



## Game of the Week: Peabody an easier sell as a worthy foe for Beverly

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October 09, 2008 12:56 am

The Beverly High football coaches made an extra effort to create a greater awareness of the Peabody Tanners at practice this week.

"Hey, they're better than you think they are," an assistant coach shouted as the Panthers were wrapping up a session at Beverly High earlier this week.

That was no coaching propaganda. Trying to sell the players on playing with intensity and emotion against Peabody might've been difficult the previous two years, when the Tanners were compiling a 2-19 record. But Beverly (3-1) had better pay attention in tomorrow's game (7 p.m.) at Peabody.

The Tanners (2-2) are no longer the automatic 'W' on everyone's schedule. They're coming off wins over Arlington (23-21) and Danvers (21-14) the last two weeks and looking for their first three-game winning streak since 2004.

They refuse to be taken lightly. Better yet, they don't want to be taken at all.

"I think the way (Peabody) looks at it, it's them against the world," said Peter Kallas, who starts at guard and linebacker for the Panthers. "They're physical and going to want this game. It's going to be a dogfight."

Peabody is sick of losing, and it has made enormous strides under new head coach Scott Wlasuk. The Tanners have developed a solid running game led by Nick Hiou, who is the second leading rusher on the North Shore with 467 yards on 81 carries. Throw in Kevin Bettencourt (196 yards), Mark D'addario (189) and Jon Balacer (161), and you have a team that's shown it can control the line of scrimmage.

"They're really good," Beverly head coach Dan Bauer said of Peabody. "Their backs get to the second level pretty quickly, and they've executed very well. Defensively, they get after it. Kevin Bettencourt (linebacker) seems to be in on every tackle.

"We're 3-1 and that looks good on paper, but we need to get better in every area. Our defense has played well, but our offense has sputtered. This is going to be an attitude game for us. We need to set the tone for our (Northeastern Conference) games."

Beverly still has to be favored tomorrow night based on its record and the fact that the Tanners have yet to beat a team in the Panthers' class. This is really a climb-the-ladder challenge for Peabody; Wlasuk's team has to prove it can beat a so-called superior opponent.

"No disrespect meant to Arlington or Danvers, but Beverly has had great success in recent times," said Wlasuk. "They were 9-1 (in 2006) and had a winning record (6-5) last season. It's a veteran team that knows how to win."

Beverly has turned to the spread offense this fall with mixed results thus far. Junior quarterback Mark Hannable is 18 for 35 passing for 289 yards and four touchdowns, but overall, the Panthers have lacked consistency.

It'll help the Panthers if leading rusher Rashad Sims (217 yards), who carried the ball only three times in last week's 21-0 win over Revere, is back to full strength after getting banged up against Gloucester two weeks ago. If he isn't, Dylan Terry (21 carries, 62 yards for the season) and Hannable (31 carries, 66 yards) are the likely candidates to make Peabody honor the running game.

"It would be a huge step and a big momentum boost if we can beat Beverly," said Wlasuk, "but we also have to understand it's not the end of the world if doesn't work out. We're still in the process of establishing our own identity, and you don't do that in just one game."

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#### Photos



Senior Giani Dicesare and the Beverly High football team are hoping to surge towards their fourth win in five games tomorrow night when they travel to Coley Lee Field to take on the suddenly surging Peabody Tanners. Staff Photo