



Vacaville reloads and takes aim at yet another MEL title

Vacaville High School enters its 100th season of football much like the previous 99, with an abundance of talent and the continued goal of league and Sac-Joaquin Section success.

The Bulldogs have a solid corps returning from the 2025 club that went 8-3 and won the Monticello Empire League title with a 6-0 record. Vacaville's season extended into the Division III playoffs before a first-round loss to Rio Americano, 17-14, brought an end to the run.

Vacaville lost its first two games last year to Atwater, 65-64, and West Park, 22-6. The Bulldogs then impressively rattled off eight straight wins before finally falling to Rio Americano.

"With a strong foundation, the outlook for the 2026 season is bright as the Bulldogs celebrate a historic milestone," assistant coach Ryan Smith said in an email. "This year's theme, 'A Century on the Gridiron,' honors the legacy of the past while setting the tone for the next era of Vacaville football."

Head coach Mike Papadopoulos is entering his 22nd season but currently away on paid administrative leave. Assistant coaches Chris Santopadre and Ryan Smith have been running practice. The Bulldogs open the season Friday, Aug. 28, at Atwater.

"The junior and senior class strengths complement each other exceptionally well, giving the Bulldogs a balanced roster with depth, leadership, and versatility across all phases of the game," Smith continued. "The team's culture continues to be defined by hard work, consistency, and a commitment to elevating the standard of Vacaville Football."

Vacaville has five All-MEL selections back on the team. MEL Lineman of the Year Brody Rogers, a senior, is tops among them after catching 10 passes for 180 yards and three touchdowns as a tight end and collecting 38 tackles and five sacks at defensive end.

Senior all-league offensive lineman Dylan Proctor returns, along with senior defensive lineman Nicholas Lozano, senior defensive back Julian Garcia and senior defensive back Chance Fritch also return.

In addition to the returning standouts, several athletes have emerged after a highly productive offseason, according to Smith.

On offense, Smith mentioned senior quarterback Malaki Couthur, junior running back Preston Ivanich, senior running back Zaylan Aldaronda, junior receiver Cameron Von Muhlfeld and senior receiver Rashad Rush.

Defensively, Smith highlighted senior defensive lineman Colby Shafer, senior defensive lineman Alex Morgan, senior linebacker Dino Menicou, senior linebacker Gabriel Slade, senior linebacker Jonathan Ortega, Von Muhlfeld at defensive back, senior defensive back Jackson Holbein and senior defensive back Gabriel Ingraham.