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@ NMHS

Newark Memorial puts on a dazzling display

■ Sao scores three TDs as Cougars overwhelm MSJ

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NEWARK — It's hard to play a perfect game, but Newark Memorial high came close Friday by overpowering Mission San Jose 44-0 in a Mission Valley Athletic League game.

When Newark's Tino Sao had the ball in his hands, he was perfect. The senior runner carried the ball just three times but accounted for 131 yards of total offense and three touchdowns.

"It was cool," Sao said. "We played hard, and I had a lot of help from the blockers."

Sao did see his fair share of running room, but his combination of speed and agility was just too much for Mission.

That was obvious on a 60-yard punt return in the second quarter. Sao took the ball off a bounce, was hit by a Mission (1-5, 0-3) defender and should have been stopped. Instead, he backpedaled away from the defender, shook a couple of others and tore down the left side outrunning and outjoking the rest of the Mission team to score.

In any other game this play would have the one to remember, but on Friday, there were several other highlight-quality runs.

Five Newark (5-2, 2-1) players had runs of 20 or more yards, 12 players carried the ball, and four scored touchdowns.

"All those guys deserved to be in there," Newark coach Rich Swift said. "They work just as hard in practice, with weights, they deserved it."

Swift worked in his second- and third-team players in the first half when it was evident the game's outcome was already determined.

Michael Gates showed flashes of brilliance in the first half, needing just four carries to gain 51 yards. The senior looked nearly unstoppable, before Swift chose to use the multitalented athlete primarily on defense for the rest of the game.

His younger brother, Myles, got two first-half carries as well, going for 32 yards, 25 on a touchdown.

In a 13-11 loss last week, the Cougars threw the ball a season-high 21 times. Against the Warriors, quarterback Rodney Rael went to the air just twice, completing both passes for a total of 38 yards.

Newark will now prepare for a dangerous John F. Kennedy team, which hosts James Logan at 7 p.m. today at Tak Fudenna Stadium.

Mission will go for its first MVAL win next week against American, also winless in league play.