

BOBCAT ESCAPE



**Quarterback Dom Picca and Byram Hills
Stave Off a Big Second-Half Comeback
From the Westlake Wildcats on Saturday**

Pleasantville's Air Attack Erases an Early Deficit to the Tigers

By Rob DiAntonio

Pleasantville's football team saw its season end at the hands of Putnam Valley in last year's Section 1 Class B semifinals. Five minutes into their Week 4 match-up last Friday night, it appeared the Panthers were heading toward another loss to the Tigers.

Murphy's Law of "everything that can go wrong will go wrong" reared its ugly head in the first five minutes. The Panthers turned the ball over twice and were down 14-0 in the blink of any eye.

But everything quickly turned around and the Panthers used their air attack, led by senior Jared Wilens' four touchdown receptions, to pull off a 42-28 come-from-behind win at Parkway Field in the Panthers' homecoming game.

"Before we came out for the game, given the setting and homecoming and all of the alumni here, the theme was to play with pride and they showed that," Pleasantville coach Tony Becerra said. "I joked with them afterwards that the first five minutes with those two quick scores was almost like the ghost of last year's game with Put Valley was still here and we had to chase him off. And we did. I'm very proud of them."

The Panthers quickly realized they had to go through the air against a stout Tigers defensive line that was stopping any runs up the middle in the early going. Quarterback Mike LaCapria finished 9 of 16 passing for



Pleasantville quarterback Michael LaCapria hits the brakes as he runs with the football in the second quarter of Saturday night's game at Parkway Field. He finished with five TD passes in the Panther win over Putnam Valley.

208 yards and five touchdowns. Wilens had 169 receiving yards.

"Number one, we had to," Becerra said when asked why he thought they were able to be so successful passing the ball. "They were loading the box and we couldn't run in the middle other than the occasional trap. Unless we could get something going outside with the run, we had to pass. That was out of necessity. I'm proud of our sophomore quarterback, Mike LaCapria, for stepping up in a big spot, and when we needed to throw he was up to the task."

Pleasantville opened the game yielding a pick six on its first possession to fall behind 7-0. The Panthers then fumbled a squib kick on the ensuing kickoff and the Tigers recovered. Putnam Valley's 38-yard touchdown pass gave them a 14-0 lead.

Late in the first quarter, the Panthers' Jack Collins provided a game-turning punt, which bounced out of bounds at the 1-yard line. A few plays later, Matt May recovered a Putnam Valley fumble at the 8 with three seconds left in the first quarter.

LaCapria found senior captain Sean



Pleasantville junior Matt May tries to run past Jake Listwan of Putnam Valley in the first half of Saturday's game, won by the host Panthers.

Mueller on a 7-yard slant pass for a touchdown just 50 seconds into the second quarter to cut the deficit to 14-7.

On the Panthers' next possession, a long drive culminated with a touchdown pass on third-and-11 from the 14 when LaCapria hit Wilens for the score. Nicky Doto's kick tied the game at 14-14.

"Jared has been starting since his sophomore year," Becerra said. "He's the type of kid that can do that at any time. He's under the radar and, boom, he'll just explode."

With 1:31 left in the first half, Panther Jude Safieh recovered a fumble on a botched flea flicker at the Putnam Valley 43. On the Panthers' next play, LaCapria found Wilens again on a 43-yard touchdown pass over the middle to give them a 21-14 halftime lead.

The Panthers struck first in the second half. LaCapria fired a swing pass to Wilens and he was off to the races, jetting 59 yards down the left sideline to give the Panthers a 28-14 lead a minute into the third quarter.

Putnam Valley later answered with a 50-yard screen pass, cutting the deficit to 28-21 with 3:33 to go in the third quarter.

Pleasantville quickly seized the momentum back on its next possession. Harrison Halesworth (87 yards rushing) rumbled 44 yards into Putnam Valley territory. LaCapria found Wilens yet again on a 32-yard touchdown pass to stretch the lead back to two scores.

"Coming out of the half and being able to score on the first possession was huge," Becerra said. "And then to be able to do it again and get the lead back up to two scores after they scored on

that screen was big."

May (85 yards rushing) ran in a 30-yard touchdown as time expired in the third quarter to stretch the Panthers' lead to 42-21 Panthers. Putnam Valley closed out the scoring with a 1-yard touchdown run with 1:54 to go in the game.

Following a las-second defeat against Port Jervis in the season opener, Pleasantville (3-1) has rattled off three straight wins. The Panthers' next game is Saturday, Oct. 5, at Westlake at 3 p.m.

"Just getting better and fixing mistakes," Becerra said of what has been the key to the 3-0 stretch. "We still made plenty of mistakes and we still have to work on that. But it's just getting better as a team and getting tighter as a unit."



The Panthers' Jared Wilens is on his way to scoring one of his four touchdowns in Saturday's victory over visiting Putnam Valley.



The Panthers' Jared Wilens (right) and Sean Mueller start to celebrate after a Pleasantville touchdown in the first half vs. the Tigers.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Harrison Halesworth of Pleasantville carries the ball during the first quarter of Saturday night's game.



Pleasantville's Sean Mueller finds himself in the end zone after scoring the Panthers' first touchdown against Putnam Valley.

Bobcats' Halftime Lead is Too Much for Westlake to Overcome

By Andy Jacobs

After a dominant first half by the Byram Hills football team on Saturday afternoon, the game's final quarter provided far more suspense than the Bobcats would've liked.

Their 20-0 halftime cushion over host Westlake was whittled down to just six points before quarterback Dominic Picca ran five yards for a touchdown that sealed the outcome with just under 90 seconds remaining. Byram Hills, now 4-0 this season, escaped with a 26-14 victory, putting an end to the Wildcats' two-game winning streak.

"It was really nerve racking," said Bobcat head coach Doug Carpenter shortly after his team had withstood Westlake's second-half comeback bid. "We knew as a staff they were gonna come back and they were gonna do whatever they had to. I told the guys when we were on the hill at halftime that they're not going anywhere."

With Picca tossing a pair of first-quarter touchdown passes and Michael Rocco, an emergency JV call-up, scoring on a 10-yard run midway through the second period, Byram Hills opened up a 20-point lead and appeared well on the way to a lopsided win over the reeling Wildcats.

"Yeah, we had a talk at halftime," said Westlake coach John Castellano. "We said, 'Listen, there's a lot of game left. I just want you to come out and play hard in the second half. Just play the way I know you can.' For whatever reason in the first half, probably me than them, I think we tried to get too technical with stuff we were doing. And then the second half I just said, 'Let's just get the ball to the athletes and let 'em go.'"

The Wildcats responded by moving the football 57 yards on nine plays to open the second half, finally getting on the scoreboard with a 10-yard touchdown run by Matt Sardo a little more than four minutes into the third quarter. The extra point by Josh Gelman cut the Bobcats' huge lead to 20-7.

Two big runs by Sardo, the first one 22 yards and the next 23, highlighted a five-play, 65-yard drive by Westlake later in the third quarter that was capped by a six-yard TD run from Andrew Llamas. The PAT from Gelman moved the Wildcats to within six points with nearly 15 minutes still left in the game.



The Wildcats' Nick Martinez runs past the line of scrimmage during Saturday afternoon's game against Byram Hills.



Senior quarterback Jason Ausiello of Westlake searches for an open receiver after dropping back to pass in Saturday's game.

But the Wildcats' surge came to an end with a penalty-plagued, three-and-out series when they had a chance to get even in the fourth quarter. Byram Hills took possession of the ball with 6:22 left on the clock and held onto it for the next five minutes, clinching the contest when Picca twisted his way up the middle for his five-yard touchdown run.

"I thought in the second half we did much better defensively," said Castellano. "One of the keys of the game was after we had stopped them on fourth down with about six, seven minutes to go, that offensive series



The Bobcats' Steven Franco finds some running room during the win over Westlake.



William Picca of Byram Hills runs with the football in the first quarter against host Westlake.

went backwards for us. If we could've kept the same momentum offensively and got that drive going, it might've been a different story. But we put ourselves into too deep a hole in the first half."

The Bobcats' initial possession of the day ended when a Picca pass was tipped and then intercepted by Hamad Azhar. But Byram Hills soon took advantage of an errant snap when the Wildcats were forced to punt. They took over at the Westlake 38-yard line and, five plays later, Picca threw to Ben Weinhoff for a 14-yard touchdown. The point-after from David Gold gave them a 7-0 lead with 3:52 left in the first quarter.

When Picca soon picked off a second-and-12 pass by Jason Ausiello at the Westlake 35-yard line, the Bobcats were right back in business. They needed eight plays to complete the drive, and Picca connected with Steven Franco over the middle for a 10-yard touchdown. With 23 seconds to go in the opening quarter, the Byram lead increased to 14-0.

Westlake then managed to move the ball all the way to the Bobcat 25-yard line, but the drive stalled when Ausiello's fourth-down pass to James Murray fell incomplete. Byram Hills proceeded to go 75 yards in nine plays over the next three and a half minutes. A Wildcat timeout in the midst of it was immediately followed by an 18-yard Picca pass to a leaping Franco, who dragged four Wildcats to



Byram Hills quarterback Dominic Picca fires a pass in Saturday's 26-14 win at Westlake.

the 10-yard line.

On the next play, Rocco, called up to the varsity due to a Byram backfield depleted by injuries, gave the Bobcats a 20-0 advantage as he raced into the end zone with 5:10 remaining in the half.

"This one's on me. It's not on the kids," said the Wildcats' Castellano. "They gave me everything they had. Hey, listen, I was happy with our effort. One of the goals today was to come out here and earn the respect of teams that are ranked higher than us, and I think we did."

The Bobcats, meanwhile, can now turn their full attention to Friday night's Homecoming showdown against unbeaten Ardsley, a game that may provide an answer to the question of whether a 2019 championship might be within Byram's grasp.

"I do not think we overlooked Westlake," said Carpenter. "We certainly tried to promote that as a staff and our kids respected them. But Homecoming is a really big deal at Byram Hills, rightfully so. We're excited to have another game under the lights and Ardsley is really, really good. It's gonna be a fun night."



Westlake's Matt Sardo picks up big yardage as he carries the football in the third quarter of Saturday's home game vs. Byram Hills.

ANDY JACOBS PHOTOS



Greeley’s Christoph Sauerborn boots the ball away in Friday’s 4-1 win at Fox Lane.



Charles Singer of Greeley tries to slip past the defense of Fox Lane’s Martin Nikprilaj (left) and John Kowalski during Friday afternoon’s game in Bedford.



Brian Paget of Greeley moves the ball past Fox Lane’s Ben Belfiglio during the first half of Friday’s game.

SPORTS SCENE



Fox Lane’s Ally Waldman gets set to hit a forehand return in her match at second singles vs. visiting Greeley on Friday afternoon.



Emma Saltiel of Horace Greeley moves forward to smack a backhand return during her singles match at Fox Lane on Friday.



Fox Lane goalkeeper Charles Della Penna keeps his eyes on the ball late in the first half of Friday afternoon’s game vs. Greeley.



Fox Lane senior captain John Kowalski dribbles the ball across the field in the Foxes’ home game vs. Horace Greeley on Friday.



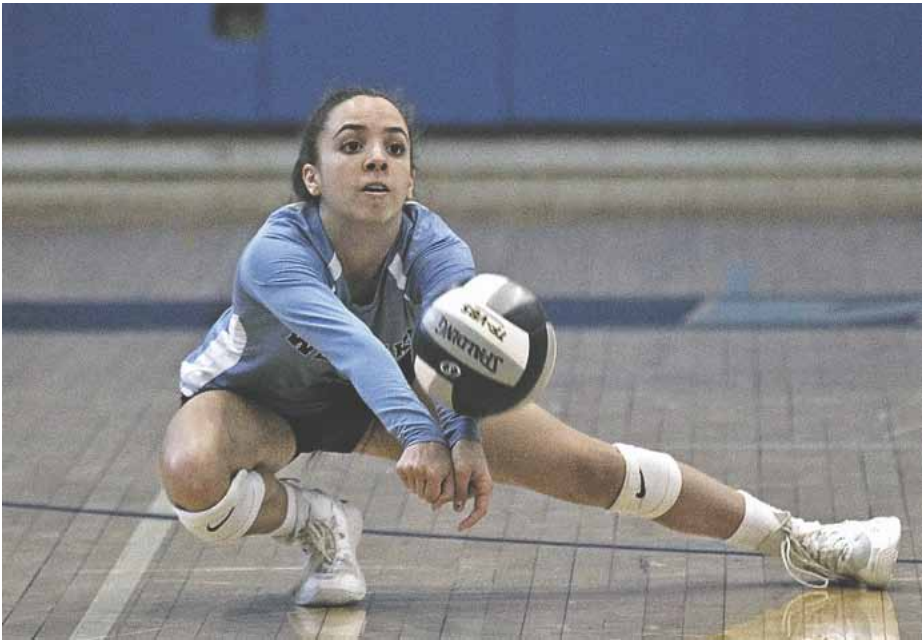
Horace Greeley’s Ryan Pohly takes the ball down the left sideline as Fox Lane’s Nathan DiCarlo chases in the Quakers’ 4-1 road victory.



Fox Lane junior Nathan DiCarlo pursues the ball in the first half of Friday’s home game.



Valhalla's Stephanie Sicilian (left) and Jasmine Grant rise for a block in last Tuesday's volleyball match at Westlake.



Westlake's Isabella Leite reaches low to bump the ball in the air during the Wildcats' home match last Tuesday.



Chloe Balin of Pleasantville High School follows through on a serve in her match at second singles last Tuesday vs. host Briarcliff.



Briarcliff's Jolie Wasserman lines up a forehand in her match at second singles last Tuesday against visiting Pleasantville.



Pleasantville's Sara Wilson concentrates on a forehand return during a singles match at Briarcliff High School last Tuesday afternoon.



Eve Tanios of Briarcliff makes a high backhand return during her third-singles match last week vs. the Pleasantville Panthers.



Sophia Cavallo of Valhalla bumps the ball in the Vikings' road win over Westlake last week.



Valhalla's Jasmine Grant goes high in the air to slam the ball over the net during the Vikings' three-games-to-none win over host Westlake last Tuesday afternoon.



Alyssa Gutierre (left) and Bea Scoca of Westlake are a bit too late trying to block the ball in last Tuesday's home match vs. the Valhalla Vikings.



Horace Greeley's Will Lafortezza and Fox Lane's Saul Sagastume try to gain control of the ball in the Quakers' 4-1 victory.



Ada Nduka of Valhalla sends a free kick down the field in the first half of last week's home game vs. Putnam Valley.



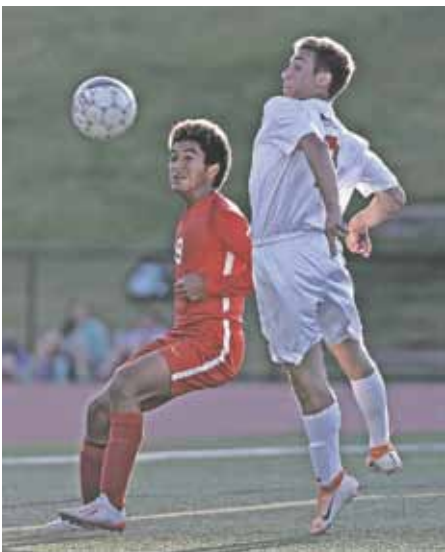
Valhalla's Anna Manfredi celebrates after scoring the first of her two goals in the opening half of last Tuesday's game against Putnam Valley.



McKenzie Flaherty of Valhalla sets her sights on the ball near midfield last Tuesday evening.



Valhalla's Maura Brosnan settles the ball in last Tuesday night's home game.



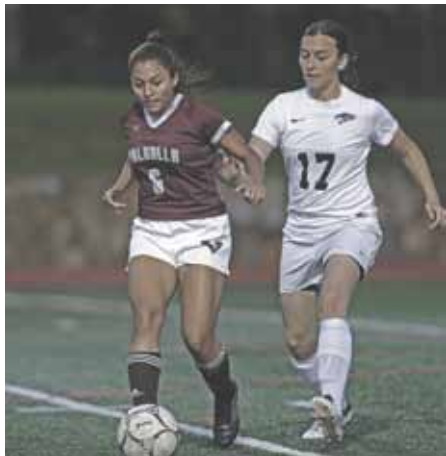
Fox Lane's Chandler De Leon (left) and Greeley's Zach Eichenberg fight for the ball in the first half of Friday's game, won by the Quakers.



Tyrese McLaughlin of Fox Lane and Alex Mancini of visiting Greeley collide as they battle for possession of the ball in Friday's game.



Valhalla junior Sara Bartlett turns up the field with the ball in the first half of the Vikings' home game against Putnam Valley.



Katherine Arteaga of Valhalla tries to maintain control of the ball as Michelle Siguencia of Putnam Valley defends in last week's game.

SPORTS SCENE

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Pace quarterback Carlton Aiken threw four touchdown passes in Saturday's 42-21 home win over Saint Anselm and was named the NE-10 Conference's offensive player of the week.

Setters Defeat Saint Anselm



The Setters' Ramir Tann-Davis is brought down during the second quarter of the 42-21 home victory over the Saint Anselm Hawks.



Jhalen Bien-Aime of Pace finds plenty of running room as he carries the ball near midfield in the Setters' win on Saturday afternoon.



Setter senior Darius Jones runs with the football after making a reception in the second quarter of Saturday's game at Pace Stadium.



Valhalla junior Mahari Davis Jr. carries the football in the first quarter of Saturday's lopsided win over Horace Mann.



The Vikings' Joseph O'Neil runs with the ball after making one of his two first-half interceptions in the win over Horace Mann.



Daniel Tammaro leaves a quartet of Horace Mann players behind as he carries the ball during Saturday's Valhalla victory.

Valhalla Cruises Past Horace Mann



Valhalla quarterback Michael Dawson does some scrambling in the second quarter of the Vikings' 35-7 Homecoming win.

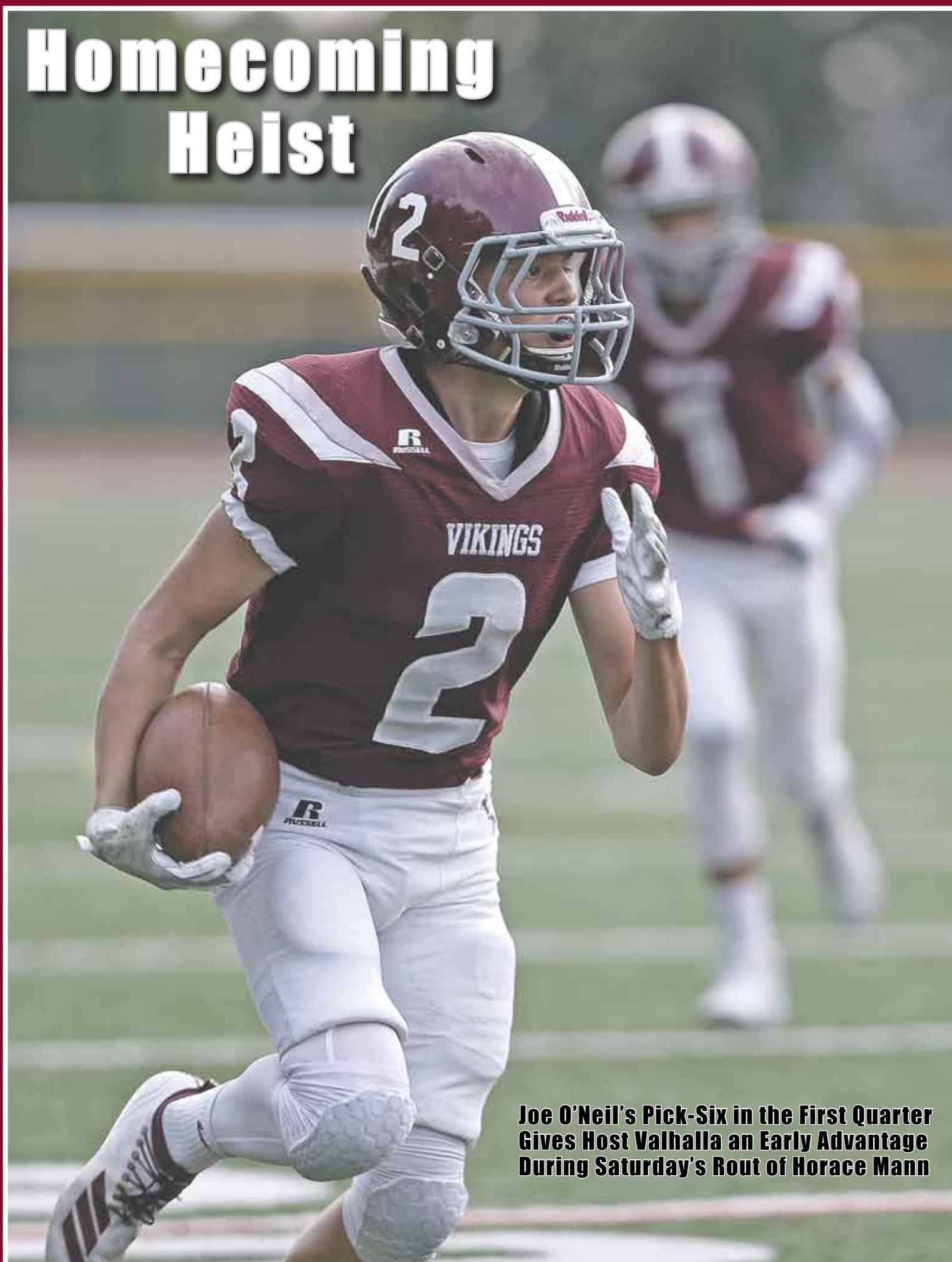


Sammy Mussuto of Valhalla fends off a would-be tackler during the first half of Saturday evening's 35-7 Homecoming victory over Horace Mann.



The Vikings' Joseph Nolan runs near midfield in the first half on Saturday evening.

Homecoming Heist



Joe O'Neil's Pick-Six in the First Quarter Gives Host Valhalla an Early Advantage During Saturday's Rout of Horace Mann