



## **Bulldogs down Mustangs 61-7 on emotional night**

The Vacaville High football team had a special play to honor teammate Demetrious Ward, who was shot to death on Monday, but it had to wait until the second time the Bulldogs had the ball.

Kane Cunningham returned the opening kickoff 85 yards for a touchdown and Vacaville cruised from there in a 61-7 win over Rodriguez to open Monticello Empire League play at Zunino Stadium, Friday night.

Once the Bulldogs got the ball back, Ward was announced as being the starting fullback and Vacaville went with just 10 players on the field.

Johnathan Burke gained 3 yards on the play to start a 58-yard scoring drive capped by quarterback Chad Hekking's 17-yard touchdown pass to Cunningham to make it 12-0, the conversions failing after both scores.

Prior to the game, the Mustangs players shook hands with the Bulldogs and there was a moment of silence in remembrance of Ward. Each Vacaville player had a decal on the back of his helmet with Ward's No. 21.

"It's a difficult lesson for our kids and the community to go through," said Vacaville coach Mike Papadopoulos, who thanked Rodriguez, the rest of the teams in MEL and other towns for their "huge show of support."

Rodriguez coach Berwyn Hutcherson said the pregame handshakes were "a gesture to let them know 'We support you.' "

Whatever wave of emotion the Bulldogs, who have won 27 straight MEL games, were on, they rode it the entire evening.

Vacaville (5-1) upped its lead to 18-0 on a 7-yard pass from Hekking to Burke with 4 minutes, 30 seconds to go opening quarter.

Rodriguez (2-4) needed just one play to strike back, receiver Torian Varner taking a fly sweep 75 yards down the left sideline for a touchdown.

Nick Ureña's conversion kick made it 18-7.

It was downhill from there, however.

In the second quarter the Bulldogs scored on touchdown passes of 18 and 30 yards from Hekking to Jason Wright and Reid Ramirez, respectively, and TD runs of 3, 4 and 17 yards by Cassius Reynolds, Mykal Walker and Chris Wood.

Walker and Wood had 2-point conversion runs and two kicks by Sam Patel to up the lead to 54-7 at the half.

The lone score after intermission was another 17-yard run by Wood in the third quarter with Sachin Patel adding the conversion kick.

"If we executed certain plays it might have been have a different game, certainly closer," Hutcherson said. "You can't play a Vacaville team of that caliber and make mistakes."

The Mustangs turned the ball over five times, including four interceptions, and had a punt blocked.

Rontavist Williams saw his first action of the season at quarterback – one of four signal callers for the Mustangs – and threw for 45 yards. Varner was the team's top receiver with four catches for 49 yards.

Hekking completed six of eight passes for 123 yards, while Derek Lymus led Bulldogs rushers with 56 yards, followed by Burke with 42 and Cunningham with 41.

Vacaville won the junior varsity game 42-0.