

# TIGER FLASHBACK

## ATHENS ACADEMY

### 1995

The Athens Academy Spartans marched their green army up Highway 441 to Tigertown for the annual battle between the two rivals. Tiger faithful were proud of the damage by the hurricane-like effort of the Tigers, as they bruised, beat up and flat out knocked out Athens Academy 22-0 in a Herculean effort.

After an early Tiger fumble at the 28, the Commerce defense stiffened their necks and forced the Spartans to turn the ball over on downs at the hosts 19.

After a short drive, Brent Nichols fumbled away a Tiger drive at the AA 49. The Spartans drove to the Commerce four but a short field goal sailed wide left, and Commerce had dodged a bullet.

Through the next quarter and a half, Commerce scored on four consecutive possessions. Quarterback Kevin Poe, fullback Michael Fitzpatrick and halfback Stephen David alternated in doing the damage in the first TD drive along with the superb blocking of Brent Nichols.

Poe finished off a march of 10 plays and 80 yards when he skirted left end on an option keeper and scored at the 7:15 mark of the second period. Brandon Bruce's PAT attempt sailed wide. Commerce led however (6-0).

Following a Spartan punt, the Tiger offense set sail once more and scored in seven plays.

This time it was halfback David who finished off the I-Bone effort with a 13-yard touchdown run around the right side behind fine offensive line blocking. Poe's two-point conversion pass attempt failed leaving the Tigers with a (12-0) lead with 2:02 remaining before halftime.

After three unsuccessful AA plays, the Spartans punted to the Commerce 43. From here Poe and David did their magic, as the Tigers scored in four snaps.

The highlight of the march was a 39-yard pass from Poe to Brent Nichols down to the Spartan 8, as he broke several tackles on the journey. On the succeeding play, David skirted right end on a power sweep to score with 31 ticks left in the second stanza.

Bruce toed the PAT and the Tigers went into halftime with a (19-0) lead.

The Tiger offensive line was superb during the night as they controlled the line of scrimmage against the Spartans. The offensive line consisted of the following: tight end-Greg Sorrow, tackles-Craig Ellis and Matt Stephenson, guards-Stevie Cotrell and Casey Westbrooks and center-Joe Anderson.

On the third play following intermission, Tiger defensive back Brent Nichols intercepted a pass from the AA quarterback and returned it 21 yards to the Spartan 32.

Poe then directed a seven play drive to the 12 from where a bad pitch lost 10 yards forcing a Brandon Bruce field goal. The 39-yard attempt was successful and the Tiger lead was now at (22-0) with 7:25 left in the third period, as the Tigers had taken complete command of the game.

The remainder of the game was uneventful with neither team penetrating the opponent's 30 yard line.

Commerce had 246 yards of total offense all on the ground, while the Tiger defense limited Athens Academy to 85 yards in total offense and only 26 in the second half.

Jody Rogers led the team in tackles with 13, as the Tiger defenders dominated the Spartans in this shutout which was the only one in the series dating back to 1985.

Commerce went on to post a season record of (10-3-0) and moving to the third round of the playoffs and also defeated Madison County, Oconee County, Oglethorpe County, Rabun County, Monticello, Social Circle, Union County along with beating Jefferson and Calhoun in playoff games. Commerce lost only to Buford and Jefferson in regular season play. Manchester in the third playoff game defeated the Tigers in Commerce.

Others on the 1995 Commerce team were: Russ Gregg, Chad Wheeler, SE-Scott Sanders, Terrell Beasley, Will Massey, Mickey Pittman, Josh Billew, Josh Kesler, LB-Tony Allen, Chad Eubanks, Matthew Moulton, Josh Smith, Matt Perry, Tommy Morgan, Chad Ashley, Brad Freeman, DE-J.P. Barone, DT-Josh Spear, Jake Epps, Dustin Allen, Terry Brown, Rob Sanders, Reggie Collins, Jason Lord, Craig Mathis and Nick Ladd.

Partially compiled from *THE COMMERCE NEWS* reports

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