

Sports

PREP FOOTBALL | FRIDAY

Richland turns it around in second half

BY JEFF MORROW
Special to the Herald

Whatever Richland coach Mike Neidhold said to his football team at halftime on Friday night, he should bottle it and sell it.

Neidhold walked into the locker room with his Bombers trailing visiting Kamiakin 14-7 at intermission, and he thought about how distracted his players had been all week leading up to this key Mid-Columbia Conference contest.

"I had a very pointed halftime message: get out of our own way," Neidhold said.

And that's just what Richland did, shutting down Kamiakin's offense while picking up two touchdowns and beating the Braves 21-14 at Fran Rish Stadium.

The win has created an even tighter logjam in the MCC standings this week. Just one game separates six teams. Hanford and Chiawana are tied for first with 5-1 records, while Hermiston, Kamiakin, Kennewick and Richland are right behind at 4-2.

The win by the Bombers clinched a postseason berth for them - they sit as the third MCC Class 4A team heading to regionals.

But the way the game started, nothing looked good.

Kamiakin took its opening drive and marched 51 yards on 10 plays, capped by quarterback Lucas Castilleja hitting receiver Jaxson Nichols on a 10-yard slant pattern for a 7-0 lead.

The Braves made it 14-0 on Richland's next series, as Richland QB Josh Fonner tossed a lateral to Dhaunye Guice that at

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first looked incomplete. But officials didn't blow the whistle, and alert Kamiakin linebacker Ray Chavez scooped the loose ball up and raced 37 yards for a TD.

So in a span of 2½ minutes, the Braves were up 14-0.

"We were down 14-0, but we just told everyone 'Stay up. Stay up.'" said Richland senior Drew Daves.

Which is what the Bombers did on the ensuing possession.

The Bombers marched 80 yards in 11 plays, with Guice sprinting in from 4 yards out to cut Kamiakin's lead to 14-7 in the second quarter.

Richland had a chance to tie the game before halftime, getting the ball to the 3. Yet it couldn't punch it in.

But one thing started happening: Richland's defense became stout, stopping Kamiakin from moving the ball much at all. Neidhold's halftime rant just motivated his defensive unit even more.

"We went back to loving each other," said Daves. "We leaned on each other. We went back to trusting ourselves."

Well Kumbaya! It worked.

Kamiakin went 51 yards on its opening drive of the game. The Braves got 48 more the rest of the night. In the second half, Kamiakin had six offensive series that netted minus-3 yards, no first downs and three pass interceptions.

"We saw what Kamiakin did with their vertical threat, of them throwing the jump ball against Hanford," said Daves, who had two interceptions in the second half (along with four tackles).

His first set up a three-play, 48-yard drive with Guice runs of 32 and 15 yards, topped by a 1-yard TD scamper by QB Fonner to knot the game at 14-all early in the third quarter.

Daves' second pick clinched the win at the end of the game. In between, Neidhold had his

offense hang on to the ball, methodically grinding out yards while chewing up clock.

A drive of 62 yards on 12 plays ate up 6 minutes of the third and fourth quarters. And it was Cody Sanderson who carried the ball four times over the final 18 yards - with a 4-yard TD run with 7:31 to play clinching the game.

"Growing up from the time when I was little, I played running back. So I love it," said Sanderson, normally a wide receiver on offense. "My yards after contact are up there. It's hard to stop a 200-pound guy, so we had to try and utilize it."

Neidhold agreed. "Cody needs 25 touches a game," said Neidhold. "Cody is a very dangerous football player. He's one of the best players around here. The problem is how do we get him those touches? Throw through the air, or running the ball?"

How about 55 yards rushing and another 57 yards receiving?

"And," Neidhold interjected, "Dhaunye had a great game too."

Guice did, rushing for 92 yards and a score. He also teamed with Sanderson to chew up five of

the game's final six minutes moving the ball. Enough time that Kamiakin had to go 80 yards in the final 58.6 seconds to try and tie the game.

That's when Daves got that second pick.

Kamiakin coach Scott Biglin was frustrated with the officials after the game, but he also gave credit to Richland.

"They're a good team," said Biglin. "I'm proud of our guys' effort. But Richland played their butts off. We've got to move on to next week."

Which is a home game at Lampson Stadium on Thursday against Chiawa-



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na. A trip to Hermiston the following week completes the regular season.

And while Hermiston is 5-1, and Kamiakin and Kennewick both at 4-2, only two of those teams will qualify for the 3A regional playoffs.

Someone good is staying home.

"This is such a tough league," said Biglin.

NOTES: LB Benjamin Hollenberg led Kamiakin with six tackles, two for loss. ... LB Kade Powell had a strong game for the Bombers with 4 tackles (1 for loss) and a quarterback sack. DB Ben Fewel added five tackles, while LB

Camron Ball added four tackles with a QB sack. ... Richland plays at Kennewick next Friday, then is the visitor at Fran Rish against Hanford on Oct. 26. ... Officials called 20 penalties for 179 yards on both teams combined.

BOMBERS 21, BRAVES 14

Kamiakin	14	0	0	0	-14
Richland	0	7	7	7	-21

SCORING PLAYS
Kam - Jaxson Nichols 10 pass from Lucas Castilleja (Kaden Shymanski kick)
Kam - Ray Chavez 37 fumble return (Shymanski kick)
Rich - Dhaunye Guice 4 run (Joseph Weissenfels kick)
Rich - Josh Fonner 1 run (Weissenfels kick)
Rich - Cody Sanderson 4 run (Weissenfels kick)

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS
RUSHING - Kam, Tuna Altahir 10-71, Chavez 5-11, Castilleja 10-0, Team 1-minus 19, Totals 26-63. Rich, Guice 16-92, Sanderson 12-55, Sam Stanfield 5-19, Fonner 6-17, Totals 39-183.
PASSING - Kam, Castilleja 6-12-3-36. Rich, Fonner 13-21-0-157.
RECEIVING - Kam, Kelen Rutz 1-11, Niko Wiltz 3-10, Nichols 1-10, Messiah Jones 1-5. Rich, Ryan Kriskovich 5-69, Sanderson 4-57, Drew Daves 2-18, Marshaun Davis-Copeland 1-9, Andrew Fairchild 1-4.
FIRST DOWNS - Kam 5, Rich 16.
FUMBLES-LOST - Kam 2-0, Rich 1-1.
PENALTIES-YARDS - Kam 7-71, Rich 13-108.

Richland's Cody Sanderson (19) tackles Kamiakin's Jaxson Nichols during Friday's Mid-Columbia Conference football game at Fran Rish in Richland.

THE WIN BY THE BOMBERS CLINCHED A POSTSEASON BERTH FOR THEM - THEY SIT AS THE THIRD MCC CLASS 4A TEAM HEADING TO REGIONALS.

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