



## One for the ages, again

### Townies wake up late, but win in o.t.

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**BY CAROLYN THORNTON**  
**Journal Sports Writer**

EAST PROVIDENCE -- In preparing his team for yesterday's Thanksgiving Day meeting with La Salle, East Providence coach Sandy Gorham did his best to downplay the matchup.

Yes, several thousand fans would pack into Pierce Memorial Stadium to watch the 74th edition of Rhode Island's oldest intrastate rivalry.

Yes, the regular-season Division I title would be on the line.

But with the Super Bowl right around the corner, the last thing Gorham wanted was for his players to leave everything out on the field yesterday and have nothing left come next week.

With his team trailing 7-0 after two quarters, though, Gorham started to worry. The Townies seemed to lack a certain energy. Perhaps he had done too good a job in convincing his players not to place too much significance on this game. At halftime, he rallied his troops, telling them: "I said we're trying to downplay it. I didn't say go to sleep. Let's get out there and play with some fire."

Powered by senior quarterback Sean

Arlan, the Townies found the spark they needed in the second half and beat La Salle, 28-27, in the closest game in the history of the storied series, on Sam Lovett's pressure-packed extra-point kick in overtime before an crowd estimated at 8,700.

Arlan rushed for 69 yards, including two touchdowns, and collected 116 yards on nine pass completions, one of them for a TD, as East Providence handed La Salle its first regular-season loss since Tim Coen became the Rams' coach four years ago.

Yesterday's battle of the unbeaten marked the first meeting between these teams since they went head-to-head in last year's Super Bowl, which the Townies won in a thrilling 35-21 come-from-behind victory.

Beating La Salle in the Super Bowl last year "gave us a lot of confidence because we knew we could beat them," said Arlan, who scored two touchdowns in that game. "We knew we could play with them, and we just wanted to prove that we could win without [2002 Super Bowl MVP] Jamie (Silva) because Jamie was such a great player last year."

Rams All-State quarterback Liam Coen didn't make it easy for East Providence, completing 17 of 31 attempts for 272 yards, including three touchdown passes. All three were to fellow senior Ryan Boehm, the first a 41-yarder at 8:15 of the second quarter.

Jerome Blair (21 carries for 65 yards) tied the score by breaking through the middle for a 25-yard jaunt that capped the Townies' opening drive of the third quarter. But the Rams were back on top seven plays later when Boehm reeled in his 40-yarder from Coen.

But Arlan tied things up again in the opening minutes of the fourth quarter when he scampered 40 yards down the left sideline and ran it in from the 7 on the next play.

Then, with East Providence on fourth-and-9 at the La Salle 26, Arlan hit Khalil Kallimullah with a 26-yard touchdown pass at 3:26 to give the Townies their first lead.

"Actually the coaches wanted to run a running play, but I switched off at the line," said Arlan. "(Kallimullah) said he could beat (the defense), so I just threw it up and he went up and got it. He did a great job."

"Our offense is difficult to run; the quarterback doesn't just turn and hand the ball off," Gorham said. "There's a lot of pressure on the quarterback, so he has those options. He checked off and it was a great play. He has a lot of confidence. I think this is the third time this year he's checked off for a touchdown pass. He also had one against Westerly and then North Kingstown. Sean's terrific, outstanding."

East Providence's lead was shortlived, though. With 1:07 remaining in regulation, Drew O'Connell -- the leading rusher yesterday with 84 yards on 18 carries -- closed out an 80-yard scoring drive for the Rams with a 6-yard run, sending the game into overtime.

In accordance with the overtime format, each team received the ball on the 10-yard line, with the Rams going first.

A pass interference call against East Providence put La Salle at the 5, but the Rams were flagged for being offsidcs on the next play bringing them back to the 10.

After three failed attempts, two of them caused by deflections by Colin Winter and Shawn Fallon, Coen finally connected with Boehm in the endzone to make it 27-21. But Dan Coffland missed the extra point attempt, opening the door for the Townies.

Helped by a facemask penalty called against the Rams, East Providence scored on its possession, with Arlan rushing 4 yards for the score. Lovett finished with a 4-for-4 day, kicking the ball through the uprights for the deciding point.

"A lot of penalties hurt us," said Coen. "Just stupid stuff, lining up offsides, jumping offsides. We just have to be a little tougher mentally and maybe we don't put ourselves in some of the positions we did. But we came through with big huge plays. You don't make bigger plays than we made. It's just they made the big one at the end."

As the top seed heading into the playoffs, East Providence will host Portsmouth Tuesday night at 6 at Pierce. La Salle, which earns the second seed, will host St. Raphael, also at 6.

La Salle 0 0 7 14 6 -- 27

E. Providence 0 7 7 7 7 -- 28

La Salle scoring: Touchdowns -- Coen 3 (41 pass to Boehm, 40 pass to Boehm, 10 pass to Boehm), O'Connell (6 run); Conversions -- Coffland (3 kicks).

East Providence scoring: Touchdowns -- Blair (25 run), Arlan 3 (7 run, 26 pass to Kallimullah, 4 run); Conversions -- Lovett (4 kicks).

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