

Northstars football looks to rebound at Ewing

By Rich Fisher

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OCT. 29: The Nottingham High football team all but eliminated itself from playoff possibility with its loss to West Windsor-Plainsboro South Saturday. But there is plenty to play for yet, starting Friday night at Ewing.

At 3-4, the Northstars can still get a winning record. With a win over Steinert the following week it would win the Joe Logue Trophy as the township football champion.

And . . .there is still a tiny bit of playoff hope flickering although Nottingham is 12th with 61 power points, 12 behind eighth-place West Windsor-Plainsboro North.

"We gotta a lot of dim light shed on us because of that loss to West Windsor," coach Jon Adams said. "Our only hope is to win and pray. We just want to come out and play better football this week and improve in several areas."

One of those is in special teams, as Nottingham allowed West Windsor too many short fields last week. That affected the defense, but that is another area will the Northstars need improvement.

"We played pretty consistent when we had to make them drive the field," Adams said. "But we started in their end too much with some turnovers and because of special teams.

"Our offense let us down last week, we had too many turnovers, and we have to play more consistent defense and better on special teams. I think every offensive touchdown they had started in their end last week except for one."

The Northstars will try turning it around against a struggling Ewing squad. The Blue Devils are 2-5, but have one of the Colonial Valley Conference's top rushers in David Ogbannaya (860 yards, nine touchdowns). Steven Arnold has completed 48 percent of his passes for 502 yards and six touchdowns, and has thrown four interceptions.

"Those two, and the wide receiver (Darryl Griffin) are a real problem," Adams said. "They have a big physical offensive line, we have to contain (Ogbannaya) and play well on defense. And our special teams have to cover the kicks, we can't let them start on the other side of the 50 or it will be a long night."

Adams said that despite losing for the first time in four games, Nottingham has not been down this week.

"We had two good days of practice," the coach said. "I'm hoping it carries over into tomorrow's game. Everyone is positive, working hard. We have a young football team so we have to keep working hard because we return a lot next year. We have that going for us.

"But we're not closing the chapter on this year. This is still a big game and so is Steinert, and a possible third game that could be a playoff game. We're just looking to improve and stay positive."

One thing that excites the Northstars is a chance to play under the lights at Ewing tonight. With three high schools in Hamilton Township, night football is something rarely discussed. If one school gets lights, they all have to get them.

Or do they?

"You could have one facility that we all could play on," Adams said. "Particularly when Steinert, Nottingham and Hamilton play each other. You could take the money you'd make from those games and fund some programs. I'm sure we would get even more people than we get for the day games. "We look forward to playing at night. It's always a special occasion. I think we're missing the boat not having lights."

One boat that hasn't sailed, is the donations for quarterback Mark Newlin after his house was destroyed by fire last week. Aside from contributions from Notre Dame and Steinert, Hopewell Valley has promised some funding and Adams said that the parent of a Princeton player sent a huge donation this week.

"It's really nice," Adams said, "to see the football community rally around such a great kid."

Newlin continues to lead the CVC in passing with a 51.2 percent completion percentage, 1,109 yards and 12 touchdowns.

Robert Wiggs is the receptions leader with 40 (21 more than anyone else) for 689 yards and six touchdowns, while Adam Devigili has 134 catches for 186 yards and two touchdowns, plus a slew of

two-point conversion catches. Andre Simmons and Andy Vital have combined to rush for 784 yards and three touchdowns.