

Moses Lake's rally falls short, eliminated in quarterfinals

By CONNOR VANDERWEYST, Sports Editor | Posted: Monday, November 23, 2015 4:45 pm

MOSES LAKE — Moses Lake had its chances.

Trailing by four points in the fourth quarter, Moses Lake had four opportunities to put together a go-ahead drive.

Those possessions ended in an interception, two fumbles and an interception returned for a touchdown by Richland's Brecken Galliher.

"We felt good the whole time and all throughout the game and coming down to the fourth quarter," head coach Todd Griffith said. "It wasn't our best quarter of the year and in order to win those types of games you've got to come out on top of that and I think we were 4-3 in the turnovers and usually when you lose the turnover battle you don't win the game and we lost that turnover battle. Our kids fought the whole time and I'm so proud of them."

Wes Harrington connected with Ridge Montgomery in perfect stride on a 55-yard pass that was the final points of the game. Moses Lake's 2-point conversion attempt failed, Richland recovered the ensuing onside kick and salted the game away, 28-23.

Although Moses Lake was a considerable underdog amongst most people, the Chiefs went toe-to-toe with the sixth-ranked Bombers and were in a position to take a late lead. The difference came with game-breaking plays going the way of Richland.

Lakota Wills romped 73-yards for a touchdown on the second play from scrimmage, Griffey March got behind the defense on a scramble play for a 47-yard touchdown reception and then Galliher's 27-yard interception return.

"We played good," Griffith said. "We played well enough to win. We just didn't get those breaks to really come our way."

Moses Lake answered Wills' long run with a 10-play drive that was capped by a Harrington quarterback sneak from the 1-yard line. Harrington ran well early in the game, breaking off a 12-yard run to set up the short touchdown. Harrington finished with 116 passing yards and 37 rushing yards.



Moses Lake's Henry Russaw III (8) fights for extra yards against Richland Saturday at Lions Field.

Dylan Morris recovered a Richland fumble on the ensuing kickoff that set up a 37-yard Tanner Hasse field goal. Suddenly, Moses Lake led 10-7 with 4:28 left in the first quarter.

From that point, Moses Lake's offense was stifled until late in the third quarter.

Richland opened up a 21-10 lead when Paxton Stevens threw touchdown passes to Ryan Wolski and Griffey March.

Facing a fourth-and-8 and in desperate need of points, the Chiefs ran a halfback pass from Brandon Griffith to Henry Russaw III for a 31-yard touchdown.

"Brandon did a really good job of finding him and throwing the ball on the money," Griffith said. "He's done that all year and I don't know if people realize this, but he was our quarterback last year and he's kind of a dual threat back there and you have to know where he's at and what he's doing."

Moses Lake avoided turning the ball over until the four consecutive giveaways in the final period, which stymied its chance at a comeback bid.

Despite falling short of their ultimate goal, the 2015 Chiefs etched their names into the history book as the first outright Columbia Basin Big Nine league champion and the first team to win a home playoff game.

"This is the most fun I've had with a team since I've been the head coach," Griffith said. "I've had other teams that I've enjoyed, but the coaching part and the scheme and putting together a team and trying to get guys in the right place and the resilience of these kids and how hard they worked and their determination and their competitiveness. I mean, it's a coach's dream and you want to have teams that are like that all the time."