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Mistakes doom Classical against Beverly

By Jonathan Weiner / For The Item

BEVERLY -- As ecstatic as it was last week when it won its season opener, the reverse was said of the Lynn Classical football team after Saturday's 28-6 setback to Beverly Saturday afternoon at Hurd Stadium.

The Rams hurt themselves dearly with mistakes, particularly in the first quarter, which led to a pair of quick scores by the Panthers. Classical had just held Beverly on its first possession, and was ready to start out after taking over on its 28. Yet halfback Buddy Ford fumbled after picking up six yards, and the Panthers took over. Halfback Rashard Sims ran for six yards on second-and-ten, then quarterback Mark Hannable gained a first down with a ten-yard sprint to the 18. The Rams (1-1) were penalized for a late hit on the play, which marched the ball to the 9. Hannable then found Sims for a short screen, which he brought into the end zone for the game's first points.

Classical got the ball back on the kickoff, with back Jaquan Huston picking up a first down with a five-yarder to the 30. The Rams were able to move the ball to the 34, but a penalty and negative yardage on a completion pushed the squad back to the 25. The punt by Stephan Bhulasar was blocked by lineman Randy Jones, with Beverly recovering the ball at Classical's 9. It only took the Panthers three plays to extend their lead, on an 8-yard pass from Hannable to Sims late in the period.

"We can't make mistakes, especially against a good team like that," said Classical coach Tim Phelps. "They're very strong, and they took advantage of our errors."

One mistake that the Rams made on their following possession came very close to hurting them as well. Classical regained the ball, and two successive runs by halfback Cameron Smith (12-62) placed the ball at midfield. Back Gary Sisson got the Rams to Beverly's 38 on a seven-yard burst, but a penalty pushed the club backed to the 43. Quarterback Kashawn Avery was then brought down by linebacker Alex Kozlowski for a 12-yard loss back to Classical's 45. After a two-yard pickup by Smith, Avery flung the ball downfield on third-and-25 for an open receiver. The pass was picked off by safety Curtis Manuel, who returned the ball 57 yards to Classical's 21.

The Rams defense held tough, stonewalling Sims at the 5 on fourth-and-goal early in the second period. That set the stage for a nifty 17-play, 95-yard drive that saw Classical answer right before the half. Sisson and Avery each contributed 12-yard gains on successive plays to put the ball at the Rams' 34. The team picked up considerable yardage, with Avery bringing the team into Beverly territory with an 11-yard jaunt to the Panthers' 47. Classical continued to run considerable time off the clock, keeping the ball on the ground on all but one play, with the drive ending when Smith bulldozed his way in for the score seconds before the end of the half.

"It was a nice ride," Phelps said about the drive. "Our ground game was strong on that possession, but we were still hurt by our mistakes."

The Rams kept Beverly off the board in the third quarter, stopping a Panther drive that had spotted the ball on the Classical 19 at one point. On third-and-15, Hannable was thrown for an 11-yard loss by linebacker Darrell Lane (his second on the Beverly drive). Yet Classical couldn't capitalize on that stop, and fumbled the ball away on the third play of its possession.

The Panthers put the game away late in the fourth. Sims finished off a strong Panther drive with a six-yard run. Moments later, Manuel intercepted his second pass from Avery, bringing it back the entire way with just over a minute remaining for the final score.

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