

Sports



PREP FOOTBALL
RICHLAND ROLLS,
CHIAWANA WINS,
SOUTHRIDGE RALLY
FALLS SHORT 2D



NOELLE HARO-GOMEZ Tri-City Herald

Wenatchee's Dalton Thomas (7) and Jackson Bolles (16) attempt to tackle Richland's Sammy Cervantes (24) on Friday at Fran Rish Stadium. Cervantes broke through the tackle and scored a 15-yard touchdown to open the scoring for the Bombers.

RICHLAND 56, WENATCHEE 8

Richland shakes off smoky week, bombs Wenatchee

BY JEFF MORROW
Special to the Herald

Given the sketchy air conditions this week, Richland High School football coach Mike Neidhold wasn't sure what to expect when his Bombers played host to Wenatchee on Friday night.

But he didn't need to worry.

The Bombers scored 27 first-quarter points en route to an easy 56-8 win over the Panthers at Fran Rish Stadium, giving Richland a 2-0 record this season.

That record includes a season-opening, 24-21, last-minute win on the road Sept. 1 over perennial powerhouse Bellevue — a victory that could give the best teams in the state a bout of over-confidence coming into this week.

"It was a huge win," said Neidhold. "But that's in the past. You can't trip on something behind you. I was more concerned about this week."

For good reason. Neidhold said he and his players hadn't even set foot in the Rish Stadium locker room for a week.

The smoke from Northwest wildfires had the foot-

ball team practicing anywhere they could ... inside the school. Whether it was the big gym, the small upper gym or running pass patterns in the cafeteria, the Bombers had to make an adjustment going back outside. And that was just on Friday, game day.

To be fair, every high school football team had to do that this week.

But these are the Bombers, Class 4A state championship game finalists last year. They can adjust pretty quickly on the fly.

And those Richland fans who didn't get to go to Bellevue last week were excited to get their first look at new starting quarterback Cade Jensen.

It didn't start well for the senior, who is replacing the graduated Paxton Stevens. Jensen's first five passes went incomplete, and the Bombers went 3-and-out on their first series.

"I attribute that to him to being inside for the week," said Neidhold. "He didn't get a chance to be outside. It's a huge difference throw-

ing outside."

But it was just a temporary setback.

Jensen caught fire after that first series, moving the Richland offense for touchdowns on each of their next seven possessions.

"We know we are talented," said Jensen, who finished the game with 267 yards and five TD passes. "I'm the luckiest quarterback in the world. I have a great offensive line. I have at least 10 different receivers to throw to. It's a great thing to be this lucky."

The scoring explosion, once it got going, was fast and furious.

In just a little over a 6-minute span in the first quarter, the Bombers went up 27-0 when:

1. Jensen hit Sammy Cervantes on a 15-yard slant for a touchdown;

2. Adam Weissenfels surprised the Wenatchee kickoff return team when he punched an onside kick just 10 yards, and Richland teammate Caleb Chapman recovered it;

3. Three plays later, Park-

er McCary took a swing pass from Jensen and sprinted into the end zone from 15 yards out;

4. On the next series, McCary finished a six-play, 43-yard drive with a 4-yard TD run;

5. After Cervantes intercepted the Panthers on the ensuing drive, Jensen hit Weissenfels for a 2-yard TD pass to complete the 27-0 run.

The Bombers added four more TDs in the second quarter — the highlight being Weissenfels' 85-yard interception return. And the running clock ran throughout the second half.

Jensen spread the wealth, connecting with seven different receivers.

"We do that by design," said Neidhold. "We do that on purpose. No one from Richland will ever be an All-Conference receiver because of that. We've got this amazing run of kids that have come through here. They love football. They behave. They do weights. They're just football junkies."

Defensively, the Bombers held the Panthers to 158 yards of offense.

But no one Bomber dominated on D. Linebacker Jax Lee had two tackles for loss, and Casey Perryman added four tackles.

And Richland played without preseason All-State linebacker Victor Strasser, who sat out after getting hurt last week at Bellevue.