



Swampscott takes charge Big Blue now control NEC Small destiny by pounding Panthers

By Matt Williams , Staff writer
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SWAMPSCOTT - Beverly's Greg Pierce owned the first 12 minutes of yesterday's Northeastern Conference Small football showdown between his Panthers and host Swampscott at Blocksidge Field.

The final 34 minutes, however, belonged to Big Blue quarterback Peter Kinchley.

Kinchley racked up over 300 total yards of offense and led his team to 27 unanswered points in a resounding 34-13 victory.

"Peter was the man today," said Swampscott coach Steve Dembowski, whose club inched a step closer to its first playoff berth since 2003. Winners of four straight, the 8-1 Big Blue are the lone unbeaten team in NEC Small play and need just one win in their final two games (against Danvers and Marblehead) to clinch.

The visiting Panthers fell to 5-4 on the season (3-1 NEC Small), snapping a four-game winning streak of their own.

In search of their first NEC title in 19 years, the Panthers came out firing on all cylinders. Pierce opened the scoring on a nifty cutback from 53 yards out on Beverly's first possession and added a 54-yard scoring scamper to spot his team a 13-7 lead early in the second quarter. The dynamic senior totaled 140 yards and two touchdowns in the first half alone.

But Kinchley had the answer in both his right arm and, surprisingly, his legs.

The senior signal caller completed 20 of 27 passes for 225 yards and also ran for a season-high 78 yards. He delivered the go-ahead score with an 11-yard scamper, then broke the Panthers' backs before halftime.

A 10-yard pass to Justin Mitchell as time expired in the first half capped a 75-yard drive, and Kinchley came back with another scoring strike to Mitchell - this one from 19 yards out - on the opening drive of the second half.

"We've been struggling all year to have a game where the offense would really take over - and today was it," said Dembowski.

The Panthers managed just nine yards on their lone possession of the third quarter, allowing Swampscott to extend their advantage with a 4-yard run from Kyle Shonio that made it 34-13.

The advantage allowed the Big Blue defense to take chances and key on Pierce, who was held to just 16 yards on six touches in the second half and finished with 156 yards rushing.

"When they got ahead by two touchdowns, they were able to really pin their ears back and come at us," said Beverly coach Dan Bauer. "In big games it comes down to big plays, and unfortunately we weren't able to swing the momentum our way in the second half."

Beverly's power running attack isn't built to come from behind - and certainly couldn't do so from the sidelines with the Big Blue controlling time of possession throughout the second half.

"We carried the ball so much that our defense only really had to defend three possessions (after halftime)," said Dembowski. "We've been waiting all year to play a complete game, and today we got production from everybody."

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