

TIGER FLASHBACK

HART COUNTY

1979

The Tigers, having never lost to Hart County, rolled up Highway 29 into Hartwell to place another licking on the Bulldogs. Commerce, by their mighty ground game and the arm of quarterback Bobby Lamb, knocked out 432 yards of total offense and KO'ed the host canine team by a score of (34-21).

Some were saying that it would be a rough football game. Others said it would be a close one. However, no one expected that the Commerce-Hart County football battle would be anything like it was.

In a wide open war between two quarterbacks in sophomore Tiger hurler Bobby Lamb and senior Bulldog signal-caller Ken Brown, the younger won the wild one as over 630 yards of total offense was amassed by the two teams. However, Commerce again came out on top. At this point the Tigers held a (5-0-0) series advantage in this old cat and dog back yard brawl.

From the very beginning, the packed house could tell that this game would be an exciting one. After Tiger kicker Keith Lord fumbled a punt snap, Hart recovered on the Commerce 36-yard-line.

Later Brown ran wide right to the eight for a 24-yard gain, then the senior quarterback went off tackle. Finding no running room, Brown rolled off a Tiger tackler and scrambled backwards and over the middle, still behind the line of scrimmage.

In desperation, he found flanker Ted Ankerich wide open in the left corner of the end zone. The pass was short, but the senior receiver dove towards it and clutching the aerial he landed on the goal line for the game's first score at the 3:28 mark of the first period. The successful PAT gave the Bulldogs a 7-0 lead.

It was to be the first of many such plays in the game.

Still in the first quarter, Bobby Lamb came right back down the field for the Tigers first tally with less than a minute to go in the initial period.

After a couple of running plays that produced virtually no gain, Lamb went to his arm. A seven-yard aerial to split end Dennis Strickland, followed by a 9-yard pass to Lord set

up a 24-yard TD pass winged by Lamb to tight end Fred Martin, and the Tigers were on the scoreboard. Richard Dills successful PAT knotted the score at (7-7) with 0:58 remaining on the first period clock. The Tiger drive had been set up with an electrifying 44-yard kickoff return by Tiger halfback Taylor Rucker. Sophomore Rucker eventually collected 75 rushing yards on the night.

On the first play thereafter, QB Brown fumbled and gave the Tigers possession at the Hart 39. Five plays later, Commerce faced a fourth and 13 situation at the Hart 23. Dills entered for a 41-yard FG which fell just short of the mark, and the 'Dawgs had dodged a bullet.

Brown then engineered a 6-play, 80-yard drive for the go-ahead score which came on an 8-yard pass to Mark Reed with 7:29 remaining in the half. The successful PAT gave the Bulldogs a 14-7 lead. The tally was set up by a 44-yard run by halfback Danny Hughes.

Tiger lightning struck quickly 57 seconds later, as two plays following the kickoff, Lamb launched a bomb down the left sidelines which split end Keith Lord gathered in on the dead run and scored from 67-yards out with 6:31 remaining in the half. Dills kick made the score (14-14) and the Tigers again had risen from a seven point deficit.

Four plays later, Tiger defensive back Paul Guest stepped in front of a Brown spiral and returned it 25-yards to the Hart County 44 setting up the Tigers' third tally of the half. After a 20-yard option keeper by Lamb, sophomore halfback Clark Williams took the option pitch and skirted left end from 20-yards out going into the end zone untouched for the third TD by the gold and black. With 2:49 left in the half Commerce now led (21-14) having scored in three of its previous four possessions.

To begin the second half, Lord punted 35 yards dead at the Bulldog 6 whereupon the Tiger defense stymied the Hart County attack forcing a punt out to their 38.

Lamb then led the Tiger wishbone offense on a methodical 9-play drive all on the ground behind the running of fullback Greg Zak, Delano White, Lamb and Rucker. The drive was culminated by Lamb's option keeper around right end untouched for 9 yards and the first score of the second half. Dills' PAT kick again split the uprights giving Coach Ray Lamb's Tigers a (28-14) lead with 2:57 remaining in the third period.

The Tiger defense, led by Dean Shirley, Adam Stephenson, Buddy Beauchamp, Todd Jones and Paul Gholston, as it had on its earlier stint, halted the Bulldog offense and set up its final touchdown drive following a HC punt to the Commerce 41 one play before the end of the period.

Lamb then led the Tiger offense on a 10-play, 59-yard time consuming devastating ground attack with fullback Zak rushing five of the final six plays and scoring on a one-yard plunge over right guard to put the icing on the Bulldog cake. The PAT by Dills sailed wide, however Commerce held a commanding lead of (34-14) with 7:53 left in

the game. The score was set up by Lamb's 15-yard run and a 19-yard scamper by Rucker.

Bulldog quarterback Brown though was not through, as he connected five plays later on a 59-yard aerial strike to Robert Teasley to make the final score (34-21). Commerce then took the kickoff and ran out the clock by keeping the pigskin for the remaining 10 plays of the game on a drive that saw them camped on the Bulldog 22 as the final horn sounded to end the contest.

The Tiger offensive line of tackles--David Flint and Beauchamp, guards--Gholston and Clay Hendrix and center--Todd Parham played superbly, as they constantly steam-shoveled the Bulldog defense off the line of scrimmage.

"I was really impressed with our receivers," Coach Lamb said of the players that caught 164 yards in passing yardage. "I also think we ran the ball a lot better than we did last week against Habersham Central."

The Tiger ground game gathered 268 yards and consumed much of the clock especially in the second half.

Commerce went on to post a (10-2-0) record in 1979 also defeating Habersham Central, Madison County, White County, East Hall, Oconee County, North Gwinnett, Duluth, Loganville and Union County while losing only to Jefferson and to Cartersville in the Region 8A championship game.

Others on the 1879 squad were: Terry Howard, Brad Klugh, Keith Lacey, Tim Nunn, Eddie Allen, Tracy Milford, Ricky Wood, Michael Fischer, Danny Cook, Bob Finch, Britt Wilson, Tim Pritchett, Phillip Allen, Vaughn Howington, Tim Seabolt, Sonny Crawford, Mark Howell, Gary Greenway, Terry Cook and Tony Smallwood.

July 2001, Jeff Prickett

