

4A FOOTBALL

Richland has six picks, 62 points in rout of Mead

BY DUSTIN BRENNAN
dbrennan@tricityherald.com

Mead quarterback Ryan Chan might be seeing green and gold in his nightmares for a long time to come.

Josh Mendoza made three of the Richland High School football team's six interceptions, and returned two of the team's three pick-sixes, as the Bombers blew out the Panthers 62-7 on Friday at Edgar Brown Memorial Stadium in an MCC-GSL crossover game.

"You don't expect to get three pick-sixes, that's just the luck, I've always said in the tournament, 'you've gotta get lucky' " Richland coach Mike Neidhold said. "Now 62-7 isn't lucky, but our kids, the ball bounced around in the right direction for our DBs, and those kids are hungry back there. If they get the ball in their hands, they'll take off and run with it."

The victory advanced MCC champ and No. 2 Richland (10-0) to state for the third straight year. The Bombers will play Big 9 No. 2 seed West Valley (6-2) at 7 p.m. Friday (again at Edgar Brown) in their first-round matchup.

"Ever since we got in the locker room at 4 o'clock today, things were feeling pretty good," senior wide receiver/defensive back/kicker Adam Weissenfels said. "Everyone brought their 'A' game and I think it showed tonight, and I think it's just the beginning of



NOELLE HARO-GOMEZ Tri-City Herald

Richland's Josh Mendoza (23) returns an interception for a touchdown during the first quarter of Richland's 62-7 win over Mead on Friday at Edgar Brown Stadium.

what we're gonna do throughout the tournament. We're gonna keep bringing it and bringing it."

While Richland's defense was turning in most of the night's biggest plays, quarterback Cade Jensen did his fair share of picking on Mead as well, to the tune of a 16-for-22 passing line for 228 yards, five touchdowns – all to different receivers – and no interceptions.

"Cade, and I've said this all along, he's got a very good grasp of our offensive system," Neidhold said. "He's another coach on the field, he knows where guys are and why they're open. He gets the ball out on time and on target most of the time. O-Line guys played well enough to give him a

little bit of time to get the ball out, and our guys run good routes."

In addition to his big night on the defensive side of the ball, Mendoza also opened the scoring by catching a go-route – that he said Jensen audibled to before the snap – and slipping a tackle for a 69-yard touchdown 5 minutes into the first quarter.

Following that, the next three Mead drives ended with Richland returning interceptions for points. The first, by Adam Weissenfels, came with a little more than 6 minutes to go in the first quarter, and was returned 28 yards, then two plays later Mendoza housed his first of the night from 21 yards out. Down 21-0, Mead picked up

a couple first downs on its best drive of the game to that point, but Mendoza halted it with a 58-yard pick-six, which made it 27-0 after Weissenfels' extra point was blocked.

"It was awesome," Mendoza said. "Adam played a great game, all the guys were really locked in on their keys. The coaches do a great job of teaching us our fundamentals every week, week in and week out, and it really showed tonight."

"Coach (DJ) Search helped us key in on certain plays and when they would throw on certain routes and stuff. It was almost like I knew what they were gonna throw when they threw it, and so hats off to the coaches for that and helping me understand that."