

Richland knocks out Lewis and Clark in 4A play-in game

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The best football teams usually step up come postseason, and that certainly was the case with the Richland Bombers.

Richland played solidly on both sides of the ball to turn back the Lewis and Clark Tigers 42-20 in a 4A play-in game Friday at Fran Rish Stadium.

The Bombers (9-1) will entertain Central Valley (8-2) on Saturday in the first round of the state playoffs. CV defeated Chiawana 24-13 on Friday.

Defense – which had been the Tigers' strength – eluded Lewis and Clark at Richland.

Richland scored on its first two drives and rarely slowed down. The Bombers punted once and that came late.

"We knew they had a really tough defense," LC receiver/defensive back Leo Haghighi said. "Twenty points – it was good but we were expecting a little bit more. They're just a great team. They're big, they came out and ran the ball on us and we gave up a few big plays."

After finding themselves in the 14-0 hole, though, the Tigers had arguably their best offensive possession of the game.

Mixing the run and pass effectively, LC scored when quarterback Jordan Summers hit Adam Thompson with a 10-yard pass early in the second quarter.

Richland extended its lead to 21-7 before half when quarterback Paxton Stevens hit Rhett Levin on a 6-yard pass.

The Bombers' dominance in the opening two quarters was reflected in the statistics. Richland had 260 yards to LC's 82.

"Richland's a good football team," LC coach Dave Hughes said. "We had our chances and we just didn't capitalize."

Richland added two more touchdowns in the third, increasing the lead to 35-7.

But LC (5-5) fought back, cutting the lead to 35-20, when Summers found Thompson on a second TD reception and then Haghighi after an LC interception.

And then LC recovered a Richland fumble at the Bombers' 37-yard line. But the Tigers gave the ball right back, and Richland added one more score.

"We did a great job and we hustled," said Haghighi, who finished with eight catches. "We knew we had it in us to come here and give it a good shot. Obviously we'd like it to be a little closer than this."

Haghighi was proud of LC's season.

"We definitely expected to make it to the (postseason)," he said. "We obviously wanted more. The first time since (2006-07) that it's been back-to-back playoffs. Overall a successful season."

Hughes agreed.

"We battle," he said. "We've been to that cliff many times and I tell them to not fall over the cliff. We're not going to go down easy. That's what we try to instill in them and they believe it and they fight until the end."

But LC got too far behind.

"Too big a hole," Hughes said. "We didn't play very well on defense early and that hurt us. Offensively we played well tonight. It's uncharacteristic. We were high and low all season long. We'd play really well or we wouldn't play well. Those quarters hurt us when we don't play well."