

Mira Costa shows its drive by beating Chaminade

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It was almost as if Mira Costa dared Chaminade to take the first shot at an undefended chin Friday.

The knockout came with two quick counterpunches.

After stopping Chaminade on fourth down at the 1-yard line, Mira Costa answered with a 99-yard touchdown drive and never trailed in its 41-19 win in the second round of the CIF Southern Section Western Division playoffs at Chaminade.

"That was a big momentum changer," Mira Costa's Rico Wright said. "We knew that we could win this and we had to come out and be the more physical team."

Wright, also a safety, rushed for 181 yards and a touchdown on 16 carries, and quarterback Kyle Demarco ran for 92 yards and three touchdowns as top-seeded Mira Costa (10-2) continued in its quest to return to the CIF championship game.

Kyle Nunn again showed his big-play capability with five catches for 153 yards and a touchdown, but he also intercepted two passes.

"I particularly like offense, but I'll do my work on `D' as best I can," Nunn said. "I'd rather play offense but defense is fun. I won't give any less effort than I would on offense."

Demarco ran for touchdowns covering 1 and 11 yards in the second quarter and passed 43 yards to Nunn for a score in-between as the Mustangs built a 27-13 halftime lead.

The pass to Nunn, running a post, was deflected by Brando Tessar. Nunn tipped it once to himself and he grabbed it as he fell into the end zone.

"I was like, `Oh no, please don't intercept it,' and then he tipped it and I thought here's my chance, so I just took it," Nunn said. "There's always always stuff to touch up on, we could always do better, but we had a pretty good game and we're looking forward to the semifinals."

Mira Costa will host No. 4 seed Palmdale (10-2), a 49-42, double-overtime winner against St. Francis, next Friday night.

Chaminade pulled within 7-6 in the first quarter on a 28-yard pass from quarterback Jake Basmagian to Jamal McClerkin, but the Eagles (7-4) were stuffed trying to convert a two-point conversion.

Tessar's 2-yard run made it 27-13 at halftime, but Mira Costa took control on the first drive of the second half.

A 51-yard pass from Demarco to Nunn set up Demarco's 2-yard sneak. Each team committed three turnovers in a wild third quarter. Nunn and J.R. Oshima had interceptions and defensive tackle J.R. Tavai recovered a fumble.

Nunn also fumbled a punt return. Morgan Reece fumbled at the end of the 33-yard run and Demarco coughed it up after a 30-yard gain. Both fumbles were caused by Tessar, who stripped the runners in the open field.

"We got a little bit sloppy, or No.2 (Tessar) is the best at coming up behind you and punching the ball out, one of the two," Mira Costa coach Don Morrow said. "When we look back, we're going to like how the guys got off the ball on the line of scrimmage. That's the run, and that set up the passing game too."

Demarco completed eight of 10 passes for 243 yards.

Wright gave Mira Costa a 41-13 lead with a 7-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter. That capped a nine-play, 52-yard march after Oshima's interception. Wright, who has been playing more at running back with Reece nursing a nagging ankle sprain, ran four times for 30 yards on the drive.

"He's just had a hot hand recently and Morgan's got that little bit of an ankle tweak so it's been nagging him all along," Morrow said of Wright, also a safety. Wright welcomes the extra duty, but feels it too.

"Oh yeah, I'm exhausted," he said with a smile. "We were moving the ball pretty well. We just have to stay consistent. We had a couple of fumbles there, but we just have to keep on working toward that end zone.

"There are some tough opponents, there are going to be some bumps along the way but we just have to come out hard in practice and keep doing what we do every week and hope we get to the 'ship."

Chaminade scored with 4:21 left when Tessar ran 9 yards but fumbled at the goal line with McClerkin falling on the loose ball in the end zone.