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Newark gets early jump, then cruises

By Kyle Bonagura, CORRESPONDENT

FREMONT -- It's beginning to become a trend in Mission Valley Athletic League football this year. One team jumps out to a big first-half lead, then there is little to no scoring in the second half. The latest edition of this storyline came Saturday as Newark Memorial came out of the gates quickly, built a 23-0 first-half lead, then cruised to a 23-6 win against American at Tak Fudenna Stadium. Newark coach Rich Swift was pleased with his team's performance, especially on defense. "The American coach does a real good job presenting different formations," he said. "A lot of kids did a good job on defense." American (1-4,0-2) came in averaging 23.7 points per game and boasted the MVAL's top rusher in Kinsha Mangram, who was averaging 148.5 yards per game. Mangram, who has accounted for over 55 percent of the Eagles offense this year, was largely held in check by the Cougars defense. He came away with 78 yards but did score the only touchdown for American, although well after the outcome had been determined. Despite what the score may indicate, American coach Ken Peffer felt his team is improving. "We're still making mistakes, but we're playing better," Peffer said. "We made three turnovers, and they led to three TDs. We have guys wide open, but our quarterback is just missing them. We're just doing not enough things right." Peffer knew going in that Eric Stewart and Michael Gates were tough running backs to tackle, so it wasn't a big shock to him that Newark rushed for 264 yards, with Stewart (106) and Gates (62) accounting for more than half of those yards and a touchdown apiece. James Villanueva hit a 41-yard field goal to help pace the first-half scoring assault by the Cougars. Newark (4-1,1-0) will have a much tougher test next week when it plays Irvington. "They're the defending champions, it's definitely going to be the biggest test we've had yet," Swift said. American looks ahead to see John F. Kennedy, which also will be looking for its first MVAL win next week. The Titans, like American, will also be trying to bounce back from a lopsided loss.