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Beranger's 4 TDs spoils Beverly's home finale

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BEVERLY - Fans at Hurd Stadium on an overcast, chilly Saturday afternoon in November got to see the future of Northeastern Conference football.

His name is Chris Beranger.

A junior halfback for the Winthrop High football team, Beranger had a career game here Saturday, scoring four touchdowns as the Vikings guaranteed themselves a winning season with a 34-21 triumph over the Panthers.

Playing its final home game of the season, Beverly had no answer for Beranger (130 yards), who scored on runs of 38 and 17 yards, caught a 22-yard touchdown pass and returned an interception from his strong safety spot 81 yards for another score. That pickoff, coming in the final minute before halftime, gave the visitors a commanding 28-7 lead at the break.

The loss, Beverly's second straight, dropped the Orange-and-Black to 5-5 on the season. They must travel across the bridge and defeat Salem (which is also 5-5) at Bertram Field on Thanksgiving Day to secure a second straight winning season.

Beranger's monster day offset a fine performance by Beverly's own explosive junior tailback, Rashad Sims. The 160-pound speedster had a game-high 166 yards and a pair of touchdowns, highlighted by an 82-yard scamper to paydirt early in the fourth quarter.

Earlier, Sims had scored on a 14-yard run to make it 7-7 in the second quarter before Winthrop (6-4) produced three unanswered touchdowns before intermission.

Sims' effort was needed, particularly on a day when the Panthers lost star tailback and captain Greg Pierce for nearly a full quarter due to injury. Pierce, who is 57 yards short of breaking the school record for most rushing yards in a season (he sits at 1,442 yards this year), suffered a nasty cut on his right arm when it collided with a Winthrop player's helmet, and needed stitches after the game.

"That was quite a gash Greg suffered; I'll admit I didn't think he'd be back," said Beverly head coach Dan Bauer, whose father, Dan. Sr., was in from St. Louis for the game. "He might not have been his full speed self, but he came back and played as hard as he always does. And Rashad had a terrific game; he hit the hole a few times and was gone.

"I think it says a lot about our kids that we were trailing by three scores at halftime and could have packed it in or kept fighting, and they chose to keep fighting."

In addition to Beranger's terrific afternoon, Winthrop also got 141 rushing yards and a 41-yard TD run from captain Joe McDermott.

"I think this might have been Joe's best game of the season, the way he ran hard and chewed up yardage," said Winthrop head coach Sean Driscoll. "And Chris Beranger, what a game he had. He was solid on both sides of the football."

Despite the loss, Beverly did have some strong individual performances. In particular, Chris Bushey had a fine game making tackles both at outside linebacker and on the kickoff team, while fellow senior linebacker Paul Drinkwater also had a nose for the ball all afternoon. Sophomore Nick Kozlowski was a ball hawk at linebacker as well, while senior fullback Dave Patnaude - who threw a terrific block to free Sims on his 14-yard TD run - plunged into the end zone himself from three yards out for his team's final score of the day.