

# TIGER FLASHBACK MADISON COUNTY 1990

Commerce, ready to avenge the previous years' 12-14 loss to the mounted red horse riders from the east, laid in wait to ambush the 0-2 red clad invaders and did so by a (27-6) score. Commerce used a golden game plan in attacking the heart of the Madison County front seven with a Tiger wishbone running game that completely befuddled the Raider defenders especially in the second half.

Numerous members of the Commerce High School Class of 1950 were in attendance to see their beloved Tigers pounce on the eastern invaders on a warm night when rain fell before the game time but not after the opening kickoff.

The Tigers rolled up 14 first downs and 257 yards by way of its running game while limiting the inept Raider offense to only seven first downs all by way of its 109 yards through the airways and only a mere three yards on the ground.

The game began slowly, as neither team could muster much offense in the initial stanza. Commerce quarterback Jason Pittman fumbled at the Commerce 45 to begin the game, but the stalwart Tiger defense set the tone for the contest as it shut down the Raider attack on its first three snaps.

Following five punts by the two teams into the early portion of the second period, the Tigers of second year head coach Steve Savage solved the Madison County defensive scheme and set out on a 7-play, 38-yard scoring drive set up by Vernard Gillespie's nice 18-yard punt return.

Following a 5-yard run by halfback Wayland Rucker to the Raider five, quarterback Pittman swept right end on an option keeper and scampered into the end zone untouched for the first of four Tiger scores on the night. After the PAT kick by Rod Wilson hit the right upright, the score remained (6-0) with 7:08 remaining in the half.

Neither team was able to mount another serious threat for the remainder of the half.

Behind a sustained running game, Commerce took the second half kickoff and bolted down the field toward another tally. But, halfback Jason West lost possession of the damp pigskin on fourth down at the Raider 21.

However, Madison County's drive was short-lived. On second down, cornerback Josh Massey stepped in front of an errant Chris Smith pass and returned it down the left sideline for fourteen yards to the MC 32 with 3:32 remaining in the third stanza.

On second down, halfback Gillespie burst for eight yards and a first down at the Raider 19 yard line. After fullback Lamar Bowles and Rucker bolted over right tackle for 11 and 7 yards respectively, Pittman again kept on the option play behind Michael Brown, Andy Barnett, and Chris Vickery and scampered around right end for the Tigers' second score at the 2:47 mark of the third period.

Pittman carried again on the same option play for the PAT and the Tiger lead had mounted to a more comfortable (14-0).

On the third play following the kickoff by Chad Crumley, Pittman snared another errant pass by Raider QB Chris Smith returning it 20 yards to the Tiger 36 with only sixty ticks left in the third period.

As the Tiger domination continued, Commerce then mounted its third scoring march of the evening, and one that covered 64 yards in nine snaps. Bowles plowed for 7 and 16 yards up the middle of the Raider defense to the enemy 46. Two more plunges by Bowles set up Pittman's 20-yard option scamper around right end to the 15.

Shortly thereafter Rucker, a 6' 2", 215 pounder, burst for fifteen yards over left tackle for six points capping the drive at 9:12 of the final period. Rucker finished the game with 88 yards in 17 attempts. Wilson's PAT kick was wide leaving the Tigers with a commanding lead of (20-0).

The Raiders got their only points of the night three plays following the kickoff when Smith lofted a 52-yard pass to wide receiver Jonathan Gary down the sideline. With the unsuccessful PAT, the gold and black still held a commanding lead of (20-6) at the 8:14 mark of the final period.

After Pittman's 30 yard kickoff return on the ensuing kickoff, the junior quarterback directed the final Tiger TD drive of the evening 55 yards in 5 plays. He culminated the drive with his third touchdown of the game on a fancy, high-stepping option keeper once again around right end, as he put on the afterburners and rocketed 38 yards down the sideline to glory land with 6:04 left in the game. This time Rod Wilson's PAT kick was true to form and the CHS grads in attendance were very much a happy lot.

The Tigers were led defensively by Michael Brown with eight stops and a quarterback sack. Chad Crumley had seven tackles, while Kelly Slater and Miles Grogan each added six. The Tiger defense played brilliantly on this night squelching most every offensive effort by the Raiders.

Commerce went on to post a 10-4-0 record for the 1990 season, and also defeated Monticello, Decatur and East Rome in playoff games before losing to eventual state champion Lincoln County in the state playoff semi-final contest.

Other victories during the regular season campaign were against Dawson County, Jefferson, Dacula, Social Circle, Athens Academy and Monticello. Regular season losses were to Oconee County, Oglethorpe County and Banks County.

Others who played on the 1990 Tiger squad were: Adam Wilson, Clay Eubanks, Bobby Carroll, Michael Smith, Phillip Cox, Chris Goodman, Richard Vickery, Craig Davis,

Jeff Davis, Chuck Thompson, Jeff Williams, Phillip Wood, Eric Dorsey, Marlon Huff  
and Jason West.

Partially compiled from *The COMMERCE NEWS* and *ATHENS DAILY NEWS* reports

July 1996, Jeff Prickett