



## Beverly steals momentum, then overpowers Saugus

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October 27, 2008 12:34 am

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SAUGUS — Five plays, 54 seconds and one lead change was enough to completely alter the complexion of a football game Saturday afternoon.

After coughing up a second-quarter lead with a careless turnover, Beverly buckled down and marched 66 yards in five plays to regain the lead and avoid a stern halftime talking-to by Panthers head coach Dan Bauer in the process.

Both teams responded to the first half's final drive: Beverly rolled through the second half with momentum on its side, while Saugus deflated faster than a pin-pierced balloon.

The Panthers played a near-perfect third quarter and cruised to a 35-13 win at Stackpole Field, then dedicated the victory to the Fortunato family. Army Spc. Stephen Fortunato, a 25-year-old infantryman from Beverly, was killed in Afghanistan when the armored Humvee he drove in was blown up by a bomb last week.

Bauer announced the game ball would be given to the Fortunato family in the postgame huddle.

"It was a great way to end the half and it set the momentum for the second half," junior quarterback Mark Hannable said about the second-quarter drive. "We calmed down a little bit and it picked us up."

Hannable connected on 4 of 5 pass attempts on the drive, the only incomplection being an intentional spike to stop the clock. Junior Justin Marr grabbed Hannable's pass on a wide receiver slip screen and took it 26 yards for the score that tied the game at 13-13. George Louis added the extra point for the halftime lead.

Beverly (6-1, 2-0 in the Northeastern Conference Small division) needed to steal the momentum after a botched shotgun snap gave Saugus prime field position at the Panther 31. The Sachems needed only six plays to score. Quarterback Bret Reid scored on a 2-yard keeper for a short-lived 13-7 advantage.

"That (drive) hurt us," Saugus (4-2, 0-2) coach Mike Broderick said. "We got the play on the fumble, which changed the momentum. They went right down and scored on us, and we didn't make an effort to stop them. That was disheartening."

Things only got worse for Saugus in the third quarter.

Beverly forced a quick three-and-punt, then needed only one play to score when Rashad Sims raced 39 yards untouched for a 20-13 lead.

Another three-and-out put the ball back in the Panthers hands and it took only two plays before Sims was racing into the end zone again, this time from 46 yards out.

Saugus had some success moving the ball on its third possession of the second half, but the drive stalled at the Beverly 41-yard line. On 2nd-and-1 from midfield, Hannable connected with Steve Dubois for a back-breaking TD.

"We scored three times in five plays, which is unbelievable," Hannable said. "I think that's the best we've ever played."

Beverly's defense, led by Peter Kallas, Curtis Manuel and Mark Connors, was also tremendous in the third quarter.

"That was a good quarter of football," Bauer said. "It was fun to play and watch the kids execute. We've been trying to put it together on offense. We've sputtered here and there, so it was nice to see them play with continuity and more confidence."

Hannable was brilliant, connecting on 11-of-18 passes for 197 yards and two scores. He completed his last five passes and converted seven of his last eight, the one incomplection being the intentional spike on the first half's final drive. Sims was also sharp once again, finishing with 139 yards on 11 carries.

Hannable also scored on a 34-yard touchdown run to get Beverly on the board in the first quarter.

"There were some slight adjustments in the second half, but they just seemed to get a little more energy at halftime," Broderick said. "We came out flat. I don't think we recovered from that drive."

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