

**News**

- Top Stories
- [Sports](#)
- Business
- Entertainment
- Police/Courts
- Editorial
- Columnists
- Weather
- AP - The Wire
- TV Listings
- Movie Listings
- Local Marketplace
- On-line extra
- National News
- Classifieds**
- Business Directory**
- Our Newspaper**
- Subscription Info**
- Personals**
- Newsstand**
- Message Board**
- Sports Wire!**
- Fun and Games**
- Consumer Guide**
- Personal Finance**
- Lifestyles**
- USA Weekend**

SECTION LINKS

- Major League
- National Basketball Association
- NFL

Sports**Townies' running game buries Saints, 48-8**

Jon Baker

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EAST PROVIDENCE -- Just a brief glance at the statistics, not to mention the final score, tells you East Providence High manhandled Championship Division foe St. Raphael Academy on Friday night.

And, to be fair, when it comes to the overall numbers, it did.

Senior tailback Jerome Blair finished with a whopping 266 yards and four touchdowns on 20 handles, while classmate and quarterback Sean Arlan added 171 yards and a pair of paydirts on only nine keepers in the Townies' 48-8 thrashing at Pierce Memorial Stadium on Friday night.

There's more: All told, head coach Sandy Gorham's crew racked up 561 ground yards on 50 touches, and no scoring jaunt was shorter than eight yards. Heck, even back-up signal caller Kyle Thacker manufactured a TD on a 16-yard keeper to seal the deal.

Still, for the better part of a quarter and a half, Gorham admittedly was feeling mighty queasy about facing a Saints' squad that was much better prepared than it was a week ago in a 48-8 loss to La Salle.

"They did, without doubt, scare us," Gorham said after his club improved to 5-0 overall and 3-0 in league play. "We have kind of a unique offense, and it gives the opponent the chance to do different things, things that keep you off-balance. They came up with a defense we haven't seen before -- a 5-4 front with their safeties up, and that gave us problems.

"We had to make some adjustments," he added. "We changed formations, went to an unbalanced set and that opened things up for us a lot more later in the second quarter and throughout the game. Sean (Arlan) started getting more comfortable with the reads."

SRA fell to 1-4 overall and 1-3 within the division, but head coach Mike Sassi, while hardly thrilled with the verdict, was plenty satisfied with the overall effort.

"It's a totally different feeling from last week," he stated. "The kids just didn't quit. We were just outmanned as time went on. That's a great team Sandy has over there, and that's as good a defense I've seen in my 14 years here.

"The kids came out fighting, and there were times I thought we had them guessing, but I will say this: They won this game in the weight room. They had more strength and speed, and they just wore us down in the second half."

After stopping EP on its initial drive in the opening period, Saints quarterback Charlie Walkup completed a pass over the middle to Sam Dorbor, and the 76-yard aerial left SRA on the EP 9. Why Sassi didn't attempt a 26-yard field goal on a fourth-and-goal was questioned, but didn't matter much as the Saints had the Townies pinned deep.



But Gorham's contingent engineered a nine-play, 91-yard drive, ending on Blair's eight-yard jaunt off-left tackle with 2:44 left in the quarter, and -- despite a bevy of turnovers -- that opened the floodgates.

After exchanging fumbles (EP had four lost, SRA three), Jay Sanon's recovery meant bushels. Three plays after, Blair hustled 43 yards off-right guard and Sam Lovett booted his second of six PATs to make it 14-0 with 8:36 left before the break.

Blair added a 64-yard TD hustle with 5:09 remaining, and Arlan took a keeper off-right tackle and zig-zagged 72 yards for another to give EP a 28-0 halftime cushion.


At the start of the third, Blair closed a 74-yard, six-play possession with a 23-yard sweep around right end, and -- on its next opportunity -- Arlan scored on a 22-yard bootleg as the clock ticked down to 3:51 in the third.

The Saints' lone score came on John Mastrati's 28-yard scamper around right end with 4:34 left in the contest.

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