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Sports**Townies 'D' it up in 28-0 blanking of Portsmouth**

By: DAVID BORGES , Times sports writer

10/18/2003

PORTSMOUTH - East Providence High has had numerous offensive stars over the past several years, from Buddy Rodgers to Jamie Silva to guys like Sean Arlan and Jerome Blair on this year's version of the Townies.

But it's EP's defense that may be the real star of the show this season, and that was never better on display than on Saturday in a battle with gritty Portsmouth High at John F. Kennedy Field.

The Townies', big, quick, swarming 'D' held the Patriots to just 62 yards of total offense, all of it on the ground (on 31 carries, an average of just 2 yards per touch). Portsmouth quarterback Bobby Sewall didn't complete a single pass all day and was sacked three times. The Patriots managed just three first downs.

The Pats' biggest offensive play of the game came on a 17-yard run by Jimmy Toppa midway through the first quarter, but when Toppa was forced to leave the game late in the opening half with a concussion, Portsmouth's hopes were all but sealed. The Patriots managed just one more first down the rest of the way --- and that came on a roughing the passer penalty called on EP.

"We've got good size," Townie coach Sandy Gorham said of his defense. "The kids told me that Portsmouth played us tougher than any team, physically. They hit hard and they're tough as nails. But we've got a good defensive, veteran team with a lot of experience. Hopefully this is our year, because the cupboard will get a little dryer (next season)."

All-State seniors Colin Winter and Brian Nallen and sophomore David Valley came up with sacks for EP and Kevin Walsh may have come up with the best defensive play, batting away a pitchback by Sewall a la John Linehan, then recovering the fumble about 19 yards upfield. Gorham also praised the play of senior nose tackle Tony Couitt.

"He did a good job. He's a huge addition for us."

Still, despite all of this defensive dominance, it was a very close game late in the first half. The Townies boasted a 7-0 lead thanks to Blair's 20-yard scoring run on their first possession, but had to punt the ball away twice and fumbled the ball away once on their next three sequences.

But after 11 plays and 53 yards on their final drive of the half, the Townies had the ball on fourth-and-two at the Patriot 7-yard line with barely over minute before the break. A Portsmouth stop and it's a one-touchdown game heading into the latter half; an EP score and the Townies have a little breathing room.

On what turned out to be a huge play, Arlan ran left on a quarterback keeper and sprinted into the end zone for the key TD.

"That was real big," Gorham confessed. "We were only up, 7-0, and if Portsmouth holds us out at that point, that's only a seven-point lead against a young, talented team that believes they can compete. We had to punch that one in. It was really huge."

Portsmouth coach Bob "Bubba" Monteiro was pleased with his undermanned team's effort over the first 24 minutes.

"Defensively, we were not too bad," he said. "We gave them good field position on one score, but 14 points in the first half isn't too bad. They've been scoring about 34 (in the first half) this season."



However, the Townies quickly broke the game open in the latter half. On the very first play from scrimmage, Steve Zarembka took a pitch from Arlan and sprinted 70 yards to paydirt on a sweep.

"We were saving that play for the second half," said Gorham.

The Townies put the finishing touches on their victory on their first sequence of the final quarter, when Blair capped a six-play, 58-yard drive (helped by a pair of Portsmouth penalties) with a 21-yard scoring scamper.

Blair finished with 123 yards rushing on 22 carries and those two TDs. He's far and away the Times area's top rusher (903) and touchdown man (14) this season.

Arlan finished with a rather pedestrian 67 yards rushing on eight handles and a TD.

"There's no finer football player in the state, I don't care what La Salle says," said Gorham, referring to Arlan and getting a little dig in on the Rams and their heavily recruited signal-caller, Liam Coen.

Arlan also had an 85-yard punt return touchdown called back due to a penalty. In fact, penalties (seven) and fumbles (three) made this Townie victory a bit sloppy.

"We put the ball on the ground three times," said Gorham. "Sean has still got to learn not to pitch the ball when people are draped all over you. He did that once.

We almost played out of sync, and I think part of that is it's a Saturday game instead of a Friday game. We were a little sluggish at the beginning."

The Townies are back to prime time this Friday, when they host Hendricken High in a key Division 1 showdown at 7 p.m. at Pierce Field.

EAST PROV., 28-0

E. Providence	7	7	77	--	28
Portsmouth	0	0	0	--	0

EP -- Jerome Blair 20 run (Sam Lovett kick)

EP -- Sean Arlan 7 run (Sam Lovett kick)

EP -- Steve Zarembka 70 run (Sam Lovett kick)

EP -- Jerome Blair 21 run (Sam Lovett kick)

	PORT	EP
First downs	3	11
Rushes-yds	31-62	37-271
Passing	0-5-0	4-8-0
Sacks by	1-5	3-18
Net passing	- 18	21
Punts-avg.	7-34	3-42
Fumbles-lost	2-1	3-3
Pen.-yards	5-55	7-60

Individual leaders

Rushing -- East Providence: Jerome Blair 22-123, Steve Zarembka 2-72, Sean Arlan 8-67, Jay Sanon 3-14, Kyle Thacker 1-(-1), Lamont Valles 1-(-4). Portsmouth: Jimmy Toppa 8-36, Bobby Sewall 7-18, Jesse Toppa 7-14, Max Willette 3-1, Adam Martens 6-(-7).

Passing (complete-att-int-yards): East Providence: Sean Arlan 4-8-0-26.


Portsmouth: Bobby Sewall 0-5-0-0.

Receiving -- East Providence: Matt Phillips 2-16, Steve Zarembka 1-6, Khalil Kallimullah 1-4.

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