



Vacaville High football team impressive in season debut against Davis

By Matt O'Donnell | Vallejo Times Herald | August 21, 2021

The spread utilizes a pass-happy offense that takes advantage of four- and five-receiver sets.

Running backs often are just complimentary pieces in the spread — just not in Vacaville High's offense.

Senior running back Darian Leon-Guerrero was front and center on Friday against visiting Davis at a packed Tom Zunino Stadium, running for 162 yards on eight carries and three touchdowns in the Bulldogs' 45-8 triumph in the season opener.

Leon-Guerrero took the opening handoff, cut left and scored from 65 yards out on the game's first play from scrimmage. In the second quarter, he grabbed a pass in the flat from quarterback Ryan Vaughan and raced 58 yards to the end zone. And later in the first half, he juked three defenders during a 62-yard touchdown jaunt to give his team a comfortable 35-8 advantage.

Count Leon-Guerrero as one of the fans of the spread.

"I love the spread. It's a lot better than the Wing-T," Leon Guerrero said. "I just feel like I have a lot more open space."

Asked which Leon-Guerrero touchdown was his favorite, Bulldogs head coach Mike Papadopoulos grinned.

"Oh gosh ... it's like picking between children right?" the coach said. "Anytime you can get in there and help us collectively, I'm just really happy. But he made some special runs tonight."

Vaughan did not exactly take a supporting role either. The senior signal caller was 10 of 22 for 206 yards and accounted for four touchdowns — two in the air and two more on the ground. He found Anthony Wiley for a 58-yard touchdown strike with 5:49 left in the first quarter to give the Bulldogs a 14-8 lead, as Vacaville never trailed again.

“(Anthony) is our guy on those rollout plays, he’s my guy to look for,” Vaughan said. “That definitely helped me get in my rhythm a little bit. I think it helped me set the tone for the rest of our passing game.”

Papadopoulos liked what he saw from Vaughan.

“He is a great student of the game and with the way we’re approaching things together, he’s doing a great job,” Papadopoulos said. “He’s a great teammate. He understands what we’re trying to accomplish and is really distributing all the way around.”

Last March, Davis gave Vacaville a scare in the spring season opener, a 28-21 win by the Bulldogs. Early, it looked like the Blue Devils might do that again. Davis scored on their opening drive with Jude Vaughn scoring from four yards out to complete a 64-yard, seven-play drive. Quarterback Trajan Clark ran in the two-point conversion to give Davis an 8-7 edge.

From that point, however, Vacaville’s first-team defense did not allow Davis many big plays and the Blue Devils were not equipped to rally back in the air. The Blue Devils’ only other chance to score was thwarted by a goal-line stand from Vacaville late in the first half.

Overall, Vacaville allowed just 230 yards of total offense to Davis, including just 84 in the air.

“We made a defensive adjustment and just put ourselves in a better position and the kids adjusted to it really well,” Papadopoulos said.

In fact, Roman Price’s interception helped set up the Vaughan-to-Wiley touchdown.

Vacaville scored one more time in the first quarter for a 21-8 lead when Vaughan ran it in from nine yards out. Leon-Guerrero had a 25-yard burst to start the drive and Vaughan completed a 13-yard pickup to get his team into the red zone.

The Bulldogs made it 28-8 early in the second quarter on the Vaughan-to-Leon Guerrero touchdown and then 35-8 on Leon-Guerrero’s third and final touchdown of the evening. A forced fumble from the Vacaville defense set up that score.

Vacaville led 38-8 with 50 seconds left in the third quarter on Ariel Till's 41-yard field goal and Vaughan ran it in from 13 yards out early in the fourth quarter for the final score of the night.

The difficult preseason doesn't get any easier next week when Vacaville hosts Oak Ridge, traditionally one of the top teams in the Sac-Joaquin Section.

"They are one of the premier programs in the section," Papadopoulos said. "They have another storied coach who is taking over the program in coach (Casey) Taylor. He's a class act and it's a class program. That's really why we do it, to make us better. The kids understand it, win, lose or draw. There's a bigger picture for November and December if we can get there."