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Heavy-hearted Green Wave loses to Newtown

Green Wave battles in emotional game

BY JASON TÜREK
Sports Reporter

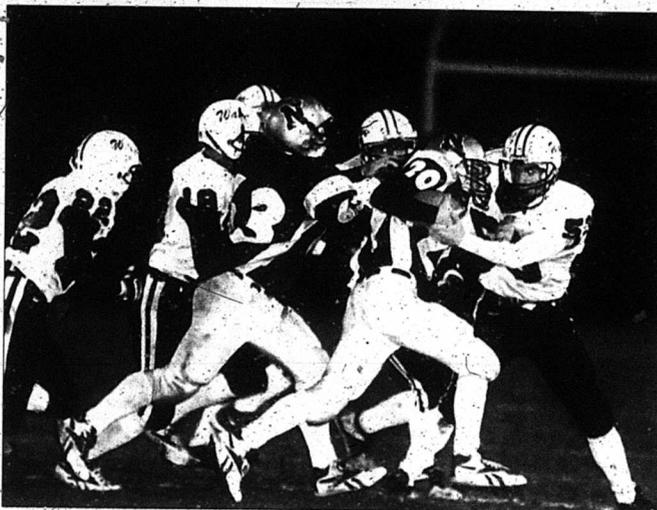
The New Milford High football team finished off an emotional week with a hard-fought 35-15 loss to rival Newtown Saturday night in Newtown for the "Boot Trophy."

The game was the last thing on the Green Wave players' and coaches' minds as the team was mourning the tragic death of senior Joe South, who was killed in a car accident earlier in the week.

"It was a very emotional week," said New Milford coach Chuck Lynch. "I had some concerns about that tonight, but the most important thing is about these guys getting better emotionally and spiritually and that was the goal this week."

The team had South's #79 displayed on its helmets and black shirts with South's name and number on the back. The cheerleaders and coaching staff also had the shirts on and there was a sign that said, "Go for Joe #79" in front of the New Milford cheering section.

In the first quarter, Newtown (5-2-1) scored 21 points with 14 of those resulting from two Green Wave turnovers. On the first drive of the game, New Milford (1-8) drove the ball to the Newtown 7-yard line. Sophomore quarterback Kevin Oberg fumbled the hand-off to



The Green Wave's Matt Ventresca (53) tackles a Newtown player, one of his three tackles in the game. Also pictured are New Milford's Ryan Adkin (22) and Pat Hendricks (18).

Photographs by Laurie Goboardi

senior fullback C.J. Creighton and Newtown's John Collins scooped up the ball and ran it 91 yards for a touchdown.

Six minutes later, on a third down play, Oberg made a good play by scooping up a low snap from center and was running for a first down at the Newtown 35-yard line. He was then stripped of the ball and Newtown's

Bobby Pattison picked up the ball and raced 65 yards down the sideline for another score.

"Newtown coach Roberts is a good coach," said Lynch. "Our mistakes led to their points, that's what good teams do."

Despite being down 28-3 halfway through the third quarter, the Green Wave players were encouraging each other on the sidelines and never showed any signs of letting up.

They would score 12 unanswered points late in the third quarter to cut the Nighthawks' lead to 28-15.

On the first scoring drive, New Milford drove 72 yards on six plays, led by Creighton, who had 47 yards on three carries. On the sixth play, Oberg threw a pass intended for senior tight end Kyle Dunleavy that popped up in the air and senior wide receiver T.J. Knapp came down with a 19-yard touchdown.

Less than a minute later, Knapp would come through on defense as he recovered a fumble and ran the ball to the Newtown 6-yard line. On the very next play, senior running back Matt Clady raced to the corner of the end zone for a touchdown.

In the fourth quarter, New Milford had a chance to cut into Newtown's lead again. It got to the Nighthawk 31-yard line when Oberg threw a pass that was intercepted by Pattison and returned the ball back to the Newtown 40.

Newtown would put together an eight-play drive covering 60 yards capped off on a touchdown by Pattison to put the game out of reach at 35-15.

The Green Wave offense out-gained Newtown 261-181 as they were led by Creighton (19

carries, 91 yards), Clady (eight carries, 64 yards), Knapp (six catches, 82 yards), and senior wide receiver Pat Hendricks (two catches, 36 yards).

Knapp (two interceptions and a fumble recovery) and senior defensive end Matt Ventresca (three sacks) led the defense.

Coach Lynch believed the way his team played, they had a chance to win the game.

"I felt we had a chance to win until four minutes left in the game," he said.

Lynch also gave many praises to his heavy-hearted squad for its effort in such a tough time.

"I'm proud of the guys. They dealt with a lot of adversity this week and started to band and heal together," he said. "We showed up ready and played our tails off tonight."

Friends remember Joe South

BY LAURA MCCUSKER
Sports Editor

him for a smile."

Almost two weeks have passed since the death of New Milford High School student and football player Joe South. Now that the shock of his passing is no longer so fresh, his friends and teammates are trying to put their grief aside and remember him as the happy, upbeat, funny person they knew.

South, who was in his senior year, was killed when his car went off the road on Route 7 in the early morning hours of Nov. 7. It was a jarring and tragic way to lose someone they cared so much about, and those who knew him best want to serve his memory well. They want those who never met him to hear about the Joe they knew and loved.

South was outgoing and friendly and affected many people in his too-brief life. When remembering him, those close to him all point out how much fun he was and how he always had a smile on his face.

"He was a great guy who was always smiling. He brought out the best in people," said Green Wave teammate Ryan Maddern. "I have so many memories of him, and they're all good."

"He was a real good kid, really funny," said Angelo Spaziani. "He was always trying to make you laugh. He was great to be around."

"I remember him as a guy who never left a room without a smile on his face. He was always laughing and always had a joke up his sleeve," said Pat Hendricks. "You could always turn to

"He was a great all-around guy, always smiling. Two things I'll remember about him: his smile and his big feet," laughed friend Marj Terrio. "I was always making fun of his huge shoes. He was fun to joke around with. There was always a good atmosphere around him."

Even though he was injured early in the season, South loved football and couldn't stay away from the team. He couldn't play, but he still showed up at every game and practice.

"Joe was always the first to pat me on the back after a tough game," said Green Wave coach Chuck Lynch. "He was a great kid and a real uplifting presence for the team."

Lynch helped South's parents, Debbie and Greg, with the wake and funeral.

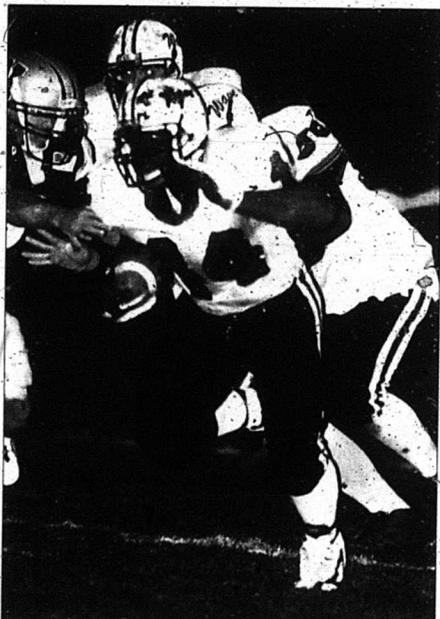
"Joe really loved his parents and was close to his family," said Hendricks. "My heart goes out to them. I know what he meant to them."

The cause of South's accident is still under investigation. Though no evidence has yet surfaced indicating alcohol was a factor, he was at a party on Saturday night and there has been conjecture in some quarters that he may have been drinking. None of those reports have been confirmed, however, and the fact that the issue has even been raised, barring any evidence, has angered his friends.

"People who are saying these things aren't even close friends. Why don't they talk to the people close

to them?"

Please see Joe, Page B2



New Milford's C.J. Creighton (44) attempts to gain some yardage in Saturday's game at Newtown.



Cheerleaders at the New Milford/Newtown football game last Saturday pay tribute to fallen Green Wave player Joe South. It was an emotional week at the high school as students remembered a friend who was taken from them far too soon.