

Sports

Strasser's first full game back special as Richland rolls

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Victor Strasser has had a tough season.

After being named a preseason All-State linebacker, the Richland High School senior injured his collarbone in the first half of the season-opening game against Bellevue, and didn't return until the Bombers Week 10 crossover against Mead.

But on Friday night, Strasser was one of three Richland players to return an interception for a touchdown, as he helped the Bombers roll the visiting West Valley (Yakima) Rams 62-28 at Edgar Brown Memorial Stadium in a first-round Class 4A state playoff game.

"I was playing with a ton of adrenaline, I felt a lot better than I did last week," Strasser said. "My thought was that I'm going to come



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Richland's Josh Mendoza (23) fights through West Valley's Conner Rath (2) and Jared Navarro (81) on his way to a TD.

out here and perform and prove that I deserve the spot, because our linebackers came out here and worked while I was gone, and I have to get my spot

back. I hope I did that, and did the right things.

"And yeah, I get lucky with a pick every once in a

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while."

Following Richland senior Josh Mendoza - who had the another of Richland's three pick-sixes, and three total TDs on the night - was happy to see Strasser run one back in his first full game of the season.

"He deserves it," Mendoza said. "He's been really patient with the team doctors and getting back with us. He's been trying to fight to get back with us early, but now he's back, and this is just a testament to how good he is. It's his first full game back and the dude takes one to the house. We're really excited for the next couple of weeks."

Ryan Kriskovich was the first Bomber to intercept West Valley QB Brandon Battle for a touchdown, and Sammy Cervantes intercepted him as well in the second half with the game already well in hand. It was another unforgettable night for the Richland defensive backfield (nicknamed Rich-Gang), which had six interceptions and three pick-sixes in last week's 62-7 win over Mead.

"We're playing at an all-time high," Mendoza said of the defensive back group. "We studied West Valley a lot; Coach (DJ) Search does a great job with our film sessions to really under-

stand their offense and what type of routes they run.

"The pick-six Krisko had was awesome, and Victor undercut a route, which was great on his part, and then I knew one of their hand signals from previously in the game, so once they did that, I knew what route was coming and it was pretty easy."

Richland's offense wasn't too shabby either, though the varsity starters got to rest after halftime for the seventh time this season.

Cade Jensen connected on 13 of his 20 passes for 145 yards, finding Mendoza in the end zone twice and also hitting on scoring strikes to Adam Weissenfels and Connor Fauchaux. Parker McCary rushed 15 times for 112 yards and a score, leading a Richland backfield that picked up a combined 216 total yards on its 28 touches.

"We had a good run count (in the defensive front) for our RPO (run-pass option) system," Richland coach Mike Neidhold said. "When we have a good run count, we hand it off. Parker was able to find some seams and get some yards in there."

Really, everything worked. The Bombers scored eight first-half touchdowns despite the offense only getting the ball six times - including when they

ran the clock out on the final possession of the half - to take a 55-14 lead into the intermission, ensuring there would be a running clock throughout the second half.

"You just don't expect this to happen every week in the playoffs, because everybody's good," Neidhold said. "To have another running clock, we don't set out to do it, we just play, we play hard, and it ends up being what it is. If they throw it to us, we're gonna catch it and take off with it."

For West Valley (7-3), Dallin Cluff caught just two first-half passes, but made them count. With the Rams down 41-0 in the second quarter, he snagged a bomb from Battle for a 74-yard catch-and-run TD. Then, near the end of the half, he caught an 18-yard score from Jack Vanderbrake on a double-pass trick play for a 55-14 game.

West Valley running back Reggie Harris scored on a 14-yard screen pass from Battle and a 1-yard run in the fourth quarter, with mostly backups on the field for Richland. He finished the game with 98 total yards on 15 touches.

UP NEXT

Richland plays at Gonzaga Prep next weekend in the state quarterfinal. It will be the first meeting between the teams since the Bullpups knocked the Bombers out of the 2015 state semifinals with a 31-17 victory.

Date and time for the game have yet to be determined.

West Valley	0	14	0	14	-	28
Richland	20	35	7	0	-	62

SCORING PLAYS

- R—Adam Weissenfels 17 pass from Cade Jensen (Weissenfels kick)
- R—Ryan Kriskovich 55 INT return (Weissenfels kick)
- R—Connor Fauchaux 4 pass from Jensen (run failed)
- R—Parker McCary 5 run (Weissenfels kick)
- R—Josh Mendoza 12 pass from Jensen (Weissenfels kick)
- R—Victor Strasser 44 INT return (Weissenfels kick)
- WV—Dallin Cluff 74 pass from Brandon Battle (pass failed)
- R—Mendoza 11 pass from Jensen (Weissenfels kick)
- R—Mendoza 96 INT return (Weissenfels kick)
- WV—Cluff 18 pass from Jack Vanderbrake (Spencer Jolley pass from Vanderbrake)
- R—Tsega Macduff 8 run (Ryan Piper kick)
- WV—Reggie Harris 14 pass from Battle (Colby Kitt kick)
- WV—Harris 1 run (Kitt kick)

STATISTICS

- RUSHING — WV, Reggie Harris 12-62; Josue Navarro 3-21; Battle 7-(minus 1); Jolley 1-(minus 7). R, McCary 15-112; Macduff 5-64; Jared Whitby 4-17; Casey Perryman 3-12; Taylor Johnson 1-(minus 3).
- PASSING — WV, Battle 7-19-4-118; Vanderbrake 1-1-0-18; Jolley 4-5-0-28. R, Jensen 13-20-0-145; Johnson 0-4-1-0.
- RECEIVING — WV, Cluff 3-107; Reed Viveros 2-28; Harris 3-36; Vanderbrake 2-4; Cameron Willey 1-4; team 2-7. R, Weissenfels 4-50; Mendoza 3-28; Fauchaux 3-24; Sammy Cervantes 1-20; Cody Sanderson 1-12; Whitby 1-11.

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