.

It was the North's second straight win and their sixth all-time in the annual football game that features the area's best seniors and whose proceeds benefit Chester County Special Olympics.

"We had great players making big plays," said Milano, who, as the winning coach, was presented with the Ben Crisi Valor Bowl Trophy in honor of the late Great Valley and Coatesville football coach. "We had three great tailbacks you can build a program around."

And those three backs -- Roshaan McCain of Downingtown West, Richie Walls of Downingtown East and David Frame of Owen J. Roberts -- all showcased their abilities in front of a sizeable crowd at Valley Stadium.

While the North's offense was mostly hold in check early on -- the team didn't register a first down until midway through the second quarter -- Milano's group began to show signs of life when Downingtown East receiver Todd Eagles, a senior bound for West Chester University, returned a kickoff 38 yards to set up Bobby Eppleman (Great Valley) 48-yard field goal that tied the game at 3-3.

Later in the second quarter, and right before halftime, the fleet-footed Walls (5 carries, 72 yards) broke through the line on a fourth-and-2 and scampered 52 yards into the end zone.

From that point on, North had the momentum. And they never trailed again.



"When you have Walls and McCain, you're going to get big plays," said West Chester Henderson head coach Joe Walsh, who guided the South team. "We stuffed them early, but then we lost the momentum. ... In a situation like this, it's hard to be disciplined and sustain plays. They made the big plays and we didn't."

North's touchdowns on the heels of the break were just as exciting.

After the eventual winner's first drive of the second half -- a long possession fueled by the power running of Frame (10 carries, 40 yards) -- stalled when Downingtown West kicker Rob Long's field goal was blocked, the North made quick work when it got the ball again.

On the first play of the next series, Coatesville quarterback Scott A'Hara found a wide-open Eagles downfield on a tricky flea-flicker play. The 45-yard touchdown strike gave North a 17-3 lead.

Later, after South sliced the lead in half on a 1-yard sneak by backup quarterback Joe Mulvihill, McCain went to work.

The spin-crazy Downingtown West running back first made nearly everyone miss on a wild 53-yard kickoff return. The Whippets' star and future Shippensburg University tailback put the finishing touches on the game with a 48-yard scoring burst on the first play of the fourth quarter, although he later admitted he was a little nervous about getting the ball in that spot.

"Before the play, I had butterflies," said McCain, who rushed for 54 yards on eight carries and was named the North's Offensive MVP. "I knew I had to get into the end zone to create a spark."

The South, meanwhile, couldn't get much going on the offensive end despite an auspicious start.

On the game's first series, Kennett quarterback Justin Clark completed three 18-yard passes -- two to Kennett's beast of a tight end, Cory Medina; the other to West Chester East standout Fred Maldonado -- before kicker Joe Buckley, a Malvern Prep star bound for the Naval Academy, booted a 32-yard field goal.

But a North defense fueled by Downingtown West's Shawn DeHaven (one sack, one tackle) and Phoenixville's Joe Galie (seven tackles) buckled down after that to stifle an opponent that boasted many explosive players of its own.

Plus, it didn't help that starting quarterback Justin Clark (Kennett) sat out the second half after injuring his foot. He was the third signal-caller to go down after Bob Brice (W.C. East) and Shane Whalen (Avon Grove) got hurt prior to the game.

Mulvihill, a running back from Unionville, got the nod for the second half and orchestrated a nine-play, 80-yard scoring drive midway through the third quarter.

"We were a little jinxed in the quarterback position," Walsh said. "But Joe Mulvihill stepped up and came up big for us."

Still, despite the loss, Walsh and all of his players enjoyed the game and all it had to offer -- running out with the Special Olympians during introductions, playing for a good cause, and suiting up with friends and former foes one last time before heading off to college.

"It was nice getting to know everyone," said Maldonado, who rushed for 64 yards and was named the South's Offensive MVP. "You hear the names, but it was nice interacting with everyone. They're all great guys."

NOTES: Defensive MVP Jon Susko (Conestoga) and Will Wise of West Chester Henderson (seven tackles) spearheaded the South's defense. ... Maldonado was given the Kyle Joseph Renehan Award in honor of the former Oxford football player who gave his life in Iraq. ... Coatesville fullback Josh Favinger won the Addy Kelly Memorial Award in memory of the renowned benefactor of local sports.

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