

Orange youth football team captures titles

Tornadoes win Twin Valley Conference, state crowns to cap undefeated season

The Orange Tornadoes of the Twin Valley Football Conference completed an outstanding season as they went undefeated, winning all 12 games, including the Twin Valley Football Conference Championship and the New Jersey Unlimited Weight Youth Football Association's Playoff and National Division Championship during the Dec. 11-12 weekend. The players are ages 12-14.

The first round had eight teams from the top eight out of 10 unlimited weight youth football conferences from around the state to compete for the ultimate distinction for the lone state champion in the American and National divisions respectively. This year's games were held over a two-week period where the first round was held on the same weekend of the NJSIAA high school football sectional championships, Dec. 5-6, at Winton White Stadium in Englewood and Jersey City's Caven Point Athletic Complex. The Trenton Little Tornadoes from the Mercer County Football League- Junior Colonial Valley Conference took on Robbinsville and won 32-6, on Dec. 5, while Orange defeated Clayton Township, 40-13, on Dec. 6, to advance to the National Division Championship Game.

The American Division saw the Englewood Junior Raiders of the Bi-County Junior Scholastic Football League take on the Parsippany Junior Vikings of the New Jersey Suburban Youth Football League where the Junior Raiders won their game over Parsippany, 44-0. The Bridgetown Gems of the Cape May County Jr. Football League rounded out the first round with a 33-19 win over the Watchung Hills Junior Warriors from the Junior Skyland Football Conference and setting the stage with Englewood for the American Division State Championship.

On Dec. 12, Orange and Trenton took the field in a "Clash of the Tornadoes." From the opening kickoff, Orange took control of the game by scoring two touchdowns in the first quarter while scoring a touchdown in the second and third quarters. The first two touchdowns came from standout athlete Kevin Momnohin, who broke off a 39-yard touchdown run on the third play of the game. Momnohin followed that up with a 25-yarder to break a 6-6 tie that was scored by Trenton's Khalil Leonard on a 51-yard punt return.

Orange controlled the ball for most of the first half, while Trenton did everything possible to stop Orange's speedy ground attack. Trenton's defense was led by linebacker Markell Snell, who led his squad with 6.5 solo tackles, including two tackles for losses. Trenton would tie the game again at the beginning of the second quarter when quarterback Khalil Leonard gave the ball to his power halfback, Zyaire Clemes, who galloped his way to the house from 68 yards out. But Orange was not satisfied with that. After a change of possession and an interception by Momnohin, Orange QB Rasheed Williams reached into his squad's bags of tricks and found tight end/defensive back Justin Nelson on a lineman-eligible play where he rumbled 58 yards untouched for the go-ahead 19-13 touchdown at the half.

Trenton came out in the second half with the hope of overpowering Orange with its balanced attack, led by the power backfield by-committee of Jarius Prather, Trumane Nieves and Clemes, along with Leonard. Leonard found ways to drive the ball 54 yards in seven plays before Orange recovered a fumble in the end zone for a touchback with just 7:24 in the third quarter. Orange took advantage of the missed Trenton opportunity and took the ball 80 yards in 10 plays that included a 29-yard strike from Williams to wide receiver Matthieu St. Pierre, giving Orange the extended advantage at 26-13.

In the fourth quarter, both teams would hold the opposing offenses from scoring again, giving Orange its first undefeated season and the State NJUWYFA National Division Championship title.

In a brief interview after the game, Orange head coach Jameel Drummond said, "This trophy goes to the kids and parents who stuck through the end with hard work and determination." He also was very pleased with the level of competition that Trenton brought and congratulated them on their successful season as well.

Orange Recreation Director Keith Pressey also was very proud of this accomplishment. "We definitely will have to show case this trophy in City Hall to show the hard work that our team has put into the program. I am very pleased that our program was able to come out as the Twin Valley Football Conference champions and now the state champions," said Pressey.