



Sea Kings pass final nonleague test

By Nick Ingram Special to the News  
Thursday, October 13, 2011 12:45 PM PDT

Leading up to last Friday night's football game, the Palos Verdes High School coaching staff knew how much of a threat host Inglewood High School's Derrick Woods posed.

But Sea Kings defensive coach Dave Young composed a game plan that corralled Woods and the Sentinels enough for the PV High offense, along with the special teams unit, to trump Inglewood High, 42-14, in a nonleague game at Coleman Stadium.

"Coach Young knew Inglewood was going to be athletic. They're good, fast and strong," senior linebacker Jake Macer said. "You have to play hard on every play, because one play can be the difference in the game."

While the Sea Kings (3-2) defense only allowed one play over 20 yards — a 31-yard touchdown pass from Woods to Devian Shelton, it was PV High's special teams that once again came up with the big plays.

With the Sentinels (1-4) punting on fourth-and-one at their own 31-yard line early in the third quarter, junior Ian Erceg found an opening and stepped in front of a punt — his second of the season — blocking it at the 23-yard line before Macer scooped the ball up at the 17 and taking it into the end zone for the first defensive touchdown of his Sea King career.

"\[Special teams\] Coach \[Jim\] Hudnall scouted \[Inglewood High\] all week," Macer said. "He saw the opening, and \[Erceg\] split the gap and made a play, just like he always does."

On Inglewood High's very next possession, the Sea Kings once again forced the Sentinels to punt, this time from the 26-yard line, and once again, Macer picked up the blocked punt at the 11-yard line before taking it in for his second touchdown and a 35-7 advantage with 7:18 left in the third quarter.

"Our special teams unit has been great," coach Guy Gardner said. "They have done a nice job the last few weeks."

PV High's defense limited Inglewood to 268 yards, with Woods passing for 151, completing 13 of his 26 attempts and throwing two interceptions, while gaining 61 yards on the ground.

After Inglewood High knotted the game at seven early in the second quarter, the Sea Kings began to distance themselves from the Sentinels.

With the Sea Kings set up at the Sentinel 32-yard line, quarterback Zack Fixen was flushed from the pocket and scrambled to his left before finding junior receiver Dean Alessi down the sideline.

"I looked back and thought \[Fixen\] was going to get sacked," Alessi said. "I just kept running my route. You never know what is going to happen. \[Fixen\] is a crazy athlete and he made the play."

Alessi, who refused to give up on the play, fought for position with the Inglewood High defender, came down with the ball before finding the end zone, giving PV High a 14-7 lead with 8:08 remaining before halftime.

The Sea Kings took a 20-7 lead with 4:07 left before halftime on senior Carl Aguirre's 2-yard touchdown run, just after Fixen found Matt Costa in the flat for an 11-yard gain after Gardner gambled on fourth-and-13, going for the first down instead of a field goal.

"\[Fixen\] has been doing a really nice job of not forcing the issue, something you want your senior to do," Gardner said. "Inglewood \[High\] was coming after him all night."

PV High had a chance to extend the lead before halftime, but Michael Tulchin's 44-yard field goal attempt sailed just left of the upright, keeping the score locked at 20-7.

In the third quarter, the Sea King offense ran just six offensive plays, the last of those coming as time expired, when Fixen found senior receiver Lateef Munir open in the middle of the field for a 39-yard touchdown pass, giving PV High a 42-7 advantage.

PV High jumped out to an early 7-0 lead in the first quarter after senior Andrew Aranda scored on a 1-yard run, capping a 76-yard drive that began with a 23-yard pass from quarterback Zack Fixen to Mason Manu before senior Zack Henkaus ate up 52 yards on five carries before Aranda's touchdown.

"Inglewood \[High\] hung tough," Gardner said. "Some of the bounces didn't go their way in the third quarter, especially on special teams."

The touchdown pass from Woods to Shelton made it a 42-14 game.

Fixen finished with 153 yards and two touchdowns, completing eight of his 13 passes. Alessi had three receptions for 57 yards, and Aguirre gained 17 yards on five carries along with a 23-yard reception and an interception on defense. Senior Salvatore Vitale led all running backs with 47 yards on six carries, and junior Matt Tomich also had an interception for the Sea Kings.

With the non-League portion of their schedule now complete, the Sea Kings return home to begin Bay League play tomorrow afternoon against visiting Leuzinger High School.

And PV High knows it cannot overlook anyone on its schedule, especially the Olympians, who come in winless at 0-5.

"We know every team in League can compete," Costa said. "We have to go into practice \[Monday\] and focus on each day, getting better that day so we can progressively get sharper."

As grueling of a schedule they went through to begin the season, going up against some very tough competition, the Sea Kings know it helped them mature along the way.

"We played our hearts out each game," Alessi said. "Some games may not have went our way, but we got better every game. As long as we go into league strong, that's a good thing."

And Gardner knows with the way the rest of the league has fared in their respective nonleague schedules, attaining the goal of a Bay League title will be very tough.

"There are some teams going in with some very good records," Gardner said. "It's going to be a dogfight."

While three-time defending league champion Mira Costa and Redondo Union high schools both enter League play with 1-4 records, both West Torrance and Peninsula high schools come in with 4-1 records.

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