

# Mustangs make it a Nunn-man Show in Rout

By Gregg McMullin

The Mira Costa High School football team played its first round CIF Southern Section Western Division game with some reverence against Quartz Hills, the team that beat the Mustangs in the CIF finals a year ago. When the game ended, it was the Rebels who were walking off the field with the highest admiration for a Mustang squad that had just beaten them 42-6. It was a game that really wasn't as close as the final score indicated because it could have been much worse; the Mustangs were *that* well prepared.

It was also a game in which senior Kyle Nunn had another monster day with three catches for 86 yards and three touchdowns. On defense, he intercepted two more passes and was a constant factor on the special teams returning punts. If they had to name this game, it would have been called the "Kyle Nunn Show" and it was a game he had been thinking about since the Mustangs' loss to the Rebels on their home field in the CIF Southern Section Western Division finals last December. "I didn't get to make much of an impact in that game," said Nunn, "because of the wind, but I think I made up for it tonight."

With Mira Costa's stifling defense taking care of business in the first half in which the Rebels had a net 27 yards, the Mustang offense was clicking on all cylinders. The Mustangs set the tone early in the game with a four-play, 48-yard drive that was capped by a 16-yard touchdown pass from Kyle Demarco to Nunn. It was a mismatch of sorts because of Nunn's height and reach advantage over the smaller Kyle Brooks to make the catch look easy.

On Quartz Hill's ensuing possession, Rebels' quarterback Jamal Asaad threw a pass intended for their team's top playmaker Kyle Brooks. Nunn stepped in front of the would-be receiver and made the interception and returned it deep into Quartz Hills' territory. The three-play drive, which started on the Rebel's 11 yard line, ended with Demarco keeping it on a sneak from two yards away, and the rout was on.

With just over four minutes gone in the first quarter, the Mustangs' 14-0 lead looked comfortable, but the game wasn't over. The Mustangs kept up the scoring barrage on their next possession just when the Rebels thought they had stopped Mira Costa. On third and long from near midfield, Demarco found Nunn open over the middle for a first down. But the speedy Nunn escaped a couple of Rebel defenders and raced 35 more yards for his second touchdown of the night.

Quartz Hills' Asaad was picked off once again near the end of the first quarter and the Mustangs obliged by scoring again. Deon Morris came up with his first interception of the year and the offense methodically moved the ball to the one yard line where Rico Wright took in for his fifth rushing

touchdown of the year.

You don't expect a playoff game to be this out of hand but with the Mustangs leading 28-0 early in the second quarter, Mira Costa head coach Don Morro wasn't about to allow his team to do anything but focus on an entire four quarters. The Mustangs had prepared themselves for this game and it was a game in which they wanted to make a statement. The nightmare continued for Quartz Hills when Asaad threw another interception, and again it was Nunn making another acrobatic catch on the other end. The ball was just under thrown towards Jarrelle Ifield with Nunn covering on the play. Nunn reached back and made a one-handed grab to give the Mustangs great field position.

Nunn's unbelievable first half wasn't through. On third-and-eight on the Rebel 20 yard line, Demarco scrambled and had enough time to find Nunn open in the end zone for his third touchdown of the night. Demarco had great protection all night long and especially in the first half. "My linemen did a great job keeping them away from me and Kyle (Nunn) ran some great routes," he said.

Leading 35-0 early in the third quarter, Mira Costa's scoring binge came to a close when Morris returned a poor Quartz Hills punt just 20 yards for a touchdown. The game for all intents and purposes had long been over and the return was just another dagger stuck into the Rebels. With a number of defensive substitutes in the game for the Mustangs in the fourth quarter, the Rebels scored their only touchdown on a two-yard run by Luke Weilbacher to make it 42-6.

The Mustangs, whose offense was limited in the finals against Quartz Hills, came alive in this game by racking up over 350 yards from scrimmage. But it was the defense led by Nunn and defensive lineman Jordan Tavai that limited the Rebels to less than 125 yards of total offense that really told the story. "They stole something from us last year and we wanted to redeem ourselves, and it's something that's been in the back of our minds all year," said Tavai.

The Mustangs travel to Chaminade (7-4) to play the Eagles in the second round tonight at 7:30 p.m. The Eagles surprised Inglewood in the first round 37-14. Chaminade, which snuck into the playoffs from the Mission League, are led by running back Cory Bess (728 yards) and quarterback Jake Basmagian (12 TDs). After starting the season with five straight wins, the Eagles have had their share of problems on both sides of the ball. Against Inglewood, the Eagles returned to early season form when they rushed for a season-high 335 yards, but don't expect that to happen against a Mustang defense that yields just 104 yards per game.

For directions to the game, you can contact the Mira Costa activities office at (310) 318-7337. •

# A Tale of Two Halves



Trevor Tarte found the net once in the first half. Photos by Shelley Kemp, www.Kemp.Photoreflect.com

## MIRA COSTA WATER POLO FINISHES AS CIF RUNNER-UP

By Kelly Kemp  
USA Water Polo Hall of Fame Coach

Games are usually won on defense—and in water polo often on the "extra-man" advantage—and that was true with the CIF Division IV Finals, held last weekend at the Woollett Aquatic Center on the Irvine High School campus, between the Mira Costa Mustangs and the Palos Verdes Sea Kings. In this championship game, PV, led by goaltending from senior Paul Mitre, clearly the game's most valuable player, was able to shut down the strongest Mira Costa team in recent memory—thrice CIF champions this past decade—to win the Sea Kings' first title in the sport.

Although Mira Costa was able to convert its "man-ups" in the first half, three of four, in fact, to lead 4-3 at halftime, PV overcame the Costa lead to win 6-5 by blocking out the Mustangs counterattacks and "man-ups" in the second half. Usually, when a team has a power play opportunity, the great ones "cash in."

In the first half, after an early PV ejection, Mira Costa's Cole Britton rifled a left-handed shot from the right wing that caromed off the crossbar all the way to the left wing into the raised hand of Bryce Miller, who caught and scored in the empty side of the PV net. Shortly thereafter, Jake Miller assisted Alec Gasperian in the center slot of player-up, and he hit the upper corner for a goal. And following a block by Costa goalie Dana Tuttle, Gasperian found Spencer Neste on the inside post, again during a man-advantage, and he scored, giving the Mustangs a 3-1 edge. One more goal by Trevor Tarte, driving the middle, gave Costa the 4-3 halftime edge.

The second half was not so forgiving, unfortunately, for the Green and Gold. Palos Verdes scraped steals, forced field blocks and kept its defense as clean as possible, only giving up one penalty foul for a penalty goal by Bryce Miller, which tied the game at five apiece near the end of three quarters. Mira Costa was able to earn five more extra-man opportunities throughout the half—nine total for the game—but to no avail... Nonetheless, a great All-South Bay final, rare for any sport! •



Bryce Miller led the scoring for the Mustang offense with three goals.



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