

Palos Verdes dominates Redondo, clinches share of Bay League crown

Lopes gains 119 yards behind strong line as Sea Kings control game from the start.

By Dave Thorpe Staff Writer

Posted: 11/05/2011 12:51:27 AM PDT



Palos Verdes Salvatore Vitale goes by Redondo's Erik Brown (30) for a touchdown in their Bay League football game on a rainy Friday afternoon in Palos Verdes High. PV controlled the game from the start. (Steve McCrank Staff Photographer)

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Palos Verdes has been thinking about a Bay League title and a deep playoff run ever since it lost in the CIF Southern Section Northern Division quarterfinals to Westlake last season. Sea King players have worked vigorously since then.

The fruits of their labor have led to at least a share of their first Bay League title since 2007, which the Sea Kings earned Friday afternoon when they dominated Redondo 31-6 at Palos Verdes High.

Along with hard work and dedication, Palos Verdes has gotten it done this year with strong line play and special teams, a ball-hawking defense and enough offensive weaponry to keep defenses at bay.

In a battle of teams that were 3-0 in league play going in, the Sea Kings were steady and strong, taking an early lead and never letting the Sea Hawks into the game.

Palos Verdes (7-2, 4-0), which can win the league title outright with a win against Hill rival Peninsula on Thursday afternoon, rushed the ball successfully, stopped the run and had three interceptions.

"They shut our offense down early, and that set the tone," Redondo coach Gene Simon said.

Redondo (4-5, 3-1) punted on its first three possessions, and time ran out in the first half on its fourth possession.

Palos Verdes established the run and stuck with it, grinding out 249 yards and three touchdowns.

Palos Verdes did it without running back Zach Henkhaus, who suffered a concussion during the second half of last week's game against West Torrance and was not dressed.

But Palos Verdes has quality depth at several positions, including running back.

Junior Matt Lopes led the way with 20 runs for 114 yards and two touchdowns. Sal Vitale had 18 carries for 74 yards and a TD. Quarterback Zack Fixen added six carries for 47 yards. Fixen also was 8 for 10 for 74 yards and a touchdown throwing the ball.

"I knew that with Henkhaus out - he's a big part of our offense - that if I got my chance I had to succeed," Lopes said. "Our line is doing a great job right now. They opened big holes for me."

After holding Redondo to 81 yards in the first half and taking a 17-0 lead into halftime, Palos Verdes got even better in the second half.

Linebacker Chad Mensinger intercepted Harrison Faecher on Redondo's first play from scrimmage in the third quarter on the Redondo 19-yard line.

Palos Verdes then went 19 yards in five plays, with Lopes scoring on a 7-yard run to give the Sea Kings a 24-0 lead with 9:36 left in the third quarter.

After Anthony Philyaw produced Redondo's biggest gain of the day, a 47-yard run, Faecher was intercepted by Lopes on the Palos Verdes 1-yard line.

Helped along by 35 yards of Palos Verdes penalties, Redondo got on the scoreboard when Faecher hit Hunter Bradshaw for a 4-yard touchdown pass with 6:48 left in the game.

Redondo's 2-point conversion attempt failed, and so did an onside kick attempt. Then Palos Verdes went 48 yards in nine plays, highlighted by Lopes' 12-yard run and capped by Lopes 10-yard touchdown run.

Robby Kolanz, who had an 18-yard touchdown reception in the second quarter, had an interception - his fourth of the year - to cap the win for the Sea Kings.

"This is such a close group, it's like playing with your brothers," Kolanz said. "I feel that's why we're able to put together all these wins."

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