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LEWISTOWN - No signing bonuses, hefty salaries or escalator clauses attached to these players' contracts. Only the incentive of championship aspirations.

Simply the truest, purest form of competition.

"We're Number One," filthy, screaming 10 to 12-year-old East Juniata players yelled, running aimlessly around the field while teammates dumped the obligatory cooler of Gatorade on their victorious coach. "We did it."

The undefeated Tigers of East Juniata (11-0) kept a zero in their loss column following Sunday night's Super Bowl XXXIX, defeating the Little Mingoies (8-3) 6-0 in a steady drizzle while claiming the Juniata Valley Football League Midget Championship on mushy Mitchell Field.

"Playing conditions I really don't think had too much to do with it," Little Mingoies coach Steve Vega, Jr. said while leaving the squishy, lumpy, banks-of-the-Mississippi-River resembling sideline.

"We knew what they were going to do. They were going to run the ball. They knew what we were going to do. We were going to run the ball."

So the torn-up, mid-field mudpit that just happened to be sprouting grass set the stage for the smashmouth showdown.

Clawing their way to an early 6-0 lead by sustaining a six-minute, 56-yard, game-opening touchdown drive, the Tigers handed the ball off for all 11 plays. Chris Swanger broke the plane of the goal line and the scoreless tie from one yard out, the drive highlighted by Wade Truitt's fourth-down, 24-yard gallop on a pitch-out around right end.

"He was the deciding factor," Vega said, commenting on Truitt's 132-yard rushing performance, "we knew we had to stop him."

What the Little Mingoies didn't know was that the touchdown-following kickoff would be an onside kick attempt, recovered in Mingoies territory by the Tigers' Grant Lesh.

"We wanted to just take them out of their game right away," East Juniata coach Jeff Austin said of planning the onside kick. "Figured if we got the ball back and shove it down their throats again, that's less time they got their hands on it to come upfield on us."

"They couldn't stop our offense."

But the Tigers stopped themselves, fumbling on the Mingoies' goal line one play after quarterback Ethan Pellman's 27-yard strike to Andrew Rhoads.

The Little Mingoies then ran their first play of the game, their only snap of the first quarter. It was the first of a dominating 16-play drive, consuming the majority of the second quarter but ending on a sour note.

After EJ handed the Little Mingoies a new set of downs by being flagged for offsides on a fourth-and-four, the Tigers' Mike Hogan picked off quarterback Tyler Bedelyon, who had lined up under center as the lone Mingo in the backfield.

"We were ready for that," Austin said of the long pass attempt. "We were waiting for it."

The rain subsided as halftime, and a heavy haze set in.

Controlling the football for the entire third quarter, the Little Mingoies took their opening possession of the half on a 17-play romp downfield, culminating in a fourth quarter fourth down at the EJ 19-yard line. The Mingoies came up short.

"It was a hard-fought battle," Vega said. "It's disappointing to lose, but it's part of the game."

The Tigers' defense surrendered only 33 points all year, including their Super Bowl shutout.

"I'm so proud of these guys," Austin said, surrounded on the soggy field by his celebrating squad. "These 22 guys right here showed more heart and more teamwork than any team I've ever seen."

"I don't know what else a coach could ask for."

Or a fan of the game.