



Vacaville football falls at home to Oak Ridge

Vacaville High's opponents are not getting any less challenging. Last week's home-opening loss was to Liberty, ranked 36th in the nation. On Friday night the Bulldogs hosted Oak Ridge, the No. 7 team in the Sac-Joaquin section.

After Vacaville hung tough for a half, the Trojans pulled away for a 45-20 victory in the non-conference matchup.

Oak Ridge is now 2-0, while Vacaville is 0-2.

"It's one of the best-coached teams that we play annually," said Vacaville head coach Mike Papadopolous. "And we had a really good game plan going along, good field position, our defense was playing well, and we had some good ball control going on."

Oak Ridge showed some of its razzle-dazzle on its first play from scrimmage, as Evan Robinson snuck out of the backfield and received a pass from junior quarterback Justin Lamson for a 29-yard gain. But the Bulldogs held on and forced the Trojans to punt.

A defensive battle ensued, but Oak Ridge began to make headway on the ground, and Dylan Warfield ran one in from two yards for a touchdown with 1:32 left in the quarter.

The Bulldogs fought right back, controlling the ball on a drive that lasted the rest of the quarter and spilled over to the second quarter. Geremiah Brown broke a run for 21 yards and Myron Amey dashed for 17 yards. Vacaville quarterback Jeremy Villalobos hit Michael Briscoe with a beautiful pass down the left sideline for 27 yards to advance the ball to the Oak Ridge 10-yard line before the quarter ended.

The drive stalled, but Chris Sacca nailed a 32-yard field goal at the 11:04 mark of the second quarter to make it 7-3 Oak Ridge.

After forcing the Trojans to punt after a three-and-out, Vacaville marched down the field again, the key play a 24-yard pass from Villalobos to Briscoe. That set up Sacca's second field goal of the night, a 42-yarder to bring the 'Dogs within one point, 7-6.

Oak Ridge took some wind out of Vacaville's sails on its very next possession. Lamson scrambled away from pressure and hit tight end Brandon Barthel for a 55-yard touchdown with 6:11 left in the half.

Then, with just 1:53 remaining, the Trojans showed their versatility. With both Lamson and Robinson in the backfield, Robinson, who throws left-handed, took the snap and heaved a pass for another 55-yard touchdown, this one to Mujahid Samad and a 21-6 lead.

Vacaville, however, wasn't done. After receiving the kickoff, Villalobos found Amey down the sideline for a 36-yard strike to the Oak Ridge 30-yard line. A pass interference penalty on the Trojans on the next play moved the ball to the 15, but a holding penalty on Vacaville moved it back to the 25.

Facing 2nd-and-20, Villalobos threaded the needle to Michael Ottrestedt down the middle for a 21-yard gain and a first down. A few plays later Villalobos ran it in from one yard out with just six seconds left, and the Bulldogs trailed 21-13 at the half.

"We got it within one score and they hit a couple of big plays that stretched it," said Papadopoulos, "and then we were forcing it just a little bit to stay in the game."

The first big play for the Trojans in the second half was a perfectly placed pass by Lamson down the right sideline to Barthel for a 40-yard touchdown to boost the lead to 28-13 with 9:31 left in the third quarter.

Less than two minutes later on 3rd-and-8, Lamson again found Barthel, this time for 46 yards for another score and a 35-13 advantage.

"We put them in a lot of good (for Vacaville) third-down positions, and they just got a couple big deep balls on us," said Papadopolous, "and we were just trying to play catchup after that."

Vacaville almost scored on another long pass from Villalobos to Briscoe with 4:40 left in the quarter, but at the last second the defender grabbed just enough of Briscoe's foot to trip him up from behind and drop him at the Oak Ridge 20 for a 43-yard gain.

The Bulldogs could not capitalize and came away with nothing when they went for it on fourth down and failed rather than trying for a field goal because they were trailing by 22 points.

Oak Ridge added three more on a field goal by Connor Edwards with 8:17 left in the contest. Vacaville scored on a one-yard run by Chris Island with four minutes to play.

With just 1:22 remaining, Warfield scampered up the middle and weaved around several defenders for a 45-yard touchdown for the final score of the game.

Papadopolous commended Villalobos for his work as the field general and Otterstadt for his job at tight end. On the defensive side, he was especially pleased with Island and Kyler Abramowicz.

“Looking at it globally at how we approach things, we’re playing better,” said the coach.
“It was another high-quality team and they made us a lot better playing them.”