

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

 E-mail
  Graphic
  Popular

Panthers in a dog fight

By **Mike Rubin**/ Correspondent

Wednesday, November 22, 2006 - Updated: **11:47 AM EST**

After accomplishing their finest campaign in eight years, the Beverly High football team aims to finish out the season in grand fashion. With an impressive 8-1 mark, the Panthers will battle arch-rivals Salem at Hurd Stadium in the 108th Thanksgiving Day showdown. Despite the Panthers' fine run in the Northeast Conference, Coach Dan Bauer knows that his troops can't take anything for granted.

Following a winless 0-11 mark in 2004, the Witches have emerged as a formidable opponent in the Northeastern Conference, posting a 5-4 record.

"Salem's a much improved team, and it's going to be a dog fight," said Bauer. "They have a 1,000 rusher, and they have some very talented offensive and defensive players. The Thanksgiving Day game alone is like a brand new season, and all the records go out the window. Everyone starts at 0-0, so it doesn't matter what the records are."

Recently, the Panthers accomplished a milestone after defeating Gloucester for the first time since 1994. Led by a strong goal line stand along with a 193-yard rushing performance by running back Pat Bailey, the Panthers escaped with a 20-18 thrilling victory over the Fishermen. With the game on the line, the Panthers' defensive line stopped a fourth goal at the one in the waning minutes to preserve the victory.

"Our defense came up huge with that (goal line) stand," said Bauer. "We showed a lot of mental toughness and we could've caved in. But the kids played some phenomenal defense, against a great team like Gloucester. It was a great moment for the program, and all hard work these kids had put forth over the course of the season had paid off."

Other impressive wins for the Panthers included a 31-22 victory over Lynn Classical along with a rain soaked 21-0 shutout over Saugus. Earlier in the season, the Panthers dominated Swampscott in a 34-7 whitewashing along with a season opening 41-12 win over Lynn English. In a convincing 35-14 win over Danvers, running back/receiver Greg Pierce had a game to remember, recording four touchdowns, three rushing and one receiving, while accumulating close to 200 yards in total offense.

"We had a lot of high points this season, and that's an attribute to the dedication of these kids," said Bauer. "We had some great wins over Swampscott, Danvers, Lynn English and Classical, and that's a great accomplishment for the program. We've made some huge strides over the season, and we're hoping we can finish the season at (9-1)."

Leading the way for the Panthers has been senior running back Pat Bailey, who's accumulated over 1,200 yards along with 18 touchdowns. Also contributing on the ground attack has been fullback David Mock, who's garnered over 500 yards and eight touchdowns.

Manning the Panthers' successive offensive line has been the nucleus of Nick Doig, Nick Traicoff along with Liam Blodgett, Brian Karuta, Nate Verry and tight end Nate Verry.

"We've gotten over 2,000 yards rushing this season from the backfield, and the offensive line deserves a lot of the credit," said Bauer. "They open the holes at the line of scrimmage and keep things moving downfield. They work hard in the trenches, and they've just done an incredible job."

At quarterback is Nick Tanzella, who's completed 37 out of 65 passes for over 400 yards for four touchdowns and two interceptions.

"He's done a great job leading the offense," said Bauer. "He's very efficient and rarely makes any mistakes. He's a great leader on and off the field and he's a pleasure to coach."

Defensively, senior lineman J. Michael Nardella is the Panthers' leading tackler with well over 100 tackles. Another force has been the emergence of Verry, who's right behind Nardella, recording 87 tackles.

"Our defense has been outstanding this season," said Bauer. "(Nardella) has done a great job stopping the big plays, and (Verry) is a solid two-way player. We're an experienced squad, and defensively, we've been able to make the big plays when we've had to."

Best feet forward

While the Panthers may have established their best season since 1998, there won't be any trip to the



Quarterback Nick Tanzella fakes and runs against Winthrop in a late-September game. (Boston Herald photo)

Herald Interactive Tools



[Recent articles](#)



[E-mail article to a friend](#)



[Graphic version](#)



[Search site](#)



[Sign up for home delivery](#)

Division 2A playoffs, as a result to their lone defeat (40-7) to Winthrop. Despite missing the playoffs, Bauer has been more than pleased with his team's performance throughout the course of the season.

"It's been an incredible season, and everyone has come through and put their best foot forward," said Bauer. "I couldn't be any happier with the efforts these kids put forth since the beginning of the pre-season."

Since the beginning of the millennium, the Panthers have controlled the rivalry, but Bauer knows that this showdown will be quite different than in years past.

"It's a breakthrough year for their (Salem) program," said Bauer. "They've had a great season and they've been in every game. They battled Gloucester to a tough (6-0) loss and they've beaten a lot of the teams we have. I expect it to be a battle out there, and it's going to be a challenge."

With 20 seniors departing from this year's squad, Bauer is optimistic that the Panthers will walk away from Hurd Stadium with a victory.

"It's been a special year, especially for the seniors," Bauer said. "There's a lot of pride on the line, and we're hoping that we'll be able to finish out a memorable year with a win."



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



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: 0.100817:Wed, 22 Nov 2006 16:47:11 GMT