

Bombardiers bounce back, close in on MIAA slot

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ATTLEBORO — Owning a two-point lead with less than two minutes remaining until halftime, after having a 73-yard scoring strike to Justin Cote and an 89-yard scoring strike to Elvin Sam both nullified by holding penalties on the same offensive series, Attleboro High senior quarterback was backed up inside the Bombardier 10-yard line at Tozier-Cassidy Field.

Faced with a third down and a “mile” situation, a snap from center eluded the grasp of Furtado, who chased the loose ball into the end zone, eluding a sack, denying the Franklin High Panthers a potential game-tying safety too.

Furtado alertly escaped all danger and fired an incomplete pass, out of bounds.

And as fate and good fortune would have it for the Bombardiers, on the very first play of Franklin’s offensive set from midfield, AHS senior Elvin Sam plucked off a Panther pass and returned the ball 44 yards up the field.

“We came to win, we made plays,” offered AHS coach Mike Strachan, whose Bombardiers (3-4) improved their chances for a spot in the MIAA Playoffs with an inspiring 37-18 victory.

Furtado completed just two passes, but he amassed 108 rushing yards, including a 73-yard TD gallop, one of three AHS touchdowns during the second quarter. And junior running back Justin Cote piled up 98 yards on the ground, scoring three touchdowns, including runs of seven and 40 yards.

“Cam takes a broken play and 100 percent that was the play of the game,” Strachan added.

But Furtado’s bravado in making something out of nothing was just one of an unending series of Bombardier big plays throughout four quarters.

Furtado’s interception of a Panther pass at the AHS 42-yard line four plays into the second quarter and his 27-yard return on the play set up the Bombardiers’ go-ahead touchdown, an 11-yard pass to Cote. And it was Furtado’s conversion rush, with an unbalanced Bombardier line, which put AHS into the lead at the three-minute mark.

“We held in, we stayed tight against one of the best quarterbacks (Jake Noviello) in the league,” Strachan continued. “I think that we settled down — the offense needed some time to get going. We had those two picks, which were great time frames for us.”

But so was Brandon Harris breaking up a fourth-down Noviello pass in the deep left corner of the end zone on Franklin’s first series of the Hockomock League; and Nick Evans’ block of the Panther conversion kick after Franklin’s first touchdown and his deflection of a Panther punt on Franklin’s fourth series; Furtado’s interception to nullify Franklin’s third series; Sam’s interception to shut down the Panthers’ sixth set of the first half; Jason Weir’s block of a second-down Noviello pass on the Panthers’ fifth series, and Josh Therrien deftly defending a third down pass a play later.

That defensive trend-setting continued through the second half with Jason Weir knocking down a Noviello second-down pass on the Panther' second series and with Evans blocking a Panther punt, allowing AHS to take possession of the ball at the Franklin 15-yard line late in the third quarter and Joe Llanos cashing in on the chance with a three-yard TD run.

The Bombardiers had scoring drives of 58 yards (on nine plays), 75 yards (on two plays) and 15 yards (on four plays) during the third quarter, including Furtado executing a Houdini, being swarmed over and around, somehow eluding a sack and romping 73 yards for a touchdown.

"We played physical overall and we wore them down," Strachan added. "We had the ball, we had our opportunities and then we settled in."