



WEEK SEVEN RECAP



With Wagons Cirled, Panthers Look to Lash out against North Crowley

Sometimes what we want and pray for is more than we can hope for.

Or so it seems. We all wanted and prayed for a Panther upset of the undefeated Richland Rebels, wanted the boys to experience the success they've worked so hard to earn, wanted and prayed for them to play the kind of total game we know is within their power.

In the end, our wants went wanting, and though it might be tempting to say our prayers went unanswered, we know that they were answered – just not with the answer we wanted or hoped for but with a resounding and resolute “not this time.”

And so Panther Nation joins the team itself in circling the wagons and hunkering down for the two-week siege that marks the end of the regular season. It doesn't get any easier as the Paschal Panthers on Friday square off against the North Crowley Panthers, who blew up, lit up and ran wild on Weatherford last week, before finishing the 2008 campaign against the always burly Burleson Elks.

The season to date has been a continual lesson for the Panthers in learning the art of winning. That the team emerged victorious in its first two games is both remarkable and encouraging, especially given that those wins were come-from-behind affairs against very talented and athletic teams. Since then, the team has learned the need to pound inferior teams (South Hills), the importance of staying focused on every play (Weatherford), the difference between showing due respect to an opponent and conceding the match at the outset (Abilene), and the importance of playing two halves (Arlington Heights, Haltom).

At this juncture, it would be tempting to say there are no more lessons to learn, that the Panthers have encountered every conceivable scenario and have nothing to do but put those lessons to work. But life is a journey, not a destination, and the Panthers learned new lessons against the Rebels, including how a seemingly small moment in a game can snowball to become a game-changer.

Journalist and author Malcolm Gladwell became well known in part because of his first book, *The Tipping Point: How Little Things Can Make a Big Difference*. Gladwell makes the case that social epidemics can sometimes behave just like epidemics of disease. Just as one child with measles can infect a whole class, so too can one seemingly small event mushroom into a history- or society-changing movement. Gladwell's tipping point paradigm, it turns out, can work in analyzing a football game, too.

Paschal won the toss, and as is standard in big games, elected to defer. Richland started out on its own 35, and on the first play from scrimmage was thrown for a loss of four on a nice play by LB Luis Garcia. On the next two plays, Richland receivers caught balls out of bounds, bringing up fourth and 14. In the first series, the Panthers forced the mighty Richland offensive juggernaut to punt.

The Panthers set out on their first possession on the Paschal 35, and on the first play RB Emmanuel Smith broke free to the Richland 48. Smith picked up four yards on the next play, and then ran for a first down to the Richland 37.

At this juncture, momentum was clearly on the Panthers' side. The Panthers believed they belonged on the same field with Richland, and in fact were taking it to the Rebels. The defense came up huge, and the offense was picking up huge chunks of real estate. But just like that, the Panthers hit the tipping point.

The Panthers were thrown for a small loss on the next play. Then a fine run by RB Angel Arguetta was called back for holding. The Panthers got three yards back on a screen from QB Brian Gallagher to RB William Hix, and then 9 more on a Gallagher to WR Sasha Lovett pass. Now facing fourth and 7 from the Richland 34, the Panthers called a time out. Coming out of the time out, the Panthers went to the air. Unfortunately, a Richland player intercepted the pass and ran all the way to the Paschal 5.

Despite the wild momentum swing, the Panthers' defense came out swinging, throwing Richland for a loss of four on the first play. On second down, however, the Rebels were able to punch it in for a touchdown. Richland now had the momentum, all after a promising Paschal drive stalled following a small loss and a big penalty.

Penalties are a concern at any juncture, of course. They kill offensive drives and put defenses in a hole. One wrinkles a brow, however, puzzled at the timing of some of the penalties Paschal has received this season. Now, not even the most hardened Panther partisan would argue that the referees stole the Richland game from the Panthers. The Rebels are a very good team that executed at times to near perfection.

Still, now is as good a time as any to wonder aloud why it seems to be that the Panthers somehow repeatedly end up on the wrong side of questionable calls. An offensive lineman makes a terrific pancake block and gets flagged for holding. Do some officials come in assuming that if a defender from a strong team gets bested that he must have been held? A defensive back jumps a route, dives, tips the ball and though a good yard in front of the receiver gets flagged for pass interference.

Do some officials enter games assuming that a receiver from a strong passing team like Richland must have been interfered with if he's unable to make a catch? Meantime, a Paschal receiver gets a helmet in the back before the ball arrives and no penalties are called, and a defender is smoked from behind after the whistle and no hankies ensue. One doesn't even know what to ask about that. And all this transpired in a “home” game.

Again, no one would argue that Paschal lost because it didn't have a true home field advantage. Richland simply outplayed Paschal. That having been said, the Panthers never enjoy a true home field advantage. No Fort Worth team does. Farrington Field, with its iconic art deco façade at the western entrance (and concrete ashtray eastern face), is nothing better than a neutral site. Play any of the Mansfield schools at that district's Taj Majal facility and they all get home field treatment, including insistent scoreboard cheer prompts. The same is true for new district rivals Richland and Haltom at the Birdville ISD facilities. Weatherford does all manner of things with its scoreboard, including shutting it off completely when that suits.

None of which, in any way, changes or changed anything. Once the game tipped, once momentum swung to the Rebels, the game quickly and decisively was dictated by Richland and played on its terms.

Still, there were some Paschal highlights. Smith rushed for more than 200 yards and had a touchdown called back for “holding.” DB Travoy McCarver made an interception as the first half came to a close. K Chris King nailed a third quarter field goal. When Richland had a third and one opportunity from the Paschal two, DB Kirby Campbell stuffed a run, forcing a Richland field goal.

At the end of the evening, however, the Panthers had little to show for their efforts other than more aches and pains, more cuts and bruises, more heartaches and sleepless nights weighted with the what-might-have-beens and woulda-coulda-shouldas that typically come with a loss. The Panthers had little to show for their efforts, that is, unless you value the value of experience, which sometimes is nothing more than lessons learned the hard way. On this night, the Panthers learned that little things matter, that little things can have big results, that little things can tip the outcome. And what's the takeaway from this lesson? That just as momentum can swing wildly against them, a seemingly small thing can help the Panthers retrieve momentum. Games, like life, ebb and flow. The secret to success is sometimes just recognizing the patterns and using them to advantage.

The Panthers now look to put these and other lessons to use against the North Crowley Panthers at 7:30 p.m. Friday at North Crowley High School. And just as we have in the past, we will be wanting and praying on Paschal's behalf, wanting them to enjoy the success they've worked so hard to achieve and wanting and praying for the total game we know is within their power – and grasp. We can hope for no less.



JV Panthers Earn Well-Deserved Cheers as they Look to North Crowley Game

“It is time for us all to stand and cheer for the doer, the achiever -- the one who recognizes the challenge and does something about it.”

-- Vince Lombardi

Week 7 of Panther JV football took the boys on the road to visit the Richland Rebels. The game started out with the Rebels jumping on the Panthers early, taking a 17-0 first quarter lead.

The deficit would have been larger if not for a stout defensive effort that held the Rebels to a field goal on one possession that started inside the Panthers' half of the field.

With the Panthers in need of a spark, the coaches decided to pull out all the stops, including a fake punt in which Tyler Anderson faked the punt and hit Raul Acosta on a nice pass for a first down. At another point, facing another fourth and mile conversion, Louis Moreno hit Anderson, who made a “highlight reel” catch for a 55-yard touchdown.

The Rebels' potent offense fired right back and reeled off three more touchdowns before the half to give Richland a 38-6 halftime lead.

The third quarter got rolling with the Panther defense showing the never-say-die mindset that has become a season-long calling card. Jonathon Weiss and Luis Agüero recovered fumbles on consecutive Rebel possessions, once again giving the Panther offense life. Again, the Panther coaches pulled one more play out of their bag of tricks, and called a run fake to Moreno. For the second time in the game, Moreno found Anderson running free and hit him for their second TD hookup of the night. QB Marshall Norment added the two point conversion on a nice scamper to the end zone to bring the score to Rebels 39, Panthers 14. The Rebels took one more trip to the end zone and the final score was Rebels 45, Panthers 14.

Once again, some offense, some defense and some October trickery gave us glimpses of what the JV boys will contribute to the varsity squad when they move up next year.

For now we have roughly 60 minutes and change of JV Panther football left for this season and a team of players to be truly proud of. The team's final home game will be at 7 p.m. Thursday against the North Crowley Panthers – a golden opportunity to heed Lombardi's call to cheer for the doers, the achievers – the JV Panthers.

Special thanks to Winky Hix for his game day reporting on JV action.



Freshmen White Defeats Previously Unbeaten Richland Squad

The freshmen white juggernaut continued to roll, beating a previously perfect Richland Rebels squad 6-0. The white team (3-4, 3-1) next faces the North Crowley Panthers at 5 p.m. Thursday at North Crowley High School.

The white team won 6-0 when QB Joe Builtron hit his cousin, WR Rey Builtron, for a 45-yard touchdown pass. On the defensive end, FS Repairer Etuk shined with two interceptions.

The freshmen purple squad lost 35-20, but battled admirably after falling behind 20-0 in the second quarter. Matt Young scored the team's first touchdown after TE/LB Austin Harty returned a kickoff to the Richland five yard line. The team's two other scores came on passes by QB Chris Hanson to WR Rory Ginsburg.

The purple team (3-5, 0-4) next goes up against the North Crowley Panthers at 7 p.m. Thursday at North Crowley High School.

Special thanks to Coach Michael Snapp for game day reporting on freshmen action.

Visit The Panther Football Website at www.leaguelineup.com/PaschalFootball

Special thanks to Geoff Campbell for his insightful game day analysis.

Questions or comments? email PHSFootballBooster@msn.com.