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## Campolindo nabs NCS Championship before tough loss to McClymonds

By Jon Kingdon



Campolindo celebrates after winning the Nov. 27 North Coast Section Championship game Photo Rudy Ortiz

"incredible stuff," it would have to be the victory over Foothill 21-14 on Nov. 27 in the North Coast Section Championship game.

The game was ultimately decided by the Cougars defense, being able to lay claim to a pseudo-shutout by not allowing the Foothill offense to cross the goal line, with the Falcons only scoring off an interception and a kickoff return.

Campolindo took the opening kickoffs and marched down the field with quarterback Dashiell Weaver throwing primarily to Robbie Mascheroni, capping the drive off with a 2-yard run by Robby Horst to go ahead 7-0. Weaver would go on to complete 18 of 26 passes for 227 yards, nine of them going to Mascheroni for 100 yards.

There was no further scoring until the very end of the second quarter. With 51 seconds left in the half, Foothill's punter Anthony Tahir dropped a punt down on the Campolindo 1-yard line. After a run for no gain and a timeout by Foothill, Weaver dropped back to pass and under heavy pressure in the end zone made an ill-advised throw that was intercepted by Foothill's Noah Lombardi who returned it for a touchdown, tying the game at 7-7.

For coach Kevin Macy, it was a matter of keeping the team focused on what had been working up until the end of the half. "We had a very calm locker room," Macy said. "We just had to get the kids to believe that we were not in a panic situation. Their touchdown was the ugliest type of score that could send a team spiraling in a bad direction. I told them that Foothill was going to come out in the second half very excited after that last play and that they were expecting us to collapse a little bit, but if we just stabilized the third quarter, we would be fine. That was our simple goal. It was just a focus, an attitude, and a perspective. That's what it was all about."

After a scoreless third quarter, Campolindo scored twice after Foothill turnovers, first on a 2-yard run by Will Monkarsh and a 7-yard run by Weaver putting the Cougars ahead by 21-7 with 4:43 left in the game.

"My touchdown was set up by Coach (Chris) Schoefield who set up load packages on the left and right," Weaver said. "It was the only time that we ran that play and it worked for the score. Our line has played so well, I wouldn't be anywhere without them. The past few games, I've taken them out to dinner which I do as a reward to them for no-sack games."

When Foothill fumbled the kickoff on their 25-yard line, the game seemed all but over until Foothill freshman Chris Lawson was the first to the ball and ran the final 75 yards to make the score 21-14.

All Macy could do was shake his head at what had just transpired. "Their two scores were like the freakiest ones you could imagine," Macy said. "As a coach, all I could say was that in my 42 years of coaching, I haven't seen that one and when they picked up that fumble, I hadn't ever seen that one either."

After Foothill's kickoff, Campolindo started their drive with 4:20 left in the game. Despite a holding penalty and facing a first-and-21 from their own 12-yard line, Campolindo converted the first down and only needed

one more first down to clinch the victory but history was repeated in a negative way for Campolindo with a fumble by Monkash, recovered by Foothill on Campolindo's 49-yard line with 2:51 left in the game.

"That's haunted us all season when we've had the ball and tried to run out the clock and then fumbled the ball with nothing but chaos at the end of a number of our games," Macy said. "So, I guess we were prepared for the type of chaos that we saw tonight."

Chaos may have been an understatement. A defensive pass interference moved the ball to the Campolindo 34-yard line. On fourth-and-9, Foothill converted the first down on a pass to the 18-yard line. One more pass brought the ball to the 7-yard line and a defensive holding on Campolindo put the ball on the 4-yard line with 37 seconds left in the game.

After Foothill's last time out, Macy went out and spoke to his defense: "I told them to play their hearts out and to be mentally prepared if they did score to regroup for a two-point conversion."

After an incomplete pass and a 3-yard loss, it was third-and-goal at the 7-yard line with 30 seconds left in the game, forcing Foothill to pass. With 24 seconds left on the clock, safety Bradley Nestal broke to his right and made the game clinching interception. "We knew they liked the out routes to the sideline, and I knew that we had to come up with a big play," Nestal said.

Macy had to acknowledge the effort that Nestal made on the interception: "That play was incredible. I couldn't believe where he came from to make that last interception. You just don't see those type of plays."

Macy kept coming back to the play of his defense. "For us to play at this level, being outmanned in every game, our kids played with such passion. After we fumbled the ball at the end, our defense just kept hanging on. They never broke and the last couple of weeks, our defense has really held together in that we really have no backups and it's been pretty much down to 12 players."

Co-Captain Elijah Klock, playing on both the offensive and defensive line, never left the field all game, making key blocks on both of the touchdown runs, and could not stop smiling after the game: "We practiced all week on protecting the ball which didn't work out that well but the most important thing for us was to prove everyone wrong. Our defense did a helluva job in protecting the end zone. It's a great feeling. I know that my dad is watching down from heaven, super proud of me and is saying, 'Good job E.J.'"

Reach the reporter at: [sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sportsdesk@lamorindaweekly.com)

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