

Palos Verdes holds off West Torrance in wild QB duel

Notch throws for 331 yards, four TDs, but Fixen makes winning plays in Bay League game.

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There are pitchers' duels in baseball and goaltenders' duels in hockey, so why not a quarterbacks' duel in football?

Zack Fixen of Palos Verdes and Joey Notch of West Torrance did just that during Friday's Bay League game at West, playing a lively version of "can you top this?"

Fixen passed for two touchdowns and ran for two more in Palos Verdes' 37-28 victory, doing all he could to keep up with Notch and West's hurry-up offense. Notch had four touchdown passes and 331 yards, completing 24 of 45 throws.

Palos Verdes improved to 6-2 overall, including 3-0 in league play, setting up a showdown next week against Redondo, which improved to 4-4, 3-0 after defeating Leuzinger on Friday. West fell to 4-4, 0-3, but it wasn't because the Warriors couldn't move the ball.

"It would be fun," Fixen said, smiling when asked if he could see himself playing in the same no-huddle offense employed by West.

Fixen directed the Sea Kings to a 14-0 lead early in the second quarter and then to a 21-6 advantage by halftime. Palos Verdes' running game, which helped to produce a one-sided victory last week over Mira Costa, struggled somewhat in the opening half.

West didn't have much success in the early going, with Notch struggling to find his rhythm. When he and the Warriors got going into the second half, the game got tighter and more intriguing. He moved the Warriors up and down the field.

Notch just couldn't get West ahead of Palos Verdes.

Palos Verdes built a 35-14 lead only to watch West come roaring back to within 35-28 with plenty of time remaining. Notch threw TD passes of 14 yards to Sam Choi and 31 yards to Craig Knaus to trim the Warriors' deficit.

"I told the guys before the game that I wasn't concerned about the score," West coach Greg Holt said. "I was looking at what kind of competitors we had and whether they could look at the man in the mirror. Well, they hung in there and played hard."

Palos Verdes refused to crumble, though.

Fixen marched the Sea Kings from their 35-yard line to the Warriors' 33 before he threw an interception into the end zone. The play turned out to benefit Palos Verdes when defensive back Dane Silverlake tried to run out of the end zone.

He ended up running back into the end zone and dropped to one knee for a safety that gave Palos Verdes a 37-28 lead with 4 minutes, 30 seconds left in the game. Palos Verdes then ran out the clock after receiving the ensuing kick.

Fixen could have tried a third quarterback sneak for a touchdown, but instead took a knee on the final play of the game from the West 1-yard-line. Fixen finished with 31 yards rushing on 11 carries to go with 10-for-16 passing for 173 yards.

"It feels really good," Fixen said of defeating West. "We were seeing that they were a little too aggressive against the run."

So, Fixen looked for his receivers on deeper routes. He connected with Robby Kolanz for a 41-yard scoring play late in the second quarter. He also had a 47-yard completion to Dean Alessi on the final drive of the game.

"It was a combination of being ready for it after a week of practice and noticing it during the game," Fixen said of West's tightly bunched defense at the line of scrimmage. "It meant our receivers had one-on-one coverage."

Given a chance to look ahead to next week's showdown against Redondo, Fixen smiled, shrugged and said, "It's a little too early, but it's hard not to get excited."

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