



## **Elk Grove outlasts Vacaville in 52-48 playoff shootout**

**By Matt Miller | Daily Republic | November 13, 2021**

VACAVILLE — The heavy fog that hung Friday night over Tom Zunino Stadium did nothing to slow two potent offenses squaring off in what turned out to be an epic Sac-Joaquin Section Division II quarterfinal football game.

Zeke Burnett scored from 13 yards out with 1:24 left in the game and Kylan Fontes converted an extra point as visiting Elk Grove pulled out a 52-48 win over Vacaville.

The Bulldogs tried to tally a final go-ahead score in the final minute but managed only one net yard on four plays. Elk Grove ran out the final seconds in “Victory Formation” to send the Thundering Herd into the semifinals and Vacaville out with a solid 8-3 final record.

“What a great event to be a part of,” Vacaville head coach Mike Papadopoulos said. “I can’t be more proud of our kids and the program and the last year and half how they dealt with Covid.”

“But that is a doggone good offense over there,” he said.

Vacaville took its first lead with 6:22 to play in the game when Darian Leon-Guerrero went 19 yards for a touchdown for a 42-38 lead. But leads continued to change hands as Elk Grove went back up 45-42, then Vacaville grabbed the advantage 48-45 before the Thundering Herd tallied the game-winner for the final four-point edge.

“We left it all out there,” Leon-Guerrero said. “They would get in a good rhythm and then we would get in a good rhythm. But this isn’t how we wanted it to turn out.”

Elk Grove rolled up 536 rushing yards and completed only one pass for 28 yards. The Thundering Herd piled up long touchdown runs with a number of deceptive handoffs or quarterback keepers.

Quarterback Ethan Archuleta carried 21 times for 220 yards and had touchdown runs of 55, 44, 66 and 74.

Burnett had a touchdown run of 60 yards to go with his 13-yarder. Jullian Davis had long scoring dashes of 66 and 57 yards. Fontes also converted a 37-yard field goal and seven extra points.

Vacaville quarterback Ryan Vaughan had a huge night, completing 28-of-42 passes for 335 yards and two touchdowns. His TD tosses went to Tim Plowman for 25 yards and Cameron Malone for 35 yards. Vaughan also had his own 17-yard scoring run.

Leon-Guerrero rushed 17 times for 130 yards and had touchdown runs of 19 and 2 yards. He nearly had a third score on a 40-yard run in the second quarter but was tackled and fumbled it into the air at the 2-yard line. Vacaville teammate Cameron Faucher was right there to catch the loose ball and went the 2 extra yards for a score.

Blake Espino got the Bulldogs scoring started in the first quarter when he dove over for a touchdown from the 1-yard line. Ariel Till converted 5-of-6 extra point attempts. Leon-Guerrero had a 2-point conversion as well.

Plowman finished with nine catches for 109 yards and a touchdown for Vacaville. Leon-Guerrero had six for 85 yards. All told, Vaughan completed passes to eight different receivers.

Elk Grove never trailed until the fourth quarter. The Thundering Herd led 14-7 at the end of the first quarter, 31-21 at halftime and 38-21 after three quarters.

The big-play offense came in handy at opportune times. Elk Grove scored on its very first play from scrimmage in the game, and also seconds before halftime.

Vacaville finished with 178 yards rushing to go with its 335 yards passing from Vaughan for a total of 513 yards. Elk Grove tallied 564 total yards of its own in a game that featured a combined 1,087 yards of offense.

It turned out to be amazing offensive production on a night that as the game went on it became nearly impossible to see the opposing sideline.