

Kessler Leads Eagles to Homecoming Win



Michael Port and Sean De Francisco stop the run. Photos by Marcy Dugan. www.marcyduganphoto.com

By Gregg McMullin

The setting was perfect for a football game on a mild fall night. Playing on a poor, dilapidated, rain-soaked field fresh from heavy rains two days before, the El Segundo High School Eagles hosted their nemesis Torrance for their 2009 homecoming game. So hold on to your seat—the El Segundo football team served noticed to the rest of the Pioneer League that they are the team to beat after hammering the Tartars 40-3 in front of a jam-packed crowd.

This wasn't your typical homecoming game by any means because it pitted two of the Pioneer League teams thought to be battling for a league title facing off in week one. This was a game in which Torrance wanted some measure of revenge since the Eagles manhandled the Tartars on their home turf and during that team's homecoming game a year ago. "This is just a friendly rivalry," said Eagle head coach Steve Shevlin.

The Tartars opened the game with a nine-play drive that stalled at El Segundo's 35 yard line. Torrance utilizes a run-oriented, wing-T offense that attempts to keep the ball away from the opposition with slick handoffs and double handoffs. The Eagles' defense time and time again stuffed the run inside that allowed Torrance just two offensive first downs in the first quarter and a total of six for the first half.

The Eagles wasted no time on offense to get on the scoreboard. On their opening possession, senior quarterback Mike Bundy found Jimmy Quiñones open for six yards and then Bundy himself scrambled for the first down. On their third play, senior running back Nick Kessler took the handoff and got a key block from Johnny Krause to spring into the open. From there Kessler got outside and outran the Torrance secondary for a 61-yard touchdown run. The Eagles had an opportunity on their next possession to increase their lead, but on fourth down and short at the Torrance 20 yard line they came up short.

In a ball control game, it isn't unreasonable to think that either team will have a low number of possessions. Torrance had just four possessions while the Eagles had the ball just three times. The Eagles' third and final drive of the first half started at their own 25 yard line. Bundy directed a 13-play series that ate up just over five minutes but stalled at the Torrance 23 yard line. Grant Palmer extended El Segundo's lead to 10-0 with a 42-yard field goal.

Torrance was not about to fade away but with their type of offense, it is tough to mount much of a comeback. The Tartars went on a 13-play drive of their own that included just one incomplete pass. The drive stalled at the Eagles' eight yard line with three seconds left

in the half. The teams lined up for a field goal attempt and Hunter Hovland broke through to tip the ball away. The ball squirted and rolled to the three yard line where Jimmy Quiñones scooped up the ball and ran 97 yards untouched. But the officials blew an inadvertent whistle and the teams replayed the down. This time the kick was good and the Eagles lead was cut to 10-3.

With a possible momentum shift in Torrance's favor to start the second half, the Eagles went to the air. Nigel Nootbaar caught a pass good for 27 yards and two plays later, Hovland caught a 33-yard touchdown pass from Bundy.

Torrance continued their ground assault, but they didn't have the impetus to keep drives going and were forced to punt back to the Eagles. Once again, Bundy directed a five-play drive and was three for four for 62 yards, including a 29-yard TD pass to Nick Kessler for a 23-3 El Segundo lead.

With the Eagles extending their lead to 26-3 with a 37-yard field goal by Grant Palmer, the Tartars took possession at their own 15 yard line after the kickoff. On their first play, Tartar QB Ralph Ramirez fumbled the ball near his own goal line where senior defensive end Michael Rae recovered the ball in the end zone for a 33-3 Eagles' lead. The Eagles finished off their night with a score by junior running back Trevor Thompkins. The speedy back found an opening, raced outside and outran four Tartars on his way to a 46-yard touchdown run.

The Eagles came away with an incredible defensive effort and a 40-3 win. The defense held the Tartars' vaunted offense to just 204 total yards, including just 15 passing yards. But not to be outdone was the Eagle offense that amassed over 400 yards on just seven possessions and did not punt once in the game. The Eagles rushed for a season-high 190 yards as a team and were led by Kessler and Thompkins. Bundy was 15 for 31 for 226 yards and two TD passes, and it was the first game this year that he hasn't been sacked. "The line did a great job protecting me tonight," he said.

Even though this was the first game of the Pioneer League schedule, the win sets up a home game showdown with Centennial (3-3, 1-0) Friday night at 7 p.m. The Apaches disposed of North Torrance in their league opener. Centennial has big-play personnel in quarterback Nelson Gammage and receiver Kevin Smith. Gammage threw for nearly 300 yards against North while Smith caught eight passes for 236 yards against the Saxons.

The frosh/soph football team made it a sweep of Torrance with its 28-14 trouncing of the Tartars. Steven Sellens caught two touchdown passes thrown by Cas Cousins while Bryce Walts led the ground attack with

two rushing touchdowns to lead the Eagles. On defense, Walts had a key interception while Nick Port and Austin Kurke were key to stopping the Tartars' running game.

The frosh/soph, who have won three straight, are 3-3, 1-0 overall and play at Centennial today (Thursday October 22) at 3 p.m. They are at home next Thursday, October 29 at 3 p.m.

Eagles News and Notes

The showdown between the El Segundo girls' volleyball team and South Torrance for first place in the Pioneer League was won by the Spartans in a three games to none match. All three games were closely contested, but the Eagles couldn't quite get the points when they needed them. The Spartans neutralized El Segundo's outside hitters with blocks and digs and the Eagles fell in three straight games 19-25, 20-25 and 22-25. El Segundo made a valiant late third game rally, but came up short. Kelly Davis



Keely Stevenson (left) and Sam Rummans (right) attempt to block South Torrance kill. Photo by Shelley Kemp, www.kemp.photorelect.com

had just four kills and five blocks and Keely Stevenson with 13 digs led the Eagles who fell to 7-3, 3-1.

The boys' water polo team fared well in the Murrieta Valley Tournament and finished off the pool play tournament by defeating Hemet, Redlands East Valley and Lakeside. Beau Blacksten scored 11 goals to lead the Eagles (16-5) while Csaba Nagy had eight goals over three games. •

MTA

from front page

Aquatics Project Set for Environmental Review

Using funds specifically earmarked for the local aquatics program, the Council approved a staff recommendation to pay two consulting firms a maximum of \$165,349 to conduct environmental and traffic review services for three potential new pool sites in town. From a feasibility study conducted earlier in the year, the City has two sets of conceptual drawings for pool locations at Richmond Street west of the Urho Saari Swim Stadium (The Plunge), the Imperial Avenue School parcel, and Hilltop Park. The drawings detail both a larger project option with a competitive pool and a full-on water park/recreational facility, as well as a scaled down version with just the pool.

Before proceeding with any construction, an environmental study must be prepared that fully analyzes and discloses the potential impacts of the project. The City will use Rincon Consultants, Inc. for the environmental work and Kimley Horn Associates for the traffic study.

"This is a good time for getting a consultant," said Councilmember Carl Jacobson. "The EIR is good for better than five years. As long as they're studying the higher amount, we can always go back to the basic, bare bones pool."

Mayor Pro Tem Eric Busch added that it was important to plan for the future even if the project doesn't start up anytime soon. "It might not be for three or four or five years, but at least we'll know what we're going for," he said.

During public communications, local resident Liz Garnholz reminded the Council that in a 2004 survey, people in town said they were just fine with The Plunge and didn't want another pool. "We have something other aquatics facilities don't have—a roof," she said. Garnholz added that the community also voted down a ballot measure to fund a new aquatics complex at the high school. She felt that spending money on this project would be "greedy" and "self-centered" given today's difficult economy.

In response, former aquatics task force member Ron Swanson pointed out that the monies to pay the consulting fees won't come out of the City's general fund, but from a separate fund provided by a local developer. "[It] can't be used for anything else but aquatics, whether it's an upgrade or to hire a consultant," Swanson said.

Mayor Kelly McDowell saw an advantage to starting the environmental study now. "The public will have ample time to review and

engage in the process as time goes by," he said, noting that the expanded timeline will allow those concerned about the nature of the facility and even the need for one in the first place to weigh in on the matter.

City to Get State Monies Back Quicker
Instead of potentially waiting until June 30, 2013 to get back the \$882,000 (plus interest) the State of California recently borrowed from it, El Segundo will be paid up in less than seven months. To do so, the Council agreed to take advantage of the Proposition 1A Securitization Program, in which local governments can receive up front the property tax revenue monies recently siphoned by Sacramento to help shore up the State budget shortfall.

Under the arrangement, a joint powers authority known as California Communities purchases receivables from Proposition 1A and issues bond monies to reimburse the agencies in question. When the State passed its budget during the summer, it required cities to lend up to eight percent of their property tax revenues, with the money scheduled to be paid back in three years.

Now, El Segundo will receive two equal payments in January and May 2010 to re-pocket the \$882,000. Finance Director Debra Cullen noted that the move has no downside, costs nothing to the City, and that over 1,300 agencies had already signed up for the program. Though he was in favor of moving forward, Mayor Kelly McDowell warned that the State could still turn around and take funds away again. To prevent this from happening, the League of California Cities is pushing a November 2010 ballot measure that would protect local government from "State raids and loans."

Halloween Frolic

A Council proclamation recognized Saturday, October 31 as the 33rd annual Halloween Frolic. Set to take place from 4-7 p.m. on the 300-400 blocks of Main Street, the event will feature inflatable rides, an El Segundo Kiwanis Club-sponsored costume contest, a pumpkin carving contest judged by the El Segundo Women's Club, a fortune telling booth, live music by the Mark Dayton Borders Band, food and refreshments.

Storm Ready City

In another proclamation, two representatives from the National Weather Service awarded El Segundo a Storm Ready City designation. The City earned the honor by meeting stringent criteria in establishing disaster readiness and severe weather safety plans, conducting training and developing communication systems.