

Orange claims youth football league championship

Junior Tornados' varsity will join three teams from Jersey City in state tournament; Panthers' try falls short

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The East Orange Panthers hosted the Twin Valley Football Conference championships in Paul Robeson Stadium where eight teams, including the Panthers, battled for the top spot in four divisions.

Sunday was a key day where the heavily favored Jersey City Jets sent three levels to the championship games. Jersey City came in with a 22- game winning streak on each level, ranging from junior peewee to junior varsity. Orange and Clifton were seeking their first league title and a berth in the youth version of the New Jersey sectional championships.

- Orange flexed its strength early against Clifton in the varsity contest as running back Kevin Momnohin breezed into the end zone from two yards out as the Junior Tornados marched 52 yards in 12 plays.

Clifton mounted a nine- play, 48- yard drive to answer. Junior Mustang quarterback James Sonzogni found his favorite target, William McAllister, while scrambling away from an Orange blitz and connected on a 16- yard scoring strike to level the game at 6- 6.

Momnohin entered the end zone twice on the next drive, but only the second score mattered. He broke free of Clifton tacklers and ran 52 yards for what would have been Orange's next touchdown, but it was called back on a illegal block. Momnohin took the ball back to the end zone house on the next play, from 25 yards out, to give the Tornados a 14- 6 edge at the half.

Clifton would come out with all cylinders firing but Orange stayed ahead. The Tornados went up 21- 6 on a 40- yard strike from Williams to Momnohin, which was followed two plays later when Momnohin ran up the middle from 10 yards for the score.

Clifton found the end zone late in the third quarter when running back Vincenzo Kline powered the Mustangs' offense down the field and finished with a 12 yard run to pull Clifton within 21- 14.

On the ensuing kickoff, Momnohin took off on an 82- yard return and increased the score to 29- 14. Sonzogni then threw an interception to Orange defensive back Craig Bradley, who returned it 18 yards for the 35- 14 victory.

Orange's varsity will go to the state tournament as the league's representative. Call 973- 789- 7830 or 201- 349- 4850 for dates and locations.

- The first game of the day in the junior peewee class, saw the Jersey City Jets taking on the very explosive East Orange Panthers. It was a rematch of the Jersey City team's 26- 0 shutout two weeks ago. The Jets drew first blood when they jumped on an opening onside kick and marched 49 yards in 12 plays before sending Jonathan Bates four yards to score with 1: 29 left in the first quarter. East Orange's leading rusher, Zamir Mickens did not play in the regular season matchup against Jersey City, but his presence was felt when he took off 58 yards on a tight- rope gallop up the Panthers' sideline to pull his team within 7- 6.

The Panthers' defensive line of Christopher Stultz, Kaleim Larson, Yusef Mapps and Charlie Finley gave Jersey City quarterback Tyneil Jackson some hard times as they combined for six sacks, three forced turnovers and one takeaway. But Jersey City would still find a way to the end zone with the help of offensive lineman Tyler Friday, who had two big blocks that sprung Jonathan Bates 38 yards before helping Jackson sneak into the end zone three plays later to give the Jets a 13- 6 edge midway through the third quarter.

Jersey City did not settle for that margin. With less than a minute remaining in the third quarter, Keishawn Jones took off up his left side and streaked 34 yards for a 20- 6 lead.

East Orange made quick work of the Jets' lead. Led by Mickens, quarterback Dy- Shawn Simpkins and wide receiver Onaji Tata, the Panthers went on a rallying drive which ended with Tata scoring on an 18- yard reverse with less than four minutes remaining to close the gap to 20- 14.

The Jets mounted a late insurance drive of 75 yards in 13 plays for the final 26- 13 victory and their second consecutive conference championship.

- Jersey City was not finished as they took on the Montclair Cobras at the peewee and junior varsity levels. On the peewee level, quarterback Marcus Dunn led his team to a 19-8 victory with the help of running backs Eli Terry and Shyheem Simmons. Terry scored on runs of two yards and one yard to cap off drives of 52 yards and 48 yards. Simmons later scored on a six yard run to cap a late seven-play, 38-yard drive.

Montclair's Terrell Vassel was having a hard time finding running room and quarterback Eric Zeug had a tough day. Zeug was sacked six times and had only three completions, but one went to Vassel late in the game for a 49-yard score.

- Montclair looked to stop the Jets from completing the hat trick of three consecutive trophies in the junior varsity game.

But quarterback Dante Bass and wide receiver Christopher Cofee would combine for 112 yards in the air as they paced the Jets to a 20-6 victory over the Montclair Cobras.

The first for the tandem was a 20-yard strike that set up teammate Herbert Johnson's six-yard touch down score from the wildcat formation to give Jersey City a 7-0 lead. Montclair answered with with Kenny Rosario's rumble to the end zone from 34 yards out to cut the Jets' lead to 7-6.

Bass again found Cofee in stride as the receiver caught a 44-yard pass over his inside shoulder to set up Tylik Lesure's 14-yard sprint for a touchdown and a 13-6 lead at halftime Bass and Cofee teamed again as Bass found Cofee on a 48-yard pass to put the Jets within striking distance for their next score. Montclair ultimately found a way to stop Jersey City and mount a rallying attack of their own through the air. But Jets' linebacker Herbert Johnson intercepted a pass and returned it untouched for a 36-yard touchdown and the hat trick for Jersey City, 20-6.