

[Home](#) > [Beverly Citizen](#) > [Sports](#)

 E-mail
  Graphic
  Popular

Panthers ground Witches

By **Peter Legasey**/ beverly@cnc.com

Thursday, November 30, 2006

In a land where the Thanksgiving dust-up between the Beverly High School Panthers and the Salem High Witches ranks second only to Halloween on the hierarchy of annual social events, perhaps it was only fitting that the stage for Thursday's game at Hurd Stadium was one set with animal whiskers painted on young faces and scrawls of orange and black streamers and balloons ... or at least, that was the case for half the crowd on hand.

And the other half was on the Salem side of the stands.

For Beverly, it was a chance to put the cap on a stellar year which had the Panthers entering the game against their cross-bridge rivals with an 8-1 record, their best mark since 1998, when the current seniors on the team were all in elementary school.

For Salem, it was a chance to give themselves a winning record in a season in which they worked hard to compile a 5-4 record against some tough competition. The Witch coven was also looking to put a halt to a three-game losing streak in their heated rivalry with the Wildcats.

Beverly not only put a cap on their A-plus semester of football, they stamped it with an exclamation point and even added a few underlines and gold stars for extra credit as they aced their test against the Witches with a 28-7 romp that may have been even more lopsided than the final score would indicate.

Just how lopsided was it? Beverly ran 39 plays over the course of the game. Salem ran all of 13. Beverly had control of the ball for a total of 33.5 minutes. Salem had possession for a mere 14.5 minutes.

How the Panthers were able to be so greedy with the ball was no mystery. Beverly put on a ground-game clinic, led, as usual, by tailback Pat Bailey and senior captain J. Michael Nardella.

"I don't think you can say enough about them," said Panthers Head Coach Dan Bauer. "Offensively, we've rushed for over 2,000 yards in the last two seasons in no small part because our tailback and fullback tandem. They're outstanding."

"Outstanding" might be the understatement of the week. Bailey alone racked up a whopping 243 yards with a pair of touchdowns on the afternoon, and Nardella - who also made his presence felt on defense with a team-high nine tackles and a sack as a middle linebacker - contributed 64 yards and a touchdown of his own. As if that weren't enough, the Panthers also got 31 yards from junior running back Greg Pierce.

Salem High Head Coach Scott Connelly knew his team had their work cut out for them just to slow down Beverly's rushing attack.

"We had to try to shut them down, but we looked at it as 'bend but don't break,' and in the first half, we did that."

The Witches' defense did indeed fight valiantly in the first half, repeatedly laying hard hits on any Panther that crossed their path. All of Salem's heavy hitting, however, was not enough to prevent Beverly High from going into halftime up 14-0, courtesy of a 1-yard run by quarterback Nick Tanzella on the opening drive of the game, and a 1-yard punch-in by Nardella with only a few seconds remaining in the half.

Beverly was ready to match the level of physical play brought on by the Witches.



"We really wanted to hit hard today," said Bailey. "That was pretty much our goal and I think we did a good job of that."

The persistence of Bailey and the Panthers' offense paid off in the fourth quarter when the punishing workload began to take a toll on the Salem defense. Bailey was able to torch the tired, cold and soaking wet group for a 28-yard touchdown run early in the period.

For a brief moment, it looked like the Witches were ready to mount a major comeback when senior captain Anthony Silva made a phenomenal leaping catch of a 12-yard pass from Nick Charlton on fourth down to make the score 21-7. Their momentum was short lived, however, as Beverly came back to score again on a 58-yard touchdown run on the very next drive by - you guessed it - Pat Bailey.

"I was just thinking, 'The more points we can get, the better,'" said Bailey. "With these sloppy conditions,

Herald Interactive Tools

-  [Recent articles](#)
-  [E-mail article to a friend](#)
-  [Graphic version](#)
-  [Search site](#)
-  [Sign up for home delivery](#)

anything can happen."

And sloppy they were. Fans in the crowd of over 7,000 did their best to drown out the roaring winds with their cheers while munching on soggy popcorn beneath their umbrellas. For the Beverly supporters, the rain and cold became a little easier to deal with as they basked in the warming glow of a victory for their Panthers in this 108-year-old rivalry. For folks on the Salem side, however, the only thing to keep them warm was the thought of getting home and sitting down for the big Thanksgiving meal that awaited them.



Recent articles

- School and city consolidations progress
Briscoe gets help to fight drug abuse
Mayflower renovation warmly received
Ventron condos pass unanimously
Screwball comedy challenges high school cast

Today's most read Town Online articles Updated 7:33 PM ET

- 1. Obituaries
2. Obituaries
3. Letters to the editor
4. Obituaries
5. Community mourning young teen

Search the site



Enterprise-level broadband service provided by Expedient: America's Largest All-Ethernet Network



towerstream

Wireless broadband service provided by Towerstream

[contact us] :: [print advertising] :: [online advertising] :: [Browser Upgrade] :: [Jobs]

Order Home Delivery Online: Weekly papers Daily papers or call 1.800.982.4023

© Copyright of GateHouse Media and Herald Interactive, Inc.

No portion of townonline.com or its content may be reproduced without the owner's written permission. Privacy Commitment

bh.heraldinteractive.com: www.townonline.com: 0.048086:Fri, 01 Dec 2006 01:00:00 GMT