

## **Mansfield makes the most of its opportunities, wins finale to cap unbeaten season**

By [Jake Levin](#) Globe.

MANSFIELD — Different stakes didn't deter the Mansfield football team in its season finale Friday night at Alumni Field.

Despite committing three turnovers and surrendering three blocked kicks (two punts and a PAT), the Hornets ended their abbreviated campaign this spring just as they ended their 2019 state championship season: with a win. Mansfield outlasted Marshfield, 12-9, to finish 6-0.

“It's definitely a little weird not being able to do a full playoff or to get a full set of games, but we definitely made the best of it,” Mansfield senior captain Nico Holmes said. “All the boys were really excited to get out here this spring. Overall, we're very happy with what we did.”

Holmes was the only player on either team to have any semblance of success on offense in the game, finishing with 106 yards from scrimmage — nearly half of them on a 49-yard touchdown run with 3:22 to go in the second quarter.

But Holmes also made his mark on defense for Mansfield, part of a linebacker group that kept the Marshfield offense out of the end zone after the Rams had racked up 158 points in four games against Patriot League competition.

The Rams (4-1) scored the game's first points on a safety after Josh Pires blocked a punt, which was subsequently knocked through the end zone. The Hornets scored a pair of touchdowns in the second quarter, first on a 2-yard burst by Anthony Comer following a Marshfield three-and-out, and later on the Holmes score, but the Rams made it impossible for Mansfield to pull away further.

Sam Sullivan, who blocked the PAT after Comer's touchdown, had an interception in the end zone on the Hornets' first drive of the third quarter, and added a 77-yard fumble return for a touchdown in the fourth quarter to make it 12-9 just as Mansfield was on the verge of running out the clock.

As had been the case for most of the second half, the Hornets offense failed to pick up a first down once it got the ball back, but a great pooch punt from quarterback Matty Boen pinned the Rams at their 10-yard line with 1:28 left and no timeouts.

After picking up one first down, the drive stalled out with an incomplete pass on fourth and 25, ensuring Mansfield's win streak against in-state opponents reached 16 games.

The Hornets haven't lost to a team from Massachusetts since Nov. 20, 2018, when they fell to Foxborough at Fenway Park in the 88th edition of their Thanksgiving rivalry.

Friday night was supposed to be the 90th meeting between the schools, but with the Warriors shut down, Mansfield got what felt like a Division 2 South title game, according to coach Mike Redding.

"I think it was fun to play a great team like this that was undefeated," Redding said. "I don't know if it was better than Foxborough, but it was a very good replacement to wrap this thing up."

## **Boston Herald**

**MANSFIELD** — There was a lot that went wrong for Mansfield in Friday night's showdown of unbeaten with Marshfield.

Mansfield lost two fumbles, one which resulted in a Marshfield touchdown. The Hornets missed on a red-zone opportunity because of an interception. Mansfield also had two punts blocked, one that resulted in a safety.

But the way the Mansfield defense was playing, it didn't matter what didn't go right in other parts of the game. The Hornets shut down a good Marshfield offense and only allowed four first downs in a 12-9 victory that ended their season a perfect 6-0. With the loss, Marshfield falls to 4-1.

"That's the story of the year," Mansfield coach Mike Redding said of the defense. "They played lights out, and they won it tonight. The score will show 12-9, but our special teams gave them a (safety), and our offense gives them one with the fumble. Again, I think this is (the defense's) fourth shutout in a row. They haven't allowed a point since the first quarter of (the) Milford (game) in Week 2. Just unbelievable effort."

The first points of the game came when Marshfield's Josh Pires blocked a first-quarter punt that went out of the end zone for a safety. But Mansfield soon took the lead for good when Anthony Comer ran in from 2 yards out to give the Hornets a 6-2 lead.

In a game that didn't have many chunk plays, Mansfield's Nico Holmes broke a big one, as he rushed right up the middle for a 49-yard touchdown. Although the two-point conversion pass was no good, the 12-2 lead seemed rather safe the way the Mansfield defense was playing.

Holmes at linebacker along with Rocco Scarpellini, and linemen like TJ Guy and Jake McCoy had big nights, and the entire secondary played well in coverage.

But even though the game seemed secure most of the second half, Marshfield played hard and made a run late. Sam Sullivan stripped Holmes on a run and returned the ball 77 yards for a touchdown with 2:45 to play to pull the Rams to within 12-9.

That's how it stayed, though, as Marshfield's last possession started at its own 10-yard line and did not advance out of its own end of the field.

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### Mansfield Dominates on Defense to Beat Marshfield



Mansfield continued its defensive dominance, allowing no points and only four first downs against Div. 2 South rival Marshfield. (Josh Perry/HockomockSports.com)



**By Josh Perry**  
Managing Editor

MANSFIELD, Mass. – Although it has been an obviously unusual season, there was a familiar, playoff-like feel to the final game of the regular season at Alumni Field. Mansfield (6-0) hosted fellow unbeaten Marshfield, a team that the Hornets have faced in the playoffs in five of the last six seasons.

There was also a familiar feel to the game, as the Mansfield defense stood tall once again, allowing only four first downs in a 12-9 win. All of Marshfield's points were scored by its defense, meaning the Hornets did not allow an opposition offense to score a single point over the final 19 quarters of the season (going back to the first quarter against Milford in week two).

“I thought we did a really good job handling their run game and couple of short passes but nothing big,” said Mansfield coach Mike Redding about the defensive effort. “They play hard and aggressive and they didn't give much tonight.”

He added, "I told the guys, look you're undefeated. It doesn't matter how many games you won, you got a zero for losses and that's special. They made the best of this opportunity and this season."

It was an awkward start for the home team. A couple of penalties ended the first possession and James Gilleran's punt was blocked by Josh Pires. Gilleran recovered to prevent a Marshfield touchdown by knocking the loose ball out of the back of the end zone for a safety.

The Rams caused a lot of problems on special teams, blocking two punts and an extra point.

Mansfield's defense was holding up well to the high-paced, spread formation offense that Marshfield likes to run. James Fichera broke up a pass play and then Rocco Scarpellini made the tackle on third and long forcing a Marshfield punt from its own 11.

Anthony Comer returned the punt to the Rams 25 and Mansfield's offense took advantage of the short field. Comer (20 carries, 55 yards) set up the touchdown with a 16-yard burst around the left side of the line and then punched it in from two yards out on the next play to put the Hornets in front 6-2.

The coverage continued to be excellent from the Mansfield secondary, as Nick Bertolino threw a big hit to break up a pass, TJ Guy set the edge to stop a sweep, and Jake Goldman made a good break on the third down pass to force an incomplection. Again, Marshfield was forced to punt from deep in its own territory and gave the hosts great starting field position.

This time, it took Mansfield only one play to turn that position into points. Nico Holmes (10 carries, 88 yards) took a counter straight up the gut and raced 49 yards for the touchdown. He was untouched until he got into the end zone. The conversion pass fell incomplete and Mansfield led 12-2 with 3:22 left in the half.

Marshfield moved the chains for the first time on a 14-yard pass from Owen Masterson to Pat Yesinko and, after an offsides call, converted a fourth and two at midfield for their second first down of the night. Everett Knowlton closed out the half with one of Mansfield's three sacks.

Holmes said there weren't a lot of adjustments on defense facing the hurry-up offense. He said, "We stuck to what we knew in our base stuff and it worked out. We played Mansfield football, hard-nosed, violent football and we got it done."

Scarpellini opened the half by recovering a Masterson fumble, but the Mansfield drive ended when Matt Boen was picked off by Sam Sullivan in the end zone. After a 30-yard pass from Ean Scholz to Yesinko got the Rams into Mansfield territory for just the second time, Holmes and Scarpellini stuffed a play for a big loss and then Scarpellini added a tackle on the fourth down keeper to get the ball back.

While the Mansfield defense was dominating, the offense was struggling to find a rhythm, especially without running back Cincere Gill. Boen followed the block of Jake McCoy to convert a fourth and two, but a holding call on the next play negated any momentum.

“We just couldn’t sustain anything,” Redding admitted. “It was hard work for either team to get first downs tonight. I’m glad we were able to get enough there in the second quarter to get some breathing room. This was playoff football for sure.”

Marshfield’s Tim Bunker blocked the ensuing punt, but the Rams couldn’t make the good starting field position count. Ryan DeGirolamo broke up a pass and then Holmes sniffed out an attempted fourth down shovel pass for no gain.

Facing third and 14, Boen (7-of-11, 88 yards) looked down the sideline to Knowlton. The pass was tipped by the Marshfield corner but Knowlton stayed with it for a 24-yard grab. The excitement from that play was fleeting as a holding call and then a fumble ended the drive.

Mansfield got the ball back and looked like it was just going to run the clock out. Boen broke an 18-yard gain on a keeper and then Holmes was close to a first down on the next play, but as he was fighting for extra yards Sullivan ripped the ball loose and took it up the far sideline for a 77-yard touchdown that stunned the home bench.

With 1:42 to play, Mansfield looked like it was going for it on fourth and two from its own 43, but instead Boen quick kicked it and the ball rolled down to the 10.

“We were just trying to hang on, trying to stay calm, do what we do, not get over excited,” said Holmes about the mindset for that final defensive possession.

Marshfield managed one first down on the final drive, just its fourth of the night, but the Hornets were flying to the ball. The Hornets only allowed Marshfield to complete 12-of-29 passes on the night. Bertolino, Jared Fraone, and Holmes all made big plays to stop the final drive and secure the win.

“It’s the story of the year,” said Redding about his defense. “They have played lights out and they won it tonight. Just unbelievable effort.”

When asked about what it was like to have Marshfield rather than traditional Thanksgiving Day rival Foxboro to close out the season, Redding explained, “We miss playing Foxboro with all the tradition, but we’re not too disappointed that when we do play Foxboro it will be next Thanksgiving hopefully in front of 5,000 instead of 300.

“I think it was fun to play a great team like this, who was undefeated. It was a damn good replacement to play kind of a Div. 2 South championship to wrap this thing up.”

# Hornets' D makes the grade again

By *PETER GOBIS Attleoro Sun-Chronicle*

MANSFIELD — Not since the first quarter of its game against Milford High had the defensive unit of the Mansfield High football team surrendered a touchdown.

The Hornets had posted three straight shutouts, and only a turnover Friday night resulted in Marshfield High reaching the end zone at Alumni Stadium.

Buoyed by a defense that limited the previously unbeaten Rams (4-1) to 40 net rushing yards along with just 11 completions on 30 passes and merely four first downs, Mansfield completed its abbreviated Fall 2 spring season at 6-0 with a 12-9 triumph.

The Hornets prevailed despite undermining their intentions on offense by yielding a safety on their first series of the game; having two punts blocked; not making two conversion attempts; having a pass intercepted in the end zone to end their first series of the second half, losing a fumble at midfield with just over five minutes left; losing another fumble that resulted in the Rams' TD with just under three minutes left; and being flagged for eight penalties for 55 yards.

Mansfield scored both of its touchdowns in the second quarter, converting a 25-yard, three-play drive and then a 49-yard one-play series. Defense got the Hornets into the end zone.

A second-down pass broken up by James Fichera and a third-down tackle by Rocco Scarpellini forced Marshfield to punt to end its second series of the game. Senior tailback Anthony Comer (56 yards on 20 carries) lugged the ball 17 yards to the Rams' 2-yard line and then followed Scarpellini's block into the end zone for six points.

Defense also got the Hornets into the end zone a second time as Trevor Foley alertly defended a Rams' third and 8 pass. Gaining possession of the ball at the Marshfield 49, senior running back Nico Holmes (71 yards on nine carries) bolted right up the middle of the field, sprung loose by the blocking of Jean Jephthe.

"All season long our defense has played lights out," Mansfield coach Mike Redding said. "It was just an unbelievable effort — they (the Rams) were very physical and fast and we just couldn't sustain anything.

It was hard work for either team to get first downs." Mansfield marched to midfield on its first series, but 15 yards of penalties forced a punt, which Marshfield blocked, the ball rolling out of the end zone for a two-point safety.

The Rams threw a scare into Mansfield when Sam Sullivan picked up a Hornet fumble and raced 77 yards for a touchdown with 2:45 remaining.

Fortunately for Mansfield, a 47-yard punt by Matt Boen to the Marshfield 10-yard line made it a long field for the Rams to travel to take the lead with 1:28 left on the clock.

"We got enough there in the second quarter to get some breathing room, but they (Marshfield) didn't go away," Redding said. "This was playoff football for sure."

Mansfield's linebacker cast of Nico and Zander Holmes and Scarpellini, with some intense pressure by senior defensive end T.J. Guy (one sack), limited Marshfield to just 18 rushing yards and three complete passes during the first half, without a first down until two minutes remained and the Rams not advancing beyond the Hornets' 48-yard line.

“Mark DeGirolamo (the Mansfield defensive coordinator) had a great game plan, it kept it simple,” Redding said of trying to match Marshfield’s quick-tempo and multi-look offense. “The defensive backs were just focused on covering the pass and the front seven. We did a really good job of handling their run game.”

Mansfield had prime field position in the second half, with series starting at the Marshfield 38, the 25, 39, 38 and 50-yard lines, but went pointless. “Fortunately, we found enough to get a couple of touchdowns in,”

Redding said. “We missed playing Foxboro with all the tradition, but it was fun to play a great team like this that was undefeated. It was like a Division 2 South championship.”

**Mansfield 12, Marshfield 9**

	<b>Mshfld.</b>	<b>Msf.</b>
First downs	4	12
Total yardage	118	243
Rushing yardage	40	163
Passing yardage	86	84
Sacks-yds.	3-8	1-4
Comp.-Att.-Int.	11-30-0	7-12-1
Punts-Avg.	5-35.0	4-37.0
Fumbles-lost	1-1	2-2
Penalties-yds.	9-67	8-55

<b>Marshfield</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7—9</b>
<b>Mansfield</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0—12</b>

**SCORING SUMMARY**

**First quarter**

Mshfld. — safety, blocked punt out of end zone, 5:47.

**Second quarter**

Msf. — Anthony Comer 2 run (kick failed), 8:58.

Msf. — Nico Holmes 49 run (pass failed), 3:22.

**Fourth quarter**

Mshfld. — Sam Sullivan 77 fumble recovery (Ethan Grindle kick), 2:45

**INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS**

**RUSHING:**

**Mshfld.** -- VanFleet 7-18, Cupples 3-26;

**Msf.** – Comer 20-56, Holmes 9-71, Boen 7-31, Wall 2-5, Scarpellini 1-0.

**PASSING:**

**Mshfld.** -- Masterson 7-20-0--40, Scholz 4-10-0--46;

**Msf.** -- Boen 7-12-1--84.

**RECEIVING:**

**Mshfld.** -- Yesinko 4-47, Van Fleet 4-29;

**Msf.** – Comer 2-21, Johnson 1-6, Knowlton 2-42, N. Holmes 2-15.

**MISSED FIELD GOALS:** None.