



## Late Stunner:Goal line stop sends Panthers to victory

By **Matt Jenkins** , Staff Writer

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GLOUCESTER - According to the Newell Stadium scoreboard, the game was over.

But the Beverly High football substitutes who spilled onto the field in delight were sent back to the sideline by the officials for one more play. For despite having stopped Gloucester on two straight quarterback sneaks from the 1-foot line, the Panther defense was being asked to do it one more time.

They responded - and with it recorded their biggest victory of the decade.

Gloucester fullback Andrew Fulford took the handoff from quarterback Bryan Sanborn and crashed into the line. When the pile of football players were peeled off Fulford, the officials revealed the powerful back was stopped inches shy of the end zone, sending the Panthers and their fans into a wild celebration after an amazing 20-18 victory before 3,500-plus fans at Newell Stadium.

"This is the best game I've ever played in, no doubt. It was up and down the whole game," Beverly tailback Pat Bailey said, after the senior captain torched the Fishermen for 193 yards on 17 carries and all three of his team's touchdowns.

"I'm probably not going to bed. I've got a Saturday morning to look forward to; I can sleep in. I'm going to be jacked up all night."

Beverly (8-1) came up with three critical defensive stops on Gloucester (8-2) to head back down Route 128 with the taste of sweet victory in their mouths.

The Panthers stuffed Fulford on a 4th-and-1 on the Beverly 16-yard line late in the first half to hold onto a 13-12 lead. They added a huge stop in the fourth quarter, forcing the Fishermen to punt after Beverly had fallen behind, 18-13. The ensuing snap sailed over Gloucester punter Cam Scola's head, resulting in the Panthers taking over on downs inside Gloucester's 5.

The third and final defensive stop was obviously the game-saver.

"You don't get much bigger than that," said Beverly inside linebacker J. Michael Nardella, another senior captain. "I couldn't tell who made the big hit (on Fulford). It was just kind of a flash. Everyone was just going crazy."

Beverly gets lots of credit for its high-powered running game, led by the lightning-fast Bailey - who increased his season output to 1,255 yards and 18 touchdowns through 7 1/2 games. But head coach Dan Bauer knows his team would have more than one loss if it weren't for the Panthers' defense.

"It's one of the best games I've ever been involved in as a coach or a player," Bauer, who played Ivy League college football,

said. "I couldn't be more proud of my kids, because they showed character and poise. It came down to the defense again - and they got it done."

Beverly's offense got it done in the first half.

Bailey hushed the spirited Gloucester crowd with a 66-yard touchdown run on the second play of the game, but Gloucester answered with an impressive 13-play, 72-yard drive that was capped by Fulford's 4-yard score. Gloucester missed the extra point and the Panthers led, 7-6.

On Beverly's next possession, Bailey broke a 48-yard run down to the Gloucester 28-yard line. After a Gloucester was hit with a facemask penalty, Bailey scored from 19-yards out for 13-6. Once again the Fishermen responded, covering 54 yards in six plays. Brian Harnish scored on a 7-yard dive, but Gloucester missed the two-point conversion and Beverly led 13-12 at halftime.

Sanborn's 1-yard keeper with 6:36 left in the game gave Gloucester the upper hand. But Beverly refused to give up, even after failing to move the ball on its next possession.

Beverly forced the three-and-punt on Gloucester - then caught the break it was looking for.

"Anything can happen in a game like this," Nardella said. "It's just going to come down to heart. We're talking about inches, so you have to bring anything you can find."

After Scola was dragged down at the 2, Bailey crashed in to put the Panthers up for good.

Gloucester went 69 yards on its final possession thanks to some precision passing and a pass interference call that put them right on the doorstep.

"For us to go that distance was just unbelievable," Gloucester coach Paul Ingram said. "I thought we scored. The kids said we scored on the second quarterback sneak, but what are you going to do? You're not going to go wide. You're on the 1-foot line. It was just a great football game between two teams that played so hard."

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