



Sea Kings break Mustangs' streak in key victory

By Nick Ingram Special to the News
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For the Palos Verdes High School football team, this was the perfect display of a team victory against rival Mira Costa High School.

Aided by two second-quarter punts returned for touchdowns and a defense that stood tall against the Mustangs running attack, PV High defeated Mira Costa, 28-7, last Friday night, spoiling the Mustangs 16-game Bay League winning streak, as well as their Homecoming.

After a scoreless first quarter that saw PV High (5-2, 2-0) fail to convert on fourth-and-10 at the Mustang 14-yard line, senior Zach Henkaus took a punt at the 39-yard line and aided by some key blocks including one from senior Lateef Munir, raced up the sideline and into the end zone, giving the Sea Kings a 7-0 lead with 9:05 left in the second quarter.

"There was a wall of guys and no body else. It was the biggest lane I've ever seen," Henkaus said. "That goes straight to coach \[Jim\] Hudnall. He has been working on schemes all week and staying up until 3 a.m. every night. All the effort and hard work goes to him."

Mira Costa High (2-5, 1-1) stormed right back, aided by Brandon Edmond's 55-yard run to start the drive and a questionable pass interference call, the Mustangs Steven Giovati punched the ball in from the 2-yard line, tying the game at seven with 6:37 left in the first half.

"The Green and Gold, they don't come out and quit," said Gardner of the three-time defending league champion Mustangs. "They are gonna play the whole time, so you know there is gonna be a game."

That was the last time the Mustangs found the end zone, as PV High's offense marched right back, scoring on a 8-yard touchdown pass from Zack Fixen to Robby Kolanz with four minutes left in the half to take a 14-7 lead.

The touchdown was set up after Fixen completed a receiver screen pass to Lateef Munir before the senior broke a tackle at the line of scrimmage and raced 25 yards upfield to set the Sea Kings up at the 24-yard line. Runs of 15 and 1 yards from Carl Aguirre set up the Kolanz touchdown.

"Our offensive line opened up holes everywhere I went," Aguirre said. "I have to give the game to them, since they are the whole team."

Once again, PV High's defense forced Mira Costa High to punt from the Mustang 11, and one more time, Henkaus was back to receive the punt, hauling it in at the 39-yard line, taking the same path as the earlier punt and getting the same result, this time a 61-yard touchdown and a 21-7 Sea King advantage.

"\[Henkaus\] is exciting when he runs, and the blocking was great. It was fun to watch," Gardner said. "Anytime you can get a couple scores off special teams, that helps you out."

It remained a two-possession game until the Sea Kings began one more march to the end zone.

Getting the ball at the Mira Costa High 20 after the Mustangs missed a 30-yard field goal, PV High was on its way to score quickly, as Aguirre ran for a first down on the drives first play before beating the Mustang defense down the sideline on his way to the end zone.

But a holding penalty on Kolanz at midfield negated the touchdown, putting the Sea King offense at its own 40.

It did not take PV High long to make up for the lost yardage, as Kolanz lept for a Fixen pass on a deep route over the middle for a 37-yard gain, four plays before Aguirre found the end zone one more time, this one a 6-yard run for a 28-7 lead with 7:31 left in the ballgame.

"I knew we would come back and score," Aguirre said. "Our line kept their heart beating and \[Kolanz\] came back with a great catch and put us back up there. \[That catch\] was no surprise. \[Kolanz\] is an athlete; it's expected."

The Mustangs drove right back, looking to cut the deficit in half, but junior Matt Lopes stepped in front of Ryan Sweigart's pass in the end zone, sealing the Sea King victory.

"I saw their receiver coming right up the middle and I jumped the route," Lopes said. "The drive before I had the interception and dropped it. I was looking for the interception."

Aguirre gained 155 yards on 18 carries and the two touchdowns, while Fixen threw for 94 yards on 5-of-11 passing. Kolanz hauled in four passes for 69 yards, and Henkaus also added 33 yards on nine carries.

"This is probably the best feeling in the world," Henkaus said after the victory. "We are on cloud nine. This is the one game we were waiting for all year. When it came, we took advantage and did what we needed to do."

Before the game, the Sea Kings knew they were in for a tough test with the Mustang running attack, especially after Edmond ran for 390 yards the week before against West Torrance High School.

But defensive coach Dave Young composed a game plan determined to shut down the Mustangs high-powered offense en route to the Sea Kings fifth consecutive victory.

"We were looking for a good team \[in Mira Costa High\] and we found it," senior lineman Patrick Scoggins said. "We worked hard this week and will continue to keep working hard. We just dominated the line of scrimmage. The loss to Mira Costa \[High\] last year just made us work that much harder this year."

The Mustangs handed the Sea Kings its lone loss in 2010, as PV High finished the regular season 9-1 before being eliminated by Westlake High School in the second round of the CIF-SS Northern Division playoffs.

Senior Andrew Aranda and junior Andrew Bucklin each added quarterback sacks for PV High's defense.

"Coach Young had a great game plan," Gardner said. "The defense played great. \[Edmond\] is a great runner and that's a big offensive line \[for Mira Costa High\]. I am proud of our defense as a whole and proud of our special teams. It was a great team effort."

The victory also served as Gardner's first against his alma mater at the helm of the Sea Kings, and PV High was ready to earn him that first win.

"\[Gardner\] works very hard and spends a lot of time preparing us for each game," Kolanz said. "We played for him \[last Friday\] in return for the countless hours he puts in throughout the week."

A 1983 graduate of Mira Costa High, Gardner was a Mustang assistant coach for 10 years through 1998, when he took his first job with the Sea Kings as an assistant to coach Pat Fresch.

The Sea Kings have one final road contest tomorrow night, when they face West Torrance High (4-3, 0-2) before returning home for the seasons final two. Last week, the Warriors fell to Redondo Union High School 45-38 in a game that featured nearly 800 yards and 10 touchdowns.

"Each week is a battle, and now we have to start tomorrow and prepare for the next battle, which is West Torrance \[High\]," Gardner said. "They have a good club."

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