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### Classical football loses a thriller

By Joyce Erekson / The Daily Item

LYNN -- It's probably a good thing the city decided to stop letting people into football games at Manning Field for free after the first half.

Although the move was made for safety reasons, anyone who tried to save a few bucks by coming to Friday night's Classical-Beverly showdown late would have missed one of the more memorable second quarters in years, and anyone who failed to stick around until the end would be kicking themselves for missing an exciting, albeit controversial, finish that ended up with Classical on the short end of a 34-28 decision.

The Rams were knocking on the door at the Beverly 13 when time ran out. Classical quarterback Nick Grassa tied to spike the ball with seconds left to stop the clock, but he bobbled the snap and officials ruled that his knee was down.

"There was some miscommunication between officials and the coaching staff. It was a tough way to lose," Classical coach Tim Phelps said. "It was disappointing, but we saw some good things today. Overall we played well."

The Rams certainly put up some winning numbers, rushing for 234 yards on 54 carries with Casey Johnson doing yeoman's work with 130 yards on 21 carries. He also caught five passes for 70 yards and scored three touchdowns, two on runs (4 yards and 39 yards) and one on a 25-yard pass from Nick Grassa.

Beverly did most of its damage in the air, with Mark Hannable going 10-13 for 157 yards (Beverly threw for 161 overall). Steve Dubois had five catches for 65 yards, including a 40-yard pass from Hannable.

The first quarter was fairly quiet on both sides, with Classical breaking the ice in the final second on Johnson's four-yard touchdown run (the kick failed). The floodgates opened for both teams in the second quarter -- a quarter that was more like a track meet than a football game. The two teams scored seven touchdowns (four by Beverly, three by Classical) before the halftime whistle sounded.

Dylan Terry put Beverly on the board to start the second half. The drive started at the Beverly 46 and ended three



Danny Omoreggie of Classical (56) gets tackled by Dylan Terry of Beverly at Manning Field on Friday. (ITEM PHOTO / OWEN O'ROURKE)

plays later with a 17-yard touchdown run by Dylan Terry (Ryan Flannery kick). Hannable, who had been sidelined with mononucleosis, had a 23-yard keeper on third-and-four from the Classical 40 to keep the drive alive.

When Classical fumbled the kickoff, Terry was there to scoop the ball up at the six and run it six yards for the touchdown and a 13-6 Beverly lead (the kick failed).

The Rams answered the call on the next drive of the game. Eleven plays and 62 yards later, Jasper Grassa ran the ball in from the three and Johnson's rush was good, giving Classical a 14-13 lead.

Tipped balls were the order of the day for a while. Beverly's Justin Marrs got things going with a 50-yard kick return to the Classical 30. Hannable went to Marrs on the next pass and Marrs caught the 30-yard touchdown pass, after it was tipped by Johnson.

The Rams bounced right back on their next possesses. When the ball was fumbled on the first play of the drive, Dan Omoreggie scooped it up for the Rams and ran 30 yards to put his team at the Beverly 47. Three plays later, Johnson broke for a 39-yard touchdown run (Grassa rush) and the Rams regained the lead, 22-21.

Beverly got that one back on the ensuing possession when Hannable threw a 40-yard pass to Dubois and Flannery kicked the extra point for a 28-22 lead. It wasn't over yet, however. Classical tied the game on its next possession when Nick Grassa found Johnson with a 25-yard touchdown pass (rush failed). After 56 total points, 50 of them coming in the second quarter, the two teams hit the locker room tied 28-28.

Beverly took the lead for good with about 3:28 remaining in the game on a Hannable 17-yard pass to Curtis Manual (kick failed).

It looked like the Rams were finished, but they didn't roll over. Nick Grassa marched his team from its own 28 down to the Beverly 13. On third and 11 from the 13, Grassa attempted to spike the ball to stop the clock, but his knee touched the ground and time ran out.

"I thought the offense played well," Phelps said. "I thought we controlled the line of scrimmage."

Phelps wasn't happy with the fumbles, but he was encouraged to see his team bounce back from some of its mistakes. Classical is 2-3.