

Sports

Bombers hold off Riverhawks in key MCC football battle

BY JEFF MORROW
Special to the Herald

Richland High football coach Mike Neidhold considered last Friday's showdown with the Chiawana Riverhawks a playoff game, even though it was a Mid-Columbia Conference regular-season contest.

"We wore our gold pants," said Neidhold. "It was a playoff game. That's when we bring out the gold pants. And we didn't want to lose (the game)."

The Bombers didn't. But it certainly wasn't easy.

Fighting through a scoreless first half, Richland was able to get a couple of second-half short yardage touchdown plays — one a 4-yard pass to Tanner Schuster from Bombers quarterback Cameron Kitchens, the other a 2-yard run from running back Elijah Rodriguez — to win the MCC showdown 14-0.

With the win, Richland solidifies its hold on the second Class 4A regional playoff berth (Kamiakin has the No. 1 berth to this point). Chiawana, meanwhile, has the inside track for the No. 3 4A berth.

It's one thing to beat

Chiawana. It's another to shut the Riverhawks out.

Until Friday, that hadn't been done since November of 2011, when Central Valley beat Chiawana 24-0 in a regional cross-over playoff game.

"We had a great game plan," said Neidhold. "I knew they liked to throw the football (with standout QB JP Zamora). I knew we needed to get pressure up front, and we got it from Lex Luther and Elijah (Rodriguez)."

Richland shut down the Riverhawks' running game, then concentrated on stopping their passing game.

It worked. But Chiawana's defense was just about as tough.

Kitchens passed for 104 yards. Rodriguez rushed 21 times for 68 yards.

"The Chiawana kids played just as hard as ours," said Neidhold. "It was an old fashioned Big Nine game from back in the 1990's, with all of the hitting. If you were the least bit timid, you had no business being out there."

Indeed.

Chiawana actually out-gained Richland in yardage, 232-171. And neither team did well in converting third- or fourth-down situations: the Riverhawks

were 2-for-16 on third downs, 2-for-7 on fourth; the Bombers were 6-for-10 on third down, and 1-for-3 on fourth.

The Bombers just did a better job at operating the old bend-but-don't-break defense.

Isaya Galvez led Richland with 6 tackles, while Rodriguez and Kalani Steward added 5 each.

A few weeks ago, after Kamiakin put a pounding on Richland 48-15 (jumping out to an early 28-0 lead), Neidhold had told the Herald his team would either get better, or implode.

"Kamiakin did us a huge favor by making us look at ourselves," said Neidhold on Monday. "We're back to playing that way we play we do here at Richland. Flying to the ball, being real simple. Do your job."

And suddenly, it looks like that stingy defense has become the heart of this Bombers team.

"It's hard to do a shut-out, because a lot of crazy things can happen," Neidhold said. "But that's our goal as we now this season. You've got to start looking at what we're doing on defense. Four shutouts already. They're doing something right."

WEEK 5 HIGHLIGHTS

KAMIAKIN 39, SOUTHRIDGE 6: Meanwhile, the MCC-leading Braves continued their run through conference opponents, this time stopping the crostown rival Suns.

The Braves outgained the Suns 470 yards to 117, with Luis Salgado rushing 19 times for 122 yards and two touchdowns.

Henry Mercado continued his stellar season by going 15-for-24 passing for 204 yards and two TD strikes.

EJ Hawkins caught 7 passes for 66 yards and a TD catch, while Fabian Hernandez added 3 catches for 67 yards, a TD reception, and a TD run.

Lucien Cone led Southridge with 5 catches for 59 yards and a score, while James Rush added 55 yards rushing on 19 carries.

The Braves will next play host to Kennewick at 7 p.m. Friday in a battle of 5-0 teams.

KENNEWICK 42, HANFORD 7: The host Lions got a big game from senior running back Myles Mayovsky, who rushed 13 times for 87 yards and two touchdowns, and caught three passes for 42 yards and another score.

Kennewick quarterback

Dayton Davis added 120 yards passing with the TD pass to Mayovsky, and another 56 yards rushing, with two scores, on seven carries.

WALLA WALLA 56, HERMISTON 14: The host Blue Devils put this game away with 28 third-quarter points.

Logan Ashbeck led the way, rushing 17 times for 154 yards and four touchdowns. He also tossed one TD pass.

Jake Humphrey added 135 yards rushing and two TD runs, as well as a receiving touchdown.

Hermiston quarterback Chase Elliott led the Bulldogs, scoring on touchdown runs of 65 and 11 yards, and finishing with 78 yards rushing on 11 carries.

POST FALLS 51, PASCO 7: Jamie Townsend scored on a 10-yard run to knot the game at 7-7, but it wasn't enough as the host Bulldogs lost to Post Falls. Jake Bustamonte scored on two TD runs for the visitors, who scored 44 unanswered points in the non-league game.

SUNNYSIDE 20, WENATCHEE 10: The visiting Grizzlies outscored the Panthers 13-0 in the second half to win their second Big Nine Confer-

ence game of the season. Logan Rodriguez was 21-for-30 for 232 yards passing and three touchdowns.

Noah McNair caught five of those passes for 119 yards and a score, while Myles Newhouse continued his great season by rushing 26 times for 94 yards, and catching three passes for 29 more yards.

MCC STANDINGS
Kamiakin 5-0 MCC, 5-0 overall

Kennewick 4-0, 5-0
Richland 4-1, 4-1
Chiawana 2-2, 2-3
Walla Walla 2-3, 2-3
Southridge 1-3, 2-3
Pasco 1-3, 1-4
Hanford 1-4, 1-4
Hermiston 0-4, 0-5

FRIDAY, OCT. 1

Kamiakin 39, Southridge 6
Kennewick 42, Hanford 7
Post Falls 51, Pasco 7
Richland 14, Chiawana 0
Walla Walla 56, Hermiston 14

FRIDAY, OCT. 8

All kickoffs at 7 p.m.
Kennewick at Kamiakin, Lamson Stadium
Pasco at Hanford, Fran Rish Stadium
Richland at Mead, Union Stadium, Spokane
Southridge at Hermiston
Walla Walla at Chiawana, Edgar Brown Stadium

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