

Hornets rise, shine over Trojans for playoff win

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Mansfield High quarterback Aidan Sacco is caught by Bridgewater-Raynham High's Nolan Anderson in their Division 2 playoff game Friday night in Mansfield.
MARK STOCKWELL/THE SUN CHRONICLE

MANSFIELD — Just how demonstrative was the defense employed by the Mansfield High football team at Alumni Field through the second half of its MIAA Division 2 South playoff game against Bridgewater-Raynham Regional High?

The Trojans were limited to merely 11 plays from the line of scrimmage and one first down, but it wasn't until senior Khristian Conner plucked off a Bridgewater-Raynham pass at the Hornet 30-yard line that jump-started the Mansfield High offense to producing 15 fourth-quarter points and a 21-7 conquest of the Trojans.

Junior tailback Vinnie Holmes rushed for 100 yards and the go-ahead touchdown after Conner's aerial theft, while Mike DeBolt, running in the absence of injured Cincere Gill and Nick Marciano, rambled for 40 yards and the Hornets' game-clinching third touchdown with 2:17 remaining.

"Once again, somehow we find ways to win," Mansfield coach Mike Redding said of his depleted roster due to injuries. "This is the youngest team that we've ever put out on the field for a playoff game."

Mansfield blanked the Trojans on all four of their first-half drives, starting at the 17, 22, the Mansfield 42 and 8-yard lines.

"Their defense played great, they did a good job of stopping what we do," B-R coach Dan Buron said of the Hornets. "Turnovers in a close game are the difference, and we had a couple of fourth downs that we didn't convert."

Most notably, aside from B-R's fleet-footed sophomore QB Anthony Morrison scoring on a 67-yard run four minutes into the second half, putting the Trojans into the lead, Mansfield's defensive tenacity reaped dividends.

Morrison did not complete a second-half pass, while 14 of the Trojans' 25 rushing plays were for gains of three yards or less.

"We hung in there, we have that confidence now of playing in tight games, like against King Philip and Attleboro that we can come back," Redding added.

After taking the lead, the next three B-R offensive sets met with less than desired results, a pass interception; the Trojans not advancing beyond their 33-yard line; and Holmes, the Hornets' ever-present linebacker stuffing a Trojan runner a yard short of a first down on a fourth down and five-yard situation. And for good measure, Hornet defensive lineman Chris Graham created a six-yard QB sack and strip of the ball.

"The first couple of series our defense played well, then their offense wore us down up front — their line took over," Buron said of Mansfield amassing 142 rushing yards during the second half with Holmes (59), DeBolt (28) and Conner (35) gathering up chunks.

Conner's pass interception resulted in a 52-yard, eight play drive that consumed 4:11 of the clock. Holmes, QB Aidan Sacco and DeBolt all had key rushes for first downs, while Holmes regained the lead for Mansfield with a 10-yard TD run.

After slamming the door shut on B-R very next series with the fourth down stop, Mansfield needed just five plays to travel 37 yards to paydirt once again — a four-yard run by DeBolt.

Mansfield, seemingly, set itself on solid footing, traveling 44 yards on five plays on its first offensive series to take the lead, Makhi Baskin hauling in a 33-yard fly pattern pass from Sacco. However, the chain markers did not favor Mansfield thereafter, unable to convert a fourth down and one-yard play at the B-R eight-yard line with just over a minute left.

"We were hot and cold offensively and their QB (Morrison) was tough to handle," Redding said. "We did enough to move on."

Mansfield 21, Bridgewater-Raynham 7

	B-R	Mfd
First downs	6	13
Total yardage	156	258
Rushing yardage	141	204
Passing yardage	20	54
Sacks-yds.	1-6	0-0
Comp.-Att.-Int.	2-9-1	3-6-0
Punts-Avg.	1-33.0	2-27.5
Fumbles-lost	3-0	0-0
Penalties-yds.	2-20	5-50

Team	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	Final
B-R	0	0	7	0	7
Mansfield	6	0	0	15	21

Scoring summary

First quarter

Msf. — Makhi Baskin 33 pass from Aidan Sacco (kick failed), 4:02.

Third quarter

B-R — Anthony Morrison 67 run (Liam Stewart kick), 7:04.

Fourth quarter

Msf. — Vinnie Holmes 10 run (Sacco rush), 6:49.

Msf. — Mike DeBolt 4 run (DeBolt kick), 2:17.

INDIVIDUAL MANSFIELD STATISTICS

RUSHING:

Holmes 14-100, Sacco 8-29, DeBolt 12-40, Conner 5-35.

PASSING:

Sacco 3-6-0--54.

RECEIVING:

Baskin 1-33, Conner 2-21

MISSED FIELD GOALS: None.