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Central Valley's defense swarms toward Richland's Jared Whitby during Saturday's State 4A semifinal in Pasco.

Bombers wear down Bears

First-half offensive spree sends Richland to State 4A championship

By Jeff Morrow

FOR THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

PASCO – The Central Valley Bears football team had its magical run end on the floor of Edgar Brown Stadium on Saturday, losing to a tough Richland team 42-10 in the State 4A semifinals.

“A couple of days from now, a week from now, we’ll remember that we put 10 straight wins together,” CV coach Ryan Butner said.

Richland, Butner said, was just too tough.

“Defensively, they were much more physical than the game film indicates,” Butner said. “They are so disciplined and well-coached. They had checks for what we did. For example, we put a guy in motion, they had checks for that.”

After stopping the Bombers’ offense on a three-and-out on the game’s first series, the Bears drove the ball down inside the Richland 10 yard-line on their opening drive before Landon Rehkow kicked a 22-yard field goal.

That gave CV a 3-0 lead. But it was the last lead the Bears had.

Richland scored on four of its next five possessions – three TD passes from Bombers quarterback Cade Jensen and a 4-yard touchdown run by running back Parker McCary.

Meanwhile, after Rehkow’s field goal, CV’s next five offensive possessions resulted in a fumble, punt, punt, punt and punt.

“They executed their game plan well,” CV quarterback Grant Hannan said of the Bombers’ defense. “They came out hard. They got some good pressure on the inside.”

“I think we executed our game plan well at the start,” Butner said. “They (the Bombers) adjusted, and they do what they do.”

Richland coach Mike Neidhold, whose Bombers are 13-0 and headed to the state title game for the second consecutive year, said it was key that his defense only gave up a field goal on CV’s opening series.

“We had a hard time with the speed of the game at first,” Neidhold said. “CV is really good.

“They have a good offense that you can’t replicate in practice. And yes, there were some jitters.

But we held them to a field goal, and that was a victory.”

The Bears did get on the board with a touchdown as time expired in the first half, as Hannan fired a bomb to the end zone from the Richland 45. Two Bombers defensive backs went up for the ball. It bounced off their outstretched hands and into the hands of CV receiver Micah Mason, who was behind the defenders.

Mason walked into the end zone, and CV cut Richland’s lead to 28-10, with the Bears getting the ball to start the third quarter.

“That was a great play by Micah,” Hannan said. “It was kind of Randy Moss-esque.”

And it helped lift the Bears’ spirits.

“It gave our kids some motivation going into the locker room,” Butner said.

But CV couldn’t get anything going in the second half, going 0 for 5 on its offensive possessions as Richland’s defense remained solid.

The Bears lost running back Hunter Chodorowski in the third quarter on a concussion protocol. Offensive lineman Wyatt

Wickham went down in the fourth quarter with a hyperextended knee.

Hannan finished with 156 yards passing, while Austin Tomlinson had six catches for 60 yards.

It was a bittersweet end to a season that saw the Bears go 10-2, win 10 consecutive games, averaging 37 points a game while surrendering just 14 per contest.

“I felt like we could win our league title (back in August),” Butner said. “Everything after that depends on timing. The timing has to be right. The opportunity has to be right.”

“We planned to lead this team as far as we could,” Hannan said. “We fell a little short.”

The Bears lose 19 seniors to graduation. Butner knows what he’ll tell them when they all get together again.

“I’ll tell them that I love them,” he said. “I guess I’ll miss not going to film breakdown tomorrow and game plan for next week. But this was a special group of seniors.

“I’ll tell them they’ll forever be a part of our program. We call it a brotherhood.”