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Beverly explodes offensively, crushes Salem in 113th Thanksgiving meeting

By Phil Stacey

SPORTS EDITOR

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SALEM — When Salem High took the football on the game's opening possession, moved it 74 yards in just two plays and went on to score via a 2-yard run, it appeared as though the underdog Witches might be in the process of doing something big.

Visiting Beverly would have none of it, however.

The Panthers proceeded to score the next 46 points as five different players had touchdowns in a decisive 46-21 triumph over Salem before 5,000-plus fans at Bertram Field in the 113th playing of "The Game."

"This is the way we wanted to go out — with a big win," said Beverly senior linebacker Nick Quarterone. "From the very first play offensively, everything was clicking for us. We seniors couldn't have asked for a better day."

Beverly (7-4) scored the very first time it touched the football as junior Kenny Pierce took the kickoff following Salem's opening score and ran it back 76 yards for a touchdown, tying the game at 6-6. The Panthers ran only one offensive play the entire first quarter — and took it to the house as Dom Abate sped 42 yards to the end zone and Brendan Flaherty added the two-point conversion.

From there, the Orange-and-Black were off to the races, tacking up 19 more points in the second quarter and another 13 in the third before the second and third stringers played much of the game's final 24 minutes.

The victory, Beverly's eighth over Salem (1-10) in the last 11 meetings, was especially sweet for those players who were members of last year's Super Bowl championship team who were upset by the Witches last Thanksgiving.

"This was our Super Bowl this season," said senior captain Nick Theriault, who had a pair of rushing touchdowns in his final high school game. "We definitely kept what happened last year in the back of our minds."

Junior quarterback Dave Rollins, who hit Flaherty on a pair of touchdown passes (from 20 and 32 yards out, respectively), said his team's ability to successfully run a hurry up offense caught Salem's defense off guard and led to the Panthers' offensive outburst.

"Everyone was firing on all cylinders for us," said Rollins. "We've been practicing that hurry up all season and it worked perfectly (yesterday)."

Salem shocked many of those in attendance as junior quarterback Christian Dunston hit Shakir White with a 37-yard pass on the game's first play, then scrambled 34 yards to the Beverly 2-yard-line on the very next play. Edwin Alcantara scored three plays later from four yards out to give the Witches a 6-0 lead.

But fumbles, inability to make stops and giving the visitors' outstanding field position all led to the Witches' demise; so did an excellent defensive outing from the Beverly starters, who hit hard and didn't let the dangerous Dunston get outside the pocket and create. It wasn't until the fourth quarter that Salem dented the scoreboard again as Fernando Cabrera scored from four yards out and Dunston hooked up with Ben Kapnis on a 33-yard scoring pass on the contest's final play.

"We started off the way we wanted to, but (Pierce's) kickoff return hurt us," admitted Salem head coach Sean Connolly. "Then we have another good drive on the next series that stalled, a personal foul penalty pushed us back another 15 yards, and (Abate) runs it in for them on the first time they touch the ball.

"Football's all about momentum — and from that point on, they had it all."

Sophomore backup Steve Negron also scored for Beverly; his first varsity score came late in the third quarter on a 5-yard run to give his team a 40-point (46-6) advantage.

Beverly 46, Salem 21

at Bertram Field, Salem

Beverly (7-4)1419130 — 46

Salem (1-10)60015 — 21

S-Edwin Alcantara 2 run (kick failed)

B-Kenny Pierce 76 kickoff return (kick failed)

B-Dom Abate 42 run (Brendan Flaherty rush)

B-Nick Theriault 1 run (kick failed)

B-Flaherty 20 pass from Dave Rollins (rush failed)

B-Flaherty 32 pass from Rollins (C.J. Flannery kick)

B-Therriault 3 run (Flannery kick)

B-Steve Negron 5 run (kick failed)

S-Fernando Cabrera 4 run (David Walsh rush)

S-Ben Kapnis 33 pass from Christian Dunston (Jonathan Crimble kick)

INDIVIDUAL STATS

RUSHING: Beverly — Dom Abate 4-87, Brendan Flaherty 5-39, Nick Therriault 5-32, Kenny Pierce 2-18, Dan Brown 6-17, Steve Negron 2-13, Jack Morency 1-5, Luke McDonald 2-4, Joey Kozlowski 1-2; Salem — David Walsh 7-84, Christian Dunston 11-68, Edwin Alcantara 7-26, Fernando Cabrera 5-18, Nick Paine 1-(-3), Shakir White 1-(-13).

PASSING: Beverly — Dave Rollins 3-3-60-2-0, Morency 0-2-0-0-0; Salem— Dunston 3-6-86-1-1.

RECEIVING: Beverly — Flaherty 2-52, Abate 1-8; Salem — White 2-53, Kapnis 1-33.