



## No Magic needed: Marblehead stuns Beverly football

By Phil Stacey  
Sports editor

November 03, 2008 12:32 am

BEVERLY — Teenagers know exactly how to put things in the proper perspective.

Take Marblehead's historic 33-30 football triumph over Beverly Saturday afternoon at Hurd Stadium, the first time a Magicians' team had defeated the Black-and-Orange in a dozen years.

More importantly, it kept Marblehead unbeaten in Northeastern Conference Small play at 2-0 and puts them one victory away from their first winning season since 1992 — with three games to make it happen.

"How good does *this* feel?" senior captain Sam Perlow asked quarterback Hayes Richardson, a huge smile cascading over the big tight end's face.

"I haven't felt this good since I got my Xbox 360," retorted Richardson.

In as wild and wonderful a game that has been seen on the North Shore this autumn, the upstart Magicians (5-3 overall) shot out to a 21-0 lead just four-and-a-half minutes into the game, leaving the home side of the stands stunned.

After Ian McKinley's second field goal of the game, coming on the first play of the fourth quarter, gave Marblehead a seemingly comfortable 20-point lead (27-7), the Panthers awoke from their slumber and almost pulled off the comeback of all comebacks. The hosts scored 23 points in the final stanza — including a blocked extra point that was run all the way back by Rashad Sims for two points — but their efforts fell just short.

"How many games like this would we have lost in the past?" asked Richardson, and rightfully so. "That just goes to prove that we're a different team this year; a different team with a winning attitude."

The Magicians were a loose and confident team upon entering Hurd Stadium Saturday. They had spent Friday night together — players and coaches — playing laser tag in Danvers ("I had 45 players all gunning for me," laughed Chernovetz) and having a team meal.

"We were ready for this one," said Richardson, whose team put up the most points against a Beverly team since — are you ready for this? — 1940, when they won handily over the Panthers, 39-0.

They were also thrilled that none of the five football prognosticators at this newspaper picked them to win. "I pumped my fist when I saw that," said Chernovetz. "We taped that right up on our locker room wall. We wanted them all to know we were a 'no-fer' pick again."

That was no surprise, considering that the Panthers (6-2, 1-1 NEC Small) had won an amazing 20 of their last 21 games against the Magicians and 25 of the last 27 meetings dating back to 1981.

Sims, Beverly's ever-elusive senior tailback, had another terrific game with 181 yards on 23 carries and three touchdowns. With three games to play he already has 957 yards and has found paydirt 10 times.

Not to be outdone, Richardson, Marblehead's junior signal-caller, proved he belongs among the area's upper echelon of QBs by throwing for 217 yards and a pair of scores. He also had a 1-yard touchdown run.

He spread the ball out to six different receivers, the biggest of those being senior Dan Comeau. He caught on three passes, but two of those were enormous: a 45-yarder early in the fourth quarter, and the other a play that could very well come to define Marblehead's entire season.

The Panthers had just sliced their deficit to 27-21 on quarterback Mark Hannable's 1-yard keeper with 6:11 to play, culminating a 10-play, 96-yard drive. Many in the crowd sensed that Marblehead was ready to fall apart.

Offensive coordinator Mike Giardi wasn't one of them. The Magicians' assistant coach called for a long pass on his team's very next play, and Richardson caught the Beverly defense off-guard. In doing so, he fired a seed to Comeau, who was all alone, and raced 68 yards into the Panther end zone untouched. Although the extra point was blocked (and returned by Sims), the Magicians had rebuild their lead to 33-23.

"I was really hoping we'd come out with a home run play right there," said Richardson. "I was dying for it; I felt like we could change the momentum of the game back towards us."

But Beverly wouldn't stop fighting until the final whistle. Sims powered his way over left guard from three yards out with 2:32 to go to shave the deficit down to three points, but the Panthers' onside kick attempt was recovered by Marblehead's Tom Powers, and two first downs later the visitors were able to run out the clock.

The contest also featured five interceptions and four fumbles, with Marblehead picking off four passes and losing all four fumbles.

Copyright © 1999-2008 cnhi, inc.