

# Bombers: Stopped short of goal line late in 1st half

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However, Bethel stopped Richland running back Michael Ray Richardson just short of the end zone as time ran out, and Bethel led 14-7 at intermission.

"Hey, it could have been 21-0 (Richland) in that first half," said Bethel coach Eric Kurle. "We got lucky."

And the Bombers felt that way, too.

"At the end of the half, I don't think I've ever been that upset in my life," said Richland center Ryan Lukson.

But the Bombers have proven they are a second-half team.

"At halftime, the seniors talked about not letting this be our last half of football," said Richland quarterback Adam Oakes.

And Pierson was a little irritated at intermission.

"We said that the name of the game is being consistent," he said. "Cut the foolish mistakes down. Stop the holding, the clipping. We're a second-half team."

"And really, the other thing is the first half sets up the second half," Pierson said.

After experimenting in the first half, the Bombers thought they could move the ball on Bethel's defense, which averaged just one TD allowed per game.

On the opening drive of the second half, Oakes used short passes to Eric McGarrah and hand-offs to Richardson, going 78 yards on 11 plays and culminating on a 4-yard TD pass from Oakes to Landon Kafentzis that tied the game at 14.

Only three times did Richland try to go deep in the second half, and Bethel's Derrick Morris inter-

cepted two of those passes and the third was knocked incomplete.

So it was time to go back to short passes and runs.

"We made it simple," Pierson said. "We narrowed it down to three running plays and three passing plays in the second half. That's what was working."

It included a play-action back flat pass route, which Kafentzis used to score both TDs in the second half.

The last score came with 3:08 left in the fourth quarter as Richland moved the ball 49 yards in 11 plays.

Kafentzis ran out of the backfield and into the flat, taking Oakes' pass and scoring from 10 yards out for a 21-14 lead.

"When we started going to short passes, we were effective," said Oakes, who finished the game with 203 yards passing.

Richardson also carried the ball 30 times for 121 yards and scored the Bombers' first TD on a 1-yard run in the first quarter.

"We have a running game," Kafentzis said. "We showed Bethel we can run, and that we're a diverse team."

The victory sends Richland into the state finals for the fourth time in school history. Richland, second in 1975 and 1996, won the state title in 1981.

Bethel had two chances to tie the game in the final three minutes, but the first drive ended when Richland's David Hall intercepted a Javid Shoemaker pass.

The second drive — and the game — ended at Richland's 31 when Shoemaker's final pass fell incomplete with 12 seconds remaining.

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