



Cardinal Newman leaves Vacaville in the dust

The Vacaville High School football team's offense showed it was able to find the end zone on Friday evening in a home matchup against the Cardinal Newman Cardinals. Regrettably, however, they only found it once in a 28-10 loss.

Mike Papadopoulos, in his 20th season as head coach of the Bulldogs, said despite mistakes on both sides of the ball, he feels his team is already close on many things it needs to fix.

"We made some really really bad mental errors that put us in bad field position, and we were in a four-point game going into the fourth quarter and things." Papadopoulos said. "We just really made some bad mistakes. So we most definitely had our chances, you know? And we're excited about playing teams like this because this is what we're trying to get ready for later on."

Junior Quarterback Brendan Jackson, in his first start of the season, hit sophomore receiver Devin Bishop for 19 yards to end the first quarter. Two snaps later, senior running back Tanner Boyd took a 34-yard sweep right all the way to the house, grabbing a 7-0 lead for the Bulldogs to reward his defense for two resolute fourth down stands in the first quarter.

The winning moment didn't last long. Jackson ultimately struggled in the air more than he found success against a suffocating Cardinals' secondary, finishing 11 for 28 with

142 yards and taking three sacks. The run game struggled as well, with Boyd leading the way on 16 carries for 80 yards.

Those stats couldn't cut the mustard against a high-flying Cardinal Newman offense. The Cardinals hardly passed the ball (17 yards on three receptions) but they hardly needed to as senior running backs Jamari Gentry and Zachariah Raia rushed for 137 yards on 24 carries and 84 yards on 12 carries, respectively.

The Cardinals went three and out following the lone Vacaville touchdown, but back-to-back rendezvous with the turf for Jackson, who struggled to scramble free from an oppressive Newman blitz, saw the Bulldogs do the same, handing the momentum back to Cardinal Newman.

The Cardinals tied the game up at 7-7 on a six-play drive capped off by a 20-yard Gentry run that blazed through the Bulldog secondary to the house.

A meandering 11-play Vacaville drive, complete with a fumbled snap and a flag on both sides of the ball, ate most of the remainder of the half and sent the sides into the locker room still tied at seven apiece.

A Cardinal Newman three and out followed by a bad snap on a punt gave Vacaville the ball on its own 29 early in the third quarter, but four consecutive Boyd carries, a tackle for loss on Bishop and an incomplete pass were simply not enough to capitalize for the hosts, who settled for three with a Rome Griego kick at the 17-yard-line to make the score 10-7.

The teams then traded fumbles back and forth, as Gentry fumbled on his fourth consecutive carry and Boyd on his third.

Cardinal Neman later took the lead after a highly controversial spot from a Raia run that looked well short from the Vacaville sideline, Raia capitalized on the conversion to break off a 30-yard touchdown run, bringing the score to 14-10 to end the quarter.

Given a chance to punch back, Brody fumbled again early in the fourth quarter, and despite a spectacular interception by freshman cornerback Tommie Johnson at the Bulldog five-yard line, Jackson tossed another three consecutive incomplete passes.

A Vacaville punt from inside its own end zone netted only four yards, setting up the Cardinals on the Bulldog nine-yard-line. Two plays later, Cardinal Newman led 21-10.

Vacaville charged down into Cardinal territory, but two incompletions in three plays left the drive stalled out at the 35, where a Griego kick was blocked and returned to the Bulldog 47. 10 plays later, Gentry punched in the final score of the game from the 8-yard line, ending the matter 28-10.

Papadopoulos said the team needs to focus on their process moving forward, and he praised the Cardinal Newman team.

“We’re playing really good football, we just [need to] string it together and I’m excited,” he said. “We’re going to be fine.”