

Mustangs

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In front of a standing-room-only crowd in a game that would have sold out Murdoch Stadium at El Camino College, it was a game of highlight reels. The real highlight show of the game was Mira Costa's Kyle Nunn. All the senior receiver did was return an interception for a touchdown and catch touchdown passes of 20, 25 and 61 yards. "Kyle was a real playmaker tonight on both sides of the ball," said Mustang coach Don Morrow.

An omen of what was to become a long night for Redondo started on the opening drive of the game. Actually on the first play the Sea Hawks were penalized and from there, things went downhill. Six plays later, Nunn made the near midfield interception and ran it back for a score. The Sea Hawks turned the ball over again near their own 20 yard line when Jake Jelmini stripped the ball from Redondo QB Chris Mares and Mira Costa recovered.

It didn't take long for the Mustangs to capitalize on Redondo's second turnover. With an empty backfield, Mustang quarterback Kyle Demarco found Nunn wide open on a 20-yard touchdown pass. "I think that second turnover really sent a message to them that they were going to be in for a long night," said Jelmini.

In a game that plays on emotion, the Mustangs kept their composure and didn't let the scoreboard affect how they played. "We practice fundamentals every week in practice and the game isn't over until we've played four quarters," Jelmini said.

Redondo still had no answer for the Mustangs' defense and went three-and-out on its next possession. Yes, it got even worse for the Sea Hawks. After a poor punt provided the Mustangs with great field position, Demarco found his favorite receiver on a 25-yard catch and run for another touchdown.

The Sea Hawks tried valiantly to get back into the game when Redondo's JD MacGillvary returned the ensuing kickoff 99 yards for a touchdown. After limiting Mira Costa on its next possession and forcing a punt, the Sea Hawks scored on a 42-yard field goal by Nick Diaz to cut the Mustangs' lead to 35-10 at halftime.

With a second half of football still to be played, the Mustangs' push for their Bay League title continued. The defense was limiting and the offense kept doing what it has been doing for most of the year; keeping the ball from the opposition and getting the ball to Kyle Nunn. So early in the third quarter, Demarco found Nunn open for a 61-yard touchdown pass. Nunn's push for the end zone was punctuated by dragging two would-be defenders into the end zone for the score.

Nunn ended up with three catches for 106 yards and three touchdowns and an interception for another touchdown--four touches for four scores. "Not a bad night," said Morrow with a smile.

The Mustangs' second team offensive and defensive units have been getting a lot of playing time lately. Leading 49-10 midway through the third quarter, the second team units got their reps in as well. A 14-play series ended the 60-yard drive on a six-yard touchdown by Cody Osagie.

The Sea Hawks scored two late touchdowns to make it 56-24, one on a long 61-yard pass play and the other on a six-yard run by Fernando Navarro. For the Mustangs it wasn't about the final score, but how well they handled their counterparts in a game that gave them momentum heading into the playoffs.

After opening the season by losing the first two out of three games, the Mustangs (8-2, 5-0) have rolled to seven straight wins. They have gone undefeated in Bay League play for the second consecutive year and have a 10-game winning streak in league over two years.

The Mustangs, who received the number one seed in the CIF Southern Section West-

ern Division playoffs, are looking at their first round opponent in a different way. In 2008, the Mustangs marched their way into the playoffs and faced Quartz Hills in the finals. Mira Costa's first round opponent is, you guessed it, Quartz Hills.

Mira Costa and Quartz Hills were ranked first and second in the CIF preseason polls to start the year. But since that time, the Rebels (6-4, 5-2) have faltered in the Golden League and will visit the Mustangs tonight (Friday) at 7 p.m.

The Rebels will once again rely on a strong ground game led by running back Kyle Brooks. The senior rushed for 102 yards against the Mustangs in the bitterly cold championship game a year ago. Brooks, who has rushed for over 1,400 yards for the second consecutive year, has a string of 15 straight games over two years in which he has rushed for at least 100 yards or more.

This will be a game that Morrow and his players are eagerly awaiting and have been preparing for not just this week, but for the past 12 months. It won't be a game of revenge, but rather another game on their schedule and a stepping stone in getting back to the finals. •




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