



## **Rodriguez High's football team enjoys first win ever against Vacaville**

With 2:47 remaining in the fourth quarter, the Rodriguez High School football team was in position to do something they've never done before – defeat Vacaville.

With a pair of big defensive stops late in the game, Rodriguez got it with a 22-16 victory.

“We had many opportunities to be on the other side of the score right now,” Vacaville head coach Mike Papadopoulos said. “We just didn’t execute well and made way too many mistakes offensively to be able to put the game away.”

The Mustangs had previously never beaten the Bulldogs in 16 matchups dating back to 2008. After an interception by Tre Syess, Rodriguez had the ball deep in its own territory and were in need of first downs to close it out.

The Mustangs were calling on Keylen Highbaugh all night, but this time the Bulldogs were ready for it, stuffing him at the line to force a three-and-out.

It only got worse for Rodriguez as their ensuing punt was blocked through the back of the endzone for a safety, making it a 22-16 game.

There was a sense of nervousness on the Rodriguez sideline as Brendan Jackson marched the Bulldogs offense onto their own 48-yard line with only 1:35 remaining.

Jackson, who threw for 144 yards and a touchdown, used his mobility to get out of the pocket and bounce off of defenders. He picked up 33 yards on three carries to set the Bulldogs up just outside the redzone.

On third down, Jackson threw a strike to the corner of the end zone that just fell past the outreached hands of his receiver. With only 13 seconds remaining, Jackson took

another shot to the end zone put his pass was intercepted to seal the 22-16 Rodriguez win.

Vacaville wide receiver and cornerback Jermaine Missouri said it's a different feeling to see the Mustangs at 6-0 and on top of the scoreboard.

"We've put in a lot of work this year and we come out and expect to dominate," Missouri said.

Missouri has been a problem for defenses all year and after going without a catch in the first quarter, he got himself involved early in the second quarter.

The Mustangs dialed up a trick play that saw Syess connect with Missouri for 48 yards. Two plays later, Missouri caught a 15-yard touchdown from Dylan Burke to put Rodriguez ahead 7-0.

After both sides traded three-and-outs, Rodriguez lined up to punt but the snap sailed over the punter's head and down to the two yard line. Vacaville's Tanner Boyd punched in the touchdown and knotted the game at seven apiece.

The Mustangs responded with a seven-play drive that was capped off with Syess juking a defender and crossing the goal line off of a short pass from Burke. Rodriguez converted a two-point conversion and led 15-7.

Special teams struggles continued to plague the Mustangs as this time, a punt was blocked and recovered at midfield. On the very next play, Jackson threw a 51-yard touchdown to make it a 15-14 game heading into halftime.

The homecoming halftime firework show seemingly used up all the firepower in the stadium as both offenses struggled to sustain any rhythm in the third quarter.

"I think our guys defensively did a great job," Papadopoulos said. "Our offensive facets are what we struggled with tonight."

To open the fourth quarter, the Mustangs put together a seven minute drive that ended in a spectacular 17-yard touchdown grab from Missouri over a defender.

"The connection me and Dylan have is something special and we couldn't let it go to waste this year," Missouri said.

This would be the last touchdown scored in the game and was followed up with Syess' clutch interception with 2:47 remaining.

“This is our first time beating Vacaville and it feels great,” Syess said. “New team, new players, it’s amazing.”

Vacaville will look to bounce back in a big-time rivalry match against Vanden while Rodriguez will look to continue rolling against Sacramento.