

# OTHELLO DEFENSE GENERATES 6 TURNOVERS, HUSKIES WIN FIRST GAME OF SEASON

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OTHELLO — Patrick Azevedo took a page from Richard Sherman's playbook, sneaking a peek in the Prosser offensive backfield as the Mustangs lined up in the red zone with just under four minutes remaining in the first half of Friday's non-league game at Huskie Stadium.

Mustang quarterback Will Weinmann tapped his right leg and pointed to the receiver Jordan Garcia lined up wide to go against the 5-foot-7 Othello sophomore.

Garcia faked a corner route and broke it off to the post, but Azevedo jumped the route inside for the interception at the Huskies' 2-yard line to preserve a 7-7 tie and set in motion a series of events that led to Othello's first victory of the season, 34-13, over a program that won the 2A state championship in 2015.

"I saw him do it earlier in the game and this time I figured out he was audibling to the guy I was covering," Azevedo said. "The receiver did a little shake to the outside, then did a post route. But I was able to jump the route."

What happened next was a complete turnaround for a defense that gave up 35 points the week before against Royal and 21 unanswered in the season opener at Connell. On Friday, playing for the first time on the brand new refurbished playing field at Huskie Stadium, the swarming Othello defense generated four fumbles and stopped a team averaging 21.3 points a game on downs three times.

The defensive backs got in on the action with two pass interceptions.

Special teams was not to be denied, recovering a high long snap that sailed over the Prosser punter's head in the end zone for a touchdown and blocked a PAT kick when Prosser (2-1) tried to tie the game in third quarter.

And oh yeah, the offense scored 21 unanswered points in the fourth quarter to punctuate the win with authority.

"Turnovers were the key to this game and you can credit our defense with their relentless effort," Huskies coach Roger Hoell said. "Our offense improved a lot as well and was able to sustain and control the ball. We had too many penalties though and will have to clean that up as the season progresses."

The Othello defense set 'em up, the special teams knocked 'em down and the Huskies' offense knocked 'em out. But it was the defense that took center stage, setting up the short field for an offensive unit that needed a big night out.

“We were trying to strip the ball. One guy makes the tackle and the rest of us rip at the ball,” Azevedo said. “Our defense was really amazing and got us so much momentum going our way.”

Linebacker Anthony Veliz recovered two Mustangs fumbles and had the block on the PAT. Sam Azevedo covered another. Michael Gutierrez had a strip sack and Isaiah Perez came up with the loose ball. Tanner Butcher scored his first touchdown of the season, chasing down the loose ball on the high snap into the end zone.

“We were confident tonight. To recover two fumbles feels amazing,” said Veliz. “I have a lot of faith in our team and our coach motivates us a lot. I see this as a turnaround with good things to come.”

Kyler Villarreal started at quarterback, replacing D.J. Guzman, who tweaked a knee in the second half of the Royal game. Villarreal, a 6-4 senior, was 5-of-11 for 98 yards and two touchdowns.

Perez moved from fullback to tight end. He caught two balls, including a 38-yard touchdown pass in the first quarter. The Huskies' power running game was back. Trevor Hilmes rushed for 114 yards on 14 carries and two touchdowns. Isaac Barragan carried 13 times for 46 yards and a touchdown. Villarreal added a nice element to the option package, finishing with 74 yards rushing.

Othello opens the CWAC North schedule at Quincy (2-1) on Friday.

### **Score by quarters**

Prosser 7 0 6 0 - 13

Othello 7 0 7 21 - 34

### **Scoring summary**

O - Isaiah Perez 38 pass from Kyler Villarreal (Patrick Azevedo kick)

P - Kord Tuttle 20 run (Vincent Gonzalez kick)

O - Tanner Butcher fumble recovery (Azevedo kick)

P - Will Thompson 30 pass from Will Weinmann (kick blocked)

O - Trevor Hilmes 10 run (Azevedo kick)

O - Hilmes 33 run (kick failed)

O - Isaac Barragan 2 run (Azevedo kick)