

Sports

Kamiakin uses precision offense, strong defense to down Richland

BY JEFF MORROW
Special to the Herald

KENNEWICK, WA

The Kamiakin Braves are keeping pace with their cross-town rivals, the Kennewick Lions.

Both teams seem to keep winning each week, and they sport attractive 5-1 Mid-Columbia Conference football records, and 6-1 overall records.

Yet if the season ended today, the Lions — based on their 42-18

win over Kamiakin on Sept. 27 — would be the top 3A seed to regionals. The Braves would be No. 2.

So after Kamiakin's 30-7 commanding victory over visiting Richland at Lampson Stadium on Friday, Braves coach Scott Biglin said his team can't worry about what Kennewick is doing.

"We've just got to keep playing good football," said Biglin. "It was a good victory tonight. It's been a while since we beat those guys."

It was the first time since 2014 that the Braves had beaten

the Bombers.

And on Friday, they did it with precision on offense and strong defense.

Sophomore quarterback Henry Mercado led the Braves to touchdowns on their first four possessions, tossing TD passes of 22 yards, 23 yards and 22 yards to Woodley Downard, Tuna Althahir and Messiah Jones, respectively.

Mercado, who just seems to get better every week, finished with 289 yards of passing and three TDs, plus he added 26 yards of rushing.

"We've developed a lot faster over the last few weeks," said Mercado. "We have such a strong defense. I'd like to thank my offensive line. And Tuna. Tuna gets our offense out of some stupid situations."

Besides the TD catch, Althahir finished the scoring with a 61-

yard romp through the Bombers defense.

He had 201 yards of offense — 157 yards rushing on just 17 carries, and two catches for 44 more.

Somewhere in there, the Braves added a safety when Richland quarterback Harrison Westover was called for intentional grounding in his own end zone.

By halftime, Kamiakin had a 30-0 lead and the game was out of hand.

"We had five drives in that first half where we had two interceptions and two fumbles," said Richland coach Mike Neidhold, whose team dropped to 2-4 in MCC play and 3-4 overall. "We also missed a home run ball to a guy who was wide open. We just can't seem to get

SEE KAMIAKIN, 3D

FROM PAGE 1D

KAMIAKIN

out of our own way. We can't function like that."

The Braves defense did a good job of stifling Richland's offense when it needed to.

Ben Fewel, one of the more outstanding receivers in the MCC, caught 8 passes. But he could only gain 39 yards.

"We did a bracket coverage thing on Fewel," said Biglin. "He's such a tremendous player. You have to make sure he doesn't hurt you too much. We did a great job of keeping him in front of us."

Altogether, Kamiakin has turned things around since that devastating loss to Kennewick three weeks ago.

"I feel like we've really improved," said Downard. "We've started trusting each other to do the things we're supposed to. We've got a lot of weapons.

We've got a 6-6 guy on the outside in Messiah. Henry is playing quarterback like Tom Brady. I think we've got the No. 1 running back in the state in Tuna. It's hard for a defense to put just one guy on any of our guys. Kelen (Rutz) is playing great too.

"I'm proud of our effort."

Now the Braves turn their attention to the first-place Chiawana Riverhawks, who'll play host to Kamiakin next Friday at Edgar Brown Stadium.

"In the end tonight was just one victory," said Biglin. "I told our guys know whooping or hollering. We expect to win. The tough one is next week. They're a great football team."

NOTES: Kamiakin continues to have penalty problems. Against Richland, the Braves had 15 penalties for 176 yards, compared to 9 for 69 yards for the Bombers. ... Kamiakin's defense was led by DB Kyler Bacon, who had 4 tackles, 3 covers, 2 pass breakups, and an interception. Sophomore LB Luis Salgado added 4 tackles, a quarterback sack, a forced fumble and an interception; and DB Aidan Leonard had 7 tackles. ... Sophomore DB Elijah Rodriguez and senior DB Matt Robinson led Richland's defensive effort. Rodriguez had 7 tackles, a cover and an interception for a touchback. Robinson added 6 tackles, a cover, a pass breakup, and an interception that was also a touchback.

BRAVES 30, BOMBERS 7

Richland 0 0 7 0 -- 7
Kamiakin 16 14 0 0 --

30

Scoring Plays

K - Woodley Downard 22 pass from Henry Mercado (Braeden Staniszewski kick)

K - Tuna Althahir 23 pass from Mercado (Staniszewski kick)

K - Safety, Harrison Westover called for intentional grounding in the end zone

K - Messiah Jones 22 pass from Mercado (Staniszewski kick)

K - Althahir 61 run (Staniszewski kick)

R - Ben Fewel 4 pass from Cameron Kitchens (Joseph Weissenfels kick)

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING - Richland, Marshaun Davis-Copeland 12-84, Kade Brons 6-37, Camron Ball 7-29, Westover 1-4, Jacob Raab 1-2, Kitchens 1-minus 10, Totals 28-146. Kamiakin, Althahir 17-157, Mercado 6-26, Luis Salgado 2-8, Kelen Rutz 1-2, Team 1-minus 6, Totals 27-187.

PASSING - Richland, Westover 10-23-1-72, Kitchens 8-14-1-93. Kamiakin, Mercado 17-34-2-289.

RECEIVING - Richland, Sterling Roberts 6-91, Fewel 8-39, Deacon Boyce 2-25, Kayden Roxburgh 2-10. Kamiakin, Alex Swaney 5-78, Downard 3-61, Rutz 4-55, Jones 3-51, Althahir 2-44.

FIRST DOWNS - Richland 16, Kam 19. **FUMBLES-LOST** - Rich 4-3, Kam 0-0. **PENALTIES-YARDS** - Rich -69, Kam 15-176.

PUNTS - Rich, Aidan Storms 2-68; Kam, Downard 3-110.

MCC STANDINGS

Chiawana 6-0 MCC, 6-1 overall

Kennewick 5-1, 6-1
Kamiakin 5-1, 6-1
Hanford 3-3, 4-3
Pasco 3-3, 3-4
Walla Walla 3-4, 3-4
Richland 2-4, 3-4
Hermiston 1-5, 1-6
Southridge 0-7, 0-7

Thursday, Oct. 17
Kennewick 28, Walla Walla 14

Friday, Oct. 18
Chiawana 61, Southridge 6

Eisenhower 20, Hermiston 14
Hanford 54, Pasco 18
Kamiakin 30, Richland 7

Friday, Oct. 25
Hanford at Hermiston, 7 p.m.

Kamiakin at Chiawana, Edgar Brown Stadium, 7 p.m.

Kennewick at Richland, 7 p.m.

Moses Lake at Southridge, Lampson Stadium, 7 p.m.

Pasco at Walla Walla, Borleske Stadium, 7 p.m.

2A CWAC STANDINGS

North

Ellensburg 3-0 CWAC, 3-4 overall

Othello 3-1, 4-3
East Valley 1-2, 3-4
Ephrata 1-2, 2-5
Quincy 0-3, 3-4

South

Prosser 3-0, 5-2
Toppenish 3-1, 5-2
Selah 1-2, 2-5
Grandview 1-2, 1-6
Wapato 0-3, 1-6

Friday, Oct. 18

East Valley 31, Quincy 7
Ellensburg 17, Othello 7
Ephrata 30, Selah 20
Grandview 29, Wapato 0

Prosser 25, Toppenish 21

Friday, Oct. 25

Ephrata at East Valley, 7 p.m.

Grandview at Selah, 7 p.m.

Pullman at Othello, 7 p.m.

Quincy at Ellensburg, 7 p.m.

Toppenish at Zillah, 7 p.m.

Wapato at Prosser, Fiker Stadium, 7 p.m.

SCAC EAST STANDINGS

Royal 4-0 SCAC, 7-0 overall

River View 3-1, 6-1
Kiona-Benton 3-1, 5-2
Connell 3-1, 4-3
Warden 1-3, 3-4
Wahluke 1-4, 3-4
College Place 0-5, 2-5

Friday, Oct. 18

Connell 48, Warden 12
River View 56, Gold-

endale 0

Royal 56, Kiona-Benton 0

Wahluke 21, College Place 14

Friday, Oct. 25

Cashmere at College Place, 7 p.m.

Connell at Kiona-Benton, 7 p.m.

Royal at River View, 7 p.m.

Warden at Wahluke, 7 p.m.

EWAC 2B STANDINGS

Columbia-Burbank 4-0

EWAC, 6-0 overall

Tri-Cities Prep 4-1, 6-1
White Swan 3-1, 4-2
Liberty Christian 3-2, 3-4
Kittitas-Thorp 1-3, 1-5
Mabton 1-4, 3-4
Dayton/Waitsburg 0-5, 0-7

Friday, Oct. 18

Kittitas-Thorp 24, Dayton-Waitsburg 18

Liberty Christian 21, Mabton 12

Tri-Cities Prep 49, White Swan 26

Saturday, Oct. 19

Columbia-Burbank at Tonasket, 2 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 25

Brewster at Tri-Cities Prep, Chiawana High School, 7 p.m.

Dayton-Waitsburg at Columbia-Burbank, 7 p.m.

Liberty Christian at White Swan, 7 p.m.

Mabton at Kittitas-Thorp, 7 p.m.

Jeff Morrow is former sports editor for the Tri-City Herald.