

# Sports



NOELLE HARO-GOMEZ Tri-City Herald

Richland's Parker McCary fights through a pile of Chiawana defenders during the Bombers' 21-20 MCC victory Friday night at Fran Rish Stadium.

MCC FOOTBALL | RICHLAND 21, CHIAWANA 20

## Bombers hold on to win another wild one

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Wild plays, myriad turnovers, a key blocked extra point and a one-point margin of victory.

That seems to be par for the course when Steve Graff's and Mike Neidhold's football teams get together.

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"This is what happens when we play each other," said Neidhold, coach of the Richland High School squad. "It got pretty lopsided for a couple years there, but you take those two games out of there, it's always been a one-score game.

That's always how we play each other. They get our best shot and we get theirs."

For the third straight year, Neidhold's No. 3 Bombers got the best of Graff's No. 5 Chiawana Riverhawks, this time with a 21-20 victory on Friday night at Fran Rish Stadium to clinch a third consecutive

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### RICHLAND

utive MCC title.

"This game was for the league title, so emotions were flaring and we were super excited to play these guys," said Richland wide receiver/defensive back Ryan Piper, who had a touchdown on offense and an interception on defense. "We definitely didn't play to the best of our abilities. But we got the win, and we've got a lot to work on. We've got our goals and minds set on something way bigger than this game, so we've gotta just keep working."

Quarterback Cade Jensen carried the Richland offense early, throwing three first-half touchdowns, but it was lead back Parker McCary, rushing 37 times for more than 146 yards, and the Bombers defense that helped ice the game while Chiawana (6-2, 4-2) was surging.

The ground-and-pound attack — and a fumble recovery by the Bombers following a return of an intercepted pass by Jensen — allowed Richland to hold the ball for 14 minutes, 35 seconds of the game's final 15:50.

"It's awesome," McCary said of the team's ability to run and retain possession. "I love being a running back, I always have been one since I was a little kid. So to be able to do good in a big game like this, it makes me pretty happy and proud."

Chiawana had plenty of success on the ground as well, with Ethan Garcia leading the way with 160 yards on 20 carries and a

1-yard touchdown run in the first half. It was a banner day for the Chiawana offensive line, as the team rushed for 184 yards and quarterback Enoch Vargas wasn't sacked once on his 12 drop-backs.

Jensen's TD passes — to Cody Sanderson, Adam Weissenfels and Piper — sent Richland into halftime with a 21-7 lead, but a 60-yard touchdown connection to Sisay West from Vargas — his first completion after opening 0-for-7 with two interceptions — cut it to 21-14 on the second play after intermission.

"I don't know," Graff said of what clicked in the Chiawana passing offense. "I know the wind (blowing in hard from the south end zone all game) didn't help either quarterback. But we got a guy loose on a couple plays, and that's just the way high school football is."

The Riverhawks took advantage of a Braden Childs interception near the beginning of the fourth quarter around midfield, as West caught his second TD pass of the night, this one from 44 yards out, with 8 minutes to play. But Ryan Lowry, who leads the league in made kicks (33 extra points, six field goals), had his PAT to tie the game at 21-all blocked by Richland's kicker, Weissenfels, allowing the Bombers to hold on to their one-point lead and eventually win the game.

"It came down to one play," Graff said. "We muffed the snap, didn't get the extra point, and other-

wise we'd still be playing probably."

Vargas finished the game completing five straight pass attempts, following his 0-for-start, for 113 yards with the two touchdowns. West had three catches for 105 yards.

**ODDITIES**

● Richland drove 67 yards on the game's opening drive before stalling at the Chiawana 13-yard line. Vargas was intercepted by Weissenfels on Chiawana's first play from scrimmage, then Austin Penny picked off Jensen two plays later. A 34-yard run by Garcia helped move Chiawana down the field on the ensuing drive, but Vargas threw his second interception in as many attempts, to Piper, to give it back to Richland, eventually keying the game's opening score, a 55-yard catch-and-run from Jensen to Sanderson.

● Leading 21-14 near the end of the third quarter, Richland drove 50 yards in over 7 minutes and had a chance to double its lead when Jensen threw his second pick of the game, to Josiah Richardson. Richardson returned it back to Richland's side of the field, but was caught by Jensen, who stripped the ball and had it recovered by Jax Lee to retain possession. The possession would end with another Jensen pick, to Childs, as Richland's offense stayed on the field for more than 10 minutes of game time and got no points to show for it.

**NOTES**

It's the second time in as many years a PAT block by Weissenfels has been the difference for Richland in a

huge MCC game. He ended last year's contest against Kamiakin by diving in front of Garrett Paxton's attempt that would have sent it to double overtime, and gave the Bombers another 21-20 victory. ... Richland has won 21 consecutive MCC games and three straight against Chiawana to take a 5-4 lead in the all-time series. Neidhold and Graff — who coached together on Pasco's staff beginning in 1989 — have been the only head coaches in the nine Richland-Chiawana matchups. Long-time friends, the duo did their postgame interviews together.

**UP NEXT**

Richland plays Hanford at Fran Rish and Chiawana hosts Walla Walla at Edgar Brown Stadium to close out the regular season. Both games kick off at 7 p.m. Friday.

Chiawana	0	7	7	6	-	20
Richland	7	14	0	0	-	21

**SCORING PLAYS**

- R—Cody Sanderson 55 pass from Cade Jensen (Adam Weissenfels kick)
- C—Ethan Garcia 1 run (Ryan Lowry kick)
- R—Weissenfels 7 pass from Jensen (Weissenfels kick)
- R—Ryan Piper 6 pass from Jensen (Weissenfels kick)
- C—Sisay West 60 pass from Enoch Vargas (Lowry kick)
- C—West 44 pass from Vargas (kick blocked)

**STATISTICS**

RUSHING—C, Garcia 20-160; Tayden Jenkins 5-24; Vargas 1-2. R, Parker McCary 37-146; Jared Whitby 6-36; Jensen 6-4.  
PASSING—C, Vargas 5-12-2—113. R, Jensen 13-24-3—189.  
RECEIVING—C, West 3-105; Josiah Richardson 1-5; Hunter Harris 1-3. R, Sanderson 1-55; Piper 5-47; Weissenfels 3-28; Ryan Kriskovich 1-30; Josh Mendoza 1-30; Sammy Cervantes 2-9.

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SPORTS

### Richland Bombers hold on to defeat Riverhawks by a 1-point margin 1D

