

Highlanders magic season comes to a muddy end

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November 26, 2024



Boys football falls 43-7 at Ferndale in NCS

The Piedmont High School boys football team had their magical season come to a not-very-magical end on November 23 when the Highlanders were hammered by host Ferndale, 43-7 in the semifinals of the North Coast Section Division 7 playoffs.

Piedmont finished the season 10-2. The Wildcats (11-1) advanced to the NCS championship game where they will face Moreau Catholic at Hayward High on November 30.

The Highlanders denouement came on a muddy field with the race track and barns of the Humboldt County Fair right next door, 265 miles from home. Ferndale took an 8-0 lead on its second drive of the game when quarterback Tanner Pidgeon capped a 10-play, 55-yard drive with a 1-yard run.

That was a sign of things to come as Pidgeon finished with five rushing touchdowns on the afternoon, as well as 179 yards rushing on 14 carries. He also completed all three of his passes for 63 yards.

Piedmont went three-and-out and Pidgeon then broke free for a 71-yard touchdown on the first play after the punt to make it 15-0.

The Highlanders then went on their one good drive of the game, marching 63 yards on eight plays. Tommy Ashton ran the ball in from the 8 and the lead was cut to 15-7.

Like Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg, that was the high-point. Ferndale answered with a nine-play, 58-yard drive and a three-yard Garyn McClurg touchdown run. A failed fourth down attempt left Ferndale with a short field leading to a five-yard touchdown run by Pidgeon and it was 29-7 at halftime.

Piedmont went three-and-out to start the third quarter and the Wildcats then went on a back-breaking 13-play, 64-yard drive. Again it was Pidgeon finishing things off with a 10-yard scoring run.

On the first play following the ensuing kickoff, Pidgeon picked off Markos Lagios. His 31-yard return set up his own 44-yard touchdown run and it was 43-7. The fourth quarter was played with a running clock.

The Highlanders offense, which came in averaging 368 yards per game, couldn't get going, finishing with just 43 yards rushing and 80 passing. Piedmont's outstanding senior class finished with subpar numbers. Lagios completed seven of 18 passes for 80 yards with three interceptions. Running back Ashton had 31 yards on six carries. Receiver Sam Shelby caught six of 10 targets for 75 yards.

Lagios came up just short of 2,000 yards for the season, throwing for 1,978. He also ran for 538. Shelby caught 68 passes for 1,073 yards and 10 touchdowns on the year.

Ferndale finished with 19 first downs and 378 yards in total offense, with 315 coming on the ground.