

Joltin' Joe

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September 28, 2009 12:21 am

BEVERLY — There are certain things backup quarterbacks don't do in high school football.

They don't play with unwavering confidence. They don't throw for more than a 200 yards per game passing average in two consecutive starts. And they most definitely do not flawlessly execute the team's two-minute drill, throwing a last-second game-winning touchdown in the process.

So far through two games, Beverly High junior Joe Wioncek has done all of those things — culminating with a masterful drive in the final 94 seconds of Saturday's game against Lynn English at Hurd Stadium.

Wioncek's 30-yard touchdown pass to Justin Marrs with just 15 ticks on the clock left put Lynn English — and Wioncek's status as "backup quarterback" — in the rearview mirror in the Panthers' 24-20 victory.

Wioncek, second on the Panthers' depth chart at QB heading into the preseason, became the primary signal caller when returning starter Mark Hannable was diagnosed with mononucleosis before the Panthers' opening game.

He looked like a grizzled veteran when he took Beverly (2-0) 80 yards for the winning score Saturday immediately following a tremendous Lynn English comeback.

The winning connection was a simple go pattern down the left sideline. Marrs outran the defense, and Wioncek delivered the strike.

"I talked to Justin Marrs before the last one and he said he was going to be open," Wioncek said. "He actually had to adjust to it, so he did a great job. All the credit goes to him."

It was a wild finish to a game that appeared to be headed for a methodical Beverly win through three-and-a-half quarters.

On the second play of the fourth quarter Ryan Flannery split the uprights for a 24-yard field goal and a 17-7 Beverly lead. There wasn't any scoring for the next five minutes, but the visiting Bulldogs (2-1) scored twice in less than four minutes to take a 20-17 lead.

Junior quarterback Tyllor McDonald connected with Travonne Berry-Rogers for a beautiful 28-yard hookup to make the game interesting again with 5:11 to play, and after forcing Beverly into a three-and-out, the Bulldogs got the ball back. McDonald's 10th touchdown pass of the season — a 35-yard pass down the left sideline to Melvin Tavares — seemed to complete a miraculous comeback.

"I don't know about nervous, but our defense did a great job all day. It was just heartbreaking to see that (TD) go in," Wioncek said. "We just had to focus on the job ahead. We just had to look to what we needed to do as an offense."

Wioncek proved to have nerves of steel, completing five passes — all to Marris — on the winning drive.

"(English) hit the big one at the end, but our players never lost their poise, character or composure," Beverly coach Dan Bauer said. "On the sidelines, I didn't feel deflated or anything like that."

Wioncek made a few mistakes; namely, the three interceptions he threw. But overall his statistics were phenomenal, completing 22 of 37 passes for 285 yards and three scores.

McDonald, his Bulldog counterpart, was equally impressive with 310 yards passing and three scores.

Captain Steve Dubois caught five balls for 107 yards and two touchdowns, while Marris had eight receptions for 98 yards. Tailback Dylan Terry also had a standout game, rushing for 141 yards on 19 carries.

In the end, the pressure was still on the Beverly High defense, even with only 15 seconds remaining.

"We had 15 seconds to go and were still nervous because they had two shots at it," Bauer said. "We made the plays, though."

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