

Highlanders win in double OT against Castro Valley

Andy Melian records 2 sacks, 7 tackles for loss

By Jonathan Comeaux

The Friday night lights were on at Witter Field in a big welcome back to varsity football for Piedmont High. In their season home opener on March 19, the Highlanders went to double overtime against Castro Valley before winning 20-14.

Senior running back Brian Cain punched in the game-winner from the one-yard line.

“We’ve been practicing all winter and the kids were excited just to have a game. Just to win was huge for us and builds our confidence. Hopefully we can build more confidence against Mt. Eden [next week], but not make it so hard,” said PHS coach Jerome Johnson with a nervous chuckle.

Senior defensive lineman Andy Melian wreaked havoc against the Trojans, with two sacks, seven tackles for loss, and 11 total tackles. He also blocked a Castro Valley extra point attempt.

“It was a fun game. Our defensive line has been together nearly

all four years and I think we’re bringing things together this year. It feels like we’re really meshing,” said Melian.

Alongside him on the defensive line is junior Mason Kimball, providing a second clear anchor for Piedmont. Kimball recorded 1.5 sacks, a critical leaping pass defense in the third quarter, and even caught a botched punt for a slight return in the second quarter.

“It felt great to be back out there after not playing football for a year and a half. I never thought I’d catch a punt return. It’s probably the most I’ve touched the ball in a game,” said Kimball.

Although the game finished in heated fashion, PHS had the game in control at halftime with a 14-0 lead.

Cain, the senior captain, made the Highlanders’ first two scores, one on offense and other while playing defense. He scored a TD from the three-yard line with 6:56 left in the first quarter. He also had the play of the game on defense before halftime.

With 4:14 left in the second quarter, Cain perfectly jumped a Castro Valley bubble screen to their slot receiver helped put his team up that score with a 72-yard interception return for a touchdown.

“I was lined up over their No. 2 receiver and they ran a bubble screen. The quarterback was staring at him the whole time, I jumped as soon as he showed his arm. I tipped it with one hand and then caught it,” said Cain.

But the Trojans came marching back in the second half, thanks to some missed opportunities by Piedmont to capitalize on defensive stops. PHS’ defense, in fact, was 3-of-17 on third-down stops. The offense, however, was 2-of-12 for third-down efficiency.

“We were on all cylinders in that first half and it looked like we were on our way to a shutout. We made a lot of mental mistakes in the second half and made it more difficult than it should have been,” explained Johnson.

Castro Valley scored with 1:32 left in the third quarter after driving 63 yards downfield to cap off with a one-yard touchdown carry by running back Michael Lewis, who finished with nearly 150 yards.

CV’s extra point attempt was stuffed by Melian, adding to his already career game.

In the fourth quarter, the Trojans put together a 58-yard drive to score with 56 seconds left in the game. Their two-point PAT conversion deadlocked the game at 14-14, forcing overtime.

Piedmont was unable to get anything going in the first possession of overtime, allowing Castro Valley to need only a field goal to win. The Trojans missed a



Photos by Todd Marshburn

Defensive tackle Andy Melian (58), a senior, had a monster game against Castro Valley with two QB sacks and seven tackles for loss.



Brian Cain had the play of the game, returning an interception for a touchdown in the second quarter.



Senior lineman Mason Kimball (78) had 1.5 sacks, a leaping pass deflection, and a punt return.

34-yard attempt.

CV next worked the ball down to the 7-yard line, but on a 4th down and four yards to go, they opted for TD attempt rather than a field goal. Their pass was incomplete.

Piedmont had the final possession. The big play came when full-back Joe Hempeck ran 18 yards to the seven-yard line, breaking two tackles in the process. It was the same play that was successful against Miramonte in their scrimmage the previous week.

Cain then punched the ball

across the goal line on 3rd-and-5 for the game-winner.

Final stats: Cain rushing for 91 yards, two touchdowns, and an interception return for a touchdown. Melian had his big 11 tackles, seven tackles for loss, two sacks, and a blocked field goal. Kimball had three tackles for loss, 1.5 sacks, and one pass defense.

NEXT UP

Piedmont (1-0) travels to Hayward to face Mt. Eden on Friday, March 26 for a 7:00 p.m. game.

Highlanders split games with Berkeley & Carondolet

By Jonathan Comeaux

The Piedmont girls’ lacrosse team split two games last week. It lost to Carondolet in Concord 16-6 on Thursday, March 18, and then defeated Berkeley 21-10 at Witter Field on Saturday, March 20.

“The Carondolet game was tough. Our starting goalie Sophia Ethington suffered a thumb injury in the first half,” explained PHS coach Carlton Chan. “They also had a very good goalie who stopped a lot of tough shots. Berkeley was a different story. We came fired up and had a lot better ball movement.”

It was a big pair of games for Caroline Devine, who scored four goals against Carondolet plus six goals and six assists against Berkeley. Senior captain Sadie Tschider, meanwhile, netted five

goals with six assists against the Yellowjackets.

Katherine Kinne scored six goals and one assist against Berkeley.

“Katherine had a breakout game with six goals. Our offense was much more balanced against Berkeley. Most of the scores came off of assists, 12 assists on 20 scores showed we moved the ball much, much better. We got a lot of good contributions from our attackers,” explained Chan.

PHS tops Berkeley 21-10

Despite the one-sided victory for Piedmont, the score was closer at halftime with the Highlanders holding an 11-7 lead.

Devine opened scoring two minutes into the game. Piedmont led 3-0 with goals from Charlotte Theut and Tschider netting her



Photos by Todd Marshburn

Caroline Devine had six goals and six assists against Berkeley, in addition to four goals against Carondolet.



Sadie Tschider had five goals and six assists against the Yellowjackets.

first before Berkeley’s first goal. The Highlanders worked the lead to 7-3 with two more from Tschider – a hat trick before halftime. Kinne scored her first goal with 16 minutes left, while Corinn Richards scored the seventh goal with around the mid-way mark in the first half.

Kinne scored her second with a nice pass from Devine for the 8th, while Devine netted the 9th on a cut after receiving a pass from Tschider.

Berkeley closed the score to 9-6 with five minutes remaining, but goals from Devine and Tschider made it 11-6 before the Jackets scored with 19 seconds left in the first half.

In the second half, PHS added five goals within the first five minutes of play to jump clear out of dis-

tance. Devine netted three straight to open, followed by two more from Kinne, making it 16-9 after a brief five minutes. Goals were



Katherine Kinne had a six-goal performance against Berkeley.

added by Tschider, two by Kinne, Richards, and Carly Roitblat.

Final stats: Devine with six goals and six assists, Tschider with five goals and six assists, Richards had two goals, Roitblat and Theut had individual goals.

Loss to Carondolet

Piedmont was able to score only three goals in each half against a talented Cougars’ defense. Carondolet is a Division 1 North Coast Section team.

Final stats: Devine with four goals, Tschider had two assists and one goal, Kinne had one goal and an assist.

NEXT UP

Piedmont (2-2) hosts Cal High of San Ramon tonight, Wednesday, March 24 for a 7:00 p.m. match at Witter Field.