

## Mansfield 24, Franklin 6

The Sun Chronicle/MANSFIELD

— Mansfield High senior Aidan Sacco stepped in at quarterback midway through the first quarter after never having played the position and never tried to do too much as the Hornets pulled out a one-sided 24-6 Hockomock League win over visiting Franklin High Friday night.

Mansfield rushed for 140 yards in the first half and benefited from a special teams miscue by Franklin, with a 6-yard punt giving the Hornets the ball at the Franklin 32-yard line with 1:34 left in the half and leading 10-0.

Four plays later, Mansfield two-way standout Vinnie Holmes went up the middle for a 2-yard touchdown run and put the Hornets up 17-0 at the half.

“That was a big one to finish the half and get it a three-score game,” Mansfield coach Mike Redding said of the score before the half. “You outplay them, but it’s only a 10 point game and you give them the ball to start the half.”

The Hornet offense was limited in the second half to merely three first downs, but the defense forced three turnovers, including a pair of fumbles and an interception by defensive back Cincere Gill on Franklin’s first drive of the second half.

Mansfield’s Chris Copponi recovered Franklin’s second fumble of the half at midfield which quickly turned into points. Two plays later, Gill took a handoff and scored on a 46-yard touchdown to put the Hornets ahead 24-0 with 3:02 remaining in the contest.

“Our defense did a good job,” Redding said of the Hornets, who allowed 303 yards of total offense, but did not allow the Panthers to get on the board until merely 1:39 left in the game to cut the lead to 24-6.

The Mansfield rushing attack of Gill (eight carries, 95 yards), Holmes (11 carries, 59 yards), Nick Marciano (two rushes, 32 yards) and Sacco (nine carries, 28 yards) proved too tall a task. Mansfield totaled 257 rushing yards on 33 carries for nearly 7.8 yards per rush.

It was on display early as the Hornets covered 85 yards in four rushing plays during their first scoring drive. Marciano gained 23 yards on first down and then second-string quarterback Jack Moussette picked up 38 yards to bring the ball to the Franklin 19 yard line. Moussette was hurt on the play, prompting Sacco to take over with five minutes left in the period.

Without skipping a beat, Holmes carried the ball for five yards and Sacco capped off the drive with a 14-yard touchdown run with 4:32 left in the first quarter.

Holmes scored the touchdown before the half as the Hornets covered 38 yards in four plays and 1:06 of game time. Sacco found Holmes on a 22-yard screen pass for the big play of the drive, giving the Hornets the ball at the Franklin 10-yard line.

Mansfield (2-1) will be at home to King Philip (2-1) next Friday.

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	Frk.	Msf.
First downs	14	10
Total yardage	303	302
Rushing yardage	132	257
Passing yardage	191	45
Sacks-yds.	0-0	2-20
Comp.-Att.-Int.	12-27-1	4-5-1
Punts-Avg.	3-26.3	3-33
Fumbles-lost	2-2	4-1
Penalties-yds.	5-40	7-63

Franklin	0	0	0	6—6
Mansfield	7	10	0	7—24

#### Scoring summary

##### **First quarter**

Mansfield— Aidan Sacco 14 run (Michael DeBolt kick), 4:32.

##### **Second quarter**

Mansfield—DeBolt 35 kick, 9:00.

Mansfield— Vinnie Holmes 2 run (DeBolt kick),:28.

##### **Fourth quarter**

Mansfield—Cincere Gill 46 run (DeBolt kick), 3:02.

Franklin—Ryan Driscoll 56 pass from Nick Gordan (pass fail), 1:39.

#### INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

##### RUSHING:

Cincere Gill 8-95, Vinnie Holmes 11-59, Jack Moussette 3-43, Nick Marciano 2-32, Aidan Sacco 9-28.

##### PASSING:

Jack Moussette 1-1--3, Sacco 3-4--42.

##### RECEIVING:

Vinnie Holmes 2-39, Nick Marciano 2-6.

##### MISSED FIELD GOALS:

Franklin — Parker Chevrant 30

09/22/2018

## Hornets Ride Defense, Ground Game to Beat Franklin



Mansfield junior Vinnie Holmes(22) accounted for 104 yards of offense and a touchdown, as well as double-digit tackles, as Mansfield beat Franklin at Alumni Field.  
(Josh Perry/HockomockSports.com)

HockomockSports.com

MANSFIELD, Mass. – Mansfield started Friday night’s league-opener at Alumni Field with back-up quarterback Jack Mousette under center. He lasted two series before an injury, following a 38-yard run, sent him to the sidelines for the rest of the night. With starter Damani Scott unavailable and Mousette on the bench with his arm wrapped in ice, the Hornets turned to senior Aidan Sacco to be the emergency QB.

Sacco only threw five times in the game, but he completed three of those passes for 42 yards and the Mansfield defense clamped down, forcing three turnovers in the second half and shutting Franklin out until the final two minutes of a 24-6 victory.

“It’s a gutsy win,” said Mansfield coach Mike Redding. “Jack comes in and did a nice job running the ball but the danger doing that is your QB is going to run and get hit and he just landed funny. Aidan Sacco came in...he’s never played quarterback in his life and he leads us to a win against a good football team, so we’ll take it.”

Franklin started the season 2-0 for the first time since 2012 and was looking for its first win against Mansfield since its unbeaten 2009 season. The Panthers moved the ball well, but failed to finish drives, twice reaching the red zone but both times coming away with no points.

“It was one of those night where try as we may, we did everything wrong that we could’ve from bad special teams snap, we dropped two touchdowns, every time they put the ball

on the ground they got it back” Franklin coach Eian Bain said. “I even think we executed, we just didn’t finish the big plays.”

The Panthers drove all the way to the Mansfield 15-yard-line on their opening possession. Junior Thomas Gasbarro completed two of his three passes, both to Sean Leonard (six catches, 82 yards), but a draw play at the 19 lost six yards and eventually his keeper on fourth and 15 only gained nine to end the drive.

Mansfield made quick work of an 85-yard drive, needing only four plays, to take the lead, but in the process lost its starting quarterback. After Nick Marciano broke free on the right side for a 28-yard gain out to the 43, Mousette raced for 38 yards down to the Franklin 19 but was forced to leave the game with a shoulder injury. Two plays later, Sacco went up the middle for a 14-yard score.

Sacco also fielded punts and his 29-yard return gave the Hornets the ball back at the Franklin 41. Junior Vinnie Holmes (11 carries, 65 yards) gained 27 yards on two carries to get the ball all the way to the Panthers 12, but a fumble on the next hand-off forced Sacco to retreat 18 yards. Two plays later, Michael DeBolt, who was also 3-for-3 on extra points, booted a 35-yard kick for a 10-0 lead.

Franklin’s offense went right back to work on its next possession. Senior Nick Gordon (10-23, 174 yards) was the new quarterback and he found Leonard twice in a row for 43 yards down to the Mansfield 17. On third and seven from the 14, Gordon scrambled and his pass to Ryan Driscoll in the back of the end zone was inches over the receiver’s head. The Panthers settled for a field goal attempt but Parker Chevrant’s kick was wide right from 30 yards.

Gasbarro intercepted a Sacco pass to end the next Hornets drive, but he slipped on the return and couldn’t gain extra yards after the turnover. Franklin was forced to punt from its own 32, but a high snap rushed the play and it was sliced out of bounds just six yards downfield.

Mansfield made the great starting field position count to add a score before the break. After an incomplete pass, Sacco hit Holmes in the flat for a 28-yard gain. Sacco was unable to handle the next shotgun snap but Holmes was able to scoop the loose ball and gain eight yards. On the next play, he bulldozed for two more and a three-score lead.

Redding said of the late touchdown to end the first half, “That was big. You outplay them but it’s only 10 and you give them the ball to start the half and they score and it’s a whole different game. Then we thought, if we can win the third quarter, which it ended up 0-0, as long as we didn’t let them get back to two scores.”

The third quarter was marred by turnovers by both teams. Gordon was intercepted by Cincere Gill and then sacked by Chris Copponi and Daenin Walker to end a possession. Austin Jordan recovered a Mansfield fumble to get it back for the Panthers but only three plays later the Panthers put the ball on the ground and Jack Barry recovered.

“We do a pretty good regrouping, but I think we pressed a little on the first drive coming out,” said Bain. “Then we moved the ball again and we moved the ball again, but we all took turns tonight, coaches included, making the little mistakes. When you play the best, you can’t play anything but your best and we weren’t at our best tonight.”

Late in the fourth quarter, Walker forced another fumble that was recovered by Copponi at midfield. Gill (eight carries, 95 yards) gained four yards on first down and then burst through the right side of the line and raced 46 yards for the touchdown that sealed the win.

The Panthers didn’t give up and responded in just four plays. Gordon hit Driscoll on a go route down the near sideline that made sure there wouldn’t be a shutout. The two-point conversion attempt fell incomplete.

Mansfield came away with a win, but the Hornets will now head into a showdown with two-time defending league champion King Philip with a third-string quarterback at the helm. According to Redding, the Hornets will be relying even more on their defense to come through.

“We had to get this one,” Redding admitted. “We lose this with a quarterback going down, now we’re fighting a losing battle. Now, Aidan’s got some confidence playing in a game. Our guys will be ready for next Friday. They’ve had our number the last few years and we’ll be ready to play.”

Mansfield (2-1, 1-0) will host King Philip at Alumni Field on Friday night, while Franklin (2-1, 0-1) will try to bounce back right away when Oliver Ames visits Pisini Field.