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Takeaways Help Mansfield Pull Away From Barnstable



*Mansfield senior quarterback Aidan Sacco leaps over a Barnstable player in the first half.
(Ryan Lanigan/HockomockSports.com)*

MANSFIELD, Mass. – Holding a four-point lead early in the fourth quarter, the Mansfield football team was in search of a stop that could potentially change the game. The Hornets might not have gotten the stop in terms of yardage, but they got something even better.

Going for it on fourth and one from its own 34-yard line, Barnstable quarterback Matt Petercuskie (12/38, 116 yards) lined up under center, snapped the ball and appeared to get enough of a push for a first down. While fighting for extra yards, the QB extended the ball out. Mansfield senior linebacker Philip Dinov alertly punched the ball free and it popped right into the arms of junior Michael DeBolt (eight carries, 48 yards), who took off for a 35-yard fumble return for a touchdown and a 21-10 Hornet advantage with under nine minutes to go.

It turned out to be the biggest play of the game and the Hornet defense didn't break the rest of the way as top-seeded Mansfield earned a 28-10 victory over the fifth-seeded Red Raiders.

"I thought the defense played lights off," said Mansfield head coach Mike Redding. "The fake punt was foolish on my part but we only gave up the three which helped. In the second half, the defense was lights out. Makhi [Baskin], obviously the picks were gigantic momentum changers. The offense played well enough to score enough points. That's a good football team that we just beat. We were a little shorthanded tonight so it was a gutsy win. I think tonight it

was the defense stepping up against a really good offensive team that had 35 points last week, this was a defensive win tonight.”

DeBolt finished with three touchdowns with his two others coming on the ground. The junior missed the first three games after suffering an injury in preseason. He’s played on the defensive side of the ball since Week 4 but didn’t start on offense until the final game of the regular season.

“It feels great to be back out there,” DeBolt said “I was really down after I got hurt in preseason but I’ve worked my way back here. On that fourth down, there was a big pile and Phil Dinov just punched the ball free. It popped up right to me so I just took off, I didn’t hear a whistle so I kept going.”

While Mansfield extended the lead with the fumble recovery, the Hornets put the game to rest with its next defensive series.

Facing another fourth down, this one from its own 41-yard line with six yards to gain, Petercuskie dropped back to pass but Mansfield junior Makhi Baskin read it perfect, jumping the route and picking off the pass. Baskin took the return 40 yard down to the Barnstable 14-yard line.

Two straight runs from DeBolt resulted in a score, the second one from 3-yards out and the Hornets suddenly had a 28-10 lead with 5:40 to play.

“Turnovers turned the game,” Redding said. “Our defense came up big and forced those turnovers and our first unit didn’t turn it over. “We were expecting a sneak [on the previous drive], we were blitzing in and they still got a push, it looked like he was fighting for extra yards and coughed it up. That’s a huge turnaround right there. And then we got the interception on the next series.”

The last 5:40 took 30 minutes to play but the Hornet defense didn’t break at all and kept the Red Raiders out of the end zone despite a pair of trips inside the red zone.

Though Mansfield’s defense had a terrific game, it had a slow start as the Red Raiders came out firing. The visitors marched 75 yards on 16 plays, converting a fourth down inside the red zone on a questionable catch call. Barnstable’s hurry up offense and quick screens gave Mansfield some issues, and Petercuskie used a QB option keeper to score from five yards out to make it 7-0 just 5:03 into the game.

Mansfield’s offense had an important response right away, scoring on its opening drive to tie the game. After DeBolt had a nice return, the Hornets used their ground game to move the ball. After quarterback Aidan Sacco (14 rushes, 110 yards) had a couple of nice gains, DeBolt punched it in on third down from two yards out to make it 7-7 with 2:05 left in the first quarter.

After the opening drive, Mansfield’s defense did a nice job adjusting to the Barnstable offense, which Redding credited to defensive coordinator Mark DeGirolamo. The Raiders’ next two possessions ended in three-and-outs and negative yardage.

“Coach DeGirolamo talked to the secondary about how to line up against the quads. We didn’t practice it all week and he did a good adjustment to handle their quick little screen game. We were able to double Conner Baldasaro, took their best receiver out of the game and the key was we covered the other guys one-on-one and did a great job there. Coach DeGirolamo gave them a lot of different coverages, their QB is so smart so we tried to throw a lot of looks at him and we might have thrown him off a little bit.

Mansfield’s offense didn’t fair much better as they saw a 33-yard field goal attempt go wide right on their second drive. And on their third drive, facing fourth and 5 from its own 44, the Hornets elected for a fake punt call and came up a half yard short with 1:15 to go in the half.

That was just enough time for Barnstable to get down field and Jonathan Silva hit a 25-yard field goal as time expired to give the visitors a 10-7 advantage at half.

Similar to its first drive of the first half, Mansfield's offense had a key opening drive to the second half. The Hornets orchestrated a 10-play, 59 yard drive to take the lead for the first time in the contest.

After yet another good return from DeBolt on the kickoff, the Hornets converted a first down on a carry from Vinnie Holmes at midfield, only for an unsportsmanlike penalty to knock them back 15 yards. Although Sacco ran for 11-yards, the Hornets were called for holding on the next play and faced 1st and 20 from their own 39 yard line.

Sacco ran for four yards, hit Danny Rapoza for a key 10-yard gain and then jolted seven yards past the marker for a first down.

DeBolt followed with a 19-yard run and then Holmes took one up the middle, breaking a tackle and looked like he was about to fall into the end zone for a touchdown. But the ball was poked free and rolled into the end zone. A handful of players jumped on it but it was Holmes that somehow got up and jumped on the ball for a touchdown. With Mansfield leading 14-10, the teams traded punts to finish out the third quarter, setting up the next drive where DeBolt had the fumble return.

Now Mansfield football turns its attention to the D2 South Final, where it will host rival King Philip. The third-seeded Warriors took down Natick, 17-7, to advance to its third straight sectional final. The teams met back in September at Alumni Field with Mansfield prevailing, 28-27, after KP's two-point conversion attempt in the final minute came up empty.

"I asked them what could be better than beating KP twice in one season?" Reading said of his brief postgame comments to his team. "They did it to use last year and now we have a chance to do it to them. I think it's great for our league that the two best teams can make it to the final and have an all-Hockomock League final with the winner going to Gillette, it just shows how good the league is."

The D2 South Final between the Hornets and Warriors is scheduled for a 7:00PM kickoff at Alumni Field on Friday.

Mansfield belts Barnstable to head to Div. 2 South final

By Peter Gobis pgobis@thesunchronicle.com



*Mansfield High running back Michael DeBolt, center, splits Barnstable High tacklers Matt Fredo, left, and Conner Baldasaro during the first quarter Friday night in Mansfield.
Paul Connors / The Sun Chronicle*

MANSFIELD — Somehow, perhaps with a nudge of the football by senior linebacker Phil Dinov, Michael DeBolt found the leather in his possession.

So instead of Barnstable High converting a fourth down-and-1 at their own 34-yard line two minutes into the fourth quarter, DeBolt was bolting toward the Red Raider end zone.

“Honestly, I don’t know what happened, the ball was in my hands, I didn’t hear a whistle or know if the play was dead, so I picked it up and kept running,” DeBolt said of his dramatic 36-yard fumble recovery for a touchdown.

DeBolt’s fumble recovery, along with Vinnie Holmes’ recovery of his own fumble in the end zone for a touchdown in the third quarter, and a pair of fourth-quarter interceptions by Makhi Baskin resulted in a 28-10 win for the top-seeded Mansfield High football team Friday night in the MIAA Division 2 South playoffs.

“The defense played lights out, the picks were gigantic momentum changers,” Mansfield coach Mike Redding said. “The defense stepped up against a really good offensive team. Other than first drive, we settled down and play lights out — it was a defensive win.”

The Red Raiders twice started second-half series in Mansfield territory at the 36 and 45-yard lines, but were unable to dent the end zone while senior quarterback Matt Petercuskie was able to complete just six of 25 second-half pass attempts.

Barnstable took the lead on a 75-yard, 16-play drive engineered by Petercuskie (five completions, 47 yards) over 5:03 as the Red Raider QB scored from a yard out. Petercuskie completed a controversial 18-yard, fourth-down pass to Luke Locascio, advancing the ball to the Mansfield 8-yard line.

However, other than kicker Jonathan Silva's 25-yard field goal on the final play of the first half to regain the lead for Barnstable, the Red Raiders never scored again. While Barnstable running back Brian Frieh rambled for 72 of his 107 yards during the second half, Mansfield weathered a most difficult challenge.

"Coach (Mark) DeGirolamo talked to the secondary about how to line up, he made an adjustment to handle the screen game," Redding said of the use of five, and sometimes six, Hornets in the secondary to present matchup problems for Petercuskie.

"We were able to double up their best receiver (Connor Baldasaro), the key was that we covered the other guys one-on-one and did a great job there."

Mansfield drove 59 yards on 11 plays (despite two penalties for 25 yards) at the outset of the second half, with Holmes recovering his own fumble at the goal line after a 21-yard run for the Hornets' go-ahead touchdown.

After DeBolt's fumble recovery for six points, the Hornets then stopped the next two Barnstable series with pass interceptions, both by Baskin, first at the Mansfield 48-yard line and the second at the Mansfield 3-yard line.

Despite eight penalties for 82 yards, Mansfield made plays — like a 41-yard kickoff return by DeBolt to set up the Hornets' first touchdown; like 12 of the Hornets 18 first half rushing plays were for gains of four yards or more; like Kolbey Eason snuffing out a Red Raider lateral for a 10-yard loss late in the first quarter; like Khristian Conner having a 19-yard punt return to the MHS 48 with just over two minutes left in the third quarter; and like Holmes sacking Petercuskie for 10 lost yards back to the MHS 23-yard line before Baskin's second aerial theft.

Mansfield matched Barnstable's initial score with its own 55-yard, eight-play scoring drive which consumed 3:41 — capped by DeBolt scoring from two yards out. In that drive, Hornet QB Aidan Sacco (94 yards rushing on 13 carries) bolted 21 yards on the very first play to the Red Raider 34-yard line.

The Hornets attempted to gain the lead on their second drive of the game, starting at the Barnstable 45-yard line, advancing to the Red Raider 15, but a DeBolt 33-yard field goal attempt veered right of the post.

"We've got really good athletes in the secondary who can make plays and if you don't have that against them (Barnstable and Petercuskie) they're going to throw it all over," Redding said.

Mansfield 28 Barnstable 10

	Barn.	Msf.
First downs	19	13
Total yardage	267	203
Rushing yardage	152	188
Passing yardage	115	15
Sacks-yds.	1-10	0-0
Comp.-Att.-Int.	12-39-2	2-9-0
Punts-Avg.	3-37.20	2-39.0
Fumbles-lost	1-1	2-1
Penalties-yds.	4-30	8-?

Team	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th	Final
Barnstable	7	3	0	0	10
Mansfield	7	0	7	14	28

Scoring summary

First quarter

Barn. — Matt Petercuskie 5 run (Jon Silva kick), 5:57.

Msf. — Mike DeBolt 2 run (Debolt kick), 2:02.

Second quarter

Barn. — Silva 25 field goal, :00.

Third quarter

Msf. — Vin Holmes fumble recovery in end zone (DeBolt kick), 5:52.

Fourth quarter

Msf. — DeBolt 36 fumble recovery return (DeBolt kick), 8:43.

Msf. — DeBolt 3 run (DeBolt kick), 5:40.

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING:

Sacco 13-94, Conner 3-9, Holmes 6-36, DeBolt 8-48, Archambault 2-3, Thevenot 1-minus 2.

PASSING:

Sacco 2-8-0--15, Mousette 0-1-0--0.

RECEIVING:

Rapoza 2-15.

Mansfield takes the air out of Barnstable

By Jake Levin Globe Correspondent November 03, 2018

MANSFIELD — Early adjustments were a necessity for Mansfield on Friday night.

The Hornets were back on their heels after giving up a 16-play, 75-yard scoring drive to open the game against Barnstable. Changes came quickly in the secondary as Mansfield put the clamp down on the Red Raiders' prolific passing attack, helping the Hornets advance to the Division 2 South final with a 28-10 win.

The top-seeded Hornets (8-1) will face third-seeded King Philip (7-2) for a second time this season next Friday at home.

Mansfield coach Mike Redding credited defensive coordinator Mark DeGirolamo with the adjustment, rendering the screen game of Barnstable (6-3) ineffective.

“We were able to double Connor Baldasaro, took their best receiver out of the game,” Redding said. “The key was that we covered the other guys 1-on-1 and did a great job there. Their quarterback [Matt Petercuskie] is so good and smart, we tried to throw a lot of looks at him; it may have thrown him off a bit. We’ve got a lot of really good athletes in the secondary that can make plays.”

The Hornets' starting secondary — Matty Boen, Jack Barry, Makhi Baskin, and Khristian Conner — may have been culpable in allowing Petercuskie to throw for 47 yards on the opening series. But they were just as responsible for holding the Red Raiders to just 69 yards through the air for the remainder of the game; much of the yardage coming long after the outcome had been decided.

Baskin had two interceptions in the fourth quarter.

Michael DeBolt, a running back, linebacker, and kicker for the Hornets, also played a massive role in Mansfield rendering a 10-7 halftime deficit obsolete. DeBolt had a 36-yard fumble return for a touchdown with 8:43 to go in the fourth, his PAT helping to make it 21-10, and he closed the scoring with a 3-yard run after Baskin's first pick.

It was a redemption for DeBolt, who'd misfired on a 32-yard field goal attempt in the first half.

“I was definitely upset, but I knew I'd have my chance to redeem myself,” DeBolt said. “I think I did a good job of that.”

DeBolt also had a 2-yard touchdown run on Mansfield's opening drive of the game, while Vinnie Holmes had the go-ahead score for the Hornets in the third quarter. Holmes fumbled as he neared the goal line from 21 yards away, but popped back on top of the ball in the end zone.

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