

Game of the Week: Defense must dictate

By Phil Stacey
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BEVERLY — Like most people who ventured over to Manning Field last Friday evening, Tim Phelps was surprised by what he saw from the Beverly High football team.

But most people who were in attendance that night don't have to try and come up with a game plan to defeat these new-look Panthers.

Phelps, the new head coach at Lynn Classical, does. His Rams will visit Hurd Stadium Saturday (1 p.m.) to battle Beverly in an early-season clash of 1-0 Northeastern Conference teams.

"It looks to me like Beverly has good size and very deceptive speed. Plus, they get to the football fast, wrap up the ballcarrier and tackle them. That was impressive," said Phelps, speaking of the Panthers' 6-0 upset victory over Lynn English.

"Our team has to understand that we're going into a place (Saturday) where it's probably going to be hot, they have a big stadium with a great fan base and a big band. It's a great football atmosphere. We have to be ready to deal with all of that if we want to beat Beverly."

The host Panthers will have some issues of their own in facing Classical. Similar to what they faced against English a week ago, Beverly must concern itself with the Rams' speed, particularly to the outside.

Classical also presents problems with its double-tight, double wing offense that is predicated on misdirection and deception, and sports a defense that constantly sends blitzes to pressure opposing quarterbacks.

"It's a big challenge for us," acknowledged Beverly head coach Dan Bauer, who will be looking for linebackers Steve Dubois, Pete Kallas and Nick Kozlowski, as well as defensive backs Joe Santa Maria and Rashad Sims, to try and put the clamps on Classical's potent offense.

"Classical can hurt you in a lot of different ways, so you really have to be prepared for anything they might throw at you. They're big, physical and fast. They've got some great athletes over there."

Many of them showcased their talents last week as Classical pounded St. Mary's of Lynn, 41-6, in its season opener. Six different players scored on touchdown runs as the Rams piled up 311 yards on the ground — most of that in the first half before letting the reserves play after intermission.

Captains Cameron Smith (an all-NEC defensive back last fall) and Gary Sisson were running backs who each hit paydirt. Calvin Harris is also dangerous, having scored on a 59-yard scamper. Quarterback Keshawn Avery, a junior, managed the offense well, hooking up with Jasper Grassa twice on passes for 62 yards.

Beverly, with its new spread offense a work in progress, counters with Sims (who scored the game's only TD last week) and Dylan Terry in the backfield; Curtis Manuel, Justin Marrs, Santa Maria and Dubois split wide; and junior Mark Hannable under center.

"It was good for us to see how the players reacted in a full speed game last week," Bauer said of his team's new offensive makeup. "We made some mistakes and still have a lot to work on — we've only been running this for a month — but we always look for the effort, and that was certainly there."

Bauer also liked the play of several of his linemen last week, notably tackles Ben Comeau and Ken Mahoney, nose guard Jamie Wolkiewicz, and defensive ends Jason Bance and Comeau.

Phelps said his team has installed some different defensive packages this week to help counter Beverly's spread.

"We've had to put in more coverages," he said. "It's not like Gloucester, where you can try and stack the box with eight guys. It makes it tough when they spread the ball, because they can run and pass equally well."

"Defensively, what impresses me about them is how disciplined they are and the angles that they take to the ball. They stay in their areas and play their assignments.. It's a mentality where everyone gets after to the ball."

Beverly leads the all-time series between the two schools, 29-27-3, although Classical ended a three-year BHS winning streak by prevailing a year ago, 18-13.

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Photos



From left, Beverly football players Rashad Sims, Steve Dubois, Pete Kallas, Nick Kozlowski, and Joe Santa Maria prepare for a drill at practice yesterday. The group has played a key role in Beverly's defense this season.
Staff Photo