

Game 1, September 11, 1992: La Salle 14 – Plymouth-Whitemarsh 13

by Beth Onufrak, Inquirer

Explorers Come Back To Edge Past The Colonials

Dazed from a hit in the first half, La Salle senior quarterback Sean McDermott returned to the lineup in the third quarter Friday, only to have his jersey ripped off his back.

By the fourth quarter, McDermott had finally been rewarded for his trials, as he led the Explorers to a 14-13 comeback victory over Plymouth-Whitemarsh at the Colonials' field.

"I just landed on my head and got knocked out," McDermott said of his injury in the first half. "I felt good at halftime. The trainer said it was up to me. I know it's the beginning of the season, but I felt like I could come back. I wanted to prove that I was a leader, so I came back, and it turned out good."

The Colonials were leading 13-0 - they scored all their points in the first half - when the Explorers found their offense with a little help from their special teams.

McDermott led the offense onto the field for the first possession of the fourth quarter after the special teams had forced one of a series of bad punts.

That was on the Colonials' 32. Seven plays later, on fourth and goal, McDermott threw over the top to score the Explorers' first touchdown. Joel Klock added the extra point to close the score to 13-7, with 8 minutes, 53 seconds to play.

Pressure from a rejuvenated Explorers' defense held the Colonials on their next possession, forcing another punt. McDermott fielded the punt at his own 44-yard line and raced 53 yards to set up another touchdown.

McDermott took the ball in for a 2-yard run with 3:50 remaining. Another Klock kick put the Explorers ahead, 14-13.

"I think the story of the game was our kicking game. Our punting game was terrible," said Colonials coach Joe Iacovitti.

The Colonials' offense, which had been dominant in the first half and dormant through much of the second, began a quick drive down the field. Under the direction of senior quarterback Jason Borusiewicz, the Colonials moved from their own 24-yard line 51 yards to the Explorers' 25 in just 2 minutes.

Borusiewicz completed four passes on the drive before being intercepted by Chad Ormond with 1:23 to play.

The Colonials had opened the scoring on an 80-yard, 11-play drive on their first possession. Junior running back Matt Matheson, who finished the game with 74 yards rushing, capped the drive with a 4-yard run. Steve Clement added the extra point to give the Colonials a 7-0 lead.

The Colonials scored again with 5:50 to play in the first half on a Borusiewicz 41-yard pass to senior split end Sonny Jones. Sandwiched by defenders Bill Sellers and Brian Carmody, Jones out-leaped the pair and ran to the end zone. Clement's kick was wide, leaving the score 13-0.

"They are the mirror image of our team," Explorers coach Joe Colistra said of the Colonials' man-in-motion offense. "They gave us some of our own medicine. We do it in practice all the time with our offense and our defense can't handle it. They can't adjust as quickly as we want them to do."

Borusiewicz completed 9 of 13 pass attempts in the first half for 136 yards and finished the game at 15-of-20 for 187 yards.

"(The Colonials') offense wasn't nearly as effective in the second half," Iacovitti said. "I think field position played a part."

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Senior running back Bill Tatar rushed for 108 yards for the Explorers, with 58 yards coming on a run as his team tried to run out the clock to end the game.

The Explorers play at Holy Cross in New Jersey on Saturday in a nonleague game. The Colonials host Hatboro-Horsham on Friday.

Game 2, September 19, 1992: Holy Cross NJ 34 – La Salle 0

by Marc Narducci, Inquirer

A Hard Lesson To Toughen Lancers For League Play

La Salle High football coach Joe Colistra is an eternal optimist. Even after the Explorers had been trounced by host Holy Cross, 34-0, on Saturday, Colistra had no regrets about playing the defending South Jersey Parochial A champions. His reasoning: Competing against a team such as the Lancers will harden the Explorers for the rigors of Catholic League North play, which begins this week against North Catholic.

"I'm happy we played them," said Colistra, whose team dropped to 1-1. "Games like this get you ready for league play. And the good thing is that it wasn't a league game. In a game like this, you find out a lot about your team."

And what did he discover about the Explorers?

"That we lost this game in the weight room," said Colistra. "Holy Cross was so much stronger than we were. They weren't much faster, but I was surprised how strong they were."

And at least Colistra can take consolation in the fact that any team he faces in the future probably won't measure up to the Lancers (1-0), who were The Inquirer's No. 1 team in South Jersey last year and began this season No. 3.

"I hope we don't face a team as good as Holy Cross," he said, forcing a smile.

Holy Cross was playing its first game under new coach Tom Maderia, who replaced former Phillies and local South Jersey hero Greg Luzinski, who did not leave the cupboard bare for his successor.

The Lancers took the opening kickoff and marched 67 yards in 7 plays. Matt Taylor, a bullish 5-foot, 11-inch, 185-pound senior, finished the drive with a 4-yard run. It was the first of four touchdowns for Taylor, who also rushed for more yards (152 in 16 carries) than La Salle had total yards from scrimmage all day (110).

On the ensuing series, the Explorers drove deep into Lancers territory, getting a first down at the Holy Cross 19 before destructing. On the next three plays, La Salle suffered two quarterback sacks and a fumble that Holy Cross recovered at its 49-yard line.

From that point, the Explorers would only cross midfield once, and that came on the final drive of the contest.

Even if La Salle had scored on that crucial first possession, Colistra didn't figure that the game's outcome would have changed.

"I'd like to say 'Yes, if we scored it might have given us the momentum we needed,'" he said, "but I don't think so."

Holy Cross scored on its first four possessions, putting the game away with a 27-0 halftime lead.

The Lancers' offensive line, which averaged 245 pounds, continually dominated the line of scrimmage, helping the Lancers outgain La Salle, 326 yards to 110.

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"For some reason, we just came out flat," said La Salle's 6-5, 245-pound senior defensive lineman, Mike Flanagan, who performed well in defeat. "We practiced hard all week, but for some reason, we weren't playing together. We were getting good hits on 33 (Taylor), but we weren't bringing him down."

Against Holy Cross, Colistra went to an almost exclusive two-platoon system, with the exception of quarterback Sean McDermott, who also played in the secondary. The week before in La Salle's 14-13 win over Plymouth-Whitemarsh, more of the Explorers saw action both ways. It wouldn't be surprising if some of La Salle's top players, especially the linemen, once again see double duty this week against North Catholic.

"We tried a lot of kids, and the good thing is that we didn't get anybody injured," said Colistra. "That is what these (nonleague) games are for. Our number-one goal is to get ready for the Catholic League season. We have a good bunch of kids and they will bounce back."

Game 3, September 26, 1992: La Salle 14 – North Catholic 0

by Nick Fierro, Inquirer

Explorers' Defense Shoots Down Falcons

A nasty wake-up call inspired the La Salle defense against North Catholic at Frankford on Saturday morning and may also have called up a ghost of football past.

The slumbering defense slowly returned to form after suffering a 34-0 shellacking at the hands of Holy Cross (N.J.) the previous week. It took the Explorers a while to rebound, as they faced a powerful Falcons ground attack in the first half of Saturday's game.

With poised senior quarterback Sean McDermott directing the offense, wearing a jersey temporarily pulled out of retirement, La Salle was able to put together two touchdown drives in the second half and escape with a 14-0 Catholic League North victory in its league opener.

McDermott was listed to wear No. 22 to start the season, but the number was torn off during La Salle's season-opening 14-13 victory over Plymouth-Whitemarsh. The jersey still had not been mended. So McDermott has been wearing No. 10 - the number previously worn by former league MVP Jack Stanczak - ever since.

Stanczak led the football team to a Northern Division championship in 1988, graduated in 1989, turned down an offer by the Houston Astros to play professional baseball and is now playing baseball at Villanova.

For a few brief, glorious moments on Saturday, it looked as if Stanczak had returned.

There he was in the second quarter, running the option on a crucial third-down play from the La Salle 2-yard line, pitching the ball back to Chris Convey while being hit. Convey took it around left end for a 38-yard gain to keep the Explorers from being pinned deep.

There he was again in the third quarter, lofting a 24-yard touchdown pass to Andrew Gilligan on fourth down - after having a 12-yard touchdown pass on the previous play wiped out by a holding penalty. Only it was McDermott.

Though the final statistics - four completions in six attempts for 64 yards - may not be comparable to what Stanczak used to compile, the results were the same.

"I wasn't sure about taking the number," said McDermott.

Actually, the tradition at La Salle is more focused on a stingy defense, something the Explorers (2-1, 1-0) were still searching for when the Falcons (0-3, 0-1) controlled the ball for most of the first half.

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Using almost exclusively draw plays, the Falcons twice drove deep into La Salle territory in the first half. Their first series ended with an interception by Bill Sellers at the La Salle 12. Then they drove 62 yards to the La Salle 1 on their next possession, only to be stopped by a brilliant goal-line stand.

Up to that point, La Salle had had possession for just four plays, thanks to some crafty trap blocking by the Falcons' offensive line.

"It was just a matter of keeping (the defensive linemen) on the line of scrimmage," said La Salle coach Joe Colistra of the defensive adjustments his team eventually made.

When they made them, the difference was remarkable. North produced 130 yards and earned nine first downs in the first half, compared with 53 yards and two first downs in the second half.

Game 4, October 4, 1992: La Salle 16 – Bishop McDevitt 0

by Ira Josephs, Inquirer

Klock Boots Explorers To Victory Over Lancers

In the space of one afternoon, La Salle's kicking game went from dependable to downright dangerous. Senior Joel Klock had converted 4 of 4 extra points heading into yesterday's Philadelphia Catholic League Northern Division game against Bishop McDevitt. But his only field goal attempt - a 38-yarder into the wind against Plymouth-Whitemarsh in the opening game of the season - fell short.

But Klock finally had a chance to prove in a game what he has been doing in practice all season.

Playing against neighborhood rival McDevitt (1-3, 0-2) at Springfield High, Klock booted field goals of 36, 25 and 37 yards to lift the host Explorers (3-1, 2-0) to a 16-0 win.

"I grew up with these kids," Klock said of his opponents.

"It feels good. It's nice to have your first big game against kids you know."

Klock, who was low-key about his accomplishments, also brought a calm attitude with him onto the field.

"He's real consistent," La Salle senior quarterback Sean McDermott said.

"He's not like your typical kicker. He doesn't think about it. He just goes out there and does it.

"We knew what he was capable of. It's just a matter of having a chance to do it."

A halfback on the La Salle soccer team, the 5-foot, 7-inch, 140-pound Klock didn't even begin kicking until the summer.

"I thought I'd enjoy it," he said. "I thought I'd have a chance to make the team."

It was McDermott, senior fullback Bill Tatar, and the rest of the Explorers' offense that brought Klock within field goal range and kept McDevitt's defense on the field for a good part of the day.

On La Salle's first possession, Tatar dove in from a yard out to culminate an 18-play, 72-yard drive. Tatar finished with 141 yards rushing on 27 attempts.

"I thought it worked out real well," McDermott said. "We were able to move the ball when we needed to. Give credit to the coaches and the offensive line."

Said McDevitt head coach Pat Manzi: "We aren't getting it done on the defensive side of the ball. They moved it on the ground. We have to play better defensively if we are going to be successful."

Meanwhile, the Explorers' defense came through with its second straight shutout. McDermott and junior Brian Carmody intercepted passes, and seniors Kevin Conlin, Joe McKenzie and junior Mike Flanigan batted passes down.

The Lancers were forced to punt on their first three series and didn't achieve their first down until late in the first half.

McDevitt finished the game with only four first downs.

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Still, McDevitt junior quarterback Pat Doyle managed to complete 9 of 20 passes for 81 yards despite being pressed into service right before game time.

Senior starter Bill Ring has fluid in his right knee and wasn't given the go-ahead to play when he arrived for the game. He is expected to be back for Saturday's game against Bishop Egan.

"With Billy being hurt we had to scramble a bit," Manzi said.

"But Pat did a nice job for us."

Of course, Klock was the player who best overcame a lack of varsity experience.

With just 9 seconds gone in the second quarter, he kicked his first field goal, a line drive 36-yarder.

"I wasn't that nervous," he said. "Just a little. It gave me more confidence."

Klock booted his second field goal, from 25 yards out, with 1:17 remaining in the third quarter. Tatar set up the score with a 42-yard burst up the middle.

The 37-yarder came with 5:15 remaining in the game following Carmody's interception.

by Ted Silary, Daily News

Tatar Gets Job Done For La Salle

Bill Tatar is spending his fall working hard at ground level in La Salle High's fullback-oriented offense.

Last summer, at least for a two-week stretch, he broke a sweat two stories up.

In exchange for full-time access to a Jeep, Tatar resingled the roof on his family's home in Bensalem Township.

"I did it by myself. Even carried the bundles up the ladder," Tatar said. "I'd done the roof on a little shed before, but this was the main roof."

"It was hot, but it went all right. When my father came home from work every day, he checked things out. He only yelled a couple times. Once, actually. I put a couple shingles up crooked and he said I was walking on them too much."

"He said if I wanted the Jeep, I'd have to work for it. I could see that."

Tatar (6-1, 200 pounds) did not walk through visiting Bishop McDevitt's defense yesterday as the Explorers claimed a 16-0 victory in the Catholic League Northern Division. But he did rumble, slice and occasionally scoot while posting 143 yards and the game's first score on 27 carries. Left-footed Joel Klock did the rest with field goals of 36, 25 and 37 yards.

The Lancers were accustomed to being torched by Tatar, who praised the blocking of his line (center Mike Adamow, guards Greg Lavin and Fred Hagen, tackles Tom Ragusa and Jeremy Winters and tight end Chad Ormond). In last year's 10-7 La Salle victory, he rushed 29 times for a career-high 145 yards and a score.

"McDevitt's a big rival for us," Tatar said. "Our arch rival, really. We like to beat them."

McDevitt had to play without quarterback-punter Bill Ring, who injured his knee at Saturday's practice and awakened yesterday to substantial swelling.

Junior Pat Doyle did a creditable job as Ring's replacement, completing nine of 20 passes for 81 yards and averaging 32 yards on seven punts. Doyle, however, does not have the arm strength for the home-run balls that make Ring a prime prospect.

As a sophomore, Tatar won a varsity letter as a part-time linebacker.

"But I did pretty well that year in a tryout for fullback," he said. "For my junior year, they moved me right in. I love running the ball. It's more of a thrill than defense. You get a lot of glory and you still get to hit people."

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In '91, while sharing the load with then-senior halfback Max Guevara, Tatar led all Catholic League underclass rushers with 807 yards and 10 touchdowns. In hopes of drawing interest from colleges, last summer he sent out packets including newspaper clippings and videotapes.

"I've gotten letters back from East Carolina, Rutgers, Boston College . . . even Penn State and Miami," Tatar said. "I'm looking to major in electrical engineering and/or psychology. My father is an electrical contractor, so I could work with him some day. But I'm also fascinated by the mind."

Game 5, October 10, 1992: La Salle 13 – Cardinal Dougherty 3

by Ira Josephs, Inquirer

Explorers Now Are The Only Undefeated Team In The Catholic North

The score was somewhat similar to those of the last two weeks, but the play was definitely superior. La Salle handled host Cardinal Dougherty, 13-3, in Saturday night's Philadelphia Catholic League Northern Division game at Northeast High.

And while the win was the third straight for the Explorers (4-1, 3-0), it was also extra special. The matchup featured the only two teams still undefeated in the Catholic North.

La Salle had beaten division opponents Bishop McDevitt, 16-0, and North Catholic, 14-0, in the two preceding weeks. Dougherty (4-1, 2-1) went down in the same type of defense-dominated game - though it had not been expected to.

"They are a classy organization," La Salle head coach Joe Colistra said of Dougherty.

"We knew we were in for a game all the way. We were prepared to be in a war. We had a great week of practice."

Using its run-and-shoot offense and deep talent at the skill positions, Dougherty had toppled North Catholic, 37-12, and McDevitt, 23-17, in league games this season. Surely, this wouldn't be the same team that La Salle beat, 40-13, a year ago?

Although the Cardinals moved inside the La Salle 20-yard line on their first two possessions and grabbed a 3-0 first-quarter lead, the Explorers responded with two second-quarter touchdowns by senior running back Bill Tatar and some of their most inspired play of the year.

The Cardinals opened the game in the same fast fashion they have all season. In seven plays, they moved from their own 42 to the Explorers' 19. After two unsuccessful attempts to move the ball, senior kicker Matt Greenleaf was wide right on a 36-yard field goal attempt.

La Salle was forced to punt on its first drive, and Dougherty senior Troy Kersey returned the ball 37 yards to the Explorers' 23. Four plays later, Greenleaf kicked a 35-yard field goal to give the Cardinals a 3-0 lead.

Although La Salle's shutout string of nine straight quarters was over, the Explorers' defense went to work on a new string.

La Salle senior defensive back Bill Sellers intercepted a pass by Dougherty junior quarterback Walt Bartle on the Cardinals' next drive to set the Explorers up on their own 28.

Tatar, who rushed for 105 yards on 19 carries, broke into the end zone on a 6-yard run 2 minutes, 39 seconds into the second quarter to finish a drive in which he gained 47 yards on six attempts.

La Salle senior quarterback Sean McDermott also completed passes of 17 yards to senior Chris Convey and 11 yards to senior Chad Ormond during the drive.

With 2:05 left before halftime, Tatar gave his case further credibility when he went 13 yards for his second touchdown of the game.

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Game 6, October 16, 1992: Father Judge 7 – La Salle 0

by Ira Josephs, Inquirer

Explorers Stopped By Crusaders

You can still count on both hands the number of points that La Salle has surrendered in four Catholic League Northern Division games this season. The bad news for the Explorers is that the majority of them came in Friday night's 7-0 loss to host Father Judge at Northeast High.

The first touchdown La Salle had permitted in four games was enough to give the Crusaders (4-0-2, 3-0-1) the victory. La Salle dropped to 4-2, 3-1 as a result of Judge quarterback Joe Shenko's scoring on a 1-yard bootleg run in the fourth quarter.

"It was a pretty evenly matched game," La Salle head coach Joe Colistra said. "There isn't much that separates the two teams. We played a good team, and we played very well. We did a lot of good things."

Playing good defense, of course, was first on his list of good things his team did. As usual. Senior defensive back Sean McDermott, who is also the quarterback and punter, had two interceptions in the first half.

On offense, the Explorers didn't do enough good things. Penalties hurt at times, and senior Joel Klock missed on a field goal attempt into the wind in the first half.

Judge's defense was good, too, and neither team had much success moving the ball until Shenko put together the game's lone touchdown drive.

"In the second half, we lost our rhythm and didn't have the ball very often," Colistra said. "Judge held onto the ball and it looked like it might be a 0-0 tie."

Along with McDermott's play, La Salle received outstanding defensive performances from senior linemen Kevin Conlin and Joe McKenzie. "There's no secret Judge likes to run with the ball," Colistra said. "And those two really played outstandingly."

Senior outside linebackers Tim Donahue and Bill Sellers were also especially effective.

Judge and Archbishop Ryan top the Northern Division with 3-0-1 records. The two teams played to a 0-0 tie Oct. 2. La Salle hosts Bishop Egan Sunday before taking on Ryan Nov. 1.

It's not on the schedule, but a rematch with Judge is a strong possibility. Last season the Explorers topped the Crusaders by 34-13 during the regular season, but fell by 17-7 in the semifinals of the Northern Division playoffs.

La Salle isn't looking at the two straight losses to Judge as a disadvantage if the teams meet again.

"Sometimes it's easier to fight uphill than downhill," Colistra said.

Game 7, October 25, 1992: La Salle 47 – Bishop Egan 6

by Nick Fierro, Inquirer

Explorers Await Game Against Northern Division Co-leader

La Salle football coach Joe Colistra, never one to discuss strategy with outsiders as the Catholic League playoffs loom, was understandably silent yesterday.

After all, his team had just wrapped up a 47-6 romp over visiting Bishop Egan at Springfield High. And whatever weaknesses the Explorers (5-2, 4-1) might have certainly were not exposed.

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Colistra would prefer to keep it that way, especially with the Explorers' crucial game against Northern Division co-leader Archbishop Ryan coming up next weekend.

Egan (0-7, 0-5) was just trying to survive, coming in without five starting two-way linemen who were injured or suspended.

La Salle displayed an uncharacteristic, wide-open passing game and built a 20-0 lead by halftime, despite giving up 75 yards in penalties.

Quarterback Sean McDermott finished with 5 completions in 17 attempts for 94 yards and was intercepted twice.

"Our game plan was to try to throw the ball, for two reasons," Colistra said. "Number one, we just wanted to work on our passing game. Plus, throwing the ball actually keeps the score down. Because if we kept running it, with their line the way it was, it might have been worse. We don't want to run up the score."

Still, the Explorers' most productive plays came when they were doing what they do best: running.

Bill Tatar, their workhorse back, carried 13 times for 175 yards and three touchdowns. He and Chris Convey (5 carries, 45 yards) often burst into the Egan secondary untouched.

When Jim Gorman went 79 yards on a sweep around the right side for a touchdown with 1 minute, 47 seconds left in the game, the devastation was complete.

Trailing by 20-0 early in the third, Egan seemingly had La Salle backed up with a third-and-19 at its 2-yard line. But Convey went up the middle for a 19-yard gain and a first down. Tatar ripped off 23 yards on the next play, and Egan's field position - and any chance to win - was gone.

"I think the turning point was actually in the first half, when it was 20-0," Egan coach Jack Techtmann said. "We didn't execute that well. We had some passes to some open guys but we couldn't hold on.

"(La Salle is) physical, and they out-physicaled us on the line."

La Salle took the game's opening kickoff and drove 80 yards, all on the ground, for the first score - a 3-yard plunge by Tatar. The Explorers got a break in this drive when Kevin Lahr recovered his own fumble after a 12-yard gain, giving La Salle a first down at the Egan 9.

Penalties hurt the Explorers on Egan's next possession, however, allowing the Eagles to control the ball for more than 6 minutes. They reached as far as the La Salle 19 late in the first quarter before a holding penalty pushed them back 10 yards. Eventually, Jeff Perry's 47-yard field goal attempt was wide.

La Salle wasted little time scoring on its next series, with McDermott and Tatar brilliantly disguising a handoff that helped Tatar break loose for a 68-yard touchdown run.

Costly face mask and roughing-the-kicker penalties allowed Egan to again drive to the La Salle 19 midway through the second quarter before giving it up on downs. La Salle defensive lineman Kevin Conlin batted down a key pass in that series.

La Salle responded with an 81-yard touchdown drive, capped when McDermott rolled right and rifled a 9-yard pass to Andrew Gilligan in the back of the end zone.

Game 8, November 1, 1992: Archbishop Ryan 3 – La Salle 0

by Ira Josepfs, Inquirer

Explorers Fall After Game Comes Down To A Field Goal

There were more than four times as many punts as points.

But when the top teams in the Philadelphia Catholic League Northern Division meet, the defenses are usually dominant and the offenses are extinct.

Archbishop Ryan's 3-0 win over host La Salle yesterday at Springfield High was no exception.

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Through the first 46 minutes of the game, each team punted seven times. The Raiders also came up with 4 turnovers, none of which were they able to directly capitalize on.

With just 1 minute, 22 seconds remaining in the fourth quarter, Ryan sophomore kicker Kevin Wyszynski decided the game with a 23-yard field goal.

"They have an excellent defense," said La Salle quarterback Sean McDermott. "There's no doubt about it. We weren't intimidated. We had some scoring drives, but you have to give credit to their defense."

Said La Salle head coach Joe Colistra: "It's like cooking a steak. It's tough to make a mistake when you have the right ingredients."

If Ryan is filet mignon, than La Salle is prime sirloin. The Raiders (7-0-1, 5-0-1) have outscored their opposition 112-6 this season, including a 0-0 tie against Father Judge and a 14-6 win over Archbishop Wood.

Meanwhile, the Explorers (5-3, 4-2) have allowed just 16 points in their six league games.

Judge, which edged La Salle, 7-0, remains tied with Ryan for first in the Catholic North. La Salle and Cardinal Dougherty are tied for third.

All four teams conclude their regular seasons this weekend. La Salle visits Wood, which has already been eliminated from the playoffs. Ryan hosts last-place Bishop Egan, and Judge is at Cardinal Dougherty.

A win over Egan on Saturday evening would give Ryan, the two-time defending Philadelphia Catholic League champion, its third straight undefeated regular season in the league.

Ryan head coach Glen Galeone said he expected La Salle to be a great challenge to that mark.

"They are good," Galeone said. "We just have to go out and play every game."

"We don't have the personnel in our school to throw the ball 25 times a game. For us to be competitive, we have to stay prepared and take advantage of field position."

The Raiders did have favorable position during the game, but the Explorers continually shut them down. A fumble on La Salle's opening series gave Ryan the ball on the Explorers 24.

Senior running back Gary Pacitti caught an 8-yard pass from senior quarterback Sean Taggart on the first play but was held to 1 total yard on two subsequent carries. An illegal motion penalty against the Raiders and an incomplete pass by Taggart gave the ball back to the Explorers.

Ryan moved to the La Salle 26 on its next possession, but Pacitti was stopped for a 1-yard loss on third-and-1, and senior Ray Sell was held for no gain on fourth down.

It was not until its scoring drive late in the fourth that Ryan strung together two first downs in one series.

Overall, the Raiders outgained the Explorers 133-71 and had a 6-2 advantage in first downs.

After taking over at La Salle's 34, Ryan moved to the 7. On fourth-and-4,

Wyszynski booted the game-winner from the left hashmark.

"My whole leg was shaking," he said. "I don't know. I just went up and did it."

McDermott, who was a key to La Salle's defensive effort, threw his third interception of the game to Ryan senior Dave McDonald, on the Explorers' last offensive play.

"We played a spirited game," Colistra said. "No doubt about it."

Game 9, November 8, 1992: La Salle 7 – Archbishop Wood 6

by Ted Silary, Daily News

McDermott Does Everything But Sit For La Salle

The fact that La Salle High franchise Sean McDermott almost never left the football field yesterday led one to ask coach Joe Colistra a question.

Does this kid ever get nicked?

"Maybe shaving," Colistra said. "Not playing football."

McDermott, a 5-11, 190-pound senior, was the quarterback for the playoff-bound Explorers, who used a 7-6 victory over host Archbishop Wood to secure third place in the Catholic League Northern Division. McDermott also played safety, did the punting and fielded punts as a single return man. Until two weeks ago, he returned kickoffs.

"Now," he said, "they want me to come off for a quick word with our offensive coordinator."

Traditionally, Catholic League coaches are extremely reluctant to allow their quarterbacks to start on defense and, even more dangerously, return punts.

"So am I," Colistra admitted. "Some of the other coaches probably laugh at me. I've done some laughing myself (at coaches who have given quarterbacks multiple duties). But you have to be around this kid every day . . . And it's not the first time we've done this."

Colistra was referring to 1988, when he coached a sensational quarterback/ safety named Jack Stanczak, who wore No. 10.

In the Explorers' first game this season, McDermott's original jersey, No. 28, was ripped off his back. But after Sean performed a Stanczak-like stunt - returning a late-game punt 53 yards to the 3, then running in for the winning touchdown - the equipment man suggested a switch to No. 10.

"It had kind of been retired since Jack Stanczak played," McDermott said. "He's a legend at La Salle. I'm proud to wear it. I don't know much about his career (Stanczak now plays baseball at Villanova), but I met him once. He's a nice guy."

So is McDermott - away from competition.

But when football games or wrestling matches are on the line, there's fire in the red-haired McDermott's stomach and eyes.

As a junior, McDermott, who maintains a 3.3 grade-point average and has scored 1,000 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test, went 34-0 at 171 pounds while winning Catholic League and National Prep School championships. Overall, he has won 80 varsity matches counting his freshman and sophomore seasons at North Penn High.

McDermott's wrestling suitors include Virginia, George Mason, Army and Bucknell. For football it's Nebraska, Ohio State, Rutgers and Penn State.

"Sean is always saying how hard wrestling is and how easy football is," Colistra said.

Said McDermott: "It's an oddity to go both ways at La Salle. But wrestling is a big help. It helps me be rugged and aggressive, so I can stick it out for all four quarters. The things I get from wrestling carry over into football. I'm not sure which sport I'll play in college. I'm hoping to get offers for both. Wrestling is strenuous, though. You have to suck a lot of weight to wrestle in college."

For three quarters yesterday, La Salle was outplayed by the undersized Vikings. But Wood's lead was precarious in that John Finerghy's 1-yard, second-quarter touchdown run had been followed by an unsuccessful kick.

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La Salle's scoring drive covered 79 yards in 11 plays. The largest was McDermott's 23-yard bootleg keeper on fourth-and-inches from the La Salle 44. On third-and-5 from the 28, he ran the same play to the right and picked up 10. After Bill Tatar (14 carries, 73 yards) ran 4 yards to the 14, McDermott took a couple of quick steps to his left, faked a handoff to Tatar, turned upfield and scampered into the end zone with 3:03 left in the game. Joel Klock kicked the extra point.

McDermott finished with 10 carries for 38 yards. He went 0-for-5 passing (can't have everything), punted three times for 93 yards, returned four punts for 22 yards, made four tackles (linemen Joe McKenzie and Kevin Conlin had 13 and 11, respectively) and broke up two passes.

The fact that McDermott has performed in similar fashion (or even better) all season led someone to ask Colistra, who's the MVP of the Northern Division?

"It can't be anybody but Sean McDermott," he said.

Game 10, November 13, 1992: Father Judge 14 – La Salle 2 (PCL Qfinal)

by Ira Josephs, Inquirer

Explorers Literally Exhaust Their Resources

In the end, it was freshness over fatigue.

Relying entirely on a two-platoon system, host Father Judge outlasted La Salle, 14-2, in Friday's Catholic League Northern Division semifinal at Northeast High.

Judge (7-1-2) will meet Archbishop Ryan for the Northern Division title this weekend, while La Salle will conclude its season Thanksgiving against St. Joseph's Prep.

The Explorers couldn't have played with more fire. But that emotional energy was extinguished by the slow burn of overwork that makes athletes weary and winded.

"We don't have anyone going two ways," Father Judge coach Whitey Sullivan said. "We don't think we can win that way."

It's a different situation at La Salle. While the Explorers are not a one-platoon team, certain players must play both ways.

Senior Sean McDermott is the team's quarterback, a leader who gives La Salle a physical and mental edge. But defensive back is his best position, and it's the one in which he is considered a major college prospect.

"We did a lot of good things this season," La Salle coach Joe Colistra said. "We were in a situation where we had a lot of returning kids on defense. But unfortunately, we had a few play both ways, and that came back to hurt us."

In the Catholic North this season, the overall strength of the teams was high, and so was the talent.

"There's a lot of good coaches in this league," Colistra said. "There's a lot of resurgent interest in football."

On their first possession of the game, the Crusaders cranked up a 83-yard scoring drive that senior Chris Albertini finished with a 2-yard plunge with 1:57 left in the first quarter.

"I can't explain it," Colistra said. "Defensively, that first drive was kind of discouraging."

There were big plays over the next two quarters but no points.

Midway through the second quarter, Judge senior quarterback Joe Shenko appeared to be on the verge of being sacked for a 10-yard loss. But he eluded several La Salle defenders and finally slithered, scrambled and sprinted to a 23-yard gain.

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However, La Salle senior Joe McKenzie sacked Shenko for a 7-yard loss five plays later, and the drive ended with a missed field goal attempt of 43 yards by senior Jeff Murray.

With 4:31 remaining in the game, the Explorers cut the lead to 7-2 when junior Andrew Wickersham tackled Shenko in the end zone on a botched punt attempt.

Judge, however, added an insurance touchdown with 1:37 left to play. On what looked to be a 35-yard field goal attempt, Shenko, the holder, completed an 18-yard touchdown pass to senior Steve Kurczewski.

"It was a good call," Colistra said. "We weren't settled on defense, obviously, and we were going for the block. We had to go for the block at that point."

Said Sullivan: "It was one of those things you have the luxury of doing. We would have looked really, really bad if they blocked it and picked it up and scored. They would have been ecstatic, and we would have walked home. Nobody would have been allowed on the bus."

Judge has now beaten La Salle three straight times, including last year's Northern Division semifinal (17-7) and this season's regular season game (7-0).

Game 11, Nov 26, 1992: La Salle 17 – St. Joseph's Prep 7 (Thanksgiving)

by Ira Josephs, Inquirer

Explorers Rally From Early Deficit To Finish On A Winning Note

Players from the past and peeks into the future helped lift host La Salle to a 17-7 win over St. Joseph's Prep on Thanksgiving Day at La Salle University.

It was La Salle's sixth straight win over The Prep and extended its lead in the 17-year series to 14-3. In the days preceding the game, the Explorers received constant reminders from those who have helped La Salle build such a commanding lead in the series.

"All of the coaches and players were talking to us," said La Salle senior defensive lineman Kevin Conlin, whose brother, Keith, graduated from La Salle in 1991 and now plays for Penn State. "They said you remember this one, so don't do anything you might regret. We took them real seriously. You always remember your last one."

The Explorers also wanted their arrival back at school today to be satisfying rather than mortifying. La Salle was eliminated in the semifinals of the Catholic League Northern Division playoffs with a 14-2 loss to Father Judge Nov. 13. The first quarter of their game against the Hawks followed the same pattern as their game against Judge.

The Prep (2-8) took a 7-0 lead after the opening quarter, just as the Crusaders did nearly two weeks earlier. Jess Sodaski's 9-yard touchdown pass to Matt Dwyer accounted for the first points the Hawks scored against the Explorers since 1988.

La Salle made sure they were also the last points - at least for the rest of the game.

La Salle coach Joe Colistra gave the Explorers a couple of days off after the Judge game before preparation began for the Hawks.

Despite its record, The Prep proved to be stronger than it was the previous three years.

La Salle was able to counter offensively with its senior line of center Mike Flanigan, left guard Fred Hagan, right guard Jeremy Winters, left tackle Tom Ragusa, right tackle Jack McDonald and tight end Chad Ormond.

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After falling behind, the Explorers tied the score in the second quarter on a 1-yard run by Tatar and went ahead in the third on Tatar's 2-yard run. Senior Joel Klock added a 19-yard field goal in the fourth to finish the scoring.

"Our offensive line has played really well," Tatar said. "Without the line, I wouldn't have scored at all." While the Explorers entered the season with eight returning starters on defense, the situation was completely different on offense. Only Tatar, senior wide receiver Andrew Gilligan and senior guard Mike Adamow started regularly last season. Adamow was unable to play against The Prep after tearing cartilage in his knee against Judge.

"It was a big transition year," Tatar said. "I thought we had a good season."

In the Catholic North regular season, La Salle went 5-2. The losses included a 7-0 loss to Judge and a 3-0 defeat against Archbishop Ryan.

"It was a great season," Conlin said. "The (league) was tougher than anyone ever thought."



Top row, l to rt: C. Smith, J. McDonald, Winters, Flanigan, Gilligan, Conlin, McKenzie, O'Neil, Sellers, Ragusa, Mikulski, P. McDonald, Lofgren, Dinella, Schnepf, Balcer, Mackintosh, Adamow, Grosso, Brady, Saracino, Cywinski, Puggi, Wickersham, T. Donahue, Hagen, Creedon, McAllister, Lewis, Caramenico, Mr. Colistra, S. Murphy, B. Smith, Cooper, Shaheen, Slizofski, Freeman, Sutton, Barger, Son, Brusca, Rakowski, Cevallos, Hildebrand, James, Robinson, McCutcheon, Monahan, Truitt, Merritt, Kilroy, Carl, McNichol, Citrino, Lavin, Glick, Lasorsa, Huff, Foster, A. Donahue, Stromberg, Gisondi, Vicario, Boelker, Zeccardi, Lee, McGovern, Ormond, Convey, B. Meehan, Klock, Turner, Perillo, Cleary, McGoldrick, Whelan, Grebis, Dezzi, Carmody, O'Malley, Palmer, McDermott, Fenningham, Lahr, J. Meehan, Choi, Tatar.