



## Winthrop rolls over Beverly

By Matt Jenkins

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WINTHROP - The "Big Game" never materialized for the Beverly High football team.

Proving its Northeastern Conference dominance once again last night, Winthrop used stout defense, a balanced offensive arsenal and a clear special teams advantage to throttle the Panthers, 40-7, in a battle of unbeaten squads at Miller Field.

In a matter of one minute and forty seconds, a battle of field position turned into 14 quick points that snowballed into a wild run for the Vikings.

Holding onto a two-touchdown advantage at halftime, Winthrop added a 26-point third quarter to severely dampen the Panthers' hopes of running to an NEC title.

"You would wish that in your dreams," Winthrop coach Tony Fucillo said about the 33-point victory. "I never would have believed that we would have such an offensive output against a very good Beverly team."

Beverly may have come into the game featuring arguably the league's best player in Pat Bailey. But it was clear very early on that this game was about being the best *team*.

Bailey did his part in the early going, rushing for 51 first half yards. But the speedy tailback tweaked an ankle that kept the Panther captain on the sidelines after intermission.

During that time, the Vikings churned out big play after big play.

Winthrop (4-0), which has now won 20 of 23 games at Miller Field over the last three years, is the NEC's defending champion, and has played in several big games over the past few years. Beverly (3-1), meanwhile, was getting its first taste of regular season hype since 1998, when the Panthers finished the season 9-1.

Fucillo felt that was a factor.

"I think we've been in the big game the last bunch of years," said Fucillo, whose team beat Danvers in the next-to-last week of the season a year ago to win the NEC crown. "Sometimes it's tough to step into the big game."

The Panthers are obviously not out of the title chase with six games to play, but Winthrop (4-0) is currently speeding along like a runaway train. Once Winthrop gets momentum on its side, it becomes nearly impossible to stop.

The Vikings got on the board on a 6-yard touchdown pass from James Fucillo to Mark Shannon and pounced on a loose ball

on the ensuing kickoff. Four plays later, Jason Griffin slipped in from a yard out for a 14-0 lead heading into halftime.

"It was a momentum swing for them," Beverly coach Dan Bauer said about Winthrop's recovered kickoff. "They executed on that first drive (of the second half), though. That's always key, the first drive of the second half. It's a situation where we had a pretty good run coming up to this game and Winthrop was just better than us tonight."

Winthrop got possession to start the second half well into Beverly territory after a good kick return by Matt Murray and the 15 yards that were tacked on as a result of the Panther personal foul. Four plays and 37 yards later, after Murray's 6-yard TD run, Winthrop had built a seemingly insurmountable 21-0 lead.

"The first drive in the third quarter really hurt them," Fucillo agreed.

Fucillo hit Anthony Giuliano with a 32-yard TD pass, Murray added a 24-yard touchdown run and sophomore Chris Beranger scored from 29 yards out for a 40-0 lead with seven seconds to play in the third quarter.

Beverly's only scored came when Greg Pierce returned the ensuing kickoff 85 yards for a score.

There's still a long way to go in the season and Bauer hopes to find a way to turn this loss into a learning experience.

"I don't know if you could ever say getting beat like that is a learning experience," Bauer said. "You learn from every game. I know our kids will bounce back."

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