



HERALD PHOTO BY GRANT MORRIS

GAPING HOLE: Pope John quarterback Justin Nascimento has plenty of room to run during yesterday's rout of Lowell Catholic in Lowell. Nascimento threw for 206 yards and four scores.

PJ perseveres

By MIKE DEL ROSSO

LOWELL — Pope John finished the season on the field with something it lost five of recently off the field: a win.

An ineligible player

POPE JOHN 44
LOWELL CATH. 14

cost the Tigers the earlier wins, but yesterday they bounced back from the adversity to throttle Lowell Catholic, 44-14, in a Thanksgiving matchup.

"(The player) had practiced at another school and we didn't know about it," Pope John coach Brian Vaughan said. "Our kids responded (to the ruling) the way they always respond. They've dealt with adversity since Day 1... half of these kids hadn't put pads on before Aug. 24."

The Tigers struck

Tigers win going away

quickly and repeatedly, clawing out two touchdowns within the game's opening five minutes. Leading the pack was quarterback Justin Nascimento, who completed an 85-yard touchdown pass to Malcolm Brown in the first two minutes. Pope John followed the first score with an on-sides kick recovery. Nascimento, who was 7-for-15 passing for 206 yards and four touchdowns, connected with a diving Brown in the back of the end zone to put the Tigers up 16-0.

Shell-shocked Lowell Catholic did regroup. The Crusaders maintained a steady drive on the strength of Bryan Waruhui, who finished with 168 yards on 25 rushes. Mackenzie Flynn

sealed the Crusaders' offensive with a 3-yard TD rush toward the end of the first quarter, making it a manageable 16-6 deficit.

The Crusaders were gaining momentum as Pope John was forced to punt on the next drive and the offense employed its sure-fire formula centered around Waruhui. But the saving grace for Pope John was defensive back Allen Dowling, who came up with three interceptions, all of which led to points.

Penalties had begun to wear on the Tigers and Waruhui mounted his second march down the field. But when LC decided to cap its drive off with a pass, Dowling shut the Crusaders down

with only 11 yards to go.

A trade of scores left the Tigers out in front, 30-14, at halftime. In the third quarter, and again within sight of the goal line, Lowell Catholic tried the throw to close off another impressive drive. When Dowling came down with another pick, he ran it back 100 yards for a score to pull the Tigers further ahead, 36-14.

Nascimento would connect with Brian De-francesco, who had 88 yards on four receptions (two touchdowns), for the final Pope John punch. Dowling's third interception set up the final score.

"They capitalized on big plays," Lowell Catholic coach Tim Walsh said. "I thought there was hard hitting on both sides, but they executed and that's why they won."

Alfred key

By IAN R. RAPOPORT

DIV. 4A FOOTBALL

While teammates celebrated around him, Alfred sat on the bench, reflecting.

O'BRYANT LATIN ACADEMY

The O'Bryant player wished the season was on, that a playoff game in his team's future. He picked himself up and could walk into the locker room with little solace.

By grabbing two interceptions in the final five minutes, he thwarted the hopes of a Latin Academy comeback, earning the gritty 6-2 Thanksgiving victory at Boston English. The Dragons knock the Dragons out of the playoffs.

"We had nothing to say," said Alfred, who added 54 yards on 17 carries. "I'm a quarterback. (Latin Academy players) are smarter than us. They do a lot of things, but they're not in the field."

With the result in hand, the O'Bryant High, whose players were up to root for O'Bryant, advanced to the Boston playoffs.

O'Bryant coach Brian Gadson didn't want a spoiler role, saying the Tigers (8-2) simply aren't any win. But he says the way it transpired.

After jumping out to a 5-yard touchdown by Chandler Ransome (43 yards) in the first play, 70-yard opening drive, the defense showed up. The defense held Latin to 2 yards in the first half, never allowing a touchdown inside the 20-yard line in the game.

"Defense is from the heart," Gadson said. "We're preaching it in the locker room. We expected it."

Latin Academy's offense was over, with four turnovers as the game. "Those turnovers hurt us in the end."