



Game-winning field goal try just misses as Vacaville falls to Granite Bay, 21-20

Vacaville High school kicker Brandon Talton took a couple of deep breaths and went into his normal routine.

He started by going into his setup — exactly four steps back and two to the left. He paused and then let it fly.

The football tumbled end over end for what felt like an eternity on Homecoming night at Tom Zunino Stadium. The two referees — each one standing below opposite ends of the goalpost — watched the ball closely and then looked at each other for confirmation.

They were in agreement: the kick was no good. The right-footed Talton had pulled a 35-yard field goal left by an eyelash with 12 seconds left in the game.

Granite Bay players exploded with excitement, reminiscent of the fireworks display that had gone on at midfield during Homecoming halftime festivities an hour or so earlier.

When the dust settled and the final seven seconds ticked off the clock, Vacaville had lost 21-20 to Granite Bay, one of the top teams in the Sac-Joaquin Section this year.

“That’s just like another football play,” Vacaville head coach Mike Papadopoulos said of the kick after the game. “It’s just like a pass, it’s just like a run, or anything else. He (Talton) is going to get many more opportunities like that and he will be successful. He’s a really special kid.”

There was absolutely no reason not to trust Talton with the game hanging in the balance. The junior kicker nailed two clutch kicks earlier in the game — one from 30 yards and the other a long range try from 40 yards – and didn’t allow the Grizzlies to attempt a kickoff return by routinely blasting kickoffs into the end zone all night long.

“I would trot him out there in that same situation every single time,” ‘Pop’ said. “Nobody should be hanging their heads tonight. We’re excited about where we are at right now.”

Friday night’s one point loss at home was Vacaville’s second such defeat in its last three games. The Bulldogs fell to powerhouse Oak Ridge 24-23 two weeks ago and are now 2-2 through the first four games of the season.

Similar to the Oak Ridge game, Vacaville was forced to rally with one final drive inside of three minutes left in the fourth quarter. Granite Bay took a 21-20 lead with nine minutes left in the game, Blake Peterson giving the Grizzlies the lead on a six yard sweep around the right side.

After both teams went on to trade punts later in the quarter, Granite Bay had a chance to end the game outright with a 4th-and-5 conversion attempt deep in Vacaville territory with 3:15 left. The Grizzlies tried to set up a clever screen play, but the Bulldogs snuffed it out and forced an incompleteness and turnover on downs.

Starting on its own 27 yard line, Vacaville then raced down the field in nine plays to give Talton a chance. A 20 yard run from Duvall Jackson on the first play of the drive sparked the home crowd, and two big penalties — one a pass interference on a 4th-and-5 incompleteness — kept the Bulldogs alive.

With Vacaville out of timeouts, Mitchell spiked the ball near the 25 to set up the field goal. Granite Bay head coach Jeff Evans elected to stall Talton by calling back-to-back timeouts.

Talton's kick almost could have been ruled either way. It soared directly over the left goalpost, but the referees agreed that it was tugged fractionally left, and the Bulldogs were forced to watch Granite Bay quarterback Jade Foddrill take a victory kneel down.

"This was another playoff atmosphere game tonight," 'Pop' said. "These are the types of teams you hope to have here every week. All in all, in an atmosphere like this, I think our kids played extremely well."

The first three quarters were just as dramatic as the final three minutes.

The Grizzlies were the first to score, going up 7-0 after orchestrating a 12-play drive that ended with bruising 6-foot-3, 225 pound running back Evan Tattersall pounding it in from six yards away. Vacaville's defense had stalled the drive and forced a field goal attempt around the 30, but a running into the kicker penalty kept the Granite Bay drive alive.

Vacaville answered with a long 14-play drive, which was started and finished by Jackson, the team's leading rusher. Jackson had a 40 yard run on the second play of the drive, and capped it with 10 yard touchdown to even the score at 7-7.

Talton drilled a long field goal with 6:40 left in the second quarter to put the Bulldogs up 10-7. Jake Levengood's fumble recovery on defense led to those points.

A 45 yard jet sweep around the left side allowed Peterson to score the first of his two scores for Granite Bay, putting the Grizzlies up 14-10 at the half.

The biggest momentum swing came just after halftime. Granite Bay received out of the break and marched down inside Vacaville's 5 yard line. With the Grizzlies threatening to go up by two scores, Jackson intercepted Foddrill's 3rd-and-goal pass and returned it 90 yards inside Granite Bay's 10 yard line.

The interception was one of three takeaways by Vacaville's defense.

"I thought our defense played a tremendous game tonight," 'Pop' said. "The kids are improving every single week. They (Granite Bay) have two Cal commits on their team. We put our kids in some stressful spots tonight and I thought they did well responding."

Vacaville needed just two plays to score from there. Ethan Houdyshell's six yard touchdown run put the Bulldogs up 17-14.

Another Talton field goal with 1:57 left in the third quarter made it 20-14 Vacaville.

But Peterson's six yard touchdown run with nine minutes left in the game proved to be the difference for Granite Bay, which improved to 4-0 on the season with quality wins over Jesuit and Vacaville.

Devon Mills and Jackson had interceptions on defense for Vacaville. Levensgood had a fumble recovery.

The schedule doesn't get easier for Vacaville, which hits the road to take on Pittsburg (2-1) next week. The Pirates are ranked No.19 in California by Maxpreps.com