

# Last-second revenge

## ARC NARROWLY DEFEATS CCSF 20-17 IN MIRROR-IMAGE OF LAST YEAR'S NORCAL FINAL

By Matthew Peirson

matthewpeirson@gmail.com

Only two words crossed the mind of kicker Sam Keil as he prepared to kick the eventual game-winning field goal in American River College's 20-17 win at City College of San Francisco on Saturday.

"Don't miss," Keil said.

Keil drilled the 25-yard attempt through the uprights as time expired, ending the game in an eerily similar fashion to last November's NorCal Championship game, played between the same two teams in the same location.

In that game, CCSF kicked the go-ahead field goal to take a 17-14 lead and left only six seconds on the clock en route to the win.

For Keil, and those who were a part of the team in 2014, revenge was sweet.

"Winning on a field goal on their field, it just feels good to get redemption like that," he said. "My legs were shivering a little bit, but as soon as I kicked that ball, all that went away."

For ARC, it was the team's first close finish this season, with head coach Jon Osterhout crediting the team's crispness for the win.

"We didn't play a complete game week one, we didn't play a complete game week two or three," he said. "We did today."

CCSF tied the game at 17-17 with 3:25 left to play on a 15-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Anthony Gordon to wide receiver Easop Winston, giving ARC the ball back with time to get the final score.

Wide receiver Marc Ellis totaled 63 yards on six catches, but no play was bigger than his 8-yard run off a reverse play that resulted in a third down conversion during ARC's final drive.

"(Offensive coordinator Doug Grush) asked me prior to the series, 'What do you think of the reverse?'," said Osterhout on the play call. "We saw (CCSF) playing a lot of man coverage. It was just a matter of calling it at the right time."

Ellis said the play came down to execution and getting the fresh set of downs.

"We called the play and I saw that there was no one on that side, so I took it. I had to get the first down and I did," he said.

Following a 4-yard pass and pass interference call against CCSF, ARC ended up at the one yard line with less than a minute left after running a jive-and-go pass play that left wide receiver Will McClure wide open before being stopped, his only catch of the game.

CCSF hurt itself several times with penalties, amassing 14 that cost 165 yards. ARC was called for 12, costing them 129 yards.

Some ARC players thought CCSF distracted themselves with taking cheap shots instead of just playing, especially late in the game.

"(It went on) the whole game. Mainly them trying to get us out of our game," ARC quarterback Jihad Vercher said.

After rushing for no gain at the 1-yard line, Vercher fumbled the ball on second down and just barely recovered the ball to keep possession, after which ARC kneed the ball and called its final timeout, leaving just enough time for the field goal.

"We got to hold onto the football," Vercher said. "We put it on the turf three times today, all we had to do was come through and hold onto it and just get the job done, finish the game."

Vercher fumbled twice during the game and lost one. Both of Vercher's fumbles came inside CCSF's 5 yard line. Running back



Barbara Harvey / barbaraaharvey@gmail.com

Quarterback Jihad Vercher runs downfield during Saturday's win at City College of San Francisco. Vercher threw for 280 yards and a touchdown.

Armand Shyne also had a fumble earlier in the game that was recovered by CCSF.

"I was a little too excited on the play. I was thinking touchdown before getting the ball and that's on me," said Vercher. "I got to do better at that."

Vercher finished the game 22 for 35 for 280 yards, with his lone touchdown pass coming late in the first quarter on a 31-yard reception by Ellis.

Gordon completed 25 of 41 passes during the game for CCSF, for 307 yards, two touchdowns and one interception.

Neither team established an effective running game, with the lone big run of the day being a 63-yard touchdown by Shyne early in the fourth quarter to give ARC a 17-10 lead.

Shyne finished the game with 72 yards rushing on 13 attempts.

For ARC, its first close game of the season came against arguably its biggest rival and boosted the team's confidence overall given the result.

"(It showed that) when the chips are down and it's a close game, we can stick together," said

Vercher. "It's going to help us the rest of the season."

His teammates agreed.

"It's just a great confidence booster," said linebacker Jordan Kunaszuk, who had 9 tackles in the game.

Osterhout said a win like this is "absolutely" inspiring to a team and helps it bond as it goes through the trudges of a season.

"That's the pregame speech I gave. Playing with confidence," he said.

Next week ARC goes back down to the Bay Area to play at College of San Mateo before a bye week on Oct. 10.

"We will celebrate for the next 24 hours and it's on to San Mateo, they're a great opponent, so we got to be able to continue to build and get better everyday," Kunaszuk said.

San Mateo (3-1) was undefeated and ranked second in the state prior to Saturday's game, one spot behind first place CCSF. San Mateo lost 43-30 to San Joaquin Delta College, a team ARC faced in week three of the season and beat 44-24.