



Special unit leads Sea Kings to victory

By Nick Ingram Special to the News
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Week after week, the Palos Verdes High School football team is reminded just how valuable the special teams unit of a football team is.

Last Friday afternoon, the Sea Kings showed visiting South Torrance High School how game-changing that unit can be, outscoring the Spartans entire offense alone en route to a 44-7 non-League victory.

After senior running back Zach Henkaus bounced off a would-be tackler and raced 56 yards downfield to give the PV High team (2-2) an early 7-0 lead, the Sea Kings special teams unit, led by coach Jim Hudnall, began to show its brass.

"That play worked perfectly for us, because I bounced outside and there was nobody out there," Henkaus said. "That whole was not huge, but our offensive line puts in 100 percent all the time."

Aided by a bad snap, junior Ian Erceg stepped in front of the South Torrance High (2-1) punter, blocking the punt before picking it up at the 4-yard line and taking it in for the Sea Kings second score and a 13-0 lead after the ensuing point-after-touchdown was missed.

"\[Hudnall\] spends more time on special teams than anything," senior Robby Kolanz said. "He says special teams is the most important part of a football game. It can change the game, and, as you can see, it did."

With the Sea King defense forcing the Spartans to go three-and-out on their first drive of the second half, Kolanz this time sat back to receive the punt, taking it at the 47-yard line before finding a seam upfield, and ultimately the end zone for a 27-7 lead.

"I saw a whole lot of open green and only a couple of green jerseys," said Kolanz, in reference to the Spartans jerseys. "I owed it to coach Hud and the team to score."

Late in the second quarter, Fixen found Kolanz deep behind the Spartan defense twice, but the senior receiver was unable to haul one pass, as the second was overthrown.

After PV High's defense forced the Spartans to punt, Kolanz was given another chance, as this time he and Fixen hooked up for a 42-yard score, as Kolanz fought off a Spartan defensive back before scoring the touchdown and taking a 20-7 lead into the locker room.

"I haven't been blessed with downtown speed, but I pride myself on my hands," said Kolanz, who caught three passes for 68 yards. "That drop was rough, but I built off it."

Henkaus added an interception with time expiring in the third quarter, setting up a 25-yard touchdown from Fixen to senior Lateef Munir.

On the very next possession, junior Matt Lopes stepped in front of Spartan quarterback Blaise Booth's pass at South Torrance High's 36-yard line, setting up senior Carl Aguirre's 13-yard touchdown run.

While the Sea Kings jumped out to an early 13-0 lead, a turnover led to the Spartans lone points, as South Torrance High's defense jumped on Salvatore Vitale's fumble at their own 30-yard line before driving downfield and scoring on running back Brandon Loera's 23-yard run.

"\[Loera\] is a tough runner," Kolanz said. "He keeps his legs going, so focused on wrapping up. We didn't shut him down, but we did our best to contain him."

"We were expecting a lot of run, but we plugged the holes and stopped him in the end," Erceg said.

Coming into the game, PV High's coaching staff knew it was up for a different offense on the other side of the ball than it had seen in weeks past, but the coaches made sure the Sea Kings knew what needed to be done in order to earn the team's second victory of the season.

"We know South \[Torrance\] runs the ball, and they were going to beat us up on the line," defensive coach Dave Young said. "We preached all week to hit their running backs, make piles on the line and if we can own the line of scrimmage, we would be fine."

The Sea Kings defense limited the Spartans to 248 yards offensively, while Loera gained 110 yards on 22 carries.

While the secondary recorded two interceptions, the Sea Kings sacked Booth once at the end of the game, when junior Griffin Hitzel came untouched off the end, sacking Booth and forcing a fumble that senior William Suh recovered.

Fixen completed eight of his 12 passes for 128 yards and two touchdowns. Junior Roman Smith gained 58 yards on 10 carries.

The Sea Kings have the week off before traveling to Coleman Stadium, taking on Inglewood High School.

And PV High knows that it will have its hands full with the Sentinels next Friday night.

"Inglewood \[High\] has a lot of talent. They can score in a lot of ways," Gardner said. "It's good we have the bye week when we do. We have some guys that are banged up. It gives us time to get healthy."

Senior Chase Eldredge and junior David Galetti, both starters on the offensive line, were not in pads after going down with injuries against Fresno's Central High School Saturday, Sept. 17.

Last season, the Sea Kings defeated the Sentinels, 28-17. Kickoff for next Friday's contest is set for 7 p.m.

Nick Ingram is a freelance writer and a frequent contributor of the News.



KICK OFF: The Peninsula High School Athletic Booster Club held its 21st annual All-Sports Kick-Off Party this month, hosted by Katy and Greg Laetsch. More than 200 guests celebrated the start of the Peninsula High sports season. The Peninsula Athletic Booster Club has donated nearly \$1.5 million to the athletic department within the last eight years. Pictured above with Principal Mitzi Cress (fourth from left) are some of the school's coaches. From left, they are: boys varsity volleyball coach Kurt Barcinella; girl's volleyball varsity assistant Scott Massey; freshman football and freshman/sophomore baseball coach John Hargartner; head junior varsity football coach Chris Artino; and co-head varsity football coach Adam Boyd.