

TIGER FLASHBACK

DARLINGTON

1981

The Commerce Tigers sporting a (10-1-1) record for the 1981 football campaign came rolling into Barron Stadium in Rome to do battle with the Darlington Tigers in the second round of the Class AA football playoffs.

And the emphasis should be placed on ROLLING.

Before the 7-AA champs had time to pull up their socks and buckle their chinstrap, Commerce led (12-0) and didn't stop there. The real Tigers, the ones from northeastern Jackson County, crushed Darlington (37-6) in a game that proved to be no contest as playoff games go.

Commerce had the game under wraps in the opening half, and trotted to the dressing room ahead at intermission (30-0). Yep, it was (30-0)---five TD's and no PAT's.

Coach Ray Lamb's Tigers scored on their first four possessions in the first two periods.

After stopping Darlington on their first three downs following the kickoff, Commerce drove 66 yards to score in four plays.

On their first play from scrimmage, QB Bobby Lamb faded to pass and found brother Hal streaking down the middle of the field with a perfect aerial before the latter was pulled down from behind at the Darlington 12. Three plays later, junior fullback Tony Smallwood bulled over from the one for the initial tally of the game. Todd Lord's PAT was no good as the Tigers failed to make a single conversion during the entire first half, but it really didn't matter with all those TD's in the game.

On Commerce's next possession after a short drive to the Darlington 23, Coach Lamb pulled out a little razzle-dazzle. On third and 12, quarterback B. Lamb threw a lateral pass to flanker Hal Lamb who hurled it 23 yards to halfback Delano White for the touchdown to put Commerce on top (12-0).

Bobby's two-point conversion run fell shy of the goal line, and the lead remained twelve points with 4:14 to go in the first period.

Three plays later Commerce had the ball again at their 47 following another punt. Bobby

Lamb, on the first play thereafter, kept the ball on the option and skirted 45 yards to the Darlington 11. Two plays later, he threw a strike to Hal for five yards and the score. Bobby's two-point conversion pass was incomplete leaving the score at (18-0) with only six seconds having elapsed in the second stanza.

After Darlington's fourth straight three downs and out followed by a punt, Commerce had the ball once more and the Black and Gold clad lads were spoiling for another touchdown.

They were ready to pour it on. After 13 and 34 yard option keepers by B. Lamb, Smallwood blasted over from the three for his second TD on the evening with 7:25 remaining in the half. Lord's boot again was unsuccessful leaving the Tigers with a (24-0) advantage.

After a Darlington first down pass attempt was intercepted by Tim Seabolt at the Commerce 48, Lamb-Lamb and Company set up their TD Shop again. Six plays later and with only 23 ticks left on the halftime clock, quarterback Lamb lofted a 20-yard touchdown pass to senior tight end Terry Howard. Bobby's two-point conversion run failed, but the REAL TIGERS had "showed up" for their performance and "showed out", as they took a commanding (30-0) lead into halftime with their best half of the season.

Bobby, who played little in the second half, rushed for 106 yards and completed 5-of-8 passes for 110 yards and a pair of touchdowns in the first half of play.

In the opening two periods, Commerce rolled up 288 yards of total offense and limited Darlington to 13 yards of total offense and no first downs, as the defense was outstanding. Darlington was minus 2 yards rushing in the first half and minus 16 for the game.

Darlington cut the lead to (30-6) late in the third quarter on a 1-yard sneak by QB Jefts.

Commerce answered that touchdown with a final score of their own. With 10:18 left in the game, QB B. Lamb passed to halfback Clark Williams for 10 yards and a touchdown. Todd Lord made the successful PAT in stretching the margin of victory to (37-6).

Commerce defenders left Darlington QB Jefts on his back for much of the night, as they sacked the sophomore signal caller four times.

"Looking at the film, it was our best football game yet," stated Coach Lamb. It was indeed a dilly and one that will be long remembered by Commerce faithful.

The Tigers would go on to defeat North Springs (15-7) the next week for the North Georgia title, and one week later the Commerce Tigers won the Class AA State Championship by defeating Greene County (28-14).

The Tigers went on to record a (13-1-1) state championship season, as they also defeated Cartersville, Madison Co., Oconee Co., No. Gwinnett, Duluth, East Hall-twice, Jefferson,

Loganville, Rabun Co., North Springs and Greene County while losing only to Buford and tying Hart Co. in a (29-29) comeback after being down by three touchdowns on two different occasions in the contest.

Others on the 1981 team were: David Thomas, Greg Davis, Bill Finch, Clay Hendrix, Greg Zak, Daniel Ford, Rodney Bell, Tim Pritchett, Kenny Wood, Brian Hill, Nathan Anderson, John Pittman, Ted Studdard, Vaughn Howington, Allen Adams, Carl McWhorter, Taylor Rucker, Bart Haggard, Bret Haggard and Chris Tarkenton.

Primarily compiled from *ATHENS BANNER-HERALD* and *ATHENS DAILY NEWS* reports

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