



Trojans overcome Vacaville

By Jerry Heinzer | Village Life/El Dorado Hills | September 22, 2012

VACAVILLE — Byron Spain's twisting, reach-back 11-yard grab of a Jason Samuels' delivery put Oak Ridge ahead with a minute left and the defense held on as a Vacaville's game-tying field goal attempt fell short — preserving the Trojans' hard-fought 24-21 nonleague victory Friday night.

Nick Gordon's strip and Josh Wellman's fumble recovery halted a Bulldog drive with 5:41 remaining — denying the hosts an opportunity to pad their five-point advantage. Taking over at the 16, Samuels engineered an 11-play drive that ended with Spain's clutch catch on a third-and-9 play just across the goal line.

“I knew it was a crucial part of the game and I had to make a big play,” Spain said. “That last drive was life or death and our whole focus was on winning the game.”

Ahead 22-21, Samuels found Justin Priest on a short pass for the 2-point conversion but Vacaville moved 40 yards to the Oak Ridge 25 with 5 seconds left before a shot at the game-tying field goal lacked the required distance.

“It took all 48 minutes, was a total team effort and came down to the last play. Had we given up 5 more yards that kick is probably good,” Trojan coach Eric Cavaliere said. “Our defense has been good all season.

That uptempo style by Vacaville was tough to stop but they came together and made the plays.”

The win, a gritty effort by Oak Ridge, improved its record to 5-0 and spoiled the Bulldogs' Homecoming — also the homecoming for Cavaliere who prepped and played for Vacaville.

“It was awesome (returning) and just like I remember — the atmosphere, energy and intensity. I'm proud to be an alumni and a Bulldog,” Cavaliere said.

The scoring see-sawed in the opening half. Troy led 3-0 on Ryan Lamb's 23-yard field goal before Vacaville answered on David Mewborn's 69-yard end run. Oak Ridge reclaimed the lead after Jericho Hallare picked up a first down, on Spain's fully-extended diving 24-yard catch in the end zone on 4th and 10.

“The receivers made me look good tonight,” said Samuels who also acknowledged Ross Dwelley’s second-quarter, over-the shoulder 35-yard catch up the right sideline. “In the fourth our defense made a huge play (Gordon, Wellman) that got us some momentum and in the huddle I looked in everyone’s eyes and knew we’d come back.”

The Trojans countered a Bulldog touchdown as Wellman escaped a jersey grab beyond the line of scrimmage to score from 29 yards out. Chad Augood’s interception closed the second quarter.

Oak Ridge protected its 16-14 halftime advantage with two fourth-down stops, highlighted by Zack Claiborne’s sack, adding to his area lead of 10.5. Vacaville’s hurried Wing-T ground game (367 total yards) wore down the Trojans in the second half before Gordon forced the game-changing fumble.

“We all went 100 percent nonstop and our conditioning paid off,” Claiborne said about the defense. “We decided we weren’t going to lose this game and let them get a touchdown or field goal (at the end).”

Dwelley caught seven passes for 113 yards; Priest six for 40 and Spain four for 65. Samuels connected on 19-33 for 232 yards while Wellman ran 11 times for 65 yards.