

TURNING IT AROUND!

The Raider Varsity Football program rebounded from its worst season ever in '88 to one of its best ever in 1989! Their season record alone — a 7-3 mark including a Sectional playoff appearance against undefeated Morris Hills HS in mid-November — does not tell the story of how the Raiders dominated their opponents. Shabazz was blasted 34-6, Kearny by 34-0, Westfield by 35-21. Even when losing, the Raiders excelled. A powerhouse Elizabeth team was held to 13 points while the Raider "D" recovered 8 fumbles. Summit squeaked out a 14-7 win at Summit. This was a team which could blow your doors off, or could come from behind to win.

The key was hard work. That's it, hard work.

Hours in the weight room throughout the summer, and hard practices in the late-afternoon August humidity. They were determined to prove that the '88 season was only a nightmare, not the norm. And they did!

It was a team with "heart". Many players played with pain. Quarterback Noel Sirdashney threw for 735 yards and 11 touchdowns with an elbow joint on his throwing arm which at times literally throbbled. Dana McLean, 5'9" at best, ran for 578 yards and 7 touchdowns while being pummeled by players nearly twice his size. Jimmy Grant and Jamie Fisher took up the slack in the backfield when needed, Jimmy averaging 6.2 yards per carry. Linebacker Chris Giordano played the line or the play up the middle with confidence and

precision. Overall line play, a BIG problem last year, was a strong point of 1989 on both offense and defense.

The future could be rosier. Only 11 seniors will be lost in June, while the '89 Freshman Team compiled a startling 8-1 record, its only loss an upset by Newark East Side. A dark cloud on the horizon could be the absence of any Middle School football program in 1989. Without coaches at that level, no entering freshmen in September will have played football on an interscholastic, competitive level. The impact of this dilemma may not be immediately felt, and it is unknown at this time whether or not there will be a Middle School program in 1990.

