

Big plays, consistent effort send Beverly soaring over Salem

By Phil Stacey
Sports editor

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SALEM — Curtis Manuel was wide open — and he knew it.

Sometimes, that's not such a good thing.

"Those can be the toughest passes to catch," said Beverly High's senior captain and wide receiver. "I just told myself, 'Don't drop it in front of all these people'."

Manuel didn't. His 64-yard touchdown catch — off a flea flicker pass from quarterback Mark Hannable — less than four minutes into yesterday's annual holiday battle with arch rival Salem High set the tone for the afternoon, as the Panthers marched out of Bertram Field with a satisfying 28-6 triumph in the 111th playing of "The Game."

"We had practiced that play all week and wanted to use it early," said Manuel. "So when I got up the line and came off the ball and watched their corner(back) bite (on the fake), I could see there was no safety playing deep for them. The play worked perfectly."

The victory — sweet revenge for Beverly's upperclassmen after last year's shocking upset at home by the Witches — allowed them to finish the season at 7-3.

"It's the greatest feeling, one I'll never, ever forget," said senior running back Dylan Terry, who had scoring runs of 5 and 2 yards yesterday. He was one of many Panther seniors openly weeping tears of joy on the Bertram sod after the game had ended.

Although the visitors from the Garden City never appeared to be in any serious danger of losing their lead, the host Witches battled them tooth and nail for the full 48 minutes (12-minute quarters were played, as has been recent tradition in the series).

After giving up the long touchdown pass to Manuel early on, Salem buckled down defensively and more than held their own, highlighted by big performances from players such as juniors Antonio Reyes at inside linebacker, Nate Staples at cornerback and safety Joey Dinh.

But as has been the case all season, the hosts were unable to produce meaningful offense in the red zone — the Witches turned the ball over on downs inside the Beverly 10-yard line after being on the 1 — and hurt themselves with turnovers.

A third quarter fumble on a high, bouncing punt proved particularly costly for Salem as the Panthers' Jake Abate pounced on the loose ball, then watched as Terry scored five plays later from two yards out to give his team a commanding 21-6 lead in the third quarter.

"Other than the turnovers, I thought we played a solid game," said Salem (2-9) head coach Scott Connolly. "But when we made those turnovers, Beverly turned them into scores. Plus, that early trick play ... that hurt, too."

Before an estimated 5,000 fans — a good crowd, but by no means overflowing by Beverly-Salem standards — the Panthers doubled their lead with 4:41 to play until halftime. Terry (52 yards rushing) capped off an 11-play, 74-yard drive by scampering in from five yards out between the right tackle and end. His own 31-yard ramble earlier in the drive set up the score. Ryan Flannery booted the second of his four extra points to make it 14-0.

Salem, which had faltered after having 2nd-and-goal from the Beverly 1 late in the first quarter, finally hit paydirt on its next possession. Facing 4th-and-4 from the visitors' 22-yard line (following a 67-yard kickoff return by senior Edwin Guzman), Salem QB Brad Skeffington faked going left and pulled the Beverly defense with him, allowing junior Chris Bozarjian to easily scoot around right end on a reverse and take it home from 22 yards out.

But that was all the scoring the Black-and-Orange would allow. Following Terry's third quarter TD run, Salem fumbled (caused by Beverly's Hannable) and had a pass picked off (by Manuel) on their final three possessions. Meanwhile, the Panthers put the icing on the cake when Hannable (167 yards passing) hit all-star wideout Justin Marrs with a 13-yard scoring strike with under 90 seconds to play.

"The seniors came together and made sure we weren't going to lose this one," said Beverly head coach Dan Bauer.

Beverly 28, Salem 6

at Bertram Field, Salem

111th Game

Beverly7777 — 28

Salem0600 — 6

B-Curtis Manuel 64 pass from Mark Hannable (Ryan Flannery kick)

B-Dylan Terry 5 run (Flannery kick)

S-Chris Bozarjian 22 run (kick failed)

B-Terry 2 run (Flannery kick)

B-Justin MARRS 13 pass from Hannable (Flannery kick)

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING: Beverly — Dylan Terry 10-52, Justin MARRS 1-21, Nick Theriault 4-20, Mark Theriault 2-8, Mark Hannable 7-8, Ryan Flannery 1-7, Al Joseph 1-2, Randy Jones 1-(-2); Salem — Brad Skeffington 15-86, Chris Bozarjian 1-22, Max Feeley 4-19, David Kendrick 7-10, Matt Owens 1-3, Josh Gilooly 4-1.

PASSING: Beverly — Hannable 13-23-167-2-1, M. Theriault 0-1-0-0-0; Salem — Skeffington 7-18-41-0-1.

RECEIVING: Beverly — Curtis Manuel 3-81, MARRS 4-43, Steve Dubois 4-34, M. Theriault 1-7, Brendan Flaherty 1-2; Salem — Joey Dinh 2-27, Chris Bozarjian 1-11, Kendrick 1-2, Edwin Guzman 1-2, Gilooly 1-0, Antonio Reyes 1-(-1).

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