

## Surprising Danvers scores upset in dismantling Beverly

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DANVERS — It was simple, succinct — and dead-on accurate.

"Our kids came out ready to play tonight. I think that sums it up perfectly," was the quote Danvers High head football coach John Sullivan used after his team controlled play for nearly the full 44 minutes in upsetting heavily favored Beverly, 21-3, at Deering Stadium.

"I don't think Beverly was expecting the fire we hit them with early," added Falcon senior captain and quarterback Greg Ladd. "We stayed positive and intense the entire game. We never let up."

Realizing it was their Northeastern Conference Small opener and, as a result, their most critical game of the season to date, the Falcons responded big time. They scored three touchdowns on the ground, never let their opponents into the end zone and picked off four Beverly passes — three of those from 6-foot-3 senior free safety Nick Hennessey.

Some personnel changes on the defensive side of the ball — namely, senior Clinton Lutz was moved to middle linebacker, and fellow senior MLB John McInnis returned to action after missing two weeks due to injury — made a big difference, too. They did a fine job containing Beverly's elusive quarterback, Mark Hannable, on draw plays and bottling up the middle of the field.

Hannable completed 9 of 20 passes for 112 yards, but was also intercepted three times. The pop passes and screens that the Panthers love to throw worked at times, but never enough to sustain a drive downfield.

"Having Johnny back in the middle was huge for us," said Danvers captain Eric Burgos, who led all ballcarriers with 88 rushing yards and scored his team's final touchdown on a 5-yard run in the fourth quarter. "He really stuffed that draw they were trying to run."

Admittedly, the Falcons also had a little bit of luck — a bobbled second quarter punt by Lutz was picked up by McInnis, who went the other way for a 35-yard gain down to the Beverly 6-

yard line, for example — and they weren't burned despite fumbling the ball six times (the Panthers had 4 fumbles).

Sullivan called this his team's best win since the 2005 season, when they finished 7-3, and it would be hard to argue that.

Ladd hit Burgos and McInnis with consecutive 14-yard passes to set up his team's first score late in the first quarter. After a 9-yard burst by Lutz gave the Falcons 2nd and goal on the 3-yard line, McInnis took it in on a plunge for a 6-0 lead.

"Greg controlled things very well and kept his poise the entire night," said Sullivan.

With a little more than five minutes remaining in the half, McInnis alertly picked up Lutz's fumble off a punt and scampered down to the Beverly 6. Lutz redeemed himself on the next play by slashing over the goal line. Ladd then found Zach Ryan in the end zone for a 2-point conversion, making the score 14-0.

Beverly had its best drive on the ensuing possession, reaching the Danvers 5-yard line. But two incomplete passes forced them to settle for a 22-yard field goal from Ryan Flannery and a 14-3 halftime deficit.

"We made too many mistakes to win," said Beverly head coach Dan Bauer. "Turnovers and missed opportunities; that's the bottom line. Danvers played very well, too.

"When you fall behind like we did, it puts more pressure on you (offensively) and people start to pressure and try to do too much (individually). We were pressing at the end."

Hennessey's second interception of the game came early in the third quarter to thwart a Beverly drive, and his third and final pick came with three minutes to go when teammate Corey Walker tipped it in the air and Hennessey came down with it. Walker then had an interception of his own in the final minute.

"Coach (Peter) Bush and Coach (Kevin) Brown do a great job with us on defense," said Hennessey, who had an interception vs. Beverly last year as well. "Our D-line (Kell Falite, Ben Roy, Shane Tobyne, Nik Longo, Jeff Turner and Ryan) did a great job getting to their quarterback, forcing him to rush throws.

"I'm always told to read the quarterback's eyes, so that's what I did. Plus, knowing the films and the routes they like to run helped a lot, too."

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