

TIGER FLASHBACK

MANCHESTER

1948

For the third home game of the 1948 campaign, the Manchester Blue Devils rolled into Commerce with plans of putting a little heat on the Tigers. The two teams combined put on an offensive fireworks show featuring 750 yards of total offense 405 of that by the Tigers, as Commerce was victorious (26-13).

The Tigers first score came rather early in the contest. The Commerce attack stalled on their 45 and Commerce was forced to punt. On their second snap, the Blue Devil quarterback fired a short pass into the flat where linebacker C.W. Crawford stepped in front of the errant aerial and after juggling it several times gathered it in and outraced several opponents to score from 35 yards out. The point after touchdown was successful and the Gold and Black clad young men from Tigertown had jumped out to a (7-0) lead that they would never relinquish.

Manchester came right back with a sustained march for a TD set up by a 40-yard gallop by the Blue Devil running back. The successful PAT evened up the score at (7-7) in the first quarter.

On the ensuing kickoff, Crawford took the oblong leather on his own 25, faked a handoff with excellent deception and behind fine downfield blocking, bolted down the field untouched for a 75-yard trip to pay dirt. The PAT was again successful and the Tigers led (14-7) as the initial stanza ended.

The second period was marked with numerous fumbles, interceptions and penalties, as neither team was able to mount a serious scoring threat. However, Dickie Alexander and Gene White triggered a serious march into enemy territory with 20-yard runs each just before the halftime horn sounded ending the Tiger scoring threat deep within Manchester territory.

Commerce came out of the locker room and dominated the third period. In the opening minutes of the second half, the Tiger defensive front wall led by the trio of Sidney Waters, Vern Davis, and Ray Adams held Manchester on downs near midfield forcing a punt. On the first play thereafter, Crawford found a large hole off right tackle and raced down the field meeting three defenders which he managed to elude. After slipping out of their grasps, the Tiger fullback was finally run out of bounds at the Blue Devil four to complete a 55-yard gain.

Crawford then scored on the succeeding snap as he plunged in behind right guard. With the missed PAT the Tigers now led (20-7).

Following a short Manchester drive that stalled, the Imps punted down to the Tiger 40. On the next play, the superb blocking Tiger line of ends-Richard Alexander and Otho Dodd, tackles-Richard Kirby and Ray Adams, guards-Vern Davis and Sidney Waters, and center Buddy Harber opened a gaping hole on the right offensive side for halfback Gene White who used his blazing speed to race 60 yards to glory land. The second unsuccessful Tiger PAT on the evening now made the score Commerce 26, Manchester 7 in the latter moments of the third period.

Dickie Alexander and Gene White each scored on runs of 40 and 45 yards respectively in the final period, but each was nullified by penalties.

Manchester was able to push across another TD late in the contest on a 50-yard scoring pass, but by this time the game had been decided with the Tigers coming away with a (26-13) victory.

The Tigers put on an outstanding offensive display. However, the defense gave up 345 total yards but eventually improved as the season progressed.

The Commerce Tigers of 1948 posted an impressive record of 7-2-1 also defeating Covington, Jonesboro, Cornelia, Campbell of Fairburn, Clarkesville and Jefferson while losing only to Toccoa and Monroe and tying Buford.

Others on the 1948 squad were: Paul Scoggins, Ray Garrett, Verner Crawford, Dee Woodie Martin, Hinton Paul, Thomas Sweetser, Garnett Bray, Ray and Roy Fruit, Curtis Stowe, Willard Cartledge, Bill Kilpatrick, Ebb Kilpatrick, William Hardman, James Richey, Curtis Elliott and Charles Hill.

Primarily compiled from *THE COMMERCE NEWS* reports

July 1996, Jeff Prickett