

SEXTON 34, EVERETT 20



Sexton junior Ja'Von Wray (3) and senior Jay Alvarez (33) tackle Everett junior Leondre Terry (6) Friday night. MATTHEW DAE SMITH / FOR LSJ

# Sexton clinches a share of title

Bell, Big Reds defeat defending CAAC Blue champion Everett

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Sexton coach Dan Boggan is not surprised his team is 8-0 and clinched at least a share of the CAAC Blue title with a 34-20 win over defending champion Everett on Friday at Archie Ross Stadium.

"We worked really hard in this off-season, and it's really paying off," he said.

Avonte' Bell rushed for 160 yards on 14 carries and scored on touchdown runs of 24, 47 and 31 yards to help the Big Reds improve to 6-0 in the league.

"Bell ran really well, and our offensive line really played well," said Boggan, who especially praised junior center Shain Shannon. "Our center does a lot

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as far as making calls, and getting everybody situated."

The Vikings slipped to 5-3 overall and 3-3 in the league, and will need to beat Jackson at home on Friday to secure a playoff spot.

"We just couldn't stop the run inside, and they had two big long passes on third down," said Everett coach Marcelle Carruthers, referring to Sexton quarterback Malik Mack, who passed for 104 yards.

But the Vikings did keep Sexton from scoring more points. Marvin Wright made seven tackles, Jacob Odom seven

tackles and a fumble recovery, and Xavier Couthen six tackles and a sack.

"They turned us away three times inside the 20," Boggan said. "That's a credit to the way they played. They played us harder than anybody has all year."

One of the times, Everett sacked Big Mack. He lost the football, and the Vikings were on their way to returning it for a TD that might have cut the Big Reds' lead to 21-14.

But referees whistled the play dead as an incomplete pass. A similar play occurred just three minutes later in the third quarter.

"We thought they were both fumbles, but what can you do?" Carruthers said.

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## Sexton

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“They make the call, and we go from there.”

After Bell scored on the first play of the fourth quarter to make the score 27-6, Everett drove down inside the 10 before turning the ball over on downs.

“That's just playing good hard-nosed football,” Carruthers said. “You get down there, you've got to punch it in.”

Fourth-year starting quarterback Lucas Barner completed 11 of 19 passes for 160 yards and a TD. But he was missing main receiving target (and backup quarterback) Rhett Blackman, who sprained an MCL in his knee against Grand Ledge last week

“He should be should be able to play next week,” Carruthers said of Blackman.

Blackman's replacement, sophomore D'Andre Taylor, drew high praise from Carruthers. Taylor's night included a 1-yard TD run that cut Sexton's lead to 27-14 with about two minutes remaining.

Both teams would add one more TD in the game's last minute. After Bell's 31-yard run, Barner hit Wright — who also rushed for 77 yards on nine carries — with a 54-yard pass.



**Avonte' Bell scores one of his three touchdowns during the Big Reds' 34-20 CAAC Blue victory at Everett.** MATTHEW DAE SMITH / FOR LSJ

Barner opened the scoring with a 7-yard TD run that capped a 90-yard, 12-play drive following the game's opening kickoff.

Sexton tied the score at 6-6 four minutes later on a 4-yard run by junior Javon Wray. Senior Javon Cooney had returned the kickoff to the Everett 30-yard line to start the drive.

Bell ran 24 yards for a TD to put the Big Reds ahead for good at 14-6 with 9:20 left in the second quarter.

Wray added another TD on a 2-yard run at the 6:01 mark to make it 21-6 at halftime.