



Wa-Hi falls at Richland, 64-14

Hector del Castillo

RICHLAND — Walla Walla High School’s first two possessions resulted in touchdowns as the Blue Devils twice jumped ahead of unbeaten Richland and started toward a shocking upset, but the Bombers dominated the rest of the game and handed Wa-Hi a 64-14 loss in Mid-Columbia Conference football action here Friday.

The Blue Devils (3-4 overall, 2-3 in the league) had hoped to follow their Homecoming victory last week with another good performance — together with breaks falling in their favor — but they ran into a powerhouse.

“Richland is a really good football team,” Wa-Hi coach Eric Hisaw said. “They just are. They’re flat-out better than us. We had a great first quarter. The first part of the second quarter wasn’t bad ... They’re just better than us. At some point when they’re better, you can’t do much about it. The kids kept fighting. I’m proud of that. The coaches kept coaching, but they’re just better. You have to tip your hat and say, ‘You now what? Good game.’”

Richland overpowered Wa-Hi at the line of scrimmage, on both sides of the ball.

The Blue Devil offense that had seemed unstoppable all season, averaging 418.5 yards through the first six games, finally met its match at Richland, as Wa-Hi totaled only 109 against the Bombers.

Wa-Hi senior quarterback Mitch Lesmeister managed to gain 62 yards rushing on 13 keepers, but he had averaged 10.3 yards per carry prior to the game. His season total of 947 yards, along with 11 touchdowns, ranked second in the league.

Classmate Brennan Barberich took 12 handoffs, but usually ran into tacklers at or behind the line of scrimmage. He ended up totaling minus-8 yards in the game.

The passing game fared no better.

Wa-Hi senior wideout Isaiah Moss gained 44 yards on three receptions, but otherwise, Lesmeister managed only three completions for 15 yards. He threw two costly interceptions.

The Blue Devils opened the game with short drives to the end zone, back-to-back, but then spent the rest of the night quickly surrendering the ball on eight punts and three turnovers.

“Richland was bigger, faster and stronger,” Hisaw said. “They’re just better in so many ways. Our kids played hard. They didn’t quit. I tip my hat to our kids, our staff. But when you’re not as big, fast or strong, it’s a long night.”

Nevertheless, Wa-Hi managed to jump out to a 14-7 lead midway through the first quarter.

The Blue Devils started the game on defense as Richland quarterback Paxton Stevens began his first drive with a pass to receiver Alex Chapman at the 22-yard line.

However, Wa-Hi senior Samuel Hoe stripped the ball loose, and sophomore Jahmal Mangarero returned it to within a yard of the goal line.

The Blue Devils encountered an impenetrable Richland defense, until Lesmeister finally thundered into the end zone on fourth down.

Wa-Hi senior kicker Bryar Jensen added the extra point.

Stevens quickly answered with a 32-yard scoring pass to tie the score at 7-7.

Wa-Hi senior Bryant Romero returned the ensuing kickoff to the 45-yard line, giving the offense great field position again.

The Blue Devils again struggled to move the ball, but they managed to keep the drive alive by converting three third-down plays. The exhausting push ended with another short Lesmeister romp to the end zone, and a Jensen kick, with 6:33 still left in the first quarter.

“I was not surprised it was like that in the first quarter, honestly,” Hisaw said. “I really thought we played well. It’s nice to get the fumble on the first play of the game, and go in and capitalize on it, make a statement there.”

But Wa-Hi never scored again.

Stevens tied the game again with another scoring pass, and the Blue Devils’ next drive ended on an interception as Richland’s Victor Strasser raced all the way to the Wa-Hi 1-yard line.

The Blue Devil defense nearly put up its own wall, but the Bomber’s Parker McCary burst into the end zone on third down for a 21-14 lead with two seconds left in the first quarter.

Wa-Hi’s next three possessions all quickly ended with punts as Richland added two more touchdowns before halftime, increasing its lead to 36-14.

“That really was tough on the kids emotionally,” Hisaw said.

The Blue Devils started the second half on offense, but they punted again, and Richland called only one play as McCary broke loose on a 63-yard scoring run to put the game out of reach.

Wa-Hi next plays Thursday at Kamiakin.

Richland 64, Wa-Hi 14

Wa-Hi 14 0 0 0 14

Richland 21 15 21 7 64

Wa-Hi — Lesmeister 3 run (Jensen kick)

Richland — Kjarmo 33 pass from Stevens (Weissenfels kick)

Wa-Hi — Lesmeister 3 run (Jensen kick)

Richland — Weissenfels 13 pass from Stevens (Weissenfels kick)

Richland — McCary 3 run (Weissenfels kick)

Richland — McCary 1 run (Kjarmo pass from Kriskovich)

Richland — Weissenfels 25 pass from Stevens (Weissenfels kick)

Richland — McCary 63 run (Weissenfels kick)

Richland — Weissenfels 47 interception return (Weissenfels kick)

Richland — Weissenfels 77 pass from Stevens (Weissenfels kick)

Richland — Fishback 9 run (Weissenfels kick)

Wa-HiRichland

First downs922

Rushes-yards33-5030-247

Passing yards59282

Passes (att-comp-int)20-7-227-16-0

Punts-yards8-2361-56

Fumbles-lost2-12-2

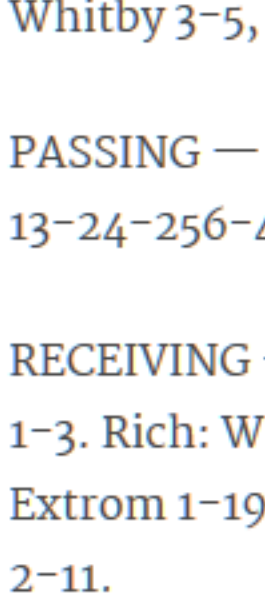
Penalties-yards4-385-46

Individual statistics

RUSHING — Wa-Hi: Lesmeister 13-62, Barberich 12-(-8), Hoe 5-7, Romero 1-0. Rich: McCary 11-133, Stanfield 10-75, Fishback 4-31, Whitby 3-5, Guffey 1-2, Stevens 1-1.

PASSING — Wa-Hi: Lesmeister 7-20-59-0-2. Rich: Stevens 13-24-256-4-0, Jensen 3-3-45-0-0.

RECEIVING — Wa-Hi: Moss 3-44, Davis 2-8, Knowles 1-4, Barberich 1-3. Rich: Weissenfels 4-137, Kjarmo 2-46, Piper 2-23, Mendoza 1-23, Extrom 1-19, Brasker 1-18, Kriskovich 1-13, Stanfield 1-11, Chapman 2-11.



Hector del Castillo

Hector writes stories about local sports, helps produce the daily section and updates the web site. A lifelong sports nut having grown up in Maryland, he joined the U-B with more than 15 years experience in journalism.