



# Atascadero News

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## Sports



### Greyhounds suffer an ugly loss

Posted: Wednesday, Sep 23rd, 2009  
BY: Aaron Crutchfield

The one positive thing about the Atascadero High School varsity football team's 14-7 loss to Clovis on Friday is that this clunker of a game didn't happen during league play.

Turnovers are the most obvious negative about the game — the Greyhounds lost four fumbles and one interception.

The offensive line continually allowed Clovis defenders to penetrate and get a hand on the ankles of the Atascadero running backs. The running backs continually went straight to the ground at the first contact. The passing game had its bright spots but couldn't save the team in the fourth quarter, with an incomplete pass on fourth-and-five being the Hounds' final offensive play of the game.

The Atascadero defense limited the Cougars to two touchdowns, but also, Clovis was in the second game learning a new offense and several Cougar drives ended because of overthrown or underthrown passes. The Atascadero defense did allow Clovis to gain 36 yards on fourth-and-10 in the fourth quarter to set up what became the winning touchdown, and after the fourth lost fumble of the night two plays later, the Cougars went on a long drive that included a 15-yard pass on fourth-and-nine. That drive didn't result in any points but it did put Atascadero in a position where it had to drive 81 yards with less than three minutes to play.

On Atascadero's final drive, the offensive philosophy went from running the ball, as it had been for three-quarters of the plays called before then, to throwing it to the edges and having the receivers get out of bounds to stop the clock. That got the Hounds from the 19 to the Clovis 48 but two straight incompletions gave the Cougars the ball at their own 48 with 1:36 left to run off the clock. A few kneel-downs did the trick.

With that, the heavily-favored Greyhounds, winners of three straight league titles, returning a large group of experienced linemen and coming off a 33-21 win over



Photo by Aaron Crutchfield - A pass goes past the outstretched hands of Atascadero's Kelton Delore during the Greyhounds' final offensive play in a 14-7 loss to Clovis on Friday. The Greyhounds fell to 1-1 on the year.

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Clovis East, were upset by the Cougars, owners of a 2-19 record over the past two seasons, starting six sophomores including all three linebackers, and fresh off a 36-7 loss to Edison of Fresno. The loss dropped the Hounds from fifth to eighth in the latest CIF-Southern Section Northern Division poll.

"Last week, we executed a lot better offensively and we held on to the ball," said Atascadero coach Vic Cooper. "You give the ball up that many times and you leave the defense out there that long, there's not going to be many good things."

Clovis employed the "bear" defense with stellar results, limiting the Hounds to 122 yards on the ground and 105 in the air. The longest run of the night was a 16-yarder by Stetson Bullard and the second-longest was a 13-yarder by quarterback Jesse Whitten. Atascadero's leading rusher was Sterling Bullard with 35 yards on 12 carries.

"It's a defense, essentially it's a nose, head up on the center, two-three techniques, that means we're on the guard and two defensive ends on the outside," said Clovis coach Rich Hammond. "It's a front that we employed last year when I was at Gilroy."

Gilroy beat Atascadero 27-19 last year.

Although the Hounds didn't have much of a running game for most of the night, the exception came on the team's lone scoring play, which came in the third quarter and resulted in 57 of the team's 122 rushing yards. That 10-play drive featured a run on all 10 plays, with Stetson Bullard rushing for 16 yards, Tanner Kuhnle rushing for 13 yards, Sterling Bullard rushing for 10 yards, Tanner Thompson rushing for seven and Whitten sealing the deal on a three-yard keeper for a touchdown with 5:19 left in the third quarter. Joey Dodds' point-after kick tied the game.

The Cougars drew first blood with a one-yard touchdown run as time expired in the first quarter for a 7-0 lead. The winning touchdown came the play after the 36-yard pass on fourth-and-10, with a three-yard quarterback keeper with 6:55 left in the game.

"I feel like we left some points on the field, but we did enough to get a 'W' tonight and that's good, considering where this program's been with two years of 2-19," Hammond said. "To come out and get an early-season win against a very good opponent that's probably going to win their league, a team that beat Clovis East from our league last week, is a big confidence booster."

Meanwhile, Atascadero has no time to lick its wounds, as the Hounds will hit the road on Friday, Sept. 18 to face Gilroy.

"Bottom line, when it came to crunch time, we had a chance to win it and we just didn't get it done," Cooper said. "We'll go back to the drawing board. It's a long season and I don't think this is the end of the world."

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