

Panthers shine bright under the home lights, cruise past Melrose in season opener

By Phil Stacey
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BEVERLY — By all accounts, it was a smashing success.

The first night football game in the 73-year history of Hurd Stadium couldn't have been scripted any better: beautiful, if not seasonal, weather conditions; approximately 4,000 fans on hand; the portable halogens stationed along the outside of both sidelines burning brightly; all facets of the operation going off without a hitch.

And of course, the ending was the best part of the night, with the host Beverly Panthers securing an all-important win in their season opener.

Dominating the line of scrimmage and taking advantage of the many opportunities visiting Melrose presented to them, the Panthers held the visitors to just 140 yards and scored twice each rushing and passing the football, adding up to a tidy 25-6 triumph.

"This was a historic night for us," said Beverly head coach Dan Bauer, whose team won its fourth straight season opener and fifth overall in his seven years at the BHS helm.

"We'll look at the tape and want to correct some things, certainly, but this was a very good opener for us. We're on the right track."

With junior Joe Wioncek taking most of the snaps at quarterback in place of returning senior starter Mark Hannable (sick), the Beverly offense never seemed to miss a beat. A two-year starter at catcher on the Panther baseball team, the talented Wioncek connected with Steve Dubois on a 32-yard pass (with a great fingertip catch by the senior captain) on the game's first play, and seemed comfortable both in the pocket and running the offense the entire night.

"Joe was prepared and the team rallied around him," said Bauer. "He did a really nice job for us."

When the Panthers got into the red zone, senior Mark Therault lined up under center and times and also directed his team to success. With prior experience at the position, he deftly guided his team to a pair of scores (as did Wioncek).

Both quarterbacks, in fact, had 1-yard sneaks for touchdowns and also threw a touchdown pass: Theriault on a 1-yard fade to Dubois in the right corner of the end zone, and Wioncek on a 4th-and-16 pass to senior wideout Justin Marrs that went to the house from 33 yards out. Theriault also caught a team-high six passes for 36 yards.

Beverly's primary tailback, first-year starter Dylan Terry, also acquitted himself well by picking up 88 yards on 15 carries. Many of those came after he broke past the line of scrimmage, when his second speed gear kicked in to earn himself big chunks of yardage.

Defensively, the Panthers were in midseason form by blocking a kick, picking off three passes (by sophomore linebacker Nick Quarterone, senior captain Curtis Manuel and Marrs) and swarming to the ball all evening. Unofficially, senior defensive tackle Theritchnide Roc finished with a team-high seven tackles and also had a sack. Quarterone, the tenacious 10th grade linebacker, was in on another half-dozen tackles while Dubois had five.

Melrose — which scored on its first possession on fullback Joe Sasso's two-year run — certainly was not helped by the fact that both starting quarterback Tom Murphy (broken tibia) and backup Jimmy Runge (believed to have suffered a broken wrist) were both knocked out of the game. Sophomore third stringer Brett Barbati was forced to guide the Red Raiders (0-2) for the last two quarters-plus of the night.

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Photos



Melrose's Joe Sasso attempts to bring down Beverly senior captain Curtis Manuel during last night's 25-6 Panthers win under the lights at Hurd Stadium. Staff Photographer



Beverly tailback Dylan Terry is brought down by Melrose's Cody Lusas last night. Staff Photographer