

Mansfield takes 42-35 shootout win over Attleboro

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MANSFIELD — Putting the football into the hands of Attleboro High senior quarterback Jason Weir or into the hands of Mansfield High senior quarterback Aidan Sacco almost always generates offense and excitement.

Weir threw for 254 yards and three touchdowns, guiding the Bombardiers to a pair of scores in the fourth quarter and Attleboro seized its first lead of Friday night's game at 35-34 with 1:39 remaining on the strength of sophomore Colby Briggs' 30-yard conversion kick.

Sacco produced 192 run-pass yards of offense, completing a fourth-down pass in the final minute and then watched senior running back Khristian Conner cap the 74-yard, seven-play march with an 11-yard touchdown scamper with 32 seconds remaining on the Alumni Field scoreboard as Mansfield secured a heart-stopping 42-35 victory.

In improving to 5-1 on the season, the Hornets clinched no less than a share of the Kelley-Rex Division title in the Hockomock League.

It seemed that Mansfield was in control of its destiny, owning a 28-14 advantage on a Sacco 11-yard touchdown run, following Hornet linebacker Phil Dinov's tackle and fumble recovery on Attleboro's first play of the second half as the Bombardiers' 23-yard line.

The Hornets then converted a 68-yard, nine-play drive that consumed 3:48 of the clock to take a 34-21 lead barely two minutes into the fourth quarter on sophomore running back Cincere Gill's third TD of the game.

Attleboro then undermined the best of Mansfield's intentions.

Weir directed Attleboro twice on scoring drives of 75 yards (the first on 12 plays, consuming 6:29; the second on five plays) during the first half. The Bombardier would not be denied in the fourth quarter, going 52 yards in three plays with a 45-yard scoring strike to Kevin Velazquez-Rivera, and then driving 59 yards in eight plays to seize the lead.

"This was an unbelievable high school football game — I was thinking 17-7, 14-7, I wasn't thinking many points (would be scored)," Mansfield coach Mike Redding said of the Bombardiers who allowed just 35 points in their first five games of the season. "It was a shootout — they came to play. Thank god, we answered when they did, we found ways to win, surviving some injuries and got a chance to be a No. 1 seed."

With 1:32 remaining on the clock with 74 yards to travel Sacco defied the Bombardier defense on a dramatic fourth down pass completion to Gill for a 28-yard gain to the AHS 46-yard line. Then looking to pass, but without a receiver open, Sacco bolted for 26 yards to the AHS 11-yard line to set up Conner's game-winning TD up the middle, virtually unscathed.

Then with Weir and the Bombardiers in possession of the ball with 28 seconds left and 60 yards to travel, his first three passes fell incomplete.

"We couldn't stop their offense and their QB, Sacco brings a whole different dynamic," Mike Strachan, the AHS coach said. "Our offense played really, really well, our kids played hard. These games we get in go back and forth, it came down to possessions. They've (Mansfield) got athletes everywhere, you have to defend everything."

Weir completed a fourth down and seven-yard pass to Ethan Cameron for 13 yards to set up his own score from a yard out on AHS' first series of the second half. But, Mansfield immediately responded as Sacco completed a 26-yard pass to Conner, advancing the ball to the AHS 29-yard line to set up Gill's second TD, a 21-yard run on a fourth down and two-yard play.

And AHS was wondering too, instead of facing a 21-14 deficit at halftime whether the score would have been tied had not Weir been one foot beyond the line of scrimmage in completing a 21-yard TD pass to Justin Daniels three plays before intermission.

“We had the momentum,” Redding added. “Sacco is special, but they (AHS) were bottling us up inside. There were so many plays on both sides, third down conversions, fourth down conversions — it was a tough one to coach.”

Mansfield 42, Attleboro 35

AHS Msf.

First downs 20 16

Total yardage 367 321

Rushing yardage 109 210

Passing yardage 271 111

Sacks-yds. 2-13 0-0

Comp.-Att.-Int. 19-30-1 5-8-0

Punts-Avg. 1-28.0 2-23.5

Fumbles-lost 1-1 0-0

Penalties-yds. 6-350 10-85

Attleboro 7 7 7 14—35

Mansfield 7 14 7 14—42

Scoring summary

First quarter

Msf. — Cincere Gill 7 run (Mike DeBolt kick), 7:05.

AHS — Jacob Weatherford 4 pass from Jason Weir (Colby Briggs kick), 0:36.

Second quarter

Msf. — Khristian Conner 26 pass from Aidan Sacco (DeBolt kick), 3:42.

AHS — Justin Daniels 24 pass from Weir (Briggs kick), 2:28.

Msf. — Gill 31 run (DeBolt kick), 1:09.

Third quarter

Msf. — Sacco 11 run (Debolt kick), 8:47.

AHS --Weir 1 run (Briggs kick), 1:41.

Fourth quarter

Msf. — Gill 21 run (kick failed), 8:43.

AHS — Kevin Velazquez-Rivera 45 pass from Weir (Briggs kick), 7:29.

AHS — Justin Cote 12 run (Briggs kick), 1:39.

Msf. — Conner 11 run (Vin Holmes pass from Sacco), 0:32.

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING:

Sacco 10-81, Gill 10-100, Holmes 5-11,

Conner 10-55, DeBolt 1-3.

PASSING:

Sacco 5-8-0--111.

RECEIVING:

Conner 2-52, Gill 1-28, Holmes 1-18,

Boston Globe;

Aidan Sacco finds path to victory for Mansfield

By Jake Levin Globe Correspondent October 13, 2018

MANSFIELD — Down a point to Attleboro with just more than a minute to go, facing fourth and 10 from his own 26-yard line, Mansfield quarterback Aidan Sacco didn't have many options Friday.

“At that point, there's only one play, and if we mess it up, it's game over,” Sacco said. The critical play was only another step on a lengthy drive toward a league title for Sacco and the sixth-ranked Hornets.

Sacco dialed up Cincere Gill for a 28-yard gain, followed by Sacco runs of 9 and 26 yards, to set up Khristian Conner's game-winning 11-yard touchdown run with 32 seconds to go. Mansfield survived, 42-35, to grab a share of the Hockomock-Kelley-Rex Division.

The Hornets (5-1, 4-0) held a 34-21 lead with 8:43 left, only to see the Blue Bombardiers (4-2, 2-2) pull ahead after a Justin Cote 16-yard touchdown run and a Colby Briggs 30-yard PAT made it 35-34 Attleboro with 1:39 left.

Mansfield was left without linebacker Chris Copponi and defensive lineman Daenin Walker after halftime due to a knee injury and concussion, respectively. But the Hornets were able to hang on without two captains, keeping the Blue Bombardiers away from the end zone in the waning seconds.

“I don't know many teams that can overcome losing two captains at the same time,” Mansfield coach Mike Redding said. “We had guys step in and do enough to play and find ways to win.”

Sacco threw for 111 yards and ran for 56 more. Gill shouldered the load in the backfield, racking up 99 yards on the ground and three touchdowns.

Attleboro quarterback Jason Weir threw for 274 yards to go along with three touchdown passes and an interception. He also had a 1-yard touchdown run and a catch for 17 yards.

“I thought we played great offensively,” Attleboro coach Michael Strachan said. “They've got a very dynamic offense, so Sacco poses other problems for us right now. When he's got the ball, he can make plays.”

The Boston Herald

MANSFIELD 42, ATTLEBORO 35

Attleboro (4-2) 7 7 14 7 — 35

Mansfield (5-1) 14 7 7 14 — 42

MA — Cincere Gill 12 run (Mike DeBolt kick)

AT — Jason Weir 1 run (kick good)

MA — Khristian Conner 22 pass from Aiden Sacco (DeBolt kick)

AT — Justin Cote 6 run (kick good)

MA — Sacco 17 run (DeBolt kick)

MA — Gill 18 run (DeBolt kick)

AT — Justin Williams 38 pass from Weir (kick good)

MA — Gill 22 run (kick blocked)

AT — Steve Weatherford 4 pass from Weir (kick good)

MA — Conner 11 run (Vinnie Holmes from Sacco)

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Mansfield Secures Title in Shootout with Attleboro



Mansfield sophomore Cincere Gill (2) rushed for three touchdowns to help the Hornets outscore Attleboro and clinch at least a share of their first league title since 2013. (Josh Perry/HockomockSports.com)

MANSFIELD, Mass. – All the build-up to Friday night’s Kelley-Rex division title showdown at Alumni Field presumed that Mansfield and Attleboro were going to slug it out in a defensive battle with points difficult to come by. It turned out to be the exact opposite.

Senior Khristian Conner scored with 32 seconds remaining in the game to give Mansfield the edge over the Bombardiers 42-35 and clinch the Hornets at least a share of the league title. It is Mansfield’s first division championship since 2013.

“It means everything,” said Conner about getting back on top in the league. “We worked hard over the summer for it. We just kept with it, didn’t let anything stop us and we just got the win. It feels amazing. It feels awesome.

Mansfield coach Mike Redding added, “This was an unbelievable high school football game. They came to play, they answered every time we had the momentum. Thank god we answered when they did.” Redding joked, “So many plays on both sides...it will be a fun one to watch; it was a tough one to coach.”

Attleboro took its only lead of the game with 1:39 remaining in the fourth quarter. Justin Cote (seven carries, 50 yards), who had also caught a 20-yard pass on the go-ahead drive, raced up the middle for a 12-yard score that tied the game at 34-34. Two false starts pushed the extra point

attempt back 10 yards but sophomore Colby Briggs was unfazed and split the uprights to put the visitors in front.

The Bombardiers had forced Mansfield to punt just twice on the night, but after Nick Evans sacked Hornets quarterback Aidan Sacco for no gain the hosts faced fourth and 10 from their own 26. Sacco (5-of-8, 111 yards) bought time and hit Cincere Gill for 28 yards over the middle. The sophomore, who rushed for three touchdowns on the night, was covered but managed to pull in the pass to keep the game alive.

Sacco (nine carries, 79 yards) rushed for nine yards and then broke free on a keeper to the left sideline for 26 yards and got out of bounds at the Attleboro 11. On the next play, Conner completed the comeback by finding a seam right up the gut for the score.

“They’re a really good team – good defensive team, good on offense – and they have great players but we just had to fight through it to be the better team,” Conner said.

Attleboro’s offense had found ways to come back all game long, but with only 32 seconds, there just wasn’t enough time to get up the field and a pass to Cote for four yards on fourth and 10 ended the game.

“Our offense played really, really well,” said Attleboro coach Mike Strachan. “Weir played awesome, it was just back-and-forth. We could definitely win the game, we just didn’t give him enough time at the end.”

Both offenses were able to move the ball from the opening kick-off. Mansfield took its opening possession 56 yards on seven plays to get a quick lead. Gill finished off the drive with a seven-yard sweep.

The Bombardiers returned the favor with a 12-play, 75-yard drive on its first possession.

Attleboro surprised the Hornets by going to the air with greater frequency than usual and junior Jason Weir (18-29, 251 yards) had a big night, hitting nine different receivers. After catching a halfback pass from Ethan Cameron (five catches, 69 yards), Weir capped the drive with a three-yard toss to Jacob Weatherford.

Mansfield got the lead back late in the second quarter when Sacco threw a 26-yard strike to Conner, who had gotten wide open in the front corner of the end zone. Attleboro answered right back, as Weir connected with sophomore Justin Daniels to make it 14-14 with 2:28 left in the half.

That was plenty of time for Mansfield to add another touchdown. Sacco got the Hornets to the Attleboro 31 and then Gill broke free for his second score of the night. He cut back on a sweep, finding a hole in the middle of the line and exploding through it.

“He’s special and I think we have a very good running back,” Redding said of Gill. “Vinnie [Holmes] had some decent runs, but they were bottling us up inside and Khristian ran hard, Cincere ran hard, Aidan had some nice runs and throws and just doing enough to overcome some injuries.”

Even with just a minute on the clock, Attleboro was able to get the ball into the red zone again and had a touchdown called back because the officials ruled Weir had cross the line of scrimmage before he threw. Makhi Baskin picked off the final throw of the half. Coming out of the break, the Bombardiers got the ball again, but on the first play Weir was stripped of the ball and Holmes recovered for the Hornets at the Attleboro 23.

Mansfield took advantage of the short field and Sacco got on the board with an 11-yard keeper to make it 28-14 and it felt like the Hornets were about to break the game wide open. Instead, Attleboro came right back down field and cut the lead to one score. A 13-play, 75 yard drive ended on a one-yard sneak by Weir to make it 28-21.

The track meet continued on Mansfield's next possession. Sacco hit Conner for a 26-yard completion to get into Attleboro territory. Four plays later, on fourth and two from the 21, Gill took another sweep around the end and broke free, adding his third touchdown of the night. Attleboro would give itself a lifeline by blocking Michael DeBolt's extra point attempt, but it was a 13-point Mansfield lead.

Attleboro made it a quick response. Weir got the ball out to the sideline to Kevin Velazquez-Rivera, who then turned up field and showed off his speed for a 45-yard touchdown. Evans made a huge stop on third and five, stuffing Sacco for a four-yard loss and forcing a rare Mansfield punt.

The Bombardiers came right back, with Weir connecting with Cameron on a fourth down pass to the near sideline that kept the drive going. After a 20-yard completion to Cote, the senior running back took it himself, going straight up the middle for the 12-yard TD. Briggs held his nerve to put Attleboro in front and on the verge of potentially the program's biggest win since its move to the Hock.

But, Mansfield showed that it has some grit as well. The Hornets found a way to pull out the victory and will go into the final week of the regular season with a chance to clinch the title outright.

"These games just always seem to go back-and-forth," Strachan said. "We've just got to bounce back against Franklin and play well. I thought we did a good job; they've got athletes everywhere, you've got to defend everything."

Redding noted that the Hornets lost a pair of seniors, Chris Copponi and Daenin Walker, to injuries. He said, "We've had adversity every week but still find a way to beat an awfully good football team."

Mansfield (5-1, 4-0) will travel to Oliver Ames next week to try and close out a perfect league campaign and potentially take the top spot in Div. 2 South. Attleboro (4-2, 2-2) will try to bounce back and possibly secure a first round home game in the Div. 1 South tournament with a trip to Franklin.