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Campolindo Comes up Short in Bid to Repeat as State Champs

By Karl Buscheck



Campolindo fans braved the cold and rain to support their team. Photo Gina Arico-Smith

The no names finally met their match, as La Mirada barged past Campolindo 27-3 in the CIF state Division III-AA title game on Dec. 19. It was a match that head coach Kevin Macy believed his squad never should have faced.

"We felt like we were just coming down here for their coronation," Macy said of the new CIF bowl system which pitted his no names - a reference to the Cougars' lack of star power compared to last season's state champion team - against a Division I opponent. "But we took our medicine. We came down. But there's just some realities that go with this."

Even though the DIII Cougars had to travel to Southern California to take on La Mirada on their home field on a rainy night, the game began in promising fashion for the visitors.

Near the end of the first quarter Campo snagged a 3-0 lead when senior Matthew Blair connected on a 22-yard field goal. That early kick would not be indicative of what was to come, however, as La Mirada kept the Cougars off the board the rest of the night.

The rain didn't help either, as the early downpour waterlogged the team's footballs and bogged down the usually high-powered aerial attack.

"All of a sudden, it just changed the whole game," Macy said after Campo tallied just 100 yards in the air.

The rain wasn't nearly as problematic for La Mirada, as the hosts - who only completed two passes - relied on a relentless running game. Entering the contest, the Matadores averaged 221 yards per game on the ground.

Overall, Macy was impressed with his team's efforts to stifle La Mirada's rushers.

"That's where we had some great success. I would say if they ran 50 times, we virtually stuffed 40 of them," Macy said. "And really, it just came down to the law of averages. They were finally going to break one on us. That's what happens when you're playing out of your class. Eventually, something's going to break."

That big break came on the first play of the second half. Trailing 7-3 at the time, Campo gave up a 75-yard rushing touchdown. It was the first of three second-half rushing scores that would seal La Mirada's win and spoil the Cougars' bid to become the fourth team to win back-to-back state titles since the bowl system was introduced in 2006.

Despite the staggering recent success of the program - the Cougars are in the midst of a 65-6 run - Macy deflected when asked about the topic.

"I don't look at like the overall record or things like that," Macy said. "I just look more at what these kids did as their group."

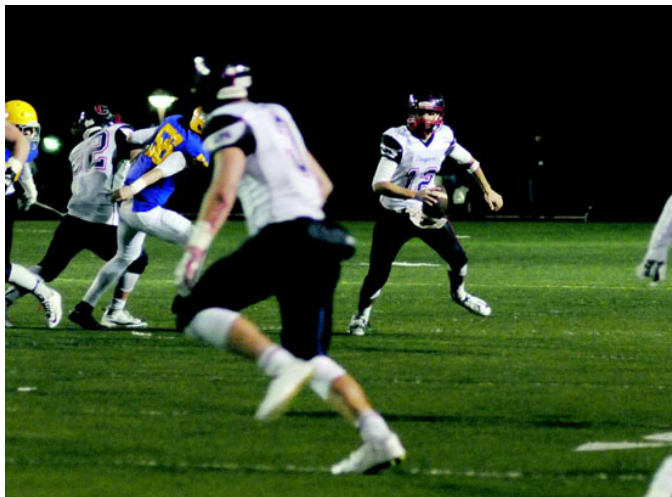
In the closing minutes of the bowl game, Macy took the opportunity to salute his seniors, subbing them off one at a time so that he could say goodbye to each player individually.

"I just wanted our seniors to get the proper tribute that they deserved," Macy said. "Those seniors, they fought so hard this year so I wanted to make sure everyone in those stands knew what this group of seniors meant to this community."

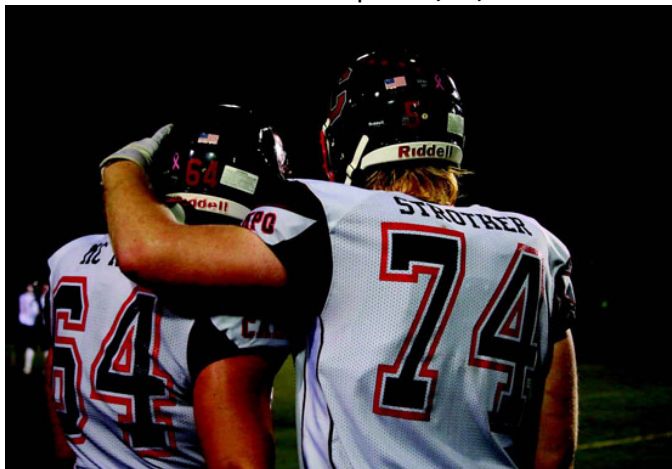
Ultimately, Macy had to call back-to-back timeouts to make sure everyone received the proper sendoff.

"Some of the kids didn't want to come off. Jack Cassidy and some of the kids did not want to come off. So I had to take another timeout to make sure that they did come off. So that they would be able to get the recognition from all their fans and the parents and everyone who came down and all the coaches."

"So it was just something we had to do at the end of the night."



Quarterback Jacob Westphal (12) rolls out of the pocket. Photo Gina Arico-Smith



Seniors Sterling Strother (74) and Wyatt McNeil (64) Photo Justin Targett

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