



Vacaville shows strong defense, lack of offense in homecoming loss to El Cerrito

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Homecoming night for Vacaville High School featured a matchup with an unbeaten team, and while the Bulldogs turned in a stellar defensive performance, there was little offensive production to speak of in a 14-9 loss Friday night to El Cerrito at Tom Zunino Stadium.

El Cerrito went up 14-0 at halftime after two long offensive pass receptions for scores. Those points held up the rest of the night as the Gauchos improved to 5-0.

Micah Navarro booted a 27-yard field goal in the third quarter for Vacaville, cutting El Cerrito's lead to 14-3. The Bulldogs added six more points on a touchdown pass from quarterback Alex Barkley to running back Cristian Diosdado in the fourth quarter that went for 10 yards. After a missed 2-point conversion run, it was 14-9 Gauchos.

Vacaville tried an onside kick with 1:30 to play in the game, but El Cerrito was able to scoop up the ball and run the final seconds off the clock for the win. The loss dropped Vacaville to 2-3 heading into next Friday's Monticello Empire League opener at home against Rodriguez.

"We brought in another undefeated team for homecoming and we wouldn't want it any other way," Vacaville head coach Mike Papadopoulos said. "We are learning every time we go out there. The kids moved the ball well. We're just not getting it all the way to the end zone yet."

Diosdado ran hard and collected most of the offensive production on the ground. He finished with 28 carries for 144 yards. The Bulldogs would net 135 yards on the ground and just 51 yards in the air.

"We just struggled out there," Diosdado said. "We've got the players, the team, the coaches, and everyone is working hard. We just have to play smoother."

El Cerrito quarterback Michael Vanhook threw for 185 yards. He completed a 29-yard touchdown pass down the right sideline in the second quarter to Warren Smith for the first score. Ten minutes later, Vanhook connected on a deep crossing pass for 46 yards to LeDuane Thomas for the second touchdown. Nathaniel Arce booted both extra point kicks.

The Bulldogs did their job stopping the run and held the Gauchos to a net 29 yards rushing. El Cerrito rarely had another opportunity to score, though there was one field goal attempt late in the third quarter that failed.

“The kids are doing a phenomenal job on defense and keeping us in every game right now,” Papadopoulos said. “We did make some mental mistakes in certain situations and there was a couple of really bad errors in the kicking game that really cost us in being able to get our defense off the field.”

Papadopoulos said he and his team like to play a loaded nonleague schedule in an effort to get ready for league play. They lost to three heavyweights in Oak Ridge (62-0), Granite Bay (35-13) and now El Cerrito this year. Wins came against Davis (49-12) and Cardinal Newman (14-7).

“Our kids embrace it,” Papadopoulos said of the schedule, “and it is making us better.”