



Granite Bay squeaks past Vacaville in a battle of top 10 prep football teams

By NADIA SABBAGHIAN | Special to the Sac Bee | September 11, 2021

The Granite Bay Grizzlies beat Vacaville Bulldogs 14-9 in a showdown between two of the top 10 teams in the Sac Joaquin Section on Friday night.

Despite the low scoring game, both teams still played a solid offensive and defensive game. By halftime, all the scoring was already done, with the Grizzlies in the lead. Though there was no scoring in the second half, it was still an entertaining 24 minutes of football.

The Grizzlies started off the game strong, with Jayce Latson running for six yards into the end zone with 3:52 left in the first quarter. Granite Bay did not score again until late in the second quarter, when quarterback Noah Mitcheom completed a breathtaking 41 yard touchdown pass to receiver Josh Coibion. And then the defenses took over.

“I do not think we were bad offensively, I think Vacaville is a really good defensive football team,” Granite Bay coach Joe Cattolico said. “We didn’t make as many plays as we would like to make on offensive, but a lot of that is the Vacaville program and their kids, they do a great job. They are tough to score against.”

After Vacaville allowed the first-half scores, the Bulldogs defense gave the offense chances to take the lead. But the Grizzlies defense had an answer of their own every time.

Vacaville recovered a fumble at the Granite Bay 45-yard line with three minutes left in the third quarter, but Granite Bay answered back with an interception on the very next play.

“I could not ask any more of our defensive efforts of what they are doing, including our special teams,” Vacaville coach Mike Papadopoulos said. “We kicked three long field goals to keep us close. We definitely had some chances.”

The Granite Bay offense took care of any remaining chances when it took over at its own 40-yard line with six minutes left to play. The Grizzlies hammered away at the tiring Vacaville defense with run after run. Granite Bay chewed up the entire remainder of the game, eventually working the ball deep into Vacaville territory as the clock expired.

It was a fitting end to a game between the seventh-ranked Grizzlies and third-ranked Bulldogs.

“It is always an honor for us to come here (Granite Bay), makes us better every single year,” Papadopoulos said.

Vacaville quarterback Ryan Vaughn threw for 130 yards. Vaughn never gave up on his offense. He continued to be confident with his throws and tried to get his ball to his receivers until the clock ran out.

“The good thing is that we know what to improve on next week. Our goal is getting better every week,” he said.

Just a few minutes after the game was over, he was already thinking about how to improve for next week.

Granite Bay quarterback Noah Mitcheom had a solid game. He threw for 96 passing yards, almost half coming on his 42-yard scoring strike and ran for 11. The humble quarterback gave credit to his teammates for pulling out the win.

“I’m just really proud of the guys,” he said. “We had a tough week last week, especially on offense and we didn’t hang our heads. We came into practice ready to go, and I think it showed out here today.”

Vacaville will host Tracy next Friday and Granite Bay will stay home again to play Del Oro.

“I think we played great as a team and can’t wait for next week,” he said.