



Dogfight: Vacaville knocks Del Oro football out of postseason

Speed kills.

For the second straight year, the Del Oro High football team found that out the hard way in a season-ending loss.

On Friday night at Golden Eagles Stadium in a Sac-Joaquin Section Div. II quarterfinal, the visiting and fifth-seeded Vacaville Bulldogs jumped out to a two-touchdown lead behind 201 first-quarter rushing yards and then rallied in the fourth quarter with two quick scores to eliminate No. 4 Del Oro with a 35-28 victory.

The Eagles came within a yard of tying the game with 22.4 seconds. Facing a third-and-goal at 1 with no timeouts remaining, Del Oro handed the ball off to running back Christian Guerrero in hopes of evening the count. Guerrero was stuffed for a short loss and the Eagles hurried back to the line of scrimmage for one more crack at the end zone on fourth down, however, quarterback Logan Hurst was also stopped short on the ground.

"It was a great high school football game," Del Oro coach Casey Taylor said. "A great playoff game, a great crowd, two great teams. It comes down to the last play of the game. You got to give Vacaville credit. They stopped us on the 1. We weren't able to get it done."

Hurst finished the night passing for 173 yards, rushing for a team-high 94 yards and accounting for three of his team's four scores. He was 15 of 23 passing with no interceptions and carried 29 times, scrambling for his life on numerous occasions and keeping his team in the game after falling into a hole early.

Vacaville (10-2) marched 77 yards on its opening drive, taking a 7-0 lead just 2 minutes, 11 seconds into the ballgame.

After a three-and-out for the Eagles, the Bulldogs were heading toward pay dirt again on the their second drive, but Del Oro's Tanner Robison forced a fumbled that popped into Jacob Nolen's hands, giving the Eagles a much needed break.

But Del Oro failed to capitalize on the opportunity, punting the ball back to the Bulldogs, who drove 79 yards to take a 14-0 lead with 3:37 left in the first.

Taking advantage of a short field, the Eagles drove 57 yards late in the first quarter to get on the board, as Dominic Pericin (43 yards) went over the top from a yard out, bringing Del Oro within 14-7.

A Trey Udoffia interception for Del Oro set up Hurst's 3-yard keeper that tied the score up at 14-14 early in the second quarter. Udoffia, Del Oro's most explosive offensive weapon, exited the game with an upper-body injury late in the first half and was in street clothes for the second half.

After allowing a 64-yard rushing touchdown on a fourth-and-1 situation and missing a 41-yard field goal that bounced off the crossbar, the Eagles entered the break trailing 21-14.

But Del Oro, which had won six straight second-round playoffs in the last six years and was hoping to defend its 2014 Div. II title, didn't go down without a fight.

Hurst hit brother Mason Hurst (six catches, 66 yards) for a 14-yard strike with one minute left in the third, tying the score again at 21-21.

Del Oro grabbed its first lead of the game one minute into the fourth quarter after the Eagles recovered a pooch kick and Logan Hurst capped off a 19-yard drive with a 5-yard TD run, putting the Eagles up 28-21.

Vacaville, however, suddenly scored twice, including a 43-yard TD up the gut, in just over a minute around the middle of the final of the period.

The Eagles then had their two chances to punch it in before their season came to an end.

Del Oro, which played stout defense down the stretch to reach the playoffs, gave up TD runs of 23, 40, 64, 3 and 43 yards throughout the game. Vacaville rushed for 425 yards, while being limited to just 45 in the air.

"They kept running us inside and outside," Del Oro linebacker Grant Meteer said. "We couldn't cover both. We missed them at the line a couple of times and we suffered from that. They were one of the fastest teams we've seen all year. We underestimated their speed."

Pericin, Logan Woods, Connor Lehner and Ray Thomas had tackles for loss for Del Oro.

Last year, Del Oro's season came to an in a CIF State Bowl loss to a speedy Bakersfield team after the Eagles had won league, section and NorCal titles.

With a young core returning next season, the Eagles, who have won nine section titles, could be primed for another big campaign in 2015.

Taylor, though, isn't looking ahead just yet.

"We'll worry about that later on," the coach said. "I'm just proud of these seniors. This group faced a lot of adversity and really fought back to win our last three games to make the playoffs. We had a great little run here tonight. I'm just proud of their efforts. They're a great group of guys. They're going to be missed."