

Ventura picks its spots to take 2nd

Peterson has five interceptions in 52-28 win over Santa Barbara

Patrick Peterson admitted he was surprised.

Sure, the Ventura High defensive back expected Santa Barbara gunslinger John Uribe to be throwing plenty of passes Saturday, but he didn't think he'd pick off five of them.

"I never get interceptions, but it's a good passing team, so the whole week coach has been telling us, 'Defensive backs, you have to stay deep,' " Peterson said.

Peterson's performance helped lift Ventura over Santa Barbara 52-28 Saturday afternoon at Larrabee Stadium.

Peterson's five interceptions tied the Ventura County record and matched the second best total in state history.

Ventura (6-4, 4-1) clinched second place in the Channel League with the win. Santa Barbara (4-6, 3-2) finishes third in conference play.

"It's a big deal," Peterson said. "We want to finish first. (St. Bonaventure's) a great team, you want to steal it from them, but finishing second is a good consolation."

The game was originally scheduled for Friday in Santa Barbara, but the Montecito wildfire forced a move of day and location.

With Friday off, some Ventura players hung out and watched movies. The entire team gathered Saturday morning for breakfast at IHOP and a walkthrough afterward.

Then it was time to rest and refocus for the game.

Ventura needed it with Uribe throwing 49 passes (completing 25) on Saturday to a reliable group of players including tight end Bryson Lloyd and wide receivers Andrew Mendoza, Roberto Nelson, Peter Garcia and Freddy Maldonado.

Uribe opened the game by completing 7 of 9 passes in leading an 81-yard drive that ended with a 19-yard touchdown catch by Garcia.

Ventura, relying on its running game, answered with consecutive touchdown runs of 1 and 34 yards by Matt Melnar to take a 14-7 lead.

Nelson evened it with an 11-yard touchdown reception as the first quarter ended. The teams traded touchdowns in the second quarter before Melnar took a pass from Keihan Gibbs and barrelled over a defender for a 23-yard touchdown and a 28-21 Ventura halftime lead.

"We had to take advantage of every time we had the ball," Melnar said.

Ventura talked about slowing Santa Barbara down at halftime, and effectively did so in the third quarter with a 15-play, 61-yard drive that culminated with a 23-yard field goal by Ben Mann.

It drained seven minutes off the clock, and more important, kept Uribe and the Santa Barbara offense on the sideline.

"They can score at a moment's notice," Ventura coach Brad Steward said. "We wanted to keep them off the field and sometimes when you can move the ball offensively, that's pretty good defense too."

Ventura broke the game open in the fourth quarter with three touchdowns from Gibbs, Rogelio Reyes and Melnar.

Melnar gained 167 yards on 31 carries, while teammate E.J. Turner ran for 138 yards on six carries. Santa Barbara's Uribe threw for 324 yards and four touchdowns.