**Port gives Gaudiano a memorable retirement gift**

By Dan Harrison sports editor | Posted: Friday, November 27, 2015

 He tried his best to keep it quiet. Newburyport head coach Ed Gaudiano knew this was going to be his last season as head coach of the Clippers, but he didn’t want his retirement to be a distraction to the team. Still, he let a few people know, and eventually Gaudiano started getting the questions. It was only a matter of time before his players would hear the speculation. So he told them, and the Clippers gave the winningest coach in program history the perfect retirement gift when they came back to stun Amesbury, 38­36 in overtime on Thanksgiving. “I had known for a while and I had told the coaches maybe a month or six weeks ago, but Newburyport is a small place and people talk. I knew word was getting out,” said Gaudiano. “People had been asking questions, so it was good to get it out there. I can’t think of a better way to go out.” Newburyport came out strong offensively yesterday led by sophomore back Quin Stott, who had a 39­yard touchdown run on the first drive of the game. He also had a 45­yard run that set up a 5­yard touchdown run by senior captain Jimmy Gallo on the team’s next drive. As good as the hosts looked offensively, the defense was equally as bad. Amesbury did what it wanted, when it wanted in the opening two quarters. Sam Stockwood, Ryan Foley and Adam Incontri provided a three­headed rushing attack that gave the Clippers all kinds of problems. Gaudiano’s halftime speech definitely inspired his defense, which came out and kept the Indians from scoring in the third and fourth quarters, which allowed Newburyport to come back from a 14­ point deficit to force overtime. And in OT, the Clippers made the big plays they needed to send their coach off with a Thanksgiving Day win no one in Newburyport is going to forget anytime soon. Another reason the win is so special is because the team had struggled so much throughout the season. But they ended the fall playing their best football. “The kids have suffered through a lot this year. We struggled and I think, like I’ve said for the past two or three weeks, we’ve been playing our best football and their greatness came out in the second half,” said Gaudiano. “It took a while, but they showed what they can do and what they’re capable of.” Gaudiano has been the head coach at Newburyport for 29 seasons. He was hired by another coaching legend, James T. Stehlin, in 1986. It just so happened that Gaudiano’s final victory came on the very­ first game of the newly named James T. Stehlin field. Coach Stehlin was on hand to see the win. With a pair of Super Bowls and five Cape Ann League Championships, Gaudiano’s coaching acumen and knowledge of the game is truly remarkable, as was the respect and gratitude the players showed him after the game. Every player approached the coach and thanked him. But after nearly three full decades at the helm, Gaudiano felt it was time to step away from the game, even if only temporarily. “It’s time to relax,” said Gaudiano, who’s wife was in attendance for her first game in some time. “I am at peace with the decision. I’m sure I will try to get back a little bit later, but I’ve got a year where I’m probably not going to do anything. I’ll get back in the game somehow, but I don’t know how.”