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Richland's Josh Phillips (28) runs around the end against Southridge on Friday at Fran Rish Stadium in Richland. See a photo gallery at tricityherald.com.

Bombers down Suns in opener

Recover from slow start to win 27-7

BEN REYNOLDS

SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

Mike Neidhold will never say he was surprised about how the first 12 minutes went Friday night.

The Richland High coach expected some nerves, some jitters, and some kids trying to force the issue.

All that happened. But once his Bombers got all that out of their system, they were like a race car that didn't step on the brake for the next three quarters.

Richland came back from some early mistakes and

an early deficit to dominate Southridge 27-7 on Friday night at Fran Rish Stadium in the season-opener for both teams.

"We just had to settle down," said Neidhold, now in his sixth season at Richland. "We expected that, and that comes with the high expectations we have."

Adding to the excitement of opening night, the Bombers jumped out of the blocks, scoring a touchdown on their second play from scrimmage when Zach Whitby connected with Payton Radliff on a 46-yard streak down the sideline.

But then things stalled. A couple of turnovers, one leading to a Southridge touchdown, and the Bombers trailed 7-6 at the end of the first quarter.

Richland regained the lead with less than a minute to go in the half, and never looked back.

The Bombers defense went in lockdown mode, and the offense was running laps around the Southridge defense.

Richland was gaining yards in big chunks on the ground, running its hurry up offense that had the Suns on its heels at times.

"We call that our NASCAR offense," Neidhold said. "We wanted to get up to the ball and go fast."

Richland opened the second half with a 58-yard, 10-play drive that resulted in a 1-yard touchdown run

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by Josh Phillips to give the Bombers a 21-7 lead. During that drive, the Bombers converted on two fourth-down plays, including Phillips' touchdown run.

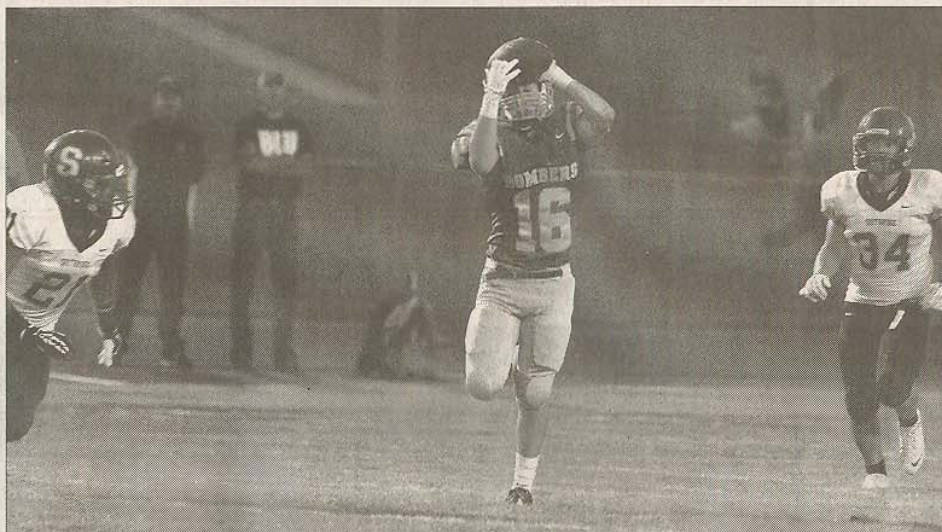
Ask if there was any doubt about going for it on fourth down at the 1, Neidhold gave the same answer he did about going for it on fourth-down and 2 at the Southridge 36-yard line earlier in the drive.

"I hate to punt," he said.

Richland extended its lead on the next drive, marching the ball 69-yards in just over three minutes to push the margin to 27-7 when Anthony Galat caught a 7-yard TD from Whitby.

"Once we get our offense and our O-line going," Galat said, "We are pretty solid."

The Richland defense didn't fare too bad either. Southridge, in its four second-half drives, never crossed the Bombers' 30-yard line. The lone scoring chance came when Jair Ealy-Thomas had his 31-yard pass attempt to Elijah Norris broken up by Gibson McGeorge in the



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Richland's Garrett March (16) makes a catch Friday against Southridge at Fran Rish Stadium in Richland.

end zone.

"We knew our defense was going to be good," Galat said. "I think we came out and played well."

Southridge running back Kadin Diaz, who is the top returning rusher in the Mid-Columbia Conference, had 20 carries for 101 yards to lead all rushers, and scored the Suns

lone touchdown.

The loss gives the Bombers a little payback from last year's 9-7 setback to open the 2012 season against the Suns. However, that was the last thing that was on the players' and coaches' minds.

"Last year was last year," Neidhold said. "It's all about this year."

Southridge	7	0	0	0	-	7
Richland	6	8	14	0	-	27
R - Payton Radliff	46 pass from Zach Whitby (kick fail)					
S - Kadin Diaz	1 run (Nate Newberry kick)					
R - Hunter Chambers	2 pass from Whitby/Radliff pass from Whitby)					
R - Josh Phillips	1 run (Ryan Wolski kick)					
R - Anthony Galat	7 pass from Whitby (kick fail)					
Individual Stats						
Rushing - S, Kadin Diaz	20-101, Mascoo Ealy-Thomas 4-10, Jair Ealy-Thomas 1-6, R, Bennett, Peterson 7-55, Nathan Perry 11-52, Nathan Galat 10-70, Zach Whitby 5-11, Josh Phillips 10-43.					
Passing - S, J. Ealy-Thomas	10-24-2-103, R, Whitby 14-21-1-177.					
Receiving - S, M. Ealy-Thomas	4-32, Brenden Kelly 2-48, Jake Baumen 1-0, Diaz 1-minus-1, Daniel Getchell 1-11, Tanner Pope 1-15, R, Radliff 5-89, Messon Nelson 1-3, Garrett March 2-31, Chambers 3-16, Galat 1-7.					