



Vacaville Bulldogs rally, fall short in playoffs against Jesuit



The Vacaville Bulldogs ripped off 21 unanswered points to take a 28-21 lead against Jesuit (Carmichael) in Saturday's second-round CIF Sac-Joaquin Section Division I football battle, but the Marauders closed out the game on a 21-0 run of their own to claim a 42-28 victory Saturday.

With the loss, the Bulldogs see their season end with a 7-4 mark. Vacaville was a perfect 4-0 in Monticello Empire League play.

Jesuit (10-2, 7-0 Delta League) took a 7-0 lead on a 54-yard pass from Hank Harvego to Josh Farr with three minutes left in the first period before Tre'vonne Hunt picked off a Jesuit pass to give the Bulldogs the ball at the Marauders' 10-yard line early in the second quarter.

"It was a roll out and Tre'vonne read it really well and was able to get in front of the receiver and made a great play on the ball," said Papadopolous. "He is the heart and soul of our team; he's about 5-foot-5 and he plays like he's 6-8.

"The kids just rally around him."

The Bulldogs failed to capitalize on the turnover as they could not punch the ball into the end zone and turned it over on downs.

After a short Jesuit punt gave the ball to the Bulldogs deep in Marauder territory, Vacaville senior Timothy Jackson took an inside handoff and scampered for a 20-yard touchdown run to tie the game with 8:26 left in the half.

It was the first of three scoring runs on the night for Jackson, who finished with 118 yards on 17 carries. Talon Abramowicz added 42 yards on 10 carries. Rutherford led the Marauders with 143 yards on 19 attempts.

The Marauders scored two touchdowns in the final four minutes of the first half and took a 21-7 lead into the locker room.

Jackson cruised to a 54-yard romp that trimmed the lead to 21-14 just 40 seconds into the second half. Six minutes later, the Bulldogs pulled even after Jackson bulled his way in from one yard out for his third score of the day with 5:26 left in the third.

"We called a sweep off tackle," and he was able to make the turn," Murphy said of Jackson's longest run of the night. "He got a couple of really good blocks off the corner, and then he just took it up our sideline."

Vacaville took a 28-21 lead as Jordan Murga hauled in a 35-yard scoring strike from Myron Amey to give the Bulldogs a 28-21 lead and to cap a 21-0 scoring spree.

"That was a halfback pass where we ran a sweep play, and Myron Amey made a good pass," said Papadapolous. "Jordan caught it around the 5 or 6-yard line, and he put his arm out and dragged two players across the goal line."

The Marauders quickly responded with a touchdown pass to tie the game at 28-28 before closing out the game with a pair of late touchdowns to set the final score.

"I'm really proud of the way the kids performed," said Papadapolous. "They did a tremendous job at making adjustments at halftime. We just had a couple of assignments that we needed to fix. Jesuit did a great job on their end making adjustments, too."

"This was just a fun game to be a part of. We just came up short on some pivotal possessions."

The Bulldogs fought through adversities all season.

"I really have to hand it to our kids," said Papadapolous. "Our season was affected by a number of things with extreme heat days and the fires, but they just kept battling."

Another obstacle was the brutal schedule that saw the Bulldogs face some of the region's toughest competition in order to prepare for a playoff run.

"We were really excited about where we were coming into the year and a lot of that is the kids embracing the type of schedule we put together," Papadopolous said. "Their body of work at the end of the day and what we are trying to achieve with our program and with the realities of what we are able to do, I really can't be any more proud of them."

"The way our kids handled those weeks and pulled together after all of the adversities they had to face? It's a great group of kids to spend time with, and it's been a pleasure to work with them."

Senior leadership was important for the Bulldogs, as Jake Levengood was named the Most Valuable Player of the MEL.

"For a lineman to be named MVP, I don't know if that has ever happened before," Papadopolous said of the Oregon State commit. "He's been a staple at our offensive tackle positions."

Toven Steele earned first-team honors at both tight end and linebacker, and was tabbed as the league's most valuable lineman, while Jackson was named the league's top running back and Cameron Mitchell was steady behind center all season.

"I think that one of the best compliments I can give this senior group is their commitment to creating a very positive energy for our program," Papadopolous said of his senior group. "It all starts with those guys creating the environment that they are all in for each other."

Despite losing a strong senior class, the cupboard is not bare at Vacaville.

"We're very, very excited about our future," Papadopolous said. "We had five sophomores on varsity all year long, and we are bringing back league championship junior varsity team. It is a very special group of kids that we will be able to develop."

"It's always difficult to play your last game because there is only one happy team at the end of every season. It's really tough when you go through a lot of stuff with a special group of kids."

Even with the loss, Papadopolous was focused on the Bulldogs capturing the MEL title for the first time since 2013.

"It's good to have that banner back in the gym after three years," said Papadopolous.

