

TIGER FLASHBACK LINCOLN COUNTY 2002

Mighty Lincoln County paraded their Red Devils into Tigertown in 2002 in an effort to garner Coach Larry Campbell the record for most wins by a high school coach in Georgia. The previous week LC had defeated Athens Academy giving Campbell a tie at 346 wins with legendary coach Dan Pitts of Mary Persons.

A defeat of the Tigers on this night which featured a warm, light sprinkle of rain would give Campbell first place in the total wins record by a Georgia coach at 347.

However, the Commerce Tigers came out of the shoot with both barrels blazing and dominated the Class A traditional power, as the Black and Gold built a 21-0 halftime lead en route to a convincing (28-6) defeat of the Red Devils and postponed Campbell's bid for the all-time win mark.

Led by a tremendous effort from the Tiger offensive front, Commerce racked up 262 yards on the ground, including a stellar effort from halfback Dennis Wilder who gained 147 yards in 11 attempts.

"I thought we played spirited ball for most of the night," Coach Steve Savage said. "They got in there and really challenged them," Savage said of his offensive line. "I was real proud of them," he added.

Defensively, Commerce got relentless pressure from its defensive line, as the Tigers recorded three sacks. Overall the Tigers managed to hold LC to a meager 146 yards of total offense on the evening.

"I was really pleased with our defense," Savage stated. "They did exactly what they had to do." Indeed, it was a total effort on both sides of the ball for Commerce.

Following the kickoff and on the game's third play, Tiger quarterback Josh Haynes held the ball seven yards past the line of scrimmage on an option keeper around right end. However, at the precise moment when defenders had him in their sights, he pitched to Wilder on a perfect option play. The fleet Tiger halfback then out-ran a host of Red Devil defensive backs for a 69-yard touchdown with 10:55 left in the initial quarter. Tommy

Eason toed the PAT for a 7-0 Tiger lead.

On the next Tiger possession following a punt, Commerce drove 80 yards in 12 plays with Haynes, Wilder and fullback David Bray alternating at doing the damage. The drive was culminated with a 4-yard run by Wilder on the option pitch around right end. Eason again booted the PAT, and the Tigers held a 14-0 lead with 1:09 left in the initial period.

The next three possessions by the two teams resulted in three punts the last of which was blocked by the Tigers at the LC 17 where Commerce took possession.

Commerce made hay of the opportunity and scored four plays later when Haynes ran a quarterback keeper behind right tackle and squirmed into the end zone for the score with 2:23 remaining in the half. Eason again was true on his kick, and the Tigers held a (21-0) halftime advantage.

The Tigers got some breathing room in the opening moments of the second half, when Eason's line drive kickoff bounced off a Lincoln County defender which was recovered by Commerce halfback Tristan Daniels at the LC 45.

Wilder's initial 20-yard sweep around left end placed the Tigers at the LC 25. Five plays later, Haynes scored on an option keeper around left end from four yards out. Eason booted the PAT successfully and with 9:30 remaining in the third stanza Commerce had a resounding lead of (28-0).

LC posted their only score of the night on a 5-yard run by Shantavas Jennings late in the third period. Linebacker Casha Daniels sacked the quarterback on the PAT pass attempt leaving the score at (28-6).

Neither team had a significant scoring opportunity for the remainder of the game, as the Commerce Tigers dominated Lincoln County especially on defense in the second half.

The Commerce offense controlled the pigskin for much of the night, as they ground out 246 yards in 45 attempts. Commerce had no passing yards in the game.

The Tiger offensive line consisted of: ends-Jonathan Beasley and David Evans, tackles-Ben Wilson and Kenny Flint, guards-Taylor Massey and Eason and center-Adam Cochran

Commerce had won its fourth game in a row over Lincoln County, as the Red Devils dropped their pitchfork and tucked their heads and tails on a return trip south.

Commerce went on to post a season record of (11-2-0) as they also defeated Franklin County, Banks County, Morgan County, Madison County, Athens Christian, Towns Co., Jefferson, Social Circle, Bowdon and Trion. The Tigers lost only to Athens Academy and Dooly County.

Others on the 2002 Tiger team were: Mitch Redmon, Josh Jordan, Jesse Smith, Kevin Wiley, Teo Smith, Scott Burns, Michael Sailors, Saeed Beituni, Wayne Abbs, DT-Evan Crawford, Royale Goodwin, Matthew Dean, Greg Gamble, Cody Cook, Justin David, Edris Reevey, Matthew Shirley, Hunter Roop, DT-John David, Dusty Vaughn, Caleb Jordan, Tyler Ledbetter, Justin Beauchamp, Daniel Taylor, Hank Tiller, James Rucker, Brandon Jennings, CB-Sam Cutler, LB-Justin Howell, Eric Redmon, Justin Cotton, Steve Brock, Kyle Gillespie, Nick Slayton and linebacker-Nicolas Cox.

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