

## Gamble pays off for NEWARK

By Kyle Bonagura, STAFF WRITER

# Gamble pays off for Newark

■ Cougars beats Huskies with fourth-down play, two-point conversion

By Kyle Bonagura  
STAFF WRITER

FREMONT — For Newark Memorial High, Friday's game against Washington didn't have league title or playoff implications, but that didn't matter.

With nothing but their pride on the line, the Cougars gutted through nearly four quarters before setting up an ending made for the back of a T-shirt, rallying to beat the Huskies 11-10 in a Mission Valley Athletic League game.

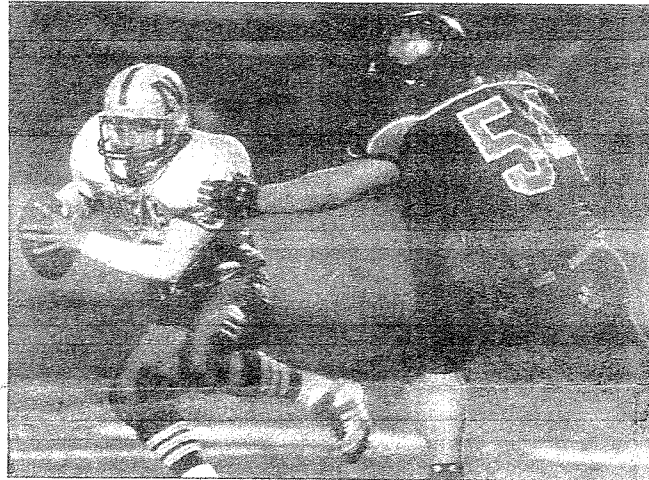
Trailing 10-3 with 22 seconds remaining in the game, the Cougars faced fourth-and-goal from the 2-yard line. Newark coach Rich Swift called a timeout to call the final play, but in the end it wasn't him making the call.

"The kids came running over yelling, 'Let's go up the middle,' I asked them are you sure? They all said yes, so I said all right," he said.

So with that, 6-foot-3, 190-pound Eric Stewart got the call and he answered with a 2-yard plunge to cross the plane for the touchdown.

After the touchdown, Swift elected to go for two points and the win — as the Cougars had nothing to lose.

They ran an option to the left where quarterback Rodney Rael pitched to Myles Gates at the two and Gates practically



NEWARK'S RODNEY RAEI (left) tries to elude the rush of Washington's Joe Nelson.

walked into the end zone to give Newark (7-3, 4-2 MVAL) the win.

"I didn't think Rodney was going to pitch it, then he did," Gates said. "Coach gave me the chance and we won the game."

The loss puts a serious damper on the Huskies' (4-6, 3-3) chances at making the North Coast Section 3-A playoffs. Even with a 3-1 record against 3-A teams, their 4-6 record won't look good.

Washington coach Ken Wittmer said he is still going to argue his team's case before the NCS committee on Sunday.

"We could very easily be 6-4," Wittmer said. "But we went out and scheduled Foothill, San Ramon Valley and Freedom. Last year we got shut out with a

6-4 record because teams with 5-5 records played more 4-A schools. The committee told me to schedule a tougher schedule, so I did."

Washington was still looking for the signature win to set them apart from the other schools vying for the last few bids. A win against a good Newark team would have been what the Huskies needed.

Wittmer said he doesn't regret scheduling East Bay Athletic Leagues powerhouses like Foothill and San Ramon Valley, saying it builds character to take on challenges like that.

Washington's offense showed it could be potent at times, scoring on its first two drives to take a 10-0 lead in the first half, but the Newark defense put the clamps down on the Huskies for the rest of the game.