



Sea Kings inch closer to Bay League title

By Nick Ingram Special to the News
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After coming off a performance where the game nearly slipped through its fingers the week before, the Palos Verdes High School football team came out last Friday afternoon looking to take a step closer to earning the school's first outright Bay League title since its reopening in 2002.

Behind an offensive line that powered the offense, and a defense that held its ground, the Sea Kings defeated Redondo Union High School, 31-6, improving to 4-0 in league play headed into the final week of the regular season.

"Our offensive line did a great job," Fixen said. "They work hard every week. Today, they showed their strength and determination. They drove Redondo back every play."

After choosing to receive the opening kickoff, the Sea Kings (7-2, 4-0) remained in control from that moment, as senior Salvatore Vitale capped an 80-yard drive with a 5-yard touchdown run, two plays after quarterback Zack Fixen's 48-yard run on third down-and-10 put PV High inside the Sea Hawks 20.

"We were planning on running the ball a lot \[with the forecast calling for rain\]," Fixen said. "They packed the box a little bit, so a play action worked great."

As the defense held Redondo (4-5, 1-3) to just 63 yards and four first downs in the first half, the offense extended the lead before halftime to 17-0 behind senior Drew Nolls' 21-yard field goal with 37 seconds and before senior Robby Kolanz's 18-yard touchdown reception made it a three-possession ballgame.

The defense continued to swarm in the second half, intercepting Sea Hawk quarterback Harrison Faecher three times — the first coming on the opening play of the second half. Senior linebacker Chad Mensinger jumped the route, putting the Sea King offense at the 19-yard line before junior Matt Lopes scored five plays later on a 7-yard touchdown run and a 24-0 lead.

"We had a bad week of practice before our game against West \[Torrance High\]," Lopes said. "We gave up a lot of big plays. We worked hard at practice and the secondary stepped up."

On the ensuing possession, after the Sea Hawks biggest gain of the day, a 47-yard run, Lopes leaped and intercepted Faecher's pass at the goal line, giving the Sea King offense the ball back deep in its own territory.

But the offense was unable to turn Lopes' interception into points, turning the ball over

on downs before Redondo found the end zone — aided by 35 penalty yards on PV High's defense, as Faecher found Hunter Bradshaw on a 4-yard completion, making it a 24-6 game with 6:48 remaining in the fourth quarter.

Given the ball one more time, this time with a short field, the Sea King offense put the game out of reach, as Lopes spearheaded a 48-yard drive, carrying the ball seven of the nine plays and scoring on a 10-yard run with 1:46 left in the game.

"[The offensive line] drive people out and create holes, and I just try to find it and hit it," said Lopes, who finished with 104 yards on 17 carries and the two touchdowns. "They do a really good job of that. Without them, you can't go anywhere."

After having an interception called back on a questionable pass-interference penalty on the Sea Hawks' scoring drive, senior Robby Kolanz put the finishing touches on Redondo Union, intercepting Faecher at the 50-yard line before being taken down at the Sea Hawk 23.

"This week was our best week of practice of the season and I attribute all of our success to that," said Kolanz, who led all receivers with 25 yards on two receptions. "We have to limit the big play, and if you play on defense, you have to have a short memory, and I don't think we had that [last week] against West [Torrance High]. You have to erase it if something bad happens, because something bad is going to happen."

Fixen threw for 70 yards on seven-of-11 passing and also ran for 51 more, while Vitale finished with 80 yards on 19 carries and the game's first touchdown.

"I am pleased with our effort today," coach Guy Gardner said. "That's a very good Redondo team. We are not going to get ahead of ourselves [regarding Peninsula High School]. We will enjoy this win for a short time and then it's a short week."

With the win, the Sea Kings remain the lone unbeaten team in the Bay League. But even as PV High looks to wrap up the league title, they know PENHI (4-5, 1-3) will be looking to spoil its perfect league record when the two rivals take the field at 2 p.m. today.

"It's going to be a big game; we have been waiting for that one," Mensinger said. "It's going to be a lot of fun. We know these guys, and it's back on our turf. It's going to be crazy."

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