MIKE PROULX

Throughout Mike Proulx’s football career at quarterback – Creekside Middle School, Castro Valley High and Humboldt State – he had a penchant for the upset.

At all three schools, he joined a football program that had its hands full with a particular rival. By the time he was done, Creekside had its first-ever win over Canyon, Castro Valley had knocked off Bishop O’Dowd, and Humboldt had shocked U.C. Davis.

It’s been 14 years since that win over Canyon, but Proulx remembers it like yesterday.

“All my friends from elementary school, we all played together on the schoolyard, and we all went to Creekside together,” the former Chabot Elementary student recalled. “We weren’t surprised (to beat Canyon); we knew we were pretty good.”

Considering he had never played tackle football and was joining a run-oriented program, passing Castro Valley High over O’Dowd had to rank as a bigger shocker. But a coaching change to Craig Nieves and a little help from former Cal coach Roger Theder made it possible.

“I remember going out to Pittsburg to attend his passing camps,” Proulx said of sessions with Theder that featured several Division I quarterbacks, including Nevada’s Colin Kaepernick. “That’s when football really started to click for me.”

Proulx was named the All-Hayward Area Athletic League quarterback after leading Castro Valley to a 7-3 season as a record-setting senior. He hoped that would be good enough to get him a shot at U.C. Davis.

It didn’t work out that way, which turned out to be the Aggies’ regret.

Rejected by Davis, Proulx accepted a partial scholarship at Humboldt. He was a starter by midseason as a redshirt freshman, and a school touchdown-pass record-holder -- as well as Great Northwest Athletic Conference Player of the Year -- by the time his senior season was complete.

Following his graduation from Humboldt, Proulx played one season in the professional German Football League, something he called “one of the most rewarding experiences I’ve ever had.

Today, the Danville resident is flanked by a wife and three dogs, and works as a deputy sheriff with the Alameda County Sheriff’s Office.