

TIGER FLASHBACK

LUMPKIN COUNTY

1973

The Lumpkin County Indians ventured down to Commerce from the Cherokee hills on a raid in hopes of scalping the undefeated (4-0) Tigers. But, Ray Lamb's troops not only attacked with their vaunted ground game, they also broke out quarterback Abe Brown's air arm in thwarting the Redskin effort (40-14).

The Indians were coached by Ken Davis a former Tiger star fullback (1958-61) and former center for the Georgia Bulldogs (1963-65). This was his first return to Commerce as a coach for a Tiger opponent. He later coached at Madison County in the late 1970's as well.

As the game commenced, the Commerce Tigers received the opening kickoff and began its first offensive series from the Tiger 33. It took only six plays for the Tigers to score.

Five running plays took the ball to the Indian 32 from where quarterback Abe Brown, who was more proficient at passing backwards on the wishbone option offense, faded to pass and threw a bomb to split end Allen Lacey for a 32-yard TD strike over the middle. This was Lacey's second touchdown reception of the season and the first of three scoring passes and six consecutive completions in the game for Brown.

Ronald "Runt" Moon added the PAT on a run over right guard to give the Tigers an early 8-0 lead with 10:01 remaining in the first quarter.

The Indians were soon forced to punt after three unsuccessful plays with Commerce starting its second scoring drive from the Tiger 28 following a punt, as the Tiger defense showed its proficiency to dominate from that side of the ball as well.

Following a one yard loss, Moon exploded over right guard on a trap play behind Joe Jones and Ricky Smith's fine blocks and raced 73 yards untouched for the tally. The PAT kick was missed following a fumbled snap, but now the Tiger lead had mounted to 14-0 with 7:41 to play in the initial stanza.

On the second play following the kickoff, Brown now playing safety intercepted Lumpkin QB John Phillip's pass at the Indian 35 and returned it 15 yards to the 20.

Brown on the first play thereafter, spotted tight end Don Watkins open over the middle. Watkins gathered in the on-target aerial and sprinted across the goal line for another score. The snap for the kick was again bobbled foiling the attempted PAT, but the Tiger lead had mounted to 20-0 with 6:18 to go in the initial period.

The Lumpkin offense lumbered to the Tiger 35 where a field goal attempt by Tony Ash was blocked by linebacker Billy Pittman to give Commerce possession once more on the Black and Gold 43 yard line.

In only two plays Commerce was on the board once more. After a one-yard loss, halfback Raymond Harris burst over left guard behind the blocks of Jones, Smith, Pittman and center Kenny Hancock and rambled 58 yards to glory land for his first of three TD's on the evening.

Carl Hiland was successful on the point-after-touchdown kick, and the Tigers had upped their lead to 27-0 with 0:58 remaining in the first period.

At this point, the game had been decided with little doubt in the minds of anyone present. The Indians were completely outclassed and the Tigers were on their way to their fifth consecutive win.

Early in the second period following a Lumpkin punt, the Tigers took possession at the Commerce 37 and quickly drove to the Indian 33 where Brown's air arm surfaced again, as Harris took in the lofty pass over his shoulder down the left sideline to score, but an illegal procedure penalty nullified the score and the drive stalled.

Four plays later, Harris returned Ash's punt 24 yards down the right sideline to the Lumpkin 42.

The Tigers took only two plays to score. After Brown's one yard loss, the Tiger quarterback stepped back into the pocket, sighted Harris alone down the left sideline once more and rifled a scoring shot to the open receiver for a 42-yard TD. Lamar Hiland booted the PAT and Commerce led (34-0) with 4:25 left in the half.

At this point, the Tiger subs entered the game intent on continuing the Black and Gold onslaught.

Following the KO, Lumpkin drove 70 yards in ten plays to score its first tally of the night. The drive was culminated when halfback Brad Anderson skirted right end to score from six yards out. The PAT run was successful and the Tigers took a (34-8) lead into the half.

Lumpkin took the second half kickoff and in 18 plays drove to the Tiger 12 where a third down pass from Phillips to Anderson was complete, but a vicious tackle at the 10 made him cough up the pigskin with Don Watkins recovering at the Tiger one yard line

to stop the only scoring opportunity of the period.

A drive by the Tigers in the fourth quarter was halted at the Lumpkin 20 when quarterback Randy Butler fumbled giving the Indians possession at their 25.

On third down at the 27, Indian halfback Jim Tolbert raced through the middle of the Tiger line for a 73-yard touchdown. The run for the PAT was unsuccessful and the Tiger lead was now 34-14 with 5:37 remaining in the contest.

After the kickoff was returned 27 yards to the Indian 48 by Harris, the Tigers negotiated the rest of the way in only four plays. On first down at the 32, Harris skirted left end on a greatly executed play by the Tiger offense for the final tally of the night. The PAT failed but the Tigers had captured a 40-14 victory over the scalped and fallen Indians.

Harris and Moon collected 151 and 134 yards respectively on the evening while Brown was a perfect 6 for 6 through the air for 3 touchdowns and 126 yards and his best passing night of the season.

The Tigers eventually went on to post a 13-1-0 season record only losing to Mt. de Sales in the Class A state championship game.

Before the loss to Mt. de Sales, the Tigers won thirteen games in a row defeating Banks County, Oconee County, Madison County, White County, Lumpkin County, Rabun County, North Hall, Pickens County, Jefferson, East Hall, Cartersville, Briarwood and Carrollton.

Others on the 1973 squad were: Randy Harris, Jack Griffeth, Jim Wood, Terry Hanley, Ricky Kitchens, Randall Miller, Ronnie Savage, Hoy Lee Smith, Jim Sullivan, Bob Griffeth, Stanley Martin, David Kesler, Jerry Farmer, Troy Walker, Ronnie Vinson and David Sanders.

July 1994, Jeff Prickett