

PREP FOOTBALL

Richland soars past Skyline

■ Richland defense forces 6 second-half turnovers against No. 2 Skyline to win season opener 38-27.

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In a season opener featuring two of the top teams in the state, Richland High School used big defensive plays and a methodical offensive scheme to beat the Skyline Spartans 38-27 on Friday night at Fran Rish Stadium.

The No. 5 Bombers (1-0) were tied with the No. 2 Spartans (0-1) at the half, but some tweaks in pass coverage caused disaster for the Skyline offense, which turned the ball over on its first five possessions of the second half.

"Mostly it was just telling our guys to do what they're supposed to do," Richland coach Mike Neidhold said of the halftime adjustments. "We told them to just get in their drops. And we forced a couple of bad throws and got the ball back, and that helped."

In total, the Bombers had six takeaways — four interceptions, two fumble recoveries — all of which came in the second half. Junior linebacker Victor Strasser led the way with an interception and a fumble recovery.

The tenacious defense turned into opportunistic offense, as senior quarterback Paxton Stevens took advantage of some short fields and led the Bombers on four consecutive scoring drives to start the second half — three of which ended in touchdowns — to put Richland up 38-14 at the end of the third quarter.

"I was expecting a close



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Richland senior wide receiver Alex Chapman runs with the ball against Skyline Friday at Fran Rish Stadium. Chapman caught two touchdown passes and had an interception.

game through the whole thing," Stevens said. "But we executed. We talked at halftime, and we executed. That's all there is to it."

Stevens completed 19 of his 37 passes for 281 yards and three touchdowns against two interceptions. Senior wide receiver Alex Chapman caught two of those touchdown passes — eight catches for 193 yards in total — and had an interception on the defensive side.

Despite throwing three interceptions, Skyline senior quarterback Drew Kistner did a nice job of moving the Spartans down the field, throwing for 243 yards on 19-of-31 passing while averaging more than 10 yards per carry on his nine rushes.

Skyline looked like it would run away with the

momentum from the get-go as it started the game with a 59-yard drive capped by a nine-yard touchdown run by senior running back Isaiah Shim on offense, and held Richland to two three-and-outs on defense.

But a turnover on downs by the Spartans on a short field on their second possession set the Bombers up for a 71-yard drive that featured a great catch by Chapman over an opposing cornerback, and ended with a 31-yard touchdown grab by junior receiver Josh Mendoza, who had to fight through contact to come down with it and tie the score at 7-7 late in the first quarter.

"(Chapman and Mendoza) helped me out a lot on those, and I told them when I came back, 'Hey, I'll get those out in front of you

more next time,' " Stevens said. "But yeah, great grabs. They really helped me out there."

Skyline's Kistner — who was splitting time at quarterback with sophomore Joe Green — connected on a downfield bomb to senior wide out CJ Moore for an 82-yard strike to put the Spartans back up 14-7 with a little more than four minutes to go in the first half. But again, Richland answered back, with a deep pass by Stevens finding Chapman for a 76-yard touchdown to tie the score at 14 heading into the locker room.

The night was filled with quarterbacks making great throws, receivers making great catches and defenders making great athletic plays to force turnovers. Neidhold said the matchup was unlike

anything fans, coaches or players usually get to see in a regular-season contest.

"That was as good of a display of high school talent, with guys catching and throwing the ball, that I've seen in a long time," Neidhold said. "Skyline is going to be fine — they may not lose again."

"Maybe we won't either, I don't know."

After the Bombers beat the No. 2 Class 4A team in the state — based on a poll by The Seattle Times — Neidhold said his job this week will be to keep his team focused on next Friday's game, when it will travel to Wenatchee to face the Panthers.

"It's one game. If you win it's one game, if you lose it's one game," Neidhold said. "We've got a lot of work to do, a lot of things that we've gotta fix. We've gotta focus on us, like we do."

Skyline	7	7	0	13	-	27
Richland	7	7	24	0	-	38

SCORING PLAYS

S — Isaiah Shim 9 run (Kevin McGrane kick)
R — Josh Mendoza 31 pass from Paxton Stevens (Adam Weissenfels kick)
S — CJ Moore 82 pass from Drew Kistner (McGrane kick)
R — Alex Chapman 76 pass from Stevens (Weissenfels kick)
R — Chapman 36 pass from Stevens (Weissenfels kick)
R — Weissenfels 23 kick
R — Parker McCary 3 run (Weissenfels kick)
R — Ben Stanfield 3 run (Weissenfels kick)
S — Alex Taylor 16 pass from Joe Green (Pass failed)
S — Taylor 4 pass from Kistner (McGrane Kick)

STATISTICS

RUSHING — S, Kistner 9-91, Riley Gill 3-28, Shim 14-26, Green 3-2, R, Stanfield 10-90, McCary 10-16, Victor Strasser 1-8, Stevens 5-(minus 4).
PASSING — S, Kistner 19-31-3-243, Green 12-20-1-87, R, Stevens 19-37-2-289.
RECEIVING — R, Chapman 8-193, Mendoza 4-59, Ryan Kriskovich 2-14, Weissenfels 2-11, Jake Stanfield 1-7, Ryan Piper 2-5.

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