

# TIGER FLASHBACK

## BANKS COUNTY

### 1993

In the 1993 game between the Commerce Tigers and the Banks County Leopards, the RAINS, NO! The MONSOON, NO! The TYPHOON came and a thought ran through the mind of many in attendance. Where is the ARK?

However, the Black and Gold clad felines slosed and slid past the Leopards with a rock solid ground game and a monstrous defense to the tune of (21-7).

It rained hard during a pre-game ceremony honoring former Tiger coach Ray Lamb who was at the Tiger helm for 22 years (1967-1988). Former superintendent W.R. Lang was also honored for over 20 years as mentor of the Commerce School System.

The downpour continued throughout the first quarter. It broke somewhat in the second stanza; then the skies opened up again with another DELUGE OF WATER at halftime and into the third quarter. However, the remarkable condition of the field at Tiger Stadium held up well, and although there was much water, the field never became a muddy quagmire.

The Coach Steve Savage led Tigers made Ray Lamb proud with their vintage keep-it-on-the-ground attack, as they amassed 162 yards and threw just two passes. Both teams took relatively good care of the pigskin, as the Tigers lost only two fumbles to one interception for the Leopards.

BC took the opening kickoff and knocked out one first down before a fourth and two attempt at a yardstick mover came up a yard short at the Tiger 44.

Three plays later, Tiger fullback Andre Pattman burst over left guard. As he was hit by a Leopard defender, the wet ball squirted loose and lay for a moment on a pile of wet humanity, whereupon BC defender Chuck Bowden grabbed the seemingly unwanted pigskin and sped 59 yards untouched for what was to be the only BC score of the game at the 7:07 mark of the first period.

The PAT kick was successful for the Leopards who in turn took an early (7-0) lead.

After exchanging possessions, Tiger punt returner Clifton Bonds returned a punt 11 yards to the C47 whereupon the Leopards had a 15-yard facemask penalty charged against them which placed the ball on the BC 38.

Tiger QB Kevin Poe then engineered the Tigers first scoring drive of the night in five plays. Poe's 12-yard run set up Pattman's 9-yard burst over right guard for a touchdown

to cap the march. Adam Allen added the successful PAT to knot the score at (7-7) with 11:15 left in the second stanza.

The hard-hitting Tiger defenders then stopped the Leopards on their next possession. Whereupon Bowden punted to midfield, but a motion penalty backed the polka dotted felines up five more yards to the BC 29.

Bowden stepped back to punt once more, and the strategy worked as a high snap resulted in the Leopard kicker being sacked following his recovery of the errant pigskin at the Banks County 12 yard line.

"That was the turning point," said Coach Savage." "Coach Gregg said make them punt it again. We thought we might block it. It worked out pretty good."

Two plays later Pattman rumbled in over right tackle for the score. On the PAT the Tiger holder bobbled the wet pigskin messing up the timing on the play, and kicker Allen got off a low line drive that was unsuccessful. However, the Tigers had snatched a (13-7) lead away from the visitors with 7:33 left before halftime.

BC proceeded to knock out three first downs, but the drive stalled at the Commerce 48 due to three unsuccessful pass attempts. Bowden then booted the Tigers into a hole at the Commerce 29.

Two plays later, Pattman coughed up the ball and Banks County recovered at the Tiger 19 with only 93 seconds left in the half which gave the Leopards a golden opportunity to take the lead into halftime.

However, the tenacious Gold and Black defense rose to the occasion, as they have many times down through the ages of Tiger folklore and closed the door to the Leopards' newfound opportunity.

QB Hank Parker threw a swing pass to halfback Shawn Smith just inches short of a first down at the Tiger nine. However, on the next play defensive end Stef Rucker threw Smith for a 5-yard loss back to the 14-yard stripe as he attempted to skirt the end.

Consequently, Parker's third down pass fell incomplete setting up the climactic fourth down play with only 38 seconds left in the half.

Parker then dropped back and threw to his left to a momentarily open receiver, but Tiger cornerback Steven Rogers reacted quickly and broke up the pass play preserving the Tigers' (13-7) advantage at the half.

Commerce had coughed up the ball twice in the first half, each giving Banks County excellent scoring opportunities. However, the Leopards could only capitalize on either one, and that would be all the gifts that the Tigers would allow on this night.

The Tigers' ball-control offense pounded out 111 second half yards and the quick reacting defense limited the Leopards to only 20 total yards gained.

Commerce put the game away midway through the third period following a Leopard punt which was returned nine yards to midfield by Bonds, as the Tigers now began a touchdown march for the remaining distance in just four plays.

Following a one yard loss by halfback Brian Stockton, Steven David skirted right end for 17-yards to the 34 whereupon a piling on penalty moved the wet pigskin to the Leopard 19. Two plays later, Stockton swept left end for 17 yards and powered into the end zone for the third Commerce score of the night. Poe then threw a successful two-point conversion pass to halfback Brent Nichols with 9:24 remaining in the third stanza to up the Tiger margin over Banks County to (21-7).

Commerce held Banks County on the ensuing drive, when on fourth and two at the Tiger 41, safetyman Kevin Neely made a big hit on halfback Shawn Smith stopping him for no gain.

Coach Savage's troops then gobbled up four minutes on the clock with a nine-play drive behind the running of Stockton and Steven David before it stalled at the Leopard 40.

The Commerce defense sealed the fate of the north Georgia spotted cats when Steven Rogers made his second excellent play of the night by intercepting Shawn Smith's wobbly aerial at midfield. Commerce then ran off the final two minutes of the clock and the game was over.

Commerce had defeated the Leopards (21-7) ending Banks County's two-game winning streak of wins in 1991 and 1992.

The Tigers, at this point in the series, now owned a 16-2-0 series record with this victory over Banks County.

The Commerce offense amassed 162 total yards on this evening to 114 for the Leopards, while the Black and Gold defense played superbly all night making one first half goal line stand and not giving up another score after the early touchdown on a fumble return by the visitors.

David and Stockton were the Tiger rushing leaders with 60 and 52 yards respectively. Defensive end Daniel Wilson and Neely had 12 and 10 tackles respectively.

The Tigers went on to post a 7-4-0 record in 1993 also defeating Oconee County, Oglethorpe Co., Towns County, Social Circle, Jefferson and Monticello while losing only to Madison County, Buford and Dacula twice with one being a playoff game.

Others on the 1993 Tiger squad were: Chad Sosebee, Chad Wheeler, Greg Sorrow, Matt Stephenson, Chad Eubanks, Gary Brown, Tony Allen, Richard Vickery, Josh Spear, Casey Westbrook, Tommy Horne, Chad Ashley, Brad Daves, Michael Ward, Russell Shore, Stevie Cotrell, Michael Reynolds, Brian Craig, Jeff Culpepper, Craig Ellis, Brad Fleeman, Matt Sears, Philip Seabolt, Joe Anderson, Keith Savage, Brandon Bruce, Bradley Cowart, Quincy Strickland, Jody Rogers and Jason Lord.

Partially compiled from *ATHENS DAILY NEWS* reports

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