



Beverly, Pierce come up short against Lynn Classical

By **Matt Jenkins**, Staff Writer

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LYNN - Beverly High senior running back Greg Pierce ran for more than 200 yards again last night, adding to what has already been a phenomenal start this season.

But it's a simple half-yard that he and the Panthers will agonize over for the next week.

Facing a 4th-and-5 at the Lynn Classical 23-yard-line with less than three minutes to play, a potential game-winning drive was halted when Pierce's out-stretched arm wasn't enough to pick up a crucial first down, crushing the Panthers' hopes in an 18-13 loss to the Rams.

The measurement revealed Beverly was half-yard short, and relieved a tense Matt Durgin on the Lynn Classical sideline.

"I was scared. Well, not scared, but I was concerned with Pierce," Durgin, the Classical coach, said. "Every time Pierce touches it, he's capable of a big play. I don't care what team he's playing. I thought we did a good job containing him, but then - bang - he hits you with a home run."

Pierce belted a pair of homers last night. He tied the game at 6-6 late in the first quarter with a 98-yard touchdown sprint that immediately followed a Curtis Manuel interception. Classical loaded up the line of scrimmage, hoping to catch the Panthers in the backfield, but Pierce found a hole and out-ran a very fast Classical secondary.

In the second half, Pierce changed direction three or four times on his way to a 65-yard touchdown run that cut Classical's lead to just five (18-13) early in the fourth quarter. Pierce finished with 214 yards on 14 carries, just a week after running for 250.

All of his yardage and big plays set up the critical fourth down play late in the game, but Beverly coach Dan Bauer knew the outcome was decided by more than just one play.

"We didn't play a very good first half," Bauer said. "The kids answered the call in the second half and we brought it down close. It came down to the fourth down play and they had to come out and measure it."

Beverly should be applauded for making it a game. Aside from Pierce's 98-yard touchdown run, Classical dominated the first half by piling up 177 yards on the ground, distributed almost evenly between four backs.

The second half was a different story.

Beverly clamped down on defense, making sure the Rams didn't break anything to the outside. Sean Deady also made a big play on special teams, blocking a Classical punt. Although the blocked punt didn't directly lead to points, it seemed to inspire the Panthers.

Early in the fourth quarter, Beverly stopped Classical on a 4th-and-1, then Pierce went 65 yards for a score on the next play.

"The focus in the second half was on defense. We wanted to attack them a little bit more, go after them and not allow them to get the perimeter, as they did in the first half," Bauer said. "We also tried to get things turned around with a big special teams play. We got the block and the momentum, but we also wanted to keep them off balance (on offense)."

Pierce did all of his damage on just 14 carries, and Beverly did a good job of mixing in tailback Rashad Sims, quarterback Mark Theriault and fullback Dave Patnaude.

"Pierce had a couple big ones, but we can't be a one-dimensional team," Bauer said. "And I don't think we are."

Quivari Jackson was the big-play man for the Rams, scoring on a 52-yard touchdown pass from Alex Watler and breaking a long run after Beverly failed to pick up the first down late in the game. Cameron Smith also scored twice for the Rams.

"It came down to that fourth down play, but really it didn't because we didn't play a very good first half," Bauer said. "The kids showed a lot of character in the second half. We've got nine games to go, and I really like this squad. I think we're going to have a good season, but we have a lot of work to do."

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