



Nottingham has breathed new life into its season thanks to quarterback Mark Newlin (3) (Photo by Suzette Lucas)

Newlin the fuel that lights fire for Nottingham football

By Rich Fisher

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OCT. 16: The whole world – OK, the whole Colonial Valley Conference football world – knew that Dennis Hernandez blocked a field goal and returned it for a touchdown to give Nottingham a remarkable win over Hamilton Saturday.

But none of that would have been even possible, were it not for the work of Mark Newlin leading up to that moment.

The senior quarterback struggled mightily for much of the game, as his first 14 passes consisted of 10 incompletions, including two interceptions.

By the time it was 35-7, it would have been easy for Newlin to say “That’s enough for this week, let’s start worrying about Trenton.”

But on Saturday, it will be Trenton worrying about Newlin for an entire game.

For he proved that he will be competing, for the entire game.

“Everything was working against us,” coach Jon Adams said. “But we found a way thanks to Mark Newlin.”

The CVC’s leading passer completed six of his last eight passes for 103 yards and two touchdowns to bring Nottingham back from the dead.

While being interviewed, Newlin thanked his linemen and receivers.

No doubt, they were thanking him back in the lockerroom.

“He is the heart and soul of this team,” Adams said. “We’ve got a lot of good guys, a lot of young guys, and we don’t have a lot of seniors. When this guy makes plays like he did against Hamilton, it just drives us.

“A win like that is a building block for our young guys, but (Newlin) deserves a lot of accolades. He was the leader, he was the catalyst, he kept the guys going. He made a great fourth-down play to Adam Devigili after he scrambled away.”

Newlin found Devigili with a TD pass on fourth-and-5 from the 20, hit Robert Pressley-Harris with a 5-yard TD pass on third-and-goal, and kept a fourth-and-11 play alive long enough to allow Nottingham to draw a defensive holding call that garnered a first down.

He was cool under pressure, and equally as hot with his arm.

It all comes from those dog days of May through August.

"I worked so hard this summer . . . so hard," Newlin said. "I went to tons of camps just to get better and it's paying off at this point in the season.

"Not only just me, but all the guys worked so hard in the off-season. We put in the work and it's starting to pay off. We deserve it, we work so hard."

A lot of players say that. But Newlin's coach seconds it when it comes to the quarterback.

"Nobody works harder than Mark," Adams said. "You look at his size and he's put together. He's as strong as any lineman on our team.

"He's a true leader, he deserves all the accolades that he gets. It's all through hard work. He spent time in the spring with (offensive coordinator Don Taylor) at our quarterback schools. He really worked hard and the kid is just all effort."

Effort is what he will need on Saturday, as the Carl Jordan-led Tornadoes have played better than their 0-5 record indicates. Lawrence coach Rob Radice raved about the way the Tornadoes defense ran to the ball during the Cardinals overtime victory last Saturday.

But Newlin seems to have a way of slipping out of trouble when he has to. He has completed 51 of 96 passes (with four interceptions) for 773 yards and eight touchdowns. He has also rushed for six touchdowns.

It doesn't hurt that he has the CVC's leading receiver by far in Robert Wiggs, whose 29 receptions and four touchdown catches are both tops in the conference. And Devigili has grabbed seven passes for 101 yards and two touchdowns.

Trenton will counter with Ted Fully, who averages 4.7 yards per rush. The Tornadoes passing game, however, is amongst the worst in the CVC.

Nottingham is riding a wave of momentum with two straight wins, and also has put itself back in the running for a Central Jersey Group III playoff spot.

None of that surprises Newlin.

"I really do feel," he said, "like this is my year."

So far, it would be hard to doubt him.