

Sports



SARAH GORDON Tri-City Herald

Richland's Parker McCary (21) slips past Skyview defender Angelo Sarchi (1) thanks to a nice block from Ryan Kriskovich during Saturday's Class 4A semifinal at Lampson Stadium in Kennewick. McCary ran for a pair of touchdowns

4A STATE FOOTBALL SEMIFINALS | RICHLAND 35, SKYVIEW 7

Bombers roll on to Tacoma

Ben Stanfield runs for 121 yards and a touchdown; Brigham Whitby, Victor Strasser and the Bombers defense put the wraps on Storm attack.

BY JEFF MORROW
Special to the Herald

This summer, before the football season began, Ben Stanfield and his Richland teammates created a text group with the title "Home is the Dome."

It symbolized their goal of getting to the Tacoma Dome for the state football championship game.

Mission accomplished. Stanfield rushed for 121 yards and a score, Paxton Stevens connected with Gavin Brasker for two touchdown passes, and the Richland defense smothered a struggling Skyview offense en route to a 35-7 Class 4A state semifinal victory at Kennewick's Lampson Stadium on Saturday night.

The Bombers are set to play top-ranked Camas — a 45-21 winner over Sumner in the other semifinal Saturday — at 7:30 p.m. next Saturday at the Tacoma Dome.

Richland, now 13-0,

makes it one step farther than last year's Bombers team, which fell in the state semifinals to eventual champion Gonzaga Prep.

"We set out in June trying to get here," said Richland coach Mike Neidhold, whose team is 24-2 over the past two seasons. "All we wanted was to get as many Mondays as we could. If you keep getting another Monday, it means you're still playing, and that means you're doing many good things. We got 14 Mondays. That's as many as we could get."

The Bombers looked tough from the outset, pounding the ball on the ground in the opening series. Stanfield carried all four times on the opening drive, finishing with a 37-yard touchdown dash for an early 7-0 lead.

Richland would never lose the lead the rest of the way.

"That first drive, we came out to run," said Stanfield.

"Our coaches have such confidence in our offensive line. We have three running backs who can run the ball (Stanfield, Parker McCary and Victor Strasser), so we're fresh."

The Bombers normally run a balanced offense. But on Saturday, Richland carried the football 40 times, leaving Stevens to toss the football just 11 times.

"When they're playing two high safeties out there, you gotta run the football," said Neidhold. "When you see a five-man zone (in the box), you run. It doesn't matter about balance at this point. It's about getting first downs."

And Richland got them when they were needed.

On the Bombers' second series, McCary scored from 2 yards out for a 14-0 lead. But all of that rushing helped set up a big 65-yard Stevens-to-Alex Chapman pass play.

Skyview did respond, as running back Dyvon Green

collected a Brody Barnum screen pass and raced 70 yards to cut Richland's lead to 14-7.

"We were mainly worried about that screen pass, as well as their read-option," said Bombers defensive tackle Brigham Whitby, who had a monster game with three tackles, two forced fumbles, two pass breakups, a QB sack and an interception. "This is the playoffs. Everybody is good. So you can't back off."

As it was, that was the Storm's only big play of the game.

Richland would respond with two second-quarter, Stevens-to-Brasker TD passes — one for 36 yards, the other for 23. Both plays seemed identical, as Brasker slipped behind the coverage and had no one within 5 yards of him.

"Brasker is a phenomenal player," Stevens exclaimed. "You put him by himself, he's tough to cover. He's worked outside all year, and he's fast."

With a 28-7 lead, it was left to the Bombers defense to close the game out.

And it did. The Storm's offensive performance yielded four punts, three turn-overs on downs, two in-terceptions, one punt blocked, one lost fumble and the one TD.

"Our whole season has been based on what our defense does," said Neidhold. "We like to get those quick three-and-outs and get the ball back."

Strasser — who at line-backer led the Bombers with seven tackles, a quarterback sack, a fumble recovery and a hurry — said the defensive unit did its homework all week in film study.

"They are a real balanced team," said Strasser. "We knew we had to stop their running back (Green), and they had two receivers who are great athletes."

The only thing left to do in the second half was to celebrate.

In the closing seconds, the

large throng of Bombers fans began chanting "On to state!"

Neidhold, getting hugs from his assistants, turned to look at the Bomber faithful and raised his arms in exultation.

"We have unbelievable support," he said. "We're very lucky to have that support for our program."

Meanwhile, expect Stanfield and his teammates to spend a lot of time this coming week texting each other on their favorite thread.

Next weekend, after all, the Dome becomes the Bombers' home.

Skyview	7	0	0	0
Richland	14	14	0	7
35 SCORING PLAYS				
R—Ben Stanfield 37 run (Adam Weissenfels kick)				
R—Parker McCary 2 run (Weissenfels kick)				
S—Dyvon Green 70 pass from Brody Barnum (Wyatt Stallman kick)				
R—Gavin Brasker 36 pass from Paxton Stevens (Weissenfels kick)				
R—Brasker 23 pass from Stevens (Weissenfels kick)				
R—McCary 4 run (Weissenfels kick)				
STATISTICS				
RUSHING — S, Green 14-53, James Millsbaugh 2-16, Barnum 7-5, Hayden Froeber 1-1, Totals 24-75. R, Stanfield 16-121, McCary 12-62, Stevens 3-16, Victor Strasser 2-10, Tsega MacDuff 1-7, Soren Baney 1-6, Jared Whitby 2-5, Tyler Fishback 2-4, Team				
PASSING — S, Barnum 22-47-2-240. R, Stevens 6-11-0-163.				
RECEIVING — S, Green 1-70, Cole Grossman 9-64, Travis Yajko 6-45, Jayden Chatman 2-31, Jeremiah Wright 4-30. R, Alex Chapman 1-65, Brasker 2-59, Weissenfels 2-42, Stanfield 1-minus 3.				
FIRST DOWNS — S 17, R 15. FUMBLES-LOST — S 3-1, R 0-0. PENALTIES-YARDS — S 12-112, R 14-125.				

SPORTS

Mid-Columbia teams go 4-for-4, punching tickets to state finals Page 1D



MID-COLUMBIA REPLAY

On this day in ...

1981: Kyle Kafentzis, Tim Ruane and Mark Bircher combined to rush for 330 yards and four touchdowns, Richland's defense gave up

just 169 total yards and the Bombers rolled over Clover Park 28-8 in a AAA semifinal game at the Richland Bowl to earn a berth in the Kingbowl.