

Sports

PREP FOOTBALL | FRIDAY

Fonner's key read leads to long TD as Richland holds off Hanford

BY JEFF MORROW
Special to the Herald

Richland quarterback Josh Fonner saw the matchup on the left side when he called for his center to snap the ball. He saw wide receiver Ben Fewel about to get one-on-one coverage, and he wanted the senior to go long.

"They don't know about his speed," said Fonner. "They were double-teaming Cody Sanderson on the other side. I just had to get Ben the ball." He did, laying it in perfectly, as Fewel caught it and outraced the Hanford defenders for a 69-yard touchdown play late in the third quarter that turned out to be the back-breaker against the Falcons.

The play gave Richland an insurmountable two-score lead that host Hanford couldn't overcome, and it gave the Bombers a 34-24 Mid-Columbia Conference football win on Friday at Fran Rish Stadium. More importantly, it gives Richland the MCC's No. 2 Class 4A regional playoff berth, which comes with a home game against Mead, the Greater Spo-

kane League's No. 2 seed, next week. Hanford becomes the MCC's No. 3 seed and will travel next Friday to play Gonzaga Prep, the GSL's top seed. Chiawana, a 48-7 winner Friday over Pasco, earned the MCC's top seed and will play host next Friday against GSL No. 3 seed Lewis & Clark. Richland's win capped a regular season in which the Bombers started off 0-2, but won their final seven contests. Richland coach Mike Neidhold, whose team won the 4A state title last season, allowed himself to say this season might have been his staff's best coach-

ing job to date. "I'm very proud of our staff," said Neidhold. "I'm honored to work with them. This year has been so interesting. It's been a puzzle every week. I'm proud of the staff, with how well they teach the kids." Asked if there was panic after dropping the season opener to Chiawana, then losing the next week to Hermiston, Neidhold didn't hesitate: "We don't panic." On Friday night, the coolest cucumber on the field may have been Fonner. He ran the offense with preci-

SEE RICHLAND, 2D



NOELLE HARO-GOMEZ Tri-City Herald

Richland's Ben Fewel takes down Hanford's Luke Sutey during a Mid-Columbia Conference game Friday at Fran Rish Stadium in Richland. Richland won 34-24.

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RICHLAND

sion and dished out passes to eight different receivers. Fonner finished 22-for-26 passing for 294 yards and five touchdown passes. "Josh has done a great job for us," said Neidhold. "He's bought into our culture." Ryan Kriskovich, Richland's two-way standout, caught seven of Fonner's passes for 122 yards, including TD catches of 33 and 37 yards. He likes what he sees in Fonner. "I knew Cody Sanderson was going to be double-teamed," said Kriskovich. "All of us other receivers have to do is just win our own battles and help Josh out. We do that and we give him confidence." Hanford coach Brett Jay knows where the key turning point might have been.

It happened late in the second quarter. His quarterback, Garrett Horner, had just finished off a 77-yard, 13-play drive that chewed up almost 5 minutes of clock by connecting on a 10-yard TD pass with Blake VanderTop to give Hanford a 14-7 lead with just 2:10 left until intermission. But Fonner responded by moving the offense 75 yards in just five plays, taking just 54 ticks off the clock. His 37-yard TD strike with Kriskovich left the two teams headed to intermission tied at 14-14. "That last two-minute drive in the first half hurt us a bit," said Jay. "We are just not playing well defensively. Our pass defense is struggling." Richland took the lead for good to open the third quarter, as Fonner hit

Sanderson on a 4-yard scoring strike for a 21-14 lead. And while the Falcons responded on their next drive with a 40-yard Xavier Uvalle field goal, Fonner answered back with the key 69-yarder to Fewel. Richland's defense did just enough to keep Horner off balance when it counted. "We've got to do better in the red zone, but that's on me," said Jay. Now the playoffs begin. It's a new season. One that Richland wasn't sure it was going to play in after the first two weeks of the regular season. "We didn't trust each other those first two weeks," said Kriskovich. "That (third) week in Sunnyside, when we won, that turned things around. And the coaches? They never lost confidence in us. We have to fight more to win than we did last year. "But we're all buying in

to what we need to do." **NOTES:** Richland athletic director Mike Edwards said Fran Rish Stadium, with its grass turf, isn't eligible to host a playoff game. So the Bombers will likely play Mead next Friday at either Edgar Brown Stadium or Lampson Stadium. Edwards said everything should be finalized by Monday morning. ... Sophomore LB Camron Ball had a monster game for the Bombers, with 12 tackles (1 for loss) and a quarterback sack. Drew Daves added 9 tackles and 2 pass break-ups, while Fewel had 6 tackles, an interception and a pass breakup. ... LB VanderTop led Hanford defensively with 8 tackles. DB Gabe Martinez added five tackles and an interception, while LB Luke Sutey added 5 tackles (2 for loss).

BOMBERS 34, FALCONS 24

Richland	7	7	14	6	-34
Hanford	7	7	3	7	-24

SCORING PLAYS
R - Ryan Kriskovich 33 pass from Josh Fonner (Joseph Weissenfels kick)
H - Jared DeVine 7 run (Xavier Uvalle kick)
H - Blake VanderTop 10 pass from Garrett Horner (Uvalle kick)
R - Kriskovich 37 pass from Fonner (Weissenfels kick)
R - Cody Sanderson 4 pass from Fonner (Weissenfels kick)
H - FG 40 Uvalle
R - Ben Fewel 69 pass from Fonner (Weissenfels kick)
H - Dylan McElderry 19 run (Uvalle kick)
R - Drew Daves 18 pass from Fonner (snap fumbled)

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS
RUSHING - Rich, Dhaunye Guice 17-125, Sam Stanfield 4-15, Sanderson 2-6, Fonner 3-4, Totals 26-150. Han, McElderry 12-65, DeVine 15-63, Horner 8-minus 14, Total 35-114.
PASSING - Rich, Fonner 22-26-1-294, Kriskovich 0-1-0-0. Han, Horner 25-36-1-250.
RECEIVING - Rich, Kriskovich 7-122, Fewel 4-92, Sanderson 5-30, Nathan Craig 2-19, Daves 1-18, Stephon Sanders 1-13, Jack Schuster 1-6, Guice 1-minus 6. Han, VanderTop 5-62, McElderry 4-45, Isaiah Mitchell 4-41, Gabe Martinez 2-23, DeVine 3-23, Tyler Garcia 3-20, DAndre Forbes 3-19, Luke Sutey 1-17.
FIRST DOWNS - Rich 18, Han 25.
FUMBLES-LOST - Rich 0-0, Han 0-0.
PENALTIES-YARDS - Rich 11-116, Han 12-147.