

# SPORTS

## Arroyo spoils Piedmont's homecoming night

By Jonathan Comeaux

Piedmont High's homecoming night on Friday, September 26 didn't result in the celebration imagined by the football team, losing 40-26 to the visiting Arroyo Dons. For the Highlanders, it was a game where what could go wrong, did go wrong. And with a young team, the mistakes were too much to overcome.

"It wasn't a great week of practice, and you practice how you play. Again, this is a young team, and they don't understand that you can't just turn it off and on," said coach Jordan Seiden.

Despite the two-touchdown loss, Piedmont put itself in position to take control of the game but struggled to capitalize. The Highlanders recovered a fumble at the Arroyo 14 in the first quarter, but relinquished a fumble of its own two plays later. At 12-12 near midfield in the second, PHS committed a costly interception returned for a touchdown. They gave away another fumble with 30 seconds left in the first half when at Arroyo's 34.

Piedmont failed to convert eight third downs, while committing eight penalties on the night.

"We didn't necessarily lay down, but if we played closer to our quality, it's a different game. False starts, jumping offside, not getting stops. We couldn't get them off the field on fourth downs, said Seiden.

Although it was a disappointing loss, Arroyo looks like the class of the Western Alameda County Conference's Shoreline Division. It marked their second win over an upper Mission Division team after the Dons opened the season with a 48-14 win over Washington.

Piedmont now enters a bye week and looks ahead to opening its Mission Division schedule on Friday, October 10 when hosting Hayward. Regardless of the recent result, the Highlanders have a good chance to contend for their third straight league title.

### Game Recap

After the Dons scored on their opening drive, Piedmont scored on a quick five-play drive where Rehan Mumtaz took a carry 32 yards to the Arroyo 36, while Cash Panico scored on a 31-yard reception—making it 6-6 after a missed point after attempt with 6:46 left in the first quarter.

Piedmont's Henderson recovered a fumbled snap on Arroyo's



Staff Photos

Xavier Henderson runs in one of his three touchdowns against Arroyo.



Cash Panico makes a 31-yard touchdown reception in the first quarter.

next drive at their 44, but they eventually punted. After pinning the Dons at their own 12, George Saunders recovered a fumble at the 14, but PHS did nothing with it after a false start and relinquishing a fumble at the 22 near the end of the first quarter.

PHS then forced a punt, turning it into a six-play touchdown series, which included Jack Meyjes converting a 4th-and-6, while Henderson scored on a 19-yard carry with 9:12 left in the second. Piedmont led 12-6 after a missed extra point.

Arroyo tied the game on a 13-play drive, making it 12-12 with 2:46 left in the half. PHS started their next series at the 48, resulting in a pick-6 on their first play after the Dons read Piedmont's wide receiver screen—taking a 19-12 lead with 2:37 remaining. The Highlanders drove to the Arroyo 34 with 30 seconds left, but gave away another fumble.

Coming out of halftime, Piedmont tied the game at 19-19 on a nine-play drive, finishing with a 22-yard touchdown run by Hen-

derson.

On defense, Saunders grabbed a critical interception with Arroyo driving to Piedmont's four, returning it to the 35. However, PHS failed to convert a 4th-and-1 at Arroyo's 46 on the next drive. That turned into a 48 yard touchdown run by the Dons, taking a 26-19 lead.

After throwing another interception, Arroyo scored on the very first play on a 53-yard carry up the gut—33-19 with 1:33 left in the third. After trades of possession, Piedmont forced Arroyo to punt within its on 10, and a bad snap enabled PHS to take over at the Dons' three, leading to a two-yard touchdown by Henderson with 8:51 left in the fourth—33-26 Arroyo, but that was the closest it got.

Arroyo scored on an exhaustive 12-play drive, converting three third-downs in the process, 40-26 with 2:23 left.

### NEXT UP

Piedmont (2-3 overall) hosts Hayward on Friday, October 10 at 7:00 p.m.

## Athletes of the Month: Xavier Henderson & Leighton Mand

Honorable Mentions: Luke McAuliffe, Stella Wilk

By Jonathan Comeaux

We have now rolled through the first month of school as the 2025 fall season passes the midway mark. We're awarding **Xavier Henderson** of the football team and **Leighton Mand** of the girls' cross country team our two Athletes of the Month for September, while **Luke McAuliffe**, the water polo goalie and **Stella Wilk** of the volleyball team are our honorable mentions.

After not scoring any touchdowns through the first two weeks of the season, Henderson has exploded for nine touchdowns in three weeks. He logged four touchdown carries in Piedmont's 45-12 win over Berean Christian on September 12, had two scores in their 36-16 win over Aragon on September 19, and had three TDs in the recent 40-26 loss to Arroyo on September 26.

Mand has led the way in each of Piedmont's races so far this season. She was 17th of 110 runners at the St. Mary's Invitational on September 6, was 19th of 158 at the Ed Sias Invitational on September 13, and 62nd of 230 at the De La Salle Invitational on September 20.

### Honorable Mentions

McAuliffe has been a key player on the water polo team, helping it to a 9-5 overall record. Of Piedmont's nine wins, six of them have come by less than five goals. He recently logged 10 saves in a 14-10 win over Castro



Staff Photos

**Goalie Luke McAuliffe is our honorable mention for September's Athlete of the Month for leading the boys' water polo team through close matches.**



Staff Photos

**Xavier Henderson is our Athlete of the Month for September after scoring nine touchdowns in the last three weeks.**



Photo by Jenni Tsoi Best

**Leighton Mand earns our Athlete of the Month for September after leading the girls' cross country team in its three meets.**

Valley, while Piedmont needed him in their 14-13 win over Carmel on September 20, 13-12 win over Amador Valley on September 19, 11-9 win over Roseville on September 19, and 12-11 win over James Logan on August 29.

Wilk is a senior captain on the volleyball team and a major part of their 7-5 start to the season. She logged a team-leading six kills in Piedmont's 3-0 win over Oakland Tech on September 18, had five kills in their 3-0 win over Lick-Wilmerding on September 11, and nine in a 3-1 win over Urban on September 9.



Staff Photos

**Stella Wilk earns honorable mention for Athlete of the Month after helping the girls' volleyball team start its season to a 7-5 record.**



It was a packed house at Witter Field for Homecoming Night.