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Sports

Under Gendron's watch, Townies cruise over Hendricken

By: JON BAKER , Times sports writer

10/24/2003

EAST PROVIDENCE - East Providence High offensive coordinator John Gendron refused to take any credit -- despite the fact he did all of the play-calling in the Townies' 38-3 Championship Division demolition of Bishop Hendricken High at Pierce Stadium on Friday night.

It was of veteran mentor Sandy Gorham's volition -- for the first time -- to "hand the ball completely" to Gendron, a former standout at both Seekonk High and the University of Rhode Island, and he had stellar reason for the move.

For those who don't know, Gorham's 14-year-old son, Ryan, will undergo a kidney transplant in Boston on Dec. 2, the same date as EP's first-round state tourney tilt. Knowing he would be unable to attend that game, he gave Gendron the chore, and the latter -- again -- stated he had little to do with the triumph.

"With my personal situation the way it is, I had no idea when the surgery date would be, so I decided to leave the play-calling to John," Gorham said after his team improved to 7-0 overall (5-0 in league). "I didn't want to have to have him call the plays without doing it first-hand. He's got plenty of experience; I mean, look at his background. But it wouldn't have been fair to him not to take the reins."

Said Gendron, a gentle, Christian man and the epitome of humble: "This is his system, and all of the plays in the system is like painting by the numbers. He has devised the offense where it's extremely easy to call the plays and make sure the guys execute them. It's like connecting the dots. If they do this defensively, then we're going to do that offensively. It's Sandy's wishbone, and that's the way it is." For the first time this season, stellar sophomore tailback Jerome Blair was held under the 100-yard mark, accumulating 98 yards on 21 handles, yet a bevy of others contributed to the onslaught. Senior Steve Zarembka manufactured 47 yards and a score on six carries, while classmate and signal caller Sean Arlan, while racking up 40 yards and a TD on 10 keepers, completed seven-of-14 passes for 89 yards and another paydirt.

As has been the case this campaign, Arlan's targets were senior Khalil Kallimullah (four catches, 60 yards) and junior Matt Phillips (three for 29 more).

Yet, if there was a key to the victory, it was the Townie defense, which yielded only 63 ground yards on 33 attempts and also forced two fumbles (one lost) and a trio of interceptions. And, when Hawks' quarterback Shane Kelly opted to go airborne, he completed only three-of-15 passes for 42 yards.

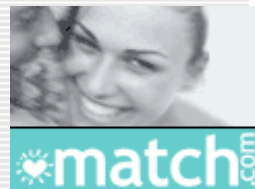
All told, Hendricken (2-4 league) mustered only five first downs.

The two rivals traded field goals early on in the first quarter, due to the Hawks' defensive patrol between the tackles (an obvious attempt to contain Blair), but that's when the Townies sprung to life. At the start of the second period, they drove 88 yards on 10 plays, culminated on Arlan's one-yard sneak. Sophomore Sam Lovett, who had already hit a 30-yard field goal, booted his first of five extra points for a 10-3 cushion with 7:18 left.

Over the next 2:23, Gorham's contingent added two more scores. First, it took advantage of a nine-yard punt and needed only two snaps before Blair flew 23 yards around left end for the TD with 5:19 remaining before the break.

And, a mere 24 ticks later -- after a Lamont Valles interception and 17-yard return -- Zarembka hustled 22 yards on a similar sweep to Blair's to make it 24-3.

Less than a minute later, it seemed as if EP would break the 30-point barrier



following Arlan's pick (he fumbled on the play, but teammate Rob McCutchen cradled the miscue). It drove to the Hawks' 24 before a "quickie" pass to Phillips on a fourth-and-3 ended the threat.

The Townies went "three-and-out" on its opening possession of the third, but a fumble by Gordie Barr on the ensuing punt was recovered by Valles and returned the the Hendricken 18. Four plays later, on a fourth-and-12, Arlan rifled a 20-yard pass to Kallimullah in the end zone. Despite being draped by two defenders, he made the catch, stunning even coaches on the sideline, and EP held a 31-3 advantage.

Blair closed the scoring, ending an eight-play, 80-yard possession with a three-yard plunge off right tackle. On that series alone, Blair, who had rushed for 40 yards on 10 handles in the initial 24 minutes, garnered 31 yards. Then again, it was helped by back-to-back late-hit and bench unsportsmanslike-conduct penalties.

"We had a tough time in the beginning, and that's because Hendricken had so many guys inside the tackle box," Gorham said. "We saw that, so we went to the quick pitch and to what we call a 'zig-zag.' That means we went to the option and tossed it outside. That 'zig-zag' takes advantage of teams who overpursue, and that opens up the outside. It's an option version of the misdirection, and it worked well. We figured that was something they hadn't seen.

"The offense is designed to the fullback and quarterback, but that doesn't mean the tailbacks or the receivers can't play a role," he added. "I mean, sometimes you don't have to throw a pass to open up the offense, and that's where Jerome and Zarembka came in."

Gendron agreed.

"They were a very tough, physical team that was committed to stopping the run inside, so we ran it out, and that also gave us the opportunity to throw the ball," he said. "Sandy has a plan for that type of defense. They threw an eight-man front, or a seven-man front at us, and they did a lot of blitzing as well. But the mark of a good plan, and a good team, is that you have answers for those kinds of dilemmas."

E. PROVIDENCE, 38-3

Hendricken 3 0 0 0 -- 3

E. Providence 3 21 14 0 -- 38

EP -- Sam Lovett 30 FG

HEND -- Gordie Barr 23 FG

EP -- Sean Arlan 1 run (Lovett kick)

EP -- Jerome Blair 23 run (Lovett kick)

EP -- Steve Zarembka 22 run (Lovett kick)

EP -- Khalil Kallimullah 20 pass from Arlan (Lovett kick)

EP -- Blair 3 run (Lovett kick)

	HEND	EP
First downs	5	11
Rushes-yds	33-63	45-228
Passing	3-15-3-42	7-14-0-89
Sacks by	0-0	0-0
Net passing	42	89
Punts-avg.	5-23.4	3-34.7
Fumbles-lost	2-1	3-2
Pen.-yards	3-35	5-40

Individual leaders

Rushing: Hendricken -- Jon Roberts 14-38, Matt Moran 8-11, Bo Marchand 6-7, Shane Kelly 2-6, Matt Mahoney 2-2, Joe Cardillo 1-(-1). East Providence -- Jerome Blair 21-98, Steve Zarembka 6-47, Sean Arlan 10-40, Matt Dessert 1-25, Jorge DaGraca 2-18, Ed Reed 3-5, Matt Price 1-(-1).

Passing (comp-att-int-yards): Hendricken -- Shane Kelly 2-12-3-35, Matt Mahoney 1-3-0-7. East Providence -- Sean Arlan 7-14-0-89.


Receiving: Hendricken -- Mike Faltus 2-25, Jon Roberts 1-17. East Providence --

Khalil Kallimullah 4-60, Matt Phillips 3-29.

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