PHOTO BY JIM KNOWLES

San Leandro High running back Christian Carter carries the ball against Encinal on Friday night.

By Jim Knowles

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Encinal High running back Corey Sails broke loose on a 58-yard touchdown run in the fourth quarter to put the Jets on top for a 25-21 win over San Leandro on Friday night.

Sails led the game in rushing with 150 yards in the Western Alameda County Conference (WACC), Foothill Division game on the Jets home field in Alameda. The Jets improved to 5-5 overall and 1-3 in the WACC.

San Leandro is still looking for its first win this season. The Pirates have been in close games the last few weeks, they held the lead against the Jets into the fourth quarter. The team is playing without a home field while Burrell Field is being rebuilt and somehow the victories have eluded them – whether it's due to a turnover or it's just the way the ball bounces.

The Jets got on the board first when quarterback Taivale Tautalastasi took off on a 43-yard dash to the end zone in the first quarter for a 7-0 lead.

San Leandro came back to tie the game when Pirates running back Finau Mataafa broke away on a 40-yard run, before he was dragged down at the Jets 1-yard line. The Pirates gave the ball to Mataafa again and he took it into the end zone. And Irvin Jauregui's extra point tied the game, 7-7.

But turnovers hurt San Leandro and quarterback Stephen Johnson had a pass picked off in the second quarter by Corey Sails deep in the Pirates own territory, which gave the Jets the ball on the San Leandro 15 yard line.

San Leandro's defense kept the Jets out of the end zone, but Encinal kicker Emily Rentschler booted a field goal for a 10-7 Jets lead.

But on the ensuing drive, quarterback Johnson guided the Pirates downfield and then took the ball on a keeper 25 yards to the end zone for a 14-10 San Leandro lead.

The Pirates added to their lead right after halftime. Facing fourth and three at midfield, San Leandro elected to go for it. Johnson dropped back and sent a deep pass to tight end Keone Foumai who hauled it in at full speed on a direct route to the goal line for a 49-yard touchdown, extending the San Leandro lead to 21-10.

San Leandro stopped Encinal's next drive on an interception by defensive back Joseph Williams, but the Pirates were then stopped by the Jets defense and forced to punt.

The Jets took over and the momentum swung as Jordan Parker galloped for a 67-yard gain. And then Parker got the ball again for an 11-yard touchdown run. Sails took the ball in for the 2-point conversion to close the gap to 21-18.

San Leandro appeared to get a break when Pirates lineman Kalake Fonua recoverd a fumble in the fourth quarter, but the next drive stalled and the Pirates punted.

Encinal gave the ball to Sails who took off on the game-winning touchdown run – one big play that made the difference.

This week, San Leandro plays Bishop O'Dowd at Chabot College today (Thursday) at 7 p.m.