



Bulldogs hang on for win against Rocklin

By Nick DeCiccio | Daily Republic | November 15, 2013

VACAVILLE - The Bulldogs' defense came up big when they needed to. Twice.

On 4th-and-10, Vacaville High defensive back Drew Chitwood had an interception to ice a 26-20 victory at Zunino Stadium against the visiting Rocklin Thunder in the opening round of the Sac-Joaquin Section Division II playoff, Friday.

Then he didn't. The Bulldogs were called for illegal use of the hands, giving Rocklin a new set of downs.

Then, nine plays later with Rocklin facing 4th-and-15 30 yards from its end zone and less than 20 seconds to play, Chitwood just did it again, picking off a pass in the end zone and running out of bounds inside the 10 on the return.

It was emblematic of the defensive effort throughout the night in the Bulldogs victory.“

The kids stayed calm,” Vacaville head coach Mike Papadopoulos said. “We made great plays in every facet of the game.”

Papadopoulos said it was tough fighting the Thunder's late-game momentum.“

It takes a team committed together,” he said. “We had a lot of guys getting the opportunity and stepping up.”

While Chitwood and the defenders stalled the Thunder's last drive, it also held them to two four-and-out possessions in the second half.

But the defensive heroics weren't exclusive to the second half.

In the second quarter, facing 3rd-and-17 from the Vacaville 21, Rocklin quarterback Logan Webb rolled right with plenty of time to throw, but found all of his receivers smothered. As the sideline snuck up on him, Webb was left with no choice but to throw

the ball away, leaving the Thunder to settle for a field goal to make the score 14-13 at the half.

Earlier in the second quarter, a pair of turnovers helped Vacaville.

First, Dulon Stevens picked off a pass Webb bombed deep into Bulldogs' territory. Though Vacaville's drive moved across midfield, it was forced to punt.

One Rocklin play later, however, the ball was back in the Bulldogs' hands. Webb connected with Joseph King on a screen pass in the backfield, but King bobbled the ball after the catch. Vacaville's Chitwood came running in to grab, but it slipped deeper into Rocklin territory before his teammate, Connor Kanellis, pounced on it.

This time Vacaville made the Thunder pay.

Daniel Mewborn sidestepped a blocker at the goal line to score a 5-yard rushing touchdown and push the score to 14-10 in Vacaville's favor, a lead it never relinquished.

Daniel Mewborn's twin brother, David, had the Bulldogs' first touchdown on the game's opening drive. The drive took the ball 78 yards in 17 plays, including three fourth-down conversions, with David Mewborn's 3-yard touchdown carry among them.

David Mewborn left the game in the second quarter with a lower-leg sprain, Papadopoulos said.

The Thunder cracked right back, knotting the score at 7 five plays later when Webb rolled to his right side for an 8-yard TD rush.

Rocklin took a 10-7 lead early in the second when Max O'Rourke booted a 38-yard field goal. Later, with Vacaville ahead 14-10, he kicked another from the same distance to cut the lead to one.

The Bulldogs scored on their first play of the second half to push their lead to 20-13. Quarterback Chad Hekking, who finished the night with 163 yards and seven completions – all to Tanner Donaldson – hurled the ball past a leaping Joshua Gurnaby and into the hands of Donaldson, who finished off the 60-yard touchdown reception.

On Vacaville's next possession, Alberto Escobedo booted a field goal from 30 yards out to give the Bulldogs a 23-13 advantage.

Later, just more than halfway through the final quarter, Escobedo nailed his second of the night, this time from 34 yards out, giving Vacaville a 26-13 edge.

Rocklin scored on its penultimate possession to close the gap to 26-20, but Chitwood's interception sealed the Thunder's comeback hopes.

Next week, Vacaville travels to Rio Linda, which beat Antelope 34-0 in its first-round game Friday night.