

MCC FOOTBALL

Richland blows past Kennewick

BEN ZIMMERMAN

SPECIAL TO THE HERALD

Playing with the must-win desperation necessary if it is to back-door its way into the playoffs, Richland thumped a short-handed Kennewick squad 44-7 on Friday at Fran Rish Stadium to keep its post-season candle aflame.

The Class 4A Bombers, who also need either Chiawana or Walla Walla to implode down the stretch to crash the bracket, relied on a quality it had been lacking, "especially last week," noted Richland coach Mike Neidhold.

"We talked a lot last week about the 'want,'" he said. "This has to matter. I'm real proud of the kids' response to that challenge."

Richland's supreme effort translated to smooth execu-

tion.

With the Bombers controlling the line of scrimmage, quarterback Taylor O'Toole completed 25 of 35 passes for 313 yards and two touchdowns, supplemented by the gritty rushing of Jacob Heinen (16 carries, 78 yards, one touchdown) and McKlane Elgin (11 carries, 44 yards, one touchdown).

Meanwhile, Richland (2-4, 2-2 in league) held the 3A Lions (2-4, 1-3) to 110 yards of offense, despite handing over a pair of fumbles.

"They made plays and we didn't," Kennewick coach Bill Templeton said.

The lone highlight for Templeton's Lions came late in the first quarter, and hinted at parity that quickly dissolved.

After Richland capitalized on Griffey March's 43-yard

punt return with a short drive to set up Heinen's one-yard touchdown plunge, Kennewick answered by forcing a fumble and striking on play-action, quarterback Matthew Driver rolling left off a fake sweep right and connecting with Josh Kutzke up the left seam.

Kutzke juiced the lone defender standing between him and a 50-yard touchdown.

But 7-7 unravelled as the more dynamic Bombers wore down the Kennewick defense, which saw a ton of field time as its offense struggled to move the chains without the services of workhorse senior running back Dwight Norwood, who did not dress after suffering a shoulder injury in the second half of last Friday's win over Pasco.

Elgin scored on a seven-yard run and O'Toole threw a

13-yard touchdown pass to Matthew Woodman as Richland took a 21-7 lead into halftime.

The Bombers exploded for three fourth-quarter touchdowns — and slapped on a safety when John Hardy dumped Driver in the end zone for a 16-yard sack — to punctuate a feel-good win.

Norwood's status is unknown, according to Templeton, for Kennewick's crucial cross-city showdown against Southridge next Friday — a game that will impact the race for the Mid-Columbia Conference's second and final 3A playoff berth more than any other contest left on the docket.

"That's a huge one next week. It has a lot of implications for the playoffs," Templeton said. "We played hard tonight, but we need to re-focus."

"Give Kennewick credit," added Neidhold. "They are well-coached and there's no quit to 'em. We beat a good team tonight."

Richland visits Pasco next Friday.

Kennewick	7	0	0	0	-	7
Richland	14	7	0	23	-	44

SCORING PLAYS

R — Jacob Heinen 1 run (Ryan Wolski kick)
K — Josh Kutzke 50 pass from Matthew Driver (Anthony Arroyo kick)
R — McKlane Elgin 7 run (Wolski kick)
R — Matthew Woodman 13 pass from Taylor O'Toole (Wolski kick)
R — O'Toole 1 run (Wolski kick)
R — Matthew Driver tackled in end zone, safety
R — Brecken Gallihar 6 pass from O'Toole (Wolski kick)
R — Kyle Whitty 3 run (Wolski kick)

STATISTICS

RUSHING — K, Raymond Gutierrez 16-66, Trevor Hammelstar 2-4, Matthew Driver 8-minus 40, Izayah Darby 3-8, Garrett Dixon 1-2, Keyshawn Owens 1-minus 1 R, McKlane Elgin 11-44, Jacob Heinen 16-78, Kyle Whitty 7-16, Taylor O'Toole 4-1.
PASSING — K, Driver 7-15-0-71 R, O'Toole 25-35-0-313.

RECEIVING — K, Andrew Townsend 1-minus 4, Josh Kutzke 1-50, Darby 3-2, Dillon Plew 2-23, R, Griffey March 6-80, Matthew Woodman 8-105, Rhett Levin 3-49, Lakota Wills 1-38, Elgin 4-7, Chad Miller 1-38, Alex Chapman 1-7, Brecken Gallihar 1-6.