PHS Football 2010: Bits and Pieces—and a Whole Lotta Effort

By Jeff Stuart

There is no sugarcoating it. This has been a tough season for the Poolesville football squad, but it’s not due to lack of effort. The closer scores this year indicate that the Falcons have been a more competitive team than in recent seasons. We talked to Coach Steve Orsini to get his take on the team, the season, and the progress being made. Here is his perspective:

“We really don't have an impact player or a big play maker. I can't complain about any of the kids' effort. We play aggressively. Defensively, we swarm to the ball. Everybody moves to the ball. They did a nice job of containing Rockville's Crusoe Gongbay, the county's best rusher. They are giving us the best they can. They are not quitters, and they really work their tails off. We try to get them to compete in practice. I tell them, 'Don't ever let somebody beat you—in anything. Life is a contest. Right here on the football field is one of the toughest contests. Make the effort. You might not win every battle, but you are going to win more than you lose.' The kids have hung in there. It is frustrating for them, too.”

As to some individual efforts, Orsini told us:

“Nikolay Henze, a tenth grader, has done a fantastic job at corner. Against Watkins Mill on a third and short, they did a little hitch pass. He was right in the kid’s face and makes the tackle. They didn't get the first down. Offensively, he had a couple of big runs for us, eight or ten yards—big for us. He plays hard every play. He is an outstanding player.

“Robert Winning (junior) at fullback is another. Ben Pyser (senior) has done a nice job at middle linebacker, center, and guard. Marty Michaels (senior, SE/DE) has given us a lot. Tyler Holston might not be as on fire as he was last year, but he still commands the huddle. He is giving us his best effort. Darryl Lang (senior) has stepped in at quarterback and has done a good job. Chris Oyer (G/DT) and Evan Habib (SE/C) have given us great effort. Both are juniors. We pulled up Jaylen McCaine (sophomore, DT) from the JV. He didn't play as a ninth grader.

“But we have made a lot of mistakes and at the worst possible times. Before the Einstein game, I told the kids, 'Let’s see if we can play football without penalties and turnovers for a whole game.' Well, in the first half, we drove the ball well, but two fifteen-yard penalties killed us. We were at their thirty with twenty-four seconds left in the half. We threw a little screen, and it was picked off and they scored. The fourth quarter we had no penalties and no turnovers. We played the way we were capable of playing. In the last seven minutes, we just took the ball down and scored. We kicked to them, tackled the guy down around the two-yard line, forced a punt, and scored again. The kids focused. It was unbelievable. Einstein is a good, physical team.”

 R.J. King (100 yards rushing) scored twice in the fourth quarter to tie the game at 14-14. The other team scored first in the overtime, but Holston answered with a four-yard touchdown pass to C.J. Lee (eight catches that game). Rather than send the game to a second overtime, the Falcons gambled and won on Henze's two-point conversion run (22-21).

In a brief overview of the season games, Coach Orsini observed:

“Against Williamsport, we had more passing and rushing yards, first downs, and time of possession. At homecoming, we had thirteen first downs as compared to just seven for Williamsport. We moved the ball but just couldn't score. Against Rockville, we played a great ball game, but we had three turnovers. With the score 7-0, we were on the eight-yard line, but we got an offside penalty that set us back. Then we get back down to the three-yard line and we get a holding penalty. We score but got an off sides penalty again. The touchdown is called back. Working the ball, we still get back to third and goal, and then the ball is intercepted.

“Against Maryland School for the Deaf, we them out in the second half. That was great football. We just needed to play that way for forty-eight minutes.”

 At Wheaton, the Falcons scored twice in the third quarter to take a 33-28 lead, but failure to convert the last two extra points cost the Falcons the game.

Working hard during practices and during games, the Falcons closed out 2010 on an outstanding note: they beat Kent County 44-0.

What will it take to get better?

“We have to get stronger. In practice, we flip big tractor tires. We lift twice a week. It is helping, but you really need to get stronger in the off season. There are five kids in school who wanted to come out for the team after school started. Our policy is that you have to show up in August when practice starts to be on the team. So we did not let them play. They could help next year if they get out for summer practices.”