

SPORTS & COMMUNITY

PRIMERO FOOTBALL Dogs drop third in a row; optimism still remains high

By Adam Sperandio
The Chronicle-News

It has not been the start to the season that first-year Primero head coach Greg Guzzo had in mind when he took over a team that went 4-5 last year and brought back returning starters such as Southwest Conference MVP James Lujan and over half of a team that saw quite a bit of success on both sides of the ball.

The Dogs were picked by many as the favorite to contend for the conference title and make a deep run in the playoffs, however that just hasn't been the case. It has been a slow, painful start for the team who dropped their third straight game to the Walsh Eagles on Friday evening by a final score of 46-6.

"It really wasn't that bad. We were right there with them in the first half, we controlled the line of scrimmage really well, we went into halftime down by six and we were thinking we were right in it," lamented head coach Gregg Guzzo. "Then the wheels fell off in the third and fourth quarter. We made a lot of mental mistakes and it killed us, we turned the ball over, we had six fumbles and when you do that you can't expect to win the ball game. But we did really well in the first half. We played a team that runs a real offense and the sweep killed us. That has been our Kryptonite on defense all year, they would run a sweep and get negative nine yards and run the same sweep the next play and get 15 yards. We have guys making mental mistakes and taking plays off and we can't have that," he said.

The Dogs led 6-0 after the end of the first and went into halftime trailing the No. 6 team in the state 12-6. After holding the Eagles on fourth and goal from the Walsh nine-yard line to open the second half, the Dogs offense took the field with the momentum and mentality that they were in the driver's seat, however that was when things fell apart and the ship started sinking.

The dogs turned the ball over on their next possession inside Walsh territory, setting up excellent field position for the Eagles to begin their onslaught. And they laid it on thick, putting

up 34 unanswered points in the second half.

"When the score hit 20-6, that was when the wheels fell off," said Guzzo. "We were right there with them, we take the lead with a few seconds left in the first, we go into halftime down by six, and we are thinking we have them on the ropes, we just killed ourselves. We just stopped them on fourth and goal and we fumble the next play. It's mental mistakes, we have done it all season so far. I can't say it's frustrating, because we have played some good teams. Walsh, Antonito and Mountain Valley are some pretty good programs, but so are we and we need to start playing like it, we have to fix it."

James Lujan and Wyatt Torres combined for over 250 yards of total offense on the night. However, dropped passes, fumbles and a non-existent running game held the Dogs out of the end zone. "It's all about running the ball, from 6-man football all the way up the chain to the pros. If you can't run the ball, you are screwed, plain and simple," said Guzzo. The tandem of Lujan and Torres has been the shining light for Guzzo and the Primero football team so far this season and has been credited as keeping the overall attitude in the locker room positive and upbeat, despite sitting with an 0-3 record. "I can't ask anymore of James and Wyatt. They have stepped up and have gone above and beyond what I have asked them. They are excellent leaders," said Guzzo. "We need other

guys to step up and play hard. Joey Archuletta has been a monster on the line, and we have had a few other guys step up in some places, but we need to work on a few things," he said.

Primero hits the road to take on the Cotopaxi Pirates on Saturday, September 20 at 2 p.m. The defending Southwest Conference Champions come into the contest with a 2-1 record after being blown out by Mountain Valley 71-27 last weekend.

Primero will be back at home on September 26 to take on the La Veta Redskins before another two game road trip takes them to Cheraw on October 3 and Antonito on October 11. The Dogs will have an opportunity to exact revenge on a Trojan team who defeated them 51-47 in the first game of the season. They wrap up their regular season at home against Aguilar on October 18.

"We are going into Cotopaxi with the same game plan we have all season, we just need to execute," said Guzzo. "We need to get a win to get everybody's confidence up and to buy into the system. We are sitting at 0-3 and 0-1 in the league. We can still come out of this pretty good. We win out and we are right back in the drivers seat," he finished.



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Photos by Matt Young

Leia Zagone, above, has provided a spark for the Trojans early in the 2014 season with 94 kills, 25 blocks and 108 digs. Trojan sophomores, and former Rye Thunderbolts, Taylor Mansfield (below left) and Rylee Abert have helped shut down teams at the net.



Tim Keller / The Chronicle-News

Down and dirty does it . . .

Raton Mud Bogs was a mucky affair Saturday as dozens of entrants came from hundreds of miles around to earn season points and cash prizes in five divisions. "Rampage," above, driven by Randy from Trinidad was a hard-digging contender. Winners from the Raton Rodeo Grounds event are headed to the state championships in Belen, New Mexico, September 27.



Steve Block / The Chronicle-News

New business hosts Grand Opening

The new Tractor Supply Company store in South Raton, New Mexico, is now open for business at the intersection of South Second Street and York Canyon Road.

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