

SPORTS

Piedmont dominates Kennedy Highlanders (8-1) remain unbeaten in league

By Jonathan Comeaux

Piedmont 's football team is one game away from securing its second straight Western Alameda County Conference title. The Highlanders recently laid waste to Mission Division opponent Kennedy 42-6 while at Tak Fudenna Stadium in Fremont.

It was a big game for senior captain Cash Elmquist and junior Xavier Henderson. Both players had a pair of receiving touchdowns while contributing heavily on defense.

"Sam [Shelby] is obviously our main guy, but defenses are keying on him and he's getting a lot of coverage on him every play. So, it opens up the field and we're able to spread the ball around," Elmquist explained.

"On the first score my quarterback hit me with a great pass as always. The second one was almost the same thing and I just ran it in," Henderson said.

Now with an 8-1 overall record and undefeated in league at 4-0, Piedmont holds a one-game lead over Newark Memorial going into the season-finaile which will be played at Witter Field.

"We just can't underestimate any of our opponents. We put up 49 against Irvington and they were 6-0. This team was 2-6 and we only put up 42. It's a matter of not playing down to anyone's level," Henderson said.

"Every game, we have to approach it like we're playing the best team in the league. If we keep our focus and that approach, the results will show," Elmquist said.

Game Recap

After forcing Kennedy to punt in the game's opening possession, Piedmont scored on a seven-play, 51-yard drive that capped off with a three-yard touchdown pass from Markos Lagios to Elmquist with 4:36 left. Kennedy then drove to Piedmont's 36, but tackles for loss by Elmquist and Sam Shelby, along with a sack by Brandon Dicke forced a 4th-and-23 at the 48. The Titans went for it, resulting in a pass defense by Henderson.

PHS scored on just two plays,



Xavier Henderson outruns a defender on his way to a second touchdown reception.



Cash Elmquist scores his second touchdown against Kennedy.



Cash Panico takes a touchdown reception into the end zone.

including a 40-yard catch and run by Henderson for a 14-0 lead with 37 seconds left in the first quarter. Piedmont's Rehan Mumtaz then blocked a punt, resulting in Jack Meyes recovering at the Kennedy 23 just 25 seconds into the second quarter. PHS stalled on a 4th-and-2 at the Titans' 14.

After forcing another punt, Piedmont drove 73 yards in 10 plays. On a 4th-and-20 at the Kennedy 26, Elmquist scored with 24 seconds left in the half for a 21-0 lead at halftime.

In the third period Ashton recovered a Kennedy onside kick and took it to the Titans' 41. PHS scored in slightly less than three minutes, including a 2-yard carry by Lagios at quarterback. Piedmont's Faisal Malik then recovered his own forced fumble at the Kennedy 39 at the seven-minute mark. The Highlanders scored in two plays with a 30-yard touchdown reception by Cash Panico over the middle and a command-

ing 35-0 lead, which activated a running clock.

PHS forced another turnover on downs at their own 35, leading to their next score with 3:35 left in the game, a 37-yard touchdown by Henderson.

Kennedy scored on a 60-yard touchdown pass in the final minute.

Final stats: Elmquist had two touchdowns, two receptions, and one tackle for loss. Henderson had two touchdowns, three receptions, and one pass defense. Shelby had six receptions and one tackle for loss. Panico had two receptions and one touchdown. Lagios had one rushing touchdown, five passing touchdowns, and completed 15 passes.

NEXT UP

Piedmont (8-1 overall, 4-0 league) hosts Newark Memorial at Witter Field for the season-finaile on Friday, November 8 at 7:00 p.m.

The resurgence of football success at Piedmont

By Steve Long

Four years ago, on September 29, 2021, an emergency meeting was called by Piedmont's first year football coach. The Piedmont High Varsity football team faced a crisis. After suffering their fourth consecutive defeat, with a staggering combined score of 165-60, the program was in disarray. The situation worsened when one of the five senior players was sidelined for at least three games due to injury, leaving the roster with just 17 players, including eight sophomores. The numbers simply did not add up, and the varsity season was abruptly canceled.

The cancellation was a devastating blow, particularly for the healthy seniors who had hoped to finish their high school careers on the field. The community, steeped in over a century of football tradition, was left grappling with questions. Was this the end of football at Piedmont High? Fear, uncertainty, and doubt loomed large.

Yet, on that fateful evening of September 29th, a group of determined parents and student-athletes gathered in the bleachers at Witter Field. Among them were the resilient sophomores of the Class of 2025. Eighteen strong, they undertook a mission to restore Piedmont football to its historic glory and re-establish Friday Night Lights as the showcase of PHS school spirit.

Despite being predicted to finish 1-9 the following year in 2023, the team defied all expectations. They emerged as league champions, achieving the remarkable feat while playing all their games on the road due to Witter Field's reconstruction. This season, the team faced a new challenge, moving up to a more competitive division due its stellar performance last year. And now, once again, they remain undefeated in league play.

The Class of 2025 has proven to be extraordinary. Their legacy is one of resilience and triumph over adversity. These 17 year olds may not fully grasp the magnitude of their achievements, but their efforts have laid a foundation for the program's ongoing success. Their story is one of inspiration, not just for the football team but for the entire community.

The team has one more home game this regular season – Friday, November 8th, 7:00 p.m. at Witter Field. This is the last chance to witness this special group in action. Beyond their incredible journey over the past three years, this team possesses exceptional heart and talent. Their legacy will ensure continued success for the program, but the magic they bring to the field is something you do not want to miss.

Do yourself a favor and come watch the show – one last time. Highlander Nation... Let's Ride.

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