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Patriots punt, pass, and kick to victory

Photo Credit: Danie Gallen

Senior Brad Ross helps the Patriots succeed in the Punt, Pass, and Kick Competition.

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Written by Daniel Gallen, Editor in Chief

On a chilly 45 degree November evening, four players from the Patriots football team defeated teams from seven other area high schools to win the Saturday In The pArc Punt, Pass, and Kick Football Festival sponsored by The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region at Cedar Lane on Saturday night. The team of senior Brad Ross and juniors Brendan Butler, Ryan Kirby, and D.J. Owens scored 648 points, outpacing second place North Harford High School and third place Fallston High School, who scored 612 and 586 points, respectively.

A “Punt, Pass, and Kick” competition tests a team’s ability to excel in those three areas of football. The competition is scored by recording the number of yards each team gains, which then equal points. Ross, who handled the kicking duties along with senior Josh Gunn for the Patriots this fall, handled the “punt” and “kick” aspect of the competition while Kirby, Butler, and Owens were the Patriot representatives in the pass portion, with Kirby quarterbacking and Butler and Owens receiving. Star senior quarterback Stephen St. Clair was originally supposed to participate in the pass portion, but hurt his groin in morning wrestling practice and was held out of competing. He was replaced by Kirby, who had four hours to prepare.

“It was interesting because when we found out Steve was injured we had some doubts about even competing,” Ross said. “We had to find a replacement, and that ended up being Ryan Kirby.”

The competition started with the punt portion, where Ross was allotted two punts to record as many yards as possible. Ross recorded 81 yards, putting the Patriots in fourth place after one event.

“I had practiced all year to punt, but in the games, we tried to get the ball to roll more so the other team wouldn’t have an opportunity to catch it,” said Ross. “In the competition, the ball had to go farther in the air and Steve and I had already agreed before he got hurt that I would handle the punting.”

Next came the field goal portion, where Ross had one minute to kick as many field goals as possible. The team earned points for making them and the number of points was based on the degree of difficulty of the kicks. Ross kicks dominated the event, making 15 30-yard field goals in the 60 seconds, scoring 450 points and putting the team in first place entering the last part of the competition, the pass portion. Fallston and North Harford tied for second in the kicking portion, with 360 points apiece, with Fallston in tied for second place overall with Friends with 456 points.

“I had prepared for the past couple of weeks,” said Ross, who was 16 of 18 on extra point attempts and 4 of 4 on field goals this year for the Patriots. “I learned the quickest way to make field goals, practiced it, and it all came together in the competition.”

In the pass portion, a quarterback is allotted four throws to his receivers to gain as many yards as possible.

Owens caught the first pass from Kirby for a 34-yard gain, while Butler dropped the second pass. The final two throws were over 40 yards, with Owens gaining 41 on his second attempt and Butler gaining 42. Total, the team grossed 117 yards on the four throws, which iced the competition.

“I knew we had a little bit of a lead going into the passing,” said Kirby. “If we missed a few throws, it wasn’t the end of the world. D.J. and Butler both did a good job.”

After the Patriots, North Harford, and Fallston, the rest of the standings were Friends with 558 points, C. Milton Wright with 496, Aberdeen with 429, Patterson Mill with 376, and Edgewood with 313.


Back in August, Ross was approached by a friend's father, Paul Levine, who works for The Arc Northern Chesapeake Region. Levine told Ross about the idea of a punt, pass, and kick competition featuring players from area high schools and asked Ross if he would be interested in participating. Ross jumped at the chance and had the idea in the back of his mind throughout the football season.

The event itself, an all-day festival for children of all ages to showcase their punting, passing, and kicking skills, was a success because it raised \$35,000 through donations and raffle tickets. Tickets to the upcoming Baltimore Ravens-Pittsburgh Steelers football game were raffled off, along with other sports memorabilia.

To Ross, the lone senior in the group, the event was special. "It was a great experience," he said. "We got to extend the season beyond the regular season, and we got something pretty special out of it."

For Kirby, the victory had a different taste. "I was ecstatic," he said. "Beating the public schools always feels good."

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