



## **Townies' defense puts Patriots in deep freeze**

### **East Providence advances to the Division I Super Bowl to face rival La Salle Academy.**

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**By JOHN GILLOOLY**  
**Journal Sports Writer**

**EAST PROVIDENCE** -- It was a tough night to pass and a tough night to run, but obviously the East Providence football team felt it was a great night to play defense.

The Townies, the defending state champion and this year's undefeated regular-season champion, didn't give up a rushing or a passing first down as they earned their third consecutive Division I Super Bowl berth with a 21-7 victory over Portsmouth in a semifinal game at frozen and wind-swept Pierce Field last night.

The Townies' victory, coupled with La Salle's 34-7 triumph over St. Raphael last night, means East Providence and La Salle will meet for the third straight year in the Division I Super Bowl.

The Super Bowl, to be played at 1 p.m. Sunday at Pierce, pits the Townies and Rams against each other for the second time in 10 days with a title on the line. East Providence posted a 28-27 overtime victory over the Rams in a showdown for the regular-season title on Thanksgiving.

The frozen turf and strong wind made it difficult for either offensive unit to operate smoothly, but the East Providence defense created even more problems for the Patriots than the weather did.

The Townies held the Portsmouth offense to 32 net yards in the first half and 15 in the second half. The Patriots did manage three first downs in the game, but all came courtesy of East Providence offside penalties when Portsmouth was facing fourth-and-one situations.

Portsmouth's only touchdown came midway through the second half when freshman Max Willette picked off a pitch-out from East Providence quarterback Sean Arlan and returned it 70 yards for a TD.

By that time, however, East Providence already had built a 19-0 lead on first-half touchdowns by Steve Mega and Jerome Blair. Blair scored a TD early in the second half.

East Providence opened the scoring with 2:23 left in the first quarter when Arlan hit Mega with a 28-yard touchdown pass on a 4th-and-13 play.

On Portsmouth's next three possessions, the East Providence defense limited the Patriots to a net total of 16 yards. That set the stage for the Townies' second touchdown with just under three minutes to play in the first half.

Blair broke loose on 37-yard touchdown run on the second play after the Townies' defense had stopped the Patriots on three plays, forcing them to punt from deep in their own territory.

"I've been telling them all year defense is the key to a championship," said East Providence assistant coach Jay Monteiro, who was sharing the head coaching responsibilities with fellow assistant John Gendron in the absence of head coach Sandy Gorham. Gorham was in Boston, where his wife and son had undergone donor/recipient kidney transplant surgery yesterday.

"Sandy called just before we left for the game to wish us luck," said Monteiro. "He said everything went well, his wife his fine and his son is doing really well. We were working hard for Coach Gorham tonight."

Blair collected the Townies' third touchdown six minutes into the second half when he completed a 69-yard drive with a one-yard run. The touchdown run was the eighth time on the drive that Blair had carried the ball. Arlan also aided the drive with a 28-yard run.

The East Providence defense even added two points to the Townies' final total as they caught Portsmouth quarterback Bobby Sewall in the end zone for a safety with just under two minutes to play.

Portsmouth 0 0 0 7 -- 7

East Providence 6 6 7 2 -- 21

Portsmouth scoring: Willette (70 interception return). Conversion - Toppa (kick).

East Providence scoring: Mega (28 pass from Arlan); Blair 2 (37 run, 1 run); Conversion -- Lovett (kick); Safety -- tackled quarterback in end zone.

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