

# Luck Goes Mustangs' Way This Time

By Gregg McMullin

In the first four games of the season, the Mira Costa Mustangs' football team has seen its share of luck and calls go against it. That all changed with its match-up against arguably one of the top teams from the CIF Southern Section's Pac-5 Division. With the aid of a roughing-the-kicker call midway through the fourth quarter, the Mustangs were able to continue their drive and score a touchdown that gave them a 24-10 win over Newport Harbor.

The Mustangs scored touchdowns in the first and second quarters to make it 14-0 by halftime. Senior running back Morgan Reece got the Mustangs on the scoreboard first with a two-yard run, getting some key blocks from JR Tavai and Kevin Hopp. In the second quarter, the Mustangs opened their gadget playbook to the page where quarterback Kyle Demarco laterals to Jackson Morrow. At this point, Morrow, the son of Mustang head coach Don Morrow, has the option of running or finding a receiver open. In this case he saw Kyle Nunn open and he connected with the Mustang's leading receiver on a 75-yard pass play for a touchdown.

Demarco wasn't too surprised with the outcome of the trick play because of who threw the ball. "I know it probably looked like we drew it up in the dirt in the huddle, but it's something we've been working on and waited for the right time to use it," he said. "Jackson (Morrow) really threw a great ball--right on target."

While Mira Costa's offense was doing its best to keep the ball from Newport Harbor's potent offense, the Mustangs' defense made sure its stay on the field wasn't too long. The Mustangs held the Sailors in check throughout the first half, and quarterback Austin Rios couldn't generate any sustained drives.

Being up by two touchdowns at halftime gave the Mustangs some breathing room, but they didn't want to rest on their laurels from what happened in the first half. "We've been here before," said Coach Morrow, referring to leads the team lost in the second half in earlier games this year.

In the third quarter, the Mustangs' offense was all but shut down while the defense continued to thwart Newport Harbor. When the Sailors did get something going, their drive stalled at the Mira Costa 16 yard line and they settled for a Dillan Freiberg 33-yard field goal. The Mustangs answered later in the quarter when Alex Norocca drilled a 21-yard field goal of his own to make it a Mustang 17-3 lead.

Early in the fourth quarter, the Mustangs were backed up deep on their own side of the field and were forced to punt. A short punt gave the Sailors great field position near Mira Costa's 30 yard line, and a two-touchdown lead for the Mustangs looked like it would be reduced. Rios found Cecil Whiteside open in the end zone on a rollout pass and just like that, the Mustangs lead was cut to 17-10 with just over 10 minutes to play in the game.

On the ensuing series for Mira Costa, the Mustangs could move the chains just once before they were forced to punt from their own 42 yard line. Good fortune or luck occurred when Mustang punter Brendan Sofen was run into during the punt, giving

the Mustangs a first down at the Newport Harbor 42 yard line. "It was an easy call to make. I think they were just a little too aggressive," said Morrow.

With a new set of downs, the Mustang offense turned to Rico Wright to keep the chains moving. On the first play, he scampered 25 yards to the Newport 18 yard line. On third and short, Demarco followed his center for a first down. On fourth and goal from just outside the one yard line, the decision to go for the touchdown and forgo the chip-shot field goal was made. Once again, Demarco used his vision and legs to find his way into the end zone for a 24-10 Mustang lead.

The final Mira Costa drive had gone 80 yards and consumed a little more than seven minutes of the fourth quarter. It ultimately frustrated any would-be comeback by the Sailors when the defense held them in check the rest of the way.

It was another complete effort on both sides of the ball. Kyle Demarco completed 11 of 16 passes for 157 yards but he was intercepted once. Kyle Nunn led all receivers in the game and the South Bay on the night with four catches for 139 yards and one touchdown. Rico Wright's rushing totals weren't huge--11 carries for 67 yards--but the 25 yards he gained during the last touchdown drive were the key to the Mustangs' winning performance. "Once the breaks went our way, I was proud of how we took advantage," Morrow said. "It's a sign of a good team to take advantage of those kinds of opportunities."

The Mustangs (3-2) prepare for their Bay League opener when they host West Torrance (4-1) Friday night at 7 p.m. Mira Costa is currently ranked second in the CIF Southern Section Western Division polls while three other Bay League teams including West Torrance are ranked in the top 10 as well. The non-league schedule the Mustangs have completed should give them the confidence knowing that they can play with any team around.

### Mustang News and Notes

The girls' volleyball team is 12-6, 2-0 on the year and is seeking another Bay League championship. The Mustangs have won 39 straight league matches and haven't lost a league match in five years dating back to October 5, 2004 when they lost to South Torrance. The Lady Mustangs' next home games are Wednesday, October 21 at 6 p.m. when they host Redondo, and Friday, October 23 at 5 p.m. when they host West Torrance.

The girls' golf team (5-2, 1-2) is doing well and have back-to-back matches against South Torrance on Tuesday, October 20 at Los Verdes CC, and Thursday, October 22 at Chester Washington at 2:45 p.m.

The boys' water polo team is currently ranked second in the current CIF Southern Section Division IV polls. The Mustangs (10-2, 1-0) are led by Bryce Miller and Alec Gasperian and will play host to Redondo on Tuesday, October 20 at 3 p.m. Coach Jon Reichardt says his team is doing all the right things right now but is not looking ahead to any game or the showdown with top-ranked Palos Verdes at home on October 29. He said the team is just focusing on one game at a time. •

# Boys Polo Starts Undefeated in Bay League



Mustang defense proved too much for Peninsula in the Bay league match-up. Connor Davidge makes the field block. Photo by Shelley Kemp, www.kemp.photorelect.com.

By Kelly Kemp

The Mira Costa High School boys' water polo team handled Peninsula High School in its home opener this past week. Up by a score of 3-0 at the half, the Mustangs continually added goals at will in the third quarter, jumping to a 9-0 lead until finishing with a 16-8 win.

Seven Mustangs scored goals--Alec Gasparian and Jake Miller had two apiece,

with Conner Davidge, Devin Norris, Trevor Tarte and Jason Veris chipping in one each. High scorer in the match, in another stellar performance, was Bryce Miller with a "hat trick" of three goals.

Mira Costa finished the week with a 12-2 record and will face Bay League foe Palos Verdes at home by the time this article goes to press. Come and root for your Mustangs for their next game -- admission is free! •



Alec Gasperian passes the ball in to the center-forward. Gaperian scored two goals to help the Mustangs beat Peninsula. Photo by Shelley Kemp, www.kemp.photorelect.com.

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