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## Mansfield Doesn't Miss a Beat, Rolls Past Franklin



Mansfield senior Nico Holmes was fired up after making a tackle in the season-opening win against Franklin at Alumni Field. (Josh Perry/HockomockSports.com)



**By Josh Perry**  
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MANSFIELD, Mass. – It had been 15 months since Mansfield last walked off the field, at Gillette Stadium, holding the 2019 Div. 2 state championship trophy. When the lights came on for Friday night's Fall II season opener at Alumni Field, the Hornets showed no rust after such a long layoff and, in fact, it looked like they hadn't missed a beat.

Mansfield scored after just three plays, had six first half touchdowns, half of them by senior running back Cincere Gill, scored twice on defense, and rolled to a 49-7 victory against Franklin.

"It's been a long, long wait," said Mansfield coach Mike Redding. "All fall everybody just held their breath that we maybe would get a chance to play and it was almost surreal you walk out here and it's 60 degrees on a Friday night and it felt like September.

"Lights go on, it's Friday night, we don't care what month it is, it felt like Friday night lights."

It took no time for the Hornets to show how dynamic they can be on offense. Gill (167 total yards) proved to be unstoppable, going for 21 yards on the first play and 34 on the second to get the Hornets down to the Franklin six. On the next play, Nico Holmes (81 total yards) bullied

his way into the end zone and James Gilleran added one of his seven extra points for an early 7-0 lead.

On its next possession, Mansfield showed different facets of its offense. Matt Boen, who Redding said was playing quarterback for the first time since seventh grade, hit Gill for 19 yards and Anthony Comer (81 total yards) took a draw for 17. After Gill missed Boen on a deep pass, he took the next snap right up the middle and raced for a 52-yard score.

“Everybody thinks they run a 4.3...and when you get out there and see a real 4.3, 4.4 kid, you know it,” said Franklin coach Eian Bain about Gill. “Super talented and you combine that with the beef that they have, you know, a lot of times we sort of pride ourselves on having speed and that’s maybe our neutralizer and tonight it wasn’t. They had the best of both worlds.”

Not to be outdone, the Mansfield defense got into the act. On a second and 11 play, the Hornets blew up and attempted screen pass and Sean Weber got a hand on Jared Arone’s attempted pass. The ball fell to Rocco Scarpellini, who took the interception 25 yards for a touchdown.

Despite trailing 21-0, Franklin’s offense was finding some success in the passing game. Arone (21-of-32, 193 yards), a first-year starter, connected with Shane Kindred nine times and with Jake O’Brien six times. On their third possession, the Panthers were able to finish a drive.

Arone hit O’Brien for 20 yards out near midfield. After getting into Mansfield territory, Franklin faced a fourth and one. A well-executed roll-out screen pass to Kindred gained eight yards and kept the drive going. A screen pass to Mack Gulla put the Panthers in the red zone and on the next play Will Tracey went up and got a pass at the front pylon for a 19-yard touchdown.

The momentum was short-lived because the Hornets just had too much on offense. CJ Bell’s return gave Mansfield good starting field position and Boen fired a pass to Comer for 33 yards down to the Franklin 14. After a low snap pushed the Hornets back a few yards, Boen threw a perfect pass to hit Holmes on the wheel route for a 17-yard score and a 28-7 lead.

A fumble recovery handed Mansfield back the ball at its own 45 and the Hornets made quick work of the short field. Boen hit tight end Everett Knowlton on the run for 34 yards and, after a holding call, followed it with an 11-yard keeper. Gill got the hand off, went straight up the middle, and made a quick cut to the right, walking in untouched with a 20-yard TD.

Mansfield forced a three-and-out and got the ball back at its 33. Jake Wall took a jet sweep to the left and rushed for 20 yards into Franklin territory. Comer had a pair of carries to get the ball to the five. Gill got the call. He started left towards the Mansfield sideline but was blocked off, turned back and reversed around to the far side, found a tiny seam, and cut it upfield to find pay dirt for a third time.

“I think everyone was worried about such a long layoff that we’d be sloppy but we’ve got a lot of experience back,” Redding explained. “We executed and then when we didn’t execute you give the ball to Cincere and he runs to daylight. He makes a lot of bad plays look good.”

Jack Colby tacked on a second defensive touchdown when he picked off a pass right in front of his bench and ran it back 35 yards. Caden Colby added Mansfield’s third interception in the fourth quarter.

After reaching the Div. 1 South final last year, Franklin graduated all of its starting skill position players. Many of the Panthers were seeing their first significant varsity minutes and getting that experience against the league’s top team.

“It was a learning curve, but we knew what we were getting,” Bain admitted. “Yes, they are really, really good. I told my guys, TJ Guy is going to play on Sunday, there’s not a doubt in

my mind...but a lot of it was just little details in our assignments, our techniques, in our eyes, and little things I think we can correct. A lot of things we had to work out of our system tonight.”

Redding acknowledged the advantage Mansfield has in terms of offensive firepower. He said, “Cincere and Anthony are just so explosive. We didn’t get the ball to Jake Wall but he can fly. Everett is a good tight end, Nico can get tough yards up inside. We’re not a typical high school football team in terms of skill and then the front five up front blocking are very, very good.”

Mansfield (1-0) will be on the road next week to face Milford for the first time. Franklin (0-1) will be on the road again when it travels to Taunton.

## Attleboro Sun/Chronicle

By PETER GOBIS

MANSFIELD — Was it the explosiveness of senior tailback Cincere Gill amassing 149 yards and three first half touchdowns or was it the dexterity of sophomore linebacker Rocco Scarpellini and senior linebacker Jack Colby, who turned interceptions into six points apiece?

Perhaps it was the ball pursuit of senior linebacker Sean Weber in forcing one interception, or that of senior defensive end T.J. Guy in allowing minus-five first half rushing yards. It may have been senior defensive back Nick Bertino recovering a Panther fumble at the Hornet 45-yard line on its fourth series of the first half, or sophomore line-backer Caden Colby creating a third interception in the fourth quarter.

And don’t forget the precise passing by southpaw senior quarterback Matt Boen, who completed all five of his passes for 101 yards his first time under center since seventh grade Pop Warner football. It all added up to an impressive football season opener by the reigning MIAA Division 2 Super Bowl champion Mansfield High Hornets Friday at Alumni Field in a 49-7 signature win over Franklin High.

“If we run like that and throw like that, we’re going to be tough to handle on offense,” Mansfield coach Mike Redding said of the Hornets’ five touchdowns and 353 yards of offense in the first half. “We’re not your typical high school football team.” Coming off a 15-month absence from the gridiron, the Hornets scored on drives of 61, 95, 59, 55 and 67 yards during the first half for a 42-7 halftime lead.

That allowed for running time during the second half against the pass-happy (29 attempts) Panthers. “It’s been a long, long way — everybody just held their breath that maybe we’d get a chance to play,” Redding said of the coronavirus pandemic shutting down the athletic calendar, both on and off the field. “It was almost surreal to walk out here on a Friday night in March and it’s 60 degrees.

“When the lights go on, it’s Friday night — we don’t care what month it is.” The Hornets needed just 47 seconds to find their way into the end zone for the first time. Gill bolted for 21 yards to the Franklin 40-yard line on first down, and then scampered 35 yards on the next play to the Panthers’ 5-yard line. From there, senior Nico Holmes followed center Joe Forte for six points and junior tackle James Gilleran hit the first of his seven conversion kicks.

The Hornets wasted little time in scoring on their second series. Boen completed a 20-yard pass to Gill to advance the ball to the Hornet 28-yard line. Then Gill darted and danced his way into

the end zone from 52 yards out for the first of his three TD's. Five plays later, Mansfield was in the end zone again as Weber alertly deflected a Panther pass, with the ball falling into the arms of Scarpellini for a defensive touchdown.

"The defense came to play, two pick-sixes (both for TDs) and they have a nice spread offense, a great set of receivers," Redding said. "We bent a little bit, but never gave up the big play." Franklin quarterback Jared Arone completed 14 of 19 first half passes for 163 yards. The Hornets needed just five plays to score their fourth TD. Boen and Anthony Comer, who rushed for 47 yards in the first half, combined for a 33-yard pass to the Franklin 14-yard line. Then Boen tossed a 17-yard scoring strike to Nico Holmes on the left flank.

Bertino's fumble recovery set up Mansfield's fifth touchdown. Boen completed a 34-yard pass over the middle to tight end Everett Knowlton, advancing the ball to the Franklin 21-yard line. Three plays later, Gill finished the drive with a 20-yard scoring run. "When we don't execute, we just give the ball to Cincere (Gill) and he runs to daylight," Redding said of the 1,000-yard rusher from a season ago.

Gill totaled 149 first half rushing yards on eight carries, including TD romps of 52, 20 and five yards. "He makes a lot of bad plays look good," Redding said. "We were a little sloppy, but it was a typical opening game, not a typical 16-month layoff," Redding added. "It was a good three weeks of practice. "The Hornets travel to Milford for a March 20 Hockomock League game with a 1 p.m. kickoff.

Mansfield	49	Franklin	7		
Franklin	0	7	0	0	— 7
Mansfield	21	21	0	7	— 49

## SCORING SUMMARY

### First quarter

Msf. — Nico Holmes 5 run (James Gilleran kick), 11:13.

Msf. — Cincere Gill 52 run (Gilleran kick), 4:43.

Msf. — Rocco Scarpellini 25 pass interception return (Gilleran kick), 2:56.

### Second quarter

Frk. — Will Tracey 19 pass from Jared Arone (Tracey kick), 11:00.

Msf. — Nico Holmes 17 pass from Matt Boen (Gilleran kick), 32.

Msf. — Gill 20 run (Gilleran kick), 5:33. Msf. — Gill 5 run (Gilleran kick), 1:02.

### Third quarter

Msf. — Jack Colby 30 pass interception return (Gilleran kick), 8:47

## Boston Globe

Mansfield 49, Franklin 7

# Cincere Gill, Mansfield don't miss a beat, ending a long layoff with runaway win over Franklin

By Jake Levin; Globe



Mansfield's Cincere Gill (2) ran over Natick in last season's Division 2 South final, and did the same to Franklin on Friday. Barry Chin/Globe Staff

**MANSFIELD** — As much as a team can pick up right where it left off after a 462-day layoff, the Mansfield football team did so Friday.

Playing for the first time since winning the Division 2 state championship on Dec. 6, 2019, the Hornets looked every bit as polished in a 49-7 win over Franklin in Hockomock League play at Alumni Field.

Mansfield senior Cincere Gill had 169 yards from scrimmage on just eight touches, setting the tone from the get-go with runs of 21 and 35 yards on the first two snaps of the game for the Hornets. One of the top returning playmakers in the state, Gill had rushing touchdowns of 52, 20, and 5 yards for Mansfield before the first half was out, helping the Hornets to a 42-7 lead at the break.

“He runs to daylight and makes a lot of bad plays look good,” Mansfield coach Mike Redding said.

While Gill is as seasoned as they come, the Hornets started a quarterback who hadn't played the position since he was in seventh grade. The rust was no problem for Matty Boen, who also stars in basketball at Mansfield, as the senior completed all five passes he threw for 100 yards, including a 17-yard touchdown pass to classmate Nico Holmes on a wheel route to make it 28-7 early in the second quarter.

Holmes also had a 6-yard rushing touchdown for the Hornets to open the scoring just 47 seconds in.

Mansfield forced four turnovers, including two pick-sixes — one each for Rocco Scarpellini, a 20-yard return to make it 21-0, and Jack Colby, who had a 35-yard return to finish off the scoring in the third quarter. Colby also recovered a fumble while his younger brother, Caden, had an interception in the fourth quarter.

Mansfield forced four turnovers, including two pick-sixes — one each for Rocco Scarpellini and Jack Colby. Colby played a role in both, tipping the ball which landed in Scarpellini's hands for a 20-yard score to make it 21-0 and bringing one in himself from 35 yards away to finish off the scoring early in the third quarter.

"It feels surreal to be playing football in March," said Mansfield senior TJ Guy, a Michigan commit at defensive end, of his team's performance. "We came out and made a statement. We've been working so hard this offseason, so we were glad to put it all together finally."