



PHOTO BY GEORGE A. FELLA

Deer Park fullback Vinny Vitale powers through to score a touchdown in the first quarter. He scored again in the fourth.

DEER PARK 14, MILLER PLACE 6

Vitale's TDs spur Falcons

BY THOMAS CULLEN
Special to Newsday

The Deer Park Falcons came to Miller Place yesterday looking to solidify their playoff position. Mission accomplished.

Deer Park came away with a 14-6 win over the pesky Panthers in a hard fought defensive struggle.

Led by fullback Vinny Vitale's two touchdown runs as well as the two-way play of offensive guard/defensive end Dimitry Russ, the Falcons improved to 5-2. "It's great running behind Dimitry, all you have to do is follow him, and he'll lead the way," said Vitale, who opened up the scoring on the Falcons' first possession which capped a six-play, 28-yard drive.

The Panthers (3-3) could not seem to get it going on offense save for the play of quarterback Matt Hinchy and one solid burst from fullback Nick Acevedo. Hinchy picked up 90 yards on 17 carries and scored the Panthers' touchdown.

Miller Place was held scoreless for the first three quarters. The Falcons were loading up the box, stifling the Panthers' attempt to establish a running game. Russ led the defense with eight tackles and defensive end Kenny Jones made six tackles and two sacks.

On the last play of the third quarter, Acevedo busted a 54-yard run that put the Panthers at the Falcons six. On the next play Hinchy scored but the extra point attempt by Tyler Simon sailed wide.

"We didn't come out in the first half," said Hinchy. "We only played two quarters of good football, and it was just too little too late."

A turnover in the fourth quarter led to the Falcons' second score. Danny Fey fumbled after catching a pass from Hinchy on the Falcons 25-yard line. Four plays later Vitale scored his second touchdown.

"He's the heart and soul of the team," Falcons head coach Ron Langel-la said of Vitale. "When we need the extra yard or just two inches he's get-

ting the football." The Panthers would get one last chance to mount a rally when they stopped the Falcons on a fourth-and-3 at the Panthers 45-yard line with 2:21 left in the game. With a nice combination of running and passing plays the Panthers marched the ball down to the Falcons 16-yard line.

Hinchy attempted a pass to Acevedo that at first was ruled an illegal forward pass. The call was then changed to intentional grounding and pushed the Panthers back to the 27. On the last play of the game Hinchy attempted to hit Acevedo in the end zone but the ball sailed a few inches over the running back's hands.

"We played a top three team in the division down to the wire," Panthers coach Ron Petrie said. "Where it hurts is the opportunity we had and we didn't cash in. We played well enough not to lose, but we made too many mistakes to win. Being youthful you have to expect that at times."

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