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## Pierce's 5 TDs lead Beverly to comeback win

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LYNN — Based on the game plan last night, Beverly High running back Kenny Pierce wasn't sure he'd get five carries the entire night.

The 16-year-old certainly never dreamed he'd score five *touchdowns*.

But in a season-defining victory for the Panthers, that's exactly what Pierce did. The jackrabbit-quick junior ran for 135 yards and four touchdowns while also returning a kickoff 81 yards for a score. And when quarterback Dave Rollins snuck it into the end zone from a yard out with just 34.7 seconds left to play, the Orange-and-Black completed a remarkable comeback to shock previously unbeaten Lynn English, 36-35, at Manning Field.

When English's Josh Batista scored his third touchdown of the evening on a 22-yard pass from Jermaine Kelly, the host Bulldogs had a seemingly commanding 21-0 lead just 53 seconds into the second quarter.

But resiliency, thy name was "Panthers" on this night.

"We never stopped believing we'd win. Even down early like we were, we still felt we were going to win," said Pierce afterward. "The backs and linemen all stuck to their assignments. You can tell when guys get down (trailing early), but we're a team that picks each other up. We've worked so hard for this."

After English's Kelly (119 yards rushing, 182 passing) scored on a 9-yard run late in the third quarter, the Bulldogs (2-1) had a 35-24 lead. But while the hosts were certainly speedier and caused Beverly (2-1) to miss many tackles in the first half, it was evident they were getting worn down by Beverly's line in the second half.

Following a runback to the English 49-yard line by Panthers captain Nick Theriault (65 tough yards on 17 carries), Beverly got within five points on Pierce's fifth TD of the night, a 3-yard run to paydirt. The sequence was certainly helped by a fourth-down pass interference call against English, giving Beverly 1st-and-goal at the 8-yard line.

Following a Beverly stop on English's next possession ("The defense stepped up big when they had to," said head coach Dan Bauer), the Panthers got the ball back on their own 26-yard line with 4:42 to play.

On the third play of the drive, junior Brendan Flaherty — injured early in the first quarter making a tackle on Kelly and returning to action for the first time since then — took a double reverse and, still obviously hurting, hurled a 42-yard pass to a wide open Dom Abate, putting the ball at the Bulldogs' 19-yard line.

As the rain poured down in the tropical conditions, Beverly pounded it in from there as eight plays chewed up most of the clock, and Rollins punched it in for the game-winning score.

Pierce had back-to-back 3-yard TD runs in the second quarter to get Beverly (which failed on all 6 of their conversion attempts) back in the game at 21-12 in the second quarter. Following a Kelly 8-yard scoring jaunt, Pierce took the following kickoff 81 yards to glory to make it 27-18 at the half. He added a 13-yard run in the third quarter, then scored again early in the fourth.

"When the backs score a touchdown, it's a touchdown for the line, too. Those guys were great tonight," said Pierce. "(Offensive coordinator) Coach (Roger) Day called a great game, and everyone stepped up and did their job.

Defensively, defensive end Ty Suggs had a pair of sacks while fellow senior Nick Quarterone sacked Kelly on the game's second-to-last play. Junior Rob Cattell had a fine game at the other defensive end spot.