

Sports

4A STATE FOOTBALL | RICHLAND 41, SUNNYSIDE 0

Richland shuts out Sunnyside in state opener

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Paxton Stevens threw six touchdown passes, Adam Weissenfels caught three of them and the Richland High School football team overcame a slow start to dispatch Sunnyside 41-0 on Friday night at Lampson Stadium in the opening round of the Class 4A state playoffs.

The No. 3 Bombers (11-0) will face either Bothell or Moses Lake next week.

In the first state appearance for the Grizzlies (8-3) since 1981 — and first game against Richland since 1963 — it seemed like all the big plays would have to go their way to knock off Richland for the first time in almost 70 years. But instead it was the Bombers — specifically Weissenfels — making all the plays.

In addition to his three

touchdown receptions, Weissenfels intercepted a pass on defense, booted an onside kick that Richland recovered and went 5-for-5 on extra points.

“My team sets me up to make plays,” Weissenfels said. “That onside kick, I’m the one that kicks it, and people see me kick it, but the whole team is going after it and hitting people. The defensive line is putting pressure on the quarterback and making him get rid of it before he wants to, and that sets me up for an easy play. And then on those touchdowns, I just got open and Paxton got me the ball — it’s really as simple as that.”

While Sunnyside moved the ball well at times and quarterback Nico Valle hit on his fair share of deep passes — he threw for 174 yards — Richland played a near-perfect game of bend-but-don’t-break defense to get its second consecutive shutout.



BOB BRAWDY Tri-City Herald

Richland wide receiver Alex Chapman (8) celebrates a first-quarter touchdown with quarterback Paxton Stevens during Friday night’s playoff game against Sunnyside at Lampson Stadium in Kennewick. Check out a photo gallery at tricityherald.com.

“They’re good. They can throw it around, they have some pretty dynamic receivers and they go on those long drives and can kind of wear you down,” Richland coach Mike Neidhold said. “Their offense is kind of hard to replicate in practice, so to get a shutout in a playoff game was huge. That’s hard to do, because everybody’s good.”

Richland has given up one score in its past three games.

Stevens struggled in the early going, throwing the first of two interceptions on the game’s first drive, and Richland went three-and-out on its second drive.

“For sure, we did come off to a slow start, but after the half we talked and told ‘em, ‘Let’s get moving,’ ” Stevens said. “ ‘Step on the gas pedal, and move forward.’ And that’s what we did. We came out strong and got the ‘W.’ ”

It took nearly five minutes for either team to pick up a first down, but Richland’s Alex Chapman made the first one count. He caught a lengthy pass from Stevens down the right sideline in front of the Bombers’ bench, then juked two Sunnyside defenders to clear his way to daylight for a 57-yard touchdown reception to open the

scoring.

Chapman struck again in the middle of the second quarter when Stevens found him wide open in front of the end zone for a 13-yard touchdown to make it 14-0.

After struggling to move the ball against the Grizzlies defense for most of the early going, Richland decided to press its luck on the ensuing kickoff and had Weissenfels scoot an onside kick up the middle of the field. Sunnyside’s center upback was late to react, and the ball rolled between his legs. Richland’s Jared Whitby dived in behind to recover to give Richland the ball back.

“At the beginning of the season, I was told that if I have an opening, I should take it,” Weissenfels said. “We hadn’t gotten the opportunity to do that all season, and our plan was to do our normal thing. But as soon as I saw that hole, I went for it.”

“Big plays are going to win you state championships, so I knew I had to take the chance, and I did and it paid off.”

Weissenfels followed up the perfectly executed onside kick by making a diving catch in the back of the end zone a few minutes later to give the Bombers a 20-0 halftime lead.

He started the second half right where he left off,

catching touchdown passes of 8 and 9 yards to go along with an interception on defense to put Richland up 34-0 by the end of the third quarter and put the game out of reach.

Blake Binns capped the scoring with a 15-yard touchdown catch late in the fourth quarter to push Stevens’ TD pass total for the day to six, a career best for the senior.

“It gives us confidence, but you know, it’s just another game,” Stevens said. “We got the ‘W,’ but we’ve got to leave it in the past and move forward.”

Sunnyside	0	0	0	0	—	0
Richland	7	13	14	7	—	41

SCORING PLAYS

- R — Alex Chapman 57 pass from Paxton Stevens (Adam Weissenfels kick)
- R — Chapman 13 pass from Stevens (Weissenfels kick)
- R — Weissenfels 16 pass from Stevens (pass failed)
- R — Weissenfels 9 pass from Stevens (Weissenfels kick)
- R — Weissenfels 8 pass from Stevens (Weissenfels kick)
- R — Blake Binns 15 pass from Stevens (Weissenfels kick)

STATISTICS

- RUSHING — S, Carlos Ramirez 10-26; Jaime Alvarez 4-9; Mylez Alvarez 2-4; Alfredo Loera 1-4; Nico Valle 2-(minus 5); team 1-(minus 8).
- R, Victor Strasser 9-70; Parker McCary 14-57; Ben Stanfield 10-41; Tyler Fishback 2-9; Tsega Macduff 4-1; Stevens 3-0.
- PASSING — S, Valle 12-33-1-174. R, Stevens 11-25-2-171.
- RECEIVING — S, Hugo Reyes 3-49; Cole Hazard 1-56; Fernando Cid Reyes 5-24; Nate Maltos 1-12; Kaden Rasmussen 1-10; Ramirez 1-1; team 1-32. R, Weissenfels 6-77; Chapman 2-70; Binns 1-15; Ryan Piper 1-10; McCary 1-(minus 1).

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