

Ellensburg football shut out by rival Prosser 31-0 in 2A state quarterfinals

[By RYAN KUHN sports editor Daily Record News](#)

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YAKIMA — For the last two seasons, the Ellensburg High School football team ended its season with one loss. Unfortunately that loss, came during the 2A state playoffs. This season was no different as the Bulldogs lost to rival Prosser High School on Saturday at Zaepfel Stadium in the 2A state quarterfinals, 31-0.

The loss also snapped a five-game winning streak against the Mustangs. “I wasn’t surprised (with the outcome,)” said Ellensburg head coach Randy Affholter. “They adjusted some things from the first game. We always talked about turnovers with our kids and they had more than we did.”

Early struggles

Ellensburg struggled from its opening possession when senior quarterback Donny Ellersick, fumbled the snap and Prosser recovered. The Bulldogs got the ball back, but Ellersick was flushed out of the pocket and sacked on his own 1-yard line. A punt from the back of the endzone saw Prosser start its drive right outside the red zone and end with a 15-yard touchdown pass from Tanner Bolt to senior wide receiver Javier Diaz. The Mustangs tripled their score in the first two minutes of the second quarter.

Bolt first found senior wide receiver Roy Borrego with a 35-yard touchdown pass into the corner of the endzone to go ahead 14-0. After Ellersick threw an interception on the ensuing drive, Borrego caught another touchdown pass with 10:16 left in the first half. “Offensively (Prosser) was able to run the football, which by that opened up their play

action game that they took advantage of,” Affholter said. Ellersick and the Bulldogs’ offense continued to be stifled as they could not even get past midfield.

With less than six minutes left until halftime, Ellensburg put together a drive that included an 11-yard run by sophomore Brady Gibson, but was forced to punt when Ellersick fumbled his second snap on third down. “We came out really slow and without the same intensity as we usually do,” Gibson said.

Costly interceptions

After only throwing four interceptions the entire regular season, Ellersick, threw his second of the game with 7:40 remaining in the third quarter. Prosser took advantage on the next possession when Bolt threw his fourth touchdown pass on a 26-yard bullet to junior Michael Kernan. “They didn’t allow Donny to move around and make plays and that really hurt us,” Affholter said.

Ellersick threw two more interceptions on his next two possessions before the start of the fourth quarter. “I guess it just wasn’t my day today,” said Ellersick, who finished with just 66 yards passing and completing 30 percent of his passes. As a whole, Ellensburg ended the game with just 133 total yards and five turnovers.

Returning next season

Next season, the Bulldogs return leading wide receivers Bryce Helgeson, Xander Orejodos, Nate Andaya and running back Mason Sherwood and for the seniors, they finished their varsity careers 37-3 with three league championships.

“It was fun,” Ellersick said, fighting back tears. “I got to play with my best friends all through high school and wouldn’t trade it for anything.”

PREP FOOTBALL

Bolt strikes big for Mustangs football

Junior QB throws four TD passes as Prosser offense enjoys a big day

By Scott Spruill

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YAKIMA, Wash. -- Tanner Bolt pitched the ball around Zaepfel Stadium like an expert marksman Saturday afternoon, connecting on 21 of 31 passes for 255 yards and four touchdowns and during one stretch in the second half completed eight in a row.

So, like a good junior should, the first thing he talked about after Prosser's 31-0 quarterfinal humbling of Ellensburg was the running game.

"Our offensive line and running backs were awesome," Bolt said. "We were physical up front, and that running game made us a lot more balanced. Being two-dimensional was huge today."

Bolt wasn't trying to be politically correct, he was spot on.

Prosser's young quarterback actually threw for more yards when the CWAC rivals met last month in league play, but with a mostly ineffective ground game — 60 yards on 18 carries — the Mustangs had trouble sustaining drives and ultimately fell 27-26 in overtime.

In Saturday's rematch, with some personnel changes on the line that resulted from the loss, Prosser nearly tripled its rushing production with six backs combining for 164 yards on 46 carries. Thomas Niemeyer and Kolby Swift were moved into the right side of the

line, and all-leaguer Riley Lusk was back at guard after missing the first game on Oct. 16.

“We had to make some changes up front and fortunately we have selfless kids who are all about the team,” said Prosser coach Corey Ingvalson. “Having that running game makes us more physical, and today it gave us exactly what we needed.”

With the complementary piece intact, Bolt and his receivers took off, accounting for all four touchdowns with a variety of short and deep routes. Bolt hit Javier Diaz on a slant over the middle for a 15-yard score in the first quarter, and then the offense and defense worked together for a two-score, 42-second barrage early in the second period that essentially settled the matter.

Bolt connected with Roy Borrego on a 35-yard sideline fade at the 10:58 mark and, after Michael Kernan’s interception on the ensuing play, Prosser went right back to the same play with Bolt finding Borrego for a 16-yard score at 10:16. Ellensburg’s defense was much tighter on Borrego’s second grab, but Bolt’s throw and the catch were also better.

“If you’re going to play man (defense) on us, we’ll go for it,” Bolt said. “We saw that, and it was worth a shot again. Getting those two quick scores back-to-back was big for our momentum.”

Bolt added a fourth score in the third quarter, hitting Kernan out of the backfield for a 25-yard tackle-breaking scamper that extended the margin to 28-0. It was Bolt’s 38th touchdown pass of the season, and Kernan was his eighth different receiver in the game.

“Ellensburg is a great team and you can’t beat them just throwing the ball,” Bolt said. “Having the running game today was the biggest thing that helped us. The way the defense has picked it up and now our running game is going strong — we’re ready for next week and to keep this season going.”

PREP FOOTBALL

Lock-down defense powers Prosser football

Mustangs post second straight postseason shutout to reach Class 2A state semifinals

By Scott Spruill

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YAKIMA, Wash. -- David Ledesma is the defensive MVP of a 10-team league, so it should be easy for him to imagine such things. But even Prosser's ace middle linebacker had trouble wrapping his head around it.

"It's unbelievable. I never would've dreamed of that score," Ledesma said as he looked at the Zaepfel Stadium scoreboard. "But the thing is, we did play a tremendous game. Our defense was amazing."

And then some. Forcing five turnovers while holding their previously unbeaten rival to 133 yards, the Mustangs combined defensive dominance with Tanner Bolt's four touchdown passes and stunned Ellensburg with a 31-0 shutout in the Class 2A state quarterfinals Saturday afternoon.

Avenging a 27-26 overtime loss at Ellensburg last month, when the Bulldogs rolled up nearly 400 yards, rejuvenated Prosser also ended a four-game skid against Ellensburg and advances to next weekend's semifinals to meet defending champion Sedro-Woolley, a 31-28 winner over Hockinson.

"We were so prepared for this game," said senior Javier Diaz, who caught Bolt's first scoring pass, had one of Prosser's four interceptions and booted a field goal. "I didn't expect anything like this, but I knew we'd play a better game than last time. Defensively

we're a lot better now, and today we swarmed to the ball. We didn't give up any deep plays."

Back on the field after building a 21-0 halftime lead, Prosser's defense was even more oppressive in the second half as interceptions by Logan Hamlin, Roy Borrego and Diaz stopped Ellensburg's first three possessions. The three-time reigning CWAC champions managed just 37 yards in the second half.

"You never come into a game like this expecting a shutout, but this defense expects to be great," said Prosser coach Corey Ingvalson, whose team beat Clarkston 14-0 last week with two defensive touchdowns. "They are so fast and we have so many playmakers, they feel they can dominate. The defense saved us last week, and today we put it all together."

Prosser's priority list was topped by containing CWAC offensive MVP Donny Ellersick, who threw for 251 yards and two touchdowns and ran for another score in the first meeting. With a variety of pressures and blitzes, the Mustangs didn't allow time or improvisation for the dual-threat Ellersick, who had just seven completions for 66 yards.

With little support from the ground game — 67 yards on 31 carries — Ellensburg needed to go up top for big plays and Prosser's secondary responded with its wave of interceptions.

"Our blitzes were effective for the pass, and we filled the gaps for the run," Ledesma explained. "We knew we had to keep Donny in the pocket because he can create things and throws well on the run. We came up with a few plays to get that done."

"Donny's a shifty player and containing him was huge," Diaz added. "To get a shutout, though, that's amazing. All of our guys played their best game today."

Prosser's defense, which also recovered a fumble in the first quarter, created nine negative-yardage plays and completely flipped the ball-control issue from the first meeting. Ellensburg ran 83 plays last month and 52 on Saturday.

Given great field position throughout the game, the Mustangs' offense made the most of it with Bolt throwing for 255 yards and the ground game chewing up 164 yards.

"Overall it was just a remarkable effort," Ingvalson said. "We'll enjoy it for 24 hours and get back to work. We're playing at a very high level right now and it's exciting to be moving on. This team wants to become part of Mustang history."

Prosser 7 14 7 3 — 31

Ellensburg 0 0 0 0 — 0

Pro — Javier Diaz 15 pass from Tanner Bolt (Diaz kick)

Pro — Roy Borrego 35 pass from Bolt (Diaz kick)

Pro — Borrego 16 pass from Bolt (Diaz kick)

Pro — Michael Kernan 25 pass from Bolt (Diaz kick)

Pro — FG Diaz 31

INDIVIDUAL STATISTICS

RUSHING — Prosser, Kernan 17-46, Noah Flores 8-46, JR Coleman 9-36, Bolt 7-22, Cesar Solis 3-10, Corby Lowry 2-4. Ellensburg, Mason Sherwood 13-32, Donny Ellersick 9-18, Brady Gibson 5-17, Seth Walker 3-3, Team 1-(minus 3).

PASSING — Prosser, Bolt 21-31-0-255. Ellensburg, Ellersick 7-21-4-66.

RECEIVING — Prosser, Borrego 5-108, Kolby Swift 5-37, Diaz 3-42, Kason Blair 3-15, Luis Fernandez 2-14, Kernan 1-25, Flores 1-8, Logan Hamlin 1-6. Ellensburg, Bryce Helgeson 3-30, Nate Andaya 2-9, Xander Orejudos 1-18, Walker 1-9.