

# SPORTS

## Highlanders back in win column; 40-15 over Irvington

By Jonathan Comeaux

Piedmont’s football team got back in the win column on Friday, October 17 under the lights of Witter Field, beating Western Alameda County Conference Mission Division foes Irvington in a one-sided 40-15 victory. The result improves Piedmont’s record to 3-4 overall and 1-1 against league competition.

It was a big return to the starting lineup for running back and linebacker Xavier Henderson, who had 108 rushing yards and four touchdowns. It marked his second four-touchdown game of the season.

Piedmont’s pass defense was key to the victory with interceptions by George Saunders and Cash Panico, and Saunders returning one for a 79-yard touchdown.

Irvington opened the game with a 47-yard kickoff return of an onside kick for a touchdown, but the Highlanders ran off 26 unanswered points to take a 26-7 lead in the third quarter before the Vikings’ next score. PHS then finished the game with another 14 unanswered points.

The Highlanders play at Washington in Fremont this Friday, October 24 for their third league match. Last year, Piedmont beat the Huskies 56-20, but this year’s Washington team is currently 4-2. They lost to Irvington 21-16 earlier this month.

**Game Recap**

To open the game, Irvington returned an onside kick 47 yards for a touchdown when their central blocker quickly jumped on a bouncing ball and ran past Piedmont’s coverage unit to take a quick 7-0 lead just seven seconds into the game.

Irvington then intercepted a pass at their own 43, but committed a turnover on downs following sacks by Max Fujimoto and John Bunje.

Piedmont got on the board with an eight-play drive, where Henderson patiently found a rushing lane to score on a 13-yard carry. Earlier in the drive, he had a 10-yard touchdown called off



Xavier Henderson had 120 total yards and four rushing touchdowns against Irvington.

Staff Photos



Jack Meyjes had four receptions for 95 yards and a touchdown.

due to a penalty. A missed extra point made it 7-6 Irvington with 1:35 left in the first quarter.

After a couple trades of possession, Saunders nabbed an interception after an initial deflection by Mateo Long, sprinting down the sideline for a 79-yard return for a touchdown with 7:35 left in the second—bringing the score to 12-7 after a failed 2-point conversion.

PHS had its next drive stall out at the Irvington 24. But on first down of the Vikings’ next series, Henderson came up with a strip and fumble recovery at the 31. The Highlanders then scored on four plays on 4th-and-6 at the 27, where Jimmy Lagios found Jack Meyjes, who made a great contested catch over his defender. The extra point by Matias Seelenberger made it 19-7 with 2:43 left in the half.

In the third quarter, Rehan Mumtaz turned a reverse 54 yards to the Irvington two, which set up a 1-yard touchdown by Henderson with 11:09 left—now 26-7. Then, Irvington finally got back on the board with a three-play series with 10:06 left, 26-15 after a two-point conversion.

PHS punted on its next possession, which led to Panico jumping on a seam route by Irvington’s tight end, returning it 32 yards to the Vikings 37. That set up a seven-play touchdown series by the Highlanders, resulting in a five-yard Henderson touchdown—33-15 with 9:48 left in the fourth quarter.

Piedmont scored its final touchdown with 4:22 left in the game, this time on a five-play series where Henderson broke a tackle on a 32-yard carry to the house.

*Final stats:* Lagios completed 10 of 19 passes for 190 yards and a touchdown. Henderson had 120 total yards on 15 carries and two reception, four touchdowns, and a forced fumble and fumble recovery. Meyjes had four receptions for 95 yards and a touchdown. Panico and Saunders had interceptions, while Saunders scored a defensive touchdown.

**NEXT UP**

Piedmont (3-4 overall, 1-1 league) visits Washington in Fremont on Friday, October 24 at 7:00 p.m.



Cash Panico had an interception in the third quarter.

## Piedmont competes at Wilder Mariner X-C Invitational

By Jonathan Comeaux

Piedmont High’s cross country team traveled to Quarry Lakes Regional Recreation Area in Fremont on Saturday, October 18 to compete in the 42nd annual P. Wilder Mariner Cross Country Invitational. The girls’ team came away with a ninth-place finish out of 15 schools, while the boys were 11th of 16.

Piedmont had some illnesses, and top runners Leighton Mand, Amalia Gray, Cora Brozowski Schrader, Nikita Gorelik and Kelsey Coleman were not able to compete. The boys’ team was missing Alex Shleuning and Noah Sohn.

“We brought a small contingent to the Wilder Invitational this year because we had several runners sick and unable to run,” coach Steve Zirkelbach said.

Skylar Best led the way for the Highlanders’ girls’ team finishing 11th of 112 runners with a time of 20:18.7 on the 5,000-meter course.

Next in for Piedmont was Cora Chun, placing 38th with a time of 21:54. Mara Kemp-Malone followed her in 45th in 22:10.8, while they were rounded out by Quincy Antaya and Gladwin Horsey in 83rd and 84th with respective times of 24:48 and 25:00.3.

The boys’ team was led by Ian Chung who placed 31st of 112 runners with a time of 17:27. Freshman Dylan Wallway was next at 41st in 17:37.3.

Sophomore Aaron Bennett



Photos by Jenni Tsoi-Best

Skylar Best led the way for Piedmont, placing 11th in a field of 112 runners.

placed 46th with a time of 17:41.3, Devon Thai was 62nd in 18:02.8, while Dresden Schultte-Sasse rounded out the top five in 92nd, 19:48.3.

Piedmont has three events left in its regular season before the Western Alameda County Conference Cross Country Championship on Saturday, November 8 at Hayward High.

**NEXT UP**

Piedmont compete in the 2025 Mid-Season Mania Invitational at Campolindo in Moraga on Wednesday, October 22 at 3:30 p.m. They also will compete in the 2025 Haystack Tune-Up at Hayward High School on Saturday, October 25 at 8:30 a.m.



Cora Chun was Piedmont’s No. 2 runner, finishing 38th of 112.



Ian Chung led Piedmont’s boys’ team in 31st of 112.



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