

Davis' grand slam sends Santa Barbara packing

By Dan Watson / Assistant Sports Editor

The minutes dwindled down Friday night, more and more important as crunch-time approached at Warrior Stadium.

No one in the stadium was more ready than Righetti's Javon Davis.

He struck once, then twice, then for a third time in the first half - but now Righetti needed him more than ever. They needed him to keep the ball away from Santa Barbara's potent spread offense.

Fifty-five yards later, Davis emphatically shut the door, dashing to the endzone with 2:53 left in the fourth quarter in what became a thrilling 35-30 Righetti win over the visiting Santa Barbara Dons.

"It's been three years since I had that feeling," Davis said of leaving defenders in his wake.

Three years ago, the Warriors senior battering ram played for the Righetti freshman football team. In between, Davis moved to Idaho and contributed to Meridian High's Class 5A State title team. At Meridian, Davis played behind two running backs now at Boise State, and made his mark on special teams.

Now, back on the Central Coast, Davis is getting his time to shine as the feature back.

And shine he did on Friday.

Davis carried the ball 32 times for 179 yards, including four touchdowns - complimenting a strong aerial performance from Righetti quarterback T.J. Jordan.

"We knew he was quick, we knew he was solid coming up with us and then wanting back in the area, but to see him out there and punishing defenses was something," Righetti coach Gary Wilson said.

In his first game of the season, Davis rushed for 76 yards and a touchdown against rival Pioneer Valley. He backed that up with 181 yards against Cabrillo in a Warriors win.

But Friday's game was his most impressive yet. Righetti kept Santa Barbara guessing on defense with a number of formations, including lining up Davis alongside Jordan in the shotgun, joining him with Cole Pincin and playing him in the traditional "I".

However, it was Santa Barbara that rushed out to an early lead at 10-0 in the first quarter.

Santa Barbara coach Will Gonzales made it no secret before game time that he would throw early and often from the shotgun.

In fact, "that's all we do," he said with a smile. The team came in with only 37 rush attempts in two games. The Dons ran exclusively from the shotgun, quarterback John Uribe tossing up 52 passes to get 311 yards.

Coming into the game, Santa Barbara had scored 21 and 28 points against the talented defenses of Oxnard and Beverly Hills, respectively. The Dons marched down the field Friday on their first possession, settling for a 21-yard field goal.

Before the first quarter ended, they struck again, this time Roberto Nelson catching a 3-yard touchdown from Uribe for a 10-0 lead.

From there, the Righetti defense employed a "bend-but-don't-break" philosophy, giving up short passes but keeping the vertical attack snuffed out.

"We knew against this team we needed to run the clock, because they wanted to let it fly," Wilson said.

Davis got the offense started, scoring on a 5-yard run to open the second quarter. He scored again at the 10-minute mark on a 1-yard plunge and then again with 7:44 to halftime on a 3-yard push.

Santa Barbara did wrestle away some momentum before halftime when Uribe hooked up with Bryson Lloyd from 15 yards out. The 6-foot, 3-inch tight end is Uribe's favorite target, and finished with 11 catches for 87 yards.

Lloyd caught another 10-yard touchdown pass from Uribe to open the third quarter, putting the Dons back up 24-21.

Soon thereafter, Jordan found Eric Aros wide open down the middle of the field for a 25-yard touchdown pass. Righetti was back up.

Nevertheless, the lead wasn't safe as the fourth quarter wound down.

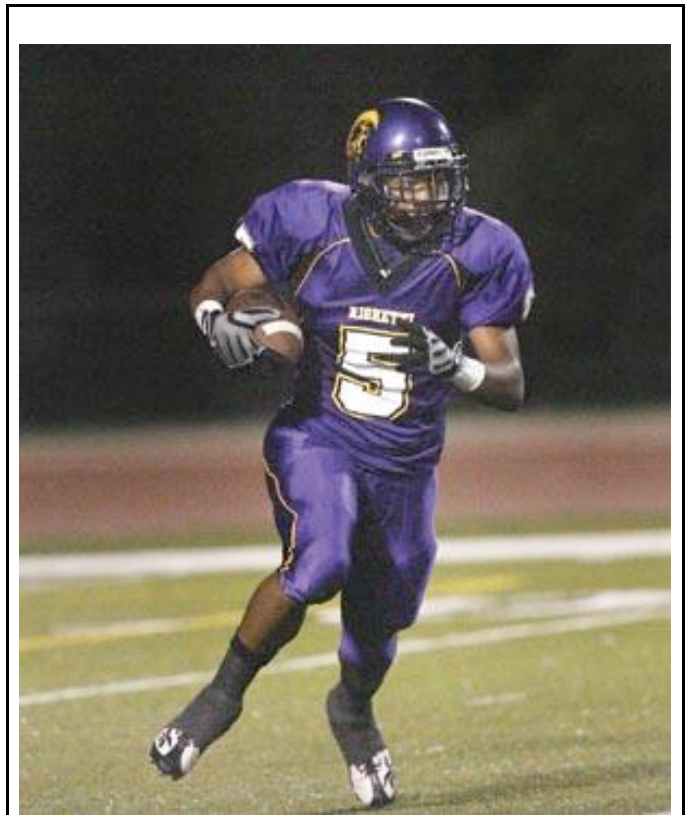
Until Davis broke free, once again. Davis' long score all but sealed the game.

Santa Barbara did manage to score with 9 seconds left, but failed to recover the onside kick.

Through the air, Jordan finished 11-for-19 with 168 passing yards. He found Sam Hallop for 51 yards and Justin Rucker for 70.

Righetti next faces Dos Pueblos on Friday before its bye week leads into league play against Atascadero, which will be the Warriors new homecoming game.

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Righetti's Javon Davis rushed for 179 yards and four touchdowns, including a 55-yarder in the fourth quarter that sealed the Warriors' 35-30 non-league victory over Santa Barbara on Friday night. - Bryan Walton/Staff