

The Bandera PROPHECY

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Bulldogs take Panthers to the wire in 41-38 loss

Chris Darus

The Bandera Prophet

At the start of the season, not many thought that Bandera and perennial state powerhouse, Navarro, would be playing for the district title on the last Friday night of District 13-4AD2 play, but it did come down to just that!

Navarro, consistently one of the elite programs in 4AD2 and currently the eight ranked team in the state and Bandera, who hadn't made the playoffs in a decade, had a battle royal for the district championship and fans in attendance were treated to one of the best games of this or any other year over that decade long span.

There were some distractions with Senior Night and Military Appreciation Night going on, but the Bulldogs were focused on the task at hand, beat Navarro.

The Panthers opened up the scoring just 38 seconds into the game on a 45-yard rush by RB, Moise Sims and followed that up a few minutes later with a 32 yard field goal to surge to a 10-0 lead with 3:56 left in the first.

The field goal was a result of the Bulldog "Wrecking Crew" defense stopping the Panthers in the red zone, something they would do numerous times this night, and the Bulldogs were once again playing

catchup football.

"We get down, but the guys keep playing, keep believing, take some coaching and go hard," coach Joel Fontenot-Amedee said.

Once again, Bandera had a touchdown nullified by a penalty, this time on an apparent chop block, but the Bulldogs did score again with 1:33 left in the quarter on a 26-yard toss from Gunnar Brown to Tommy Cardenas and Blaise Salazar booted his first of five PATs to make it 10-7. The Bulldog defense came up big early in the second, forcing the Panthers to settle for another FG after a big stop with 8:24 left in the second, making it 13-7.

On the Panther's next set of downs, while deep in their side of the field, Gunnar Brown hit the Navarro QB on a blitz and the errant pass was picked off by Bulldog DB, Will Paul, who returned it to the Navarro 13 yard line, putting Bandera in great field position.

Bandera failed to find the end zone, so Salazar was sent out and kicked a 22 yard FG making it 13-10 with 5:48 left in the half.

Navarro answered again with a 70-yard rushing touchdown by RB Johnny Alegria, and a good PAT made it, 20-10.

Bandera would not concede, scoring once again before the half on an eight yard rush by Cardenas and Salazar made it, 20-17, just before the buzzer.

The back and forth scoring continued in the third quarter with a 71-yard Navarro rush by Euler De Leon, the Panthers leading rusher, and the PAT moves the Panthers ahead by 10, 27-17.

Not to be outdone, Bandera capped off an extended drive with a MacNeil to Mason Phair 11 yard pass and Salazar's boot makes it a three point game at 27-24.

With under two minutes left in the third, the Panthers found the endzone once again on a five yard De Leon rush with 1:57 left and a good kick

gives Navarro the lead, 34-24.

Bandera's MacNeil would score from the 18 with 59 seconds left in the third and Salazar would make it 34-31 heading into the fourth quarter. The "Wrecking Crew" showed true grit early in the quarter when the Panthers, who average 391 ypg rushing, decided they can make it on a fourth and two from inside the Bandera 10. The Panthers are denied by the Bandera defense and the ball goes over on downs.

Bandera then scores on a 92 yard drive when MacNeil gets inside the left goal line marker from the 8, after both coaching staffs call a total of three timeouts in a row, to give Bandera their first and only lead of the night at 37-34.

Salazar's final PAT of the night makes it 38-34 with 1:44 left.

The elation felt by the Bulldog fans went from the high point of the evening fell to utter despair in the space of 24 seconds when Navarro breaks a 65-yard rush with 1:20 left and the PAT seals the win for the Panthers, 41-38.

The stats were as close as the score. Bandera would gain 398 yards against the vaulted Panther defense, 155 passing and 243 rushing, while giving up 444 rushing and no passing yardage to Navarro.

But the yardage numbers dont tell the whole story, the Bulldogs stuffed numerous Panther fourth and short attempts, many inside the red zone, to give the team a chance to win the game.

"I think we played Navarro as good as anyone this year. They are one of the elite programs in the state and we were right there.

Before the season, no one gave us a chance to compete for the district championship, except the guys that walk through the doors here everyday. As things went on, our confidence was building and now we believe we can play with anybody," Fontenot-Amedee said.

This weekend opens the first round of playoffs and now it is win or stay

home. The Bulldogs will take a short trip down 173 S. to take on the Hondo Owls in Bandera's first trip to post-season play in 10 years.

"Hondo is a good team, they are well coached, have good athletes and I like this matchup for us. It will be a good game," Fontenot-Amedee said. The winner of this game will face the victor of the Rockport-Fulton vs. Progresso game in the second round.

Kickoff is set for 7:30 p.m., be there in Bandera Blue and cheer on the Bulldogs Friday night.

Box score

	1	2	3	4	Final
Navarro	10	3	14	14	41
Bandera	7	3	14	14	38

Bandera stats:

Passing_ S. MacNeil, 5-9-95-0-1, T. Cardenas, 1-1-34-0-0, Gunnar Brown, 1-5-26-0-1

Rushing_ MacNeil, 15-137, Cardenas, 17-79, Gunnar Brown, 1-19, Brock Johnson, 3-8

Receiving_ Trace Decker, 1-50, MacNeil, 1-34, Gunnar Brown, 2-31, Cardenas, 2-28, M. Phair, 1-12

Tackles_ Phair, 6, Gage Brown, 5, Liam DeMarchi, 5, Tyler Moore, 5, Gunnar Brown, 4, Cardenas, 4, Garrett Meier, 3

Assists_ Gage Brown, 5, Gunnar Brown, 5, Cardenas, 4, Colton Perkins, 4, W. Paul, Meier, 3

Players of the Week:

Offensive Lineman_ Mason Musick

Co-Defensive_ Mason Musick and Mason Phair

Special Teams_ Blaise Salazar

MacNeil had a good game, coming back from what happened against Cuero. It was good to get him back in.