



Vacaville High football team knocks off Granite Bay

Geremiah Brown got it right the second time on Friday.

Early in the second half of Vacaville High's homecoming 28-16 victory over Granite Bay, the junior running back took a handoff and hit the right side of the line. He tried to bounce outside but was swarmed by the Grizzlies for no gain. Vacaville, which had been advancing the ball on its opening drive, had to punt.

When Brown returned to the sidelines, his coaches let him know that he needed to stay inside, the way the play was designed and trust his blockers.

Granite Bay received the punt with nine minutes left and started a drive from its own 14-yard line which lasted almost the remainder of the quarter. But penalties kept pushing the Grizzlies back and they were finally forced to punt, still trailing by the halftime score of 14-10.

Then Brown got his second chance.

On second-and-seven from the Bulldogs own four-yard line, the coaches called the identical play for the running back. This time Brown got it right, running the play as scripted, breaking through the line and taking it all the way into the end zone for a 20-10 lead with just five seconds remaining in the quarter.

"I just trusted the coaches, trusted their judgment and then I went inside," Brown said. "After the first 20 yards, honestly I got tired. I started cramping up, but I got excited after that goal line came near."

"He made the adjustment that we were talking about," agreed head coach Mike Papadopolous, "and he went off to the races and he was able to use that speed."

After Chris Sacca kicked the extra point, the Bulldogs (2-2) led 21-10 heading into the fourth quarter.

Granite Bay (2-2) struck back, the big play a 39-yard strike from quarterback Dillon Hamilton to Ty Peterson all the way to the Vacaville five-yard line. Cole Roth ran it in on the next play, tightening the score to 21-16 with 8:06 left.

The Grizzlies opted to go for two points, as it would have brought them within a field goal. Hamilton lofted a pass into the left corner of the end zone, and the receiver grabbed it. But defender Michael Briscoe slapped it out of his hands, preserving the five-point margin.

“Coach always told me to fight through the whistle and I did that,” Briscoe said. “He had it, and I smacked it out.”

Briscoe and Bulldog quarterback Jeremy Villalobos excelled on both offense and defense. Briscoe is a wide receiver as well as a defensive back, while Villalobos plays safety.

They worked together for a critical defensive play as the first half was winding down.

With 1:28 left trailing 14-10, the Grizzlies began a drive at their own 37-yard line. They advanced the ball to the Vacaville 31 with 21 seconds left, then tried a long pass toward the end zone.

“Briscoe had great coverage on No. 7 (Cobe Weeks),” explained Villalobos, “which caused the quarterback to make a bad throw. And I was right behind it, waiting for it.”

He intercepted it a few yards in front of the goal line and ran the ball out of bounds with just nine seconds left on the clock to preserve the Bulldog halftime lead.

Villalobos and Briscoe also teamed up on offense for a huge play with a little more than three minutes left in the half, a bomb down the right sideline that the speedy receiver hauled in and took all the way to the Granite Bay three-yard line, a 61-yard gain.

“We were planning that all night long,” Briscoe said. “We saw that the corner couldn’t play me and I just easily beat him and he made that throw.”

On the next play, Chris Island ran it in, Sacca kicked the extra point, and Vacaville led 14-10.

The senior pass-catch combo teamed up again on a critical third-and-13 play in the final quarter from Vacaville’s own 4-yard line, the Bulldogs clinging to a 21-16 lead.

Villalobos heaved the ball toward midfield and Briscoe ran under it.

“I was waiting for the ball and he (the defender) grabbed my arm and I couldn’t bring it (the ball) in,” said Briscoe. “I most definitely would have had it.”

The official agreed and called pass interference on Granite Bay, giving Vacaville a crucial first down.

Then the Bulldog ground game took over.

Island, Logan Cunningham and Kyler Abramowicz took turns grinding out yards as Vacaville pounded the ball and ran down the clock, finally scoring on a seven-yard scamper by Myron Amey around the left side with 2:22 to ice the game.

Lorenzo Lentini put it in a deep freeze when he intercepted a desperation heave by Hamilton on the Vacaville five-yard line with 1:07 to play.

Island, who also plays both ways, hobbled off the field with a cramp in the fourth quarter before returning for that final offensive push on the ground.

“This is our last time playing on this field and it’s our first time beating Granite Bay,” he said. “I was cramped but I played through it because I fight for my team.”

What Island meant is that it’s the last time the Bulldogs will play on the grass field. Tom Zunino Stadium is getting a makeover with new artificial turf, a new track and a new scoreboard, all of which should be done by graduation. The football team will play its remaining home games this season at Will C. Wood’s Wildcat Stadium.

As for beating Granite Bay, the last time the Bulldogs beat the Grizzlies was in 2016 when Island was a freshman and not yet on the varsity.

“This is one of the most competitive longest-standing rivalries in our section,” said Papadopolous. “This is playoff quality football... It’s a really big win and a great stepping stone for our program as well developmentally.”

He was really pleased with the ground game. The Bulldogs amassed 273 yards rushing.

“That’s what we always hoped would be the signature of our offense, just as the starting point,” he said. “The kids played great physical football against a great team in our section.”

Vacaville scored its first touchdown after Island recovered a bad Granite Bay snap on the Grizzlies opening drive. Villalobos then hit Michael Otterstedt for a five-yard TD pass.

