

BIG WIN!

Dons claim 'Big Game' Victory over Royals

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DAILY SOUND / Victor Maccharoli

Dons claim 'Big Game' victory

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The Santa Barbara Dons' prolific air attack has a knack for making 500-yard nights look commonplace. The Dons' put on another aerial show, again topping 500 yards, this time at the expense of its cross-town foe, the San Marcos Royals, to roll with an easy 49-28 victory in the "Big Game" at Santa Barbara High last night.

Quarterback Juan Uribe distributed his bullets all over the field for a total of 529 yards, six touchdowns and one interception, on 35 completions in 49 attempts. For his uncanny performance, Uribe earned the Gary Blades City Championship MVP Award.

Uribe quickly dispelled any suggestion that he was a one-man show. "Our team is real close," said Uribe. "Everything that we do, we are a family. I'm just lucky that we have so many weapons and work so well together."

Uribe's 529 yards were only 52 fewer than his county record setting performance on Oct. 3 against San Luis Obispo. In that game, Uribe threw for 581 yards. His six touchdown passes against the Royals also came close to the mark of seven touchdowns he set against San Luis Obispo.

On just the third play of the game, one of Uribe's favorite targets, Bryson Lloyd, aggravated an ankle injury and had to sit out for the rest of the night. Lloyd should be back next week. To his credit, Lloyd had already pulled in two catches for 52 yards by the time he was forced to make an early exit. Andrew Mendoza replaced Lloyd and the Dons never slowed down.

"Andrew picked it up the last time Bryson got hurt," said coach Will Gonzalez. "Everybody waits for their opportunity and Andrew wasn't going to waste his."

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Santa Barbara's Roberto Nelson, above, runs past a San Marcos defender in last night's win. On the front page, San Marcos' Austin Nichols gets taken down by a Santa Barbara defender in Friday night's loss.

FOOTBALL

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Under coach Gonzalez, the Dons are now 5-2 in City Championship games.

The San Marcos Royals were simply overmatched with speed and athleticism against the Dons spread offense with multiple threats lining up from sideline to sideline. Mendoza caught 10 passes for 181 yards and two touchdowns. Roberto Nelson caught nine passes for 121 yards and two touchdowns, and Freddy Maldonado caught six passes for 116 yards and three touchdowns.

To their credit, the Royals were not going to fold against the flashy air attack of the Dons. After falling to a quick 14-0 deficit, the Royals made up the two touchdowns to pull even at 14-14 with 11 minutes remaining in the first half.

Although overshadowed by their neighbors, Royals' quarterback James Crook and receiver Austin Nichols had relatively enormous nights.

The Dons defense was focused on containing Royals running back Cody Clark, and Crook and Nichols connected for touchdowns of 42 and 35 yards off of the play action during consecutive possessions to bring the Royals all the way back from their deficit.

Crook had 270 yards on 13 completions, five of those for 137 yards to Nichols, who ran free for much of the night. Royals receiver Addison Day tallied five catches for 86 yards and a touchdown.

The Dons never pretended to have the ability to rely on their defense to win the game. That is why with 3:25 remaining in the fourth quarter, sitting on a 49-28 lead, they elected to try an onside kick.

"That's what we do," said Gonzalez. "We owe them zero. We just wanted to get the ball back because we were struggling defensively."

Royal coach Dare Holdren did not see the attempt to regain the ball at the end of the game as such an innocent act. Holdren said, "The players are classy, but I don't know about their coaches. They tried a surprise onside kick and threw the ball when they were up 21 in the fourth quarter."

Maldonado had one of his biggest nights as a Don with an 80-yard touchdown reception and a 54-yard punt return to go along with many other dazzling kick returns. On the 80-yard touchdown pass, the Dons lined up at their own 20-yard line after a missed Royal field goal, and Maldonado outran the Royal defense up the middle of the field. Uribe hit him in stride at the opposite 15-yard line so nobody had a chance to get a hand on the

speedy receiver. That long touchdown brought the score to 35-14 Dons before the half.

The Royals moved the ball on their first drive coming out of the half, but after pushing the ball down to the Dons' 22, linebacker Fil Monterosa came up with an interception to end the Royals' hopes of capturing early momentum in the second half.

The Royals narrowed the deficit to 14 points at 42-28 with 6:01 remaining in the fourth quarter after a 5-yard touchdown run by Clark. Clark finished with 95 yards on 23 carries.

The Dons improved to 3-1 in league, and a win at home next week against Ventura will guarantee them a home playoff game. The Royals are now 1-3 in league and play at powerhouse St. Bonaventure next week.