



BOB BRAWDY Tri-City Herald

Richland receiver Ryan Wolski (5) catches a pass he tipped to himself as Gonzaga Prep defender Conor McKenna (42) pursues the play during Saturday's Class 4A state semifinal game at Edgar Brown Stadium in Pasco.

CLASS 4A FOOTBALL STATE SEMIFINALS

Victory just out of reach for Richland

Bombers fall 31-17 to Gonzaga Prep

Richland led in fourth quarter, but Bullpups rallied

Loss ends great season for Bombers, who finish 11-2

BY JEFF MORROW
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The Richland Bombers finally ran out of Mondays on Saturday.

All postseason long, Bombers coach Mike Neidhold was fond of telling his football team after each playoff victory that: "We get another

Monday to put the pads on."

But the Bombers couldn't hold off a fourth-quarter Gonzaga Prep rally Saturday at Edgar Brown Stadium in Pasco, falling to the Bullpups 31-17 in a Class 4A state semifinal.

It ended Richland's season with an 11-2 record —

with both losses coming at the hands of the Bullpups.

"I told them I love them," Neidhold said when asked what he told his players after the loss. "We have the greatest kids. I just love how they represent Richland High and our program."

That was because the Bombers never gave up,

even after trailing 9-0 at one point, and 15-9 at another.

And when Kyle Whitby scored on a 2-yard touchdown run — his second TD of the game — with 7:56 remaining in the game, things looked good for Richland as it held a 17-15 lead.

"All us Bombers, we never quit," said Richland full-back/linebacker Lakota Wills. "We knew we could come back. We knew we had a chance to win this game. But it didn't happen. That's how it rolls in football."

The Bombers defense had contained the Bullpups offense in the third quarter to get back into the contest.

"We made some adjustments on defense, changed some responsibilities inside," Neidhold said.

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RICHLAND

Richland was led defensively by Whitby, who had six tackles (one for loss); Brecken Galliher, who had five tackles (one for loss) and a fumble recovery; and Wills, who was in on five tackles, had a pass breakup and a fumble recovery.

But a big reason Gonzaga Prep is 13-0 is it finds ways to win.

After Whitby scored Richland's go-ahead touchdown, Prep finally started moving the ball again on offense. The Bullpups responded with a seven-play, 62-yard scoring drive, culminating in a 2-yard touchdown run by all-everything Evan Weaver.

Nick Johnson added a 2-point conversion run, and that gave the Bullpups a 23-17 lead — the lead for good — with 5:37 left.

The Bombers tried to respond on the next series, but the drive ended on their own 49.

Neidhold felt Richland's offense was too one-dimensional.

"We just couldn't run the ball well today," said Neidhold. "The way to defend our offense is to put seven guys in the box. That's what they did."

Six plays after Richland turned the ball over on downs, Weaver again pounded into the end zone for a 2-yard TD run with 1:43 to play and a 31-17 Prep lead.

"It never changes for us," said Weaver, who is headed to the University of California to play football next year. "Even when we fell behind, we knew we would score. It was a really tough

game. They're the best team we've played this season. We both know each other. It came down to who wanted it in the fourth quarter. We wanted it more."

Gonzaga Prep head coach Dave McKenna said even when Richland took the lead, his team stayed the course with a game plan of running the ball.

"We just weren't blocking in the second half for a while," McKenna said. "They're a great football team. We've played them twice now, and we've just happened to come out on top both times."

So come Monday, there will be no practice for Richland. But Neidhold said he, his coaches and the players can all reflect then on a great season.

"I'm very proud of them," Neidhold said. "There was just no quit in these kids."

Gonzaga Prep	2	13	0	16	-	31
Richland	0	9	0	0	-	17

SCORING PLAYS
GP — Safety, Richland player recovered fumble



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Richland defenders Brecken Galliher, left, and Taiton Gillespie (42) team up to tackle Gonzaga Prep's Jake Tucker during Saturday's Class 4A state semifinal in Pasco.

In own end zone
GP — Nick Johnson 2 run (Jared Kutsch kick)
Rich — FG 32 Ryan Wolski
Rich — Kyle Whitby 1 run (kick failed)
GP — Ryan Gross 7 pass from Liam Bell (kick blocked)
Rich — Safety, Johnson tackled in end zone
Rich — Whitby 2 run (kick blocked)
GP — Evan Weaver 2 run (Johnson run)

GP — Weaver 2 run (Gross pass from Bell)
STATISTICS
RUSHING — GP, Weaver 17-95, Mason Pleshe 14-55, Johnson 7-36, Gross 3-28, Bell 8-21, Jake Tucker 3-18, Totals 52-253. Rich, Whitby 11-51, Lakota Wills 14-48, Riley Mahoney 1-2, Team 1-minus 14, Paxton Stevens 6-minus 29, Totals 33-58.
PASSING — GP, Bell 3-7-0-77. Rich, Stevens

16-29-0-152.
RECEIVING — GP, Johnson 1-36, Devin Culp 1-34, Gross 1-12. Rich, Alex Chapman 6-57, Rhett Levin 4-41, Griffey March 3-35, Wolski 2-20, Whitby 1-minus 1.
FIRST DOWNS — GP 16, Rich 14. FUMBLES-LOST — GP 3-2, Rich 3-1. PENALTIES-YARDS — GP 3-40, Rich 6-63.

BOMBERS FALL TO BULLPUPS IN SEMIFINALS



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Richland receiver Rhett Levin (31) reacts after colliding with teammate Griffey March (3), which led to a missed reception on a fourth down attempt late in the fourth quarter during Saturday's semi-final 4A state playoff football game against Gonzaga Prep at Edgar Brown Stadium in Pasco. The Bombers ended up losing the game and ending their season.