

FOOTBALL

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yards in 12 plays, finishing with a 13-yard touchdown pass from Thies to Norton. West Essex converted one third down and one fourth down on that drive.

Caldwell responded on its next possession, however, when Salter found Dylan Soriente on a short bubble screen on the left side of the field. Soriente cut back across the turf and took it 64 yards to the house for a score and a short-lived 14-10 lead for the Chiefs. West Essex was able to drive 80 yards for another score for its second consecutive possession.

"We were just finally able to put a stop to number 67 [Galioto]. He's a great football player and he really did well in the first half," Norton said. "We made some offensive adjustments with our line, we just did what we were supposed to do and we were able to run the ball."

The biggest play of all probably came midway through the fourth quarter on a third and 14, where Thies rolled to his right and took off down the sideline, getting just enough yards to get a first and goal at the five, and extend the drive.

Thies finished with 12-of-20 passing, for 172 yards and one

touchdown, and also had 32 yards rushing.

"He's just tremendous. He has come of age, everyone knows about him, they know how great of a quarterback he is. He steps up every time we need him," Benacquista said. "It's nice to see him develop and mature into the quarterback he is. He is a weapon now."

Perhaps the biggest turnaround from the first half to the second half was West Essex's running game.

Through the first two quarters, the Knights were limited to 53 rushing yards, for a 3.31 yards per carry average. In the second half, West Essex gained 141 yards on the ground, for a 4.4 yards per carry average. Jason Russo led all runners with 125 rushing yards.

"They just grounded it out on us and we just couldn't stop them," said Trimmer. "You have to give them credit. They just did a better job of blocking in the second half than they did in the first, and you just have to give them all of the credit in the world. They were more physical in the second half."

Caldwell dropped to 1-1 and will play in its home opener on Saturday against Belleville.

West Essex improved to 3-0 and will be in Orange at Bell Stadium on Friday night, looking to remain unbeaten.