

F511

TIGER FLASHBACK CARTERSVILLE 1973

In the first game of the 1973 football playoffs which was a region title tilt with the Cartersville Purple Hurricanes, the Tigers of head coach Ray Lamb traveled the interstate highways of Georgia to the northwestern sector of the state for their second region championship encounter in a row with the hosts.

The Tigers fell behind early by two touchdowns but made a gallant comeback in the second and third quarters to get a (26-18) win. This contest has gone down in Tiger football history as one of the greatest, toughest and hardest hitting games that a Commerce team and its opponent have ever played.

On the second play of the game, Tiger linebacker Joe Jones, son of Ed Jones with Ed and Bill's Photo Shop in Commerce, was knocked goofy but returned to the game three plays later and continued to play in a somewhat addled state for the remainder of the half.

On this initial drive by the purple and white clad Cartersville team, halfback Joel Ross scored on a four-yard run but the PAT kick was unsuccessful leaving the 'Canes with a (6-0) lead.

On the ensuing kickoff, Tiger fullback Troy Walker fumbled, and Cartersville recovered. They scored on the next play from 24 yards out on a pass from quarterback Williams to split end Taylor. The PAT pass was unsuccessful, but the hometowners held a (12-0) lead with 5:56 left in the first quarter.

With this early success for Cartersville, things looked rather precarious for the Tigers, as they were now indeed behind the eight ball with this two TD deficit.

Guts, heart and tradition now entered the fold for the Tigers, as they reached down as a team, found the inner strength and determination that they needed and scored on their only two possessions of the second quarter to take a halftime lead into the locker room.

Tiger halfback Ronald "Runt" Moon, midway through the period, scored on a two-yard plunge to cut the deficit to (12-7) following Randy Harris' successful PAT kick. This effort by Moon culminated a 12-play, 93-yard drive all by way of the ground forces. Moon picked up 68 yards in seven totes in the all important drive to put the Tigers back into contention in this region championship contest.

The Commerce defense behind the efforts of nose guard Stanley Martin and Company then rose to the occasion and immediately following the kickoff forced Cartersville to punt with the Tigers taking over at the fifty yard line.

Behind the field generalship of quarterback Abe Brown, the Tigers proceeded to launch another scoring drive this time from midfield, and they scored with only six seconds left in the half to take the lead at halftime.

It was again the Moon, Brown, Troy Walker and Raymond Harris show, as the Tigers scored in eight plays with all contributing in key ways in the effort. The TD was set up when Harris swept left end with an option pitch from Brown for 14 yards to the one with only seconds left on the clock and no timeouts remaining for the Tigers.

Brown, the son of Bill Brown a former Tiger player in the 1940's and also the other half of the ownership of Ed and Bill's Photo Shop, bobbled the ensuing snap from center. Tiger fans, players and coaches gasped at the error, as for an instant it seemed the Tigers would squander this outstanding scoring opportunity.

However, the alert Brown grabbed the loose pigskin in the air, lunged toward the goal line behind the gutsy efforts of center-Kenny Hancock, guards-Rickey Smith and Joe Jones. Striving with everything in him, the young signal caller barely made it into the end zone for the touchdown on a play that showed tremendous effort by both he and his offensive linemen.

Randy Harris again toed the PAT with just six ticks remaining on the clock before halftime, and the resurgent Tigers went to the locker room with a (14-12) lead.

Commerce scored on its only two possessions of the third quarter, as they came out of the locker room in a rejuvenated mood following Coach Ray Lamb's halftime sermon and immediately took charge of the game.

Four plays into the second half, Brown fooled the Hurricane defense with a 24-yard bootleg run around right end to the Cartersville eight. Moon later scored on a six-yard trap play up the middle on fourth and goal at the six. A bad snap from center fouled up the PAT attempt, but Commerce now led by eight at (20-12) with four minutes having elapsed in the period following this 8-play, 46-yard scoring drive.

The stalwart Tiger defense led by Billy Pittman, Jones, Hancock, Ronnie Savage, Hoy Lee

Smith, Stanley Martin, Don Watkins and Carl Hiland forced the third punt of the night by Cartersville five plays following the previous Tiger touchdown.

Four plays into the Tiger drive, Moon's only punt of the night was fumbled by the Cartersville punt returner, and the Commerce coverage team pounced on the loose pigskin giving the team great field position at the Hurricane 42.

The Tigers scored in six plays climaxed by Harris' burst of 3 yards over left tackle for a touchdown on the last play of the third period. Brown bobbled the PAT snap foiling the extra point attempt leaving the Tigers with a more comfortable two touchdown fourth quarter lead at (26-12).

Following a QB Brown fumble at the Commerce 44 with 7 minutes remaining in the slugfest, Cartersville pulled some SHENANIGANS. The Purple Hurricanes, at the Tiger 18, faced a fourth and one situation. The quarterback retreated away from the center and threw a lateral pass that bounced off the turf and into the hands of the wide receiver.

Thinking it was an incomplete pass, the Commerce defenders relaxed. However, the wide receiver gathered in the once bounced pigskin and calmly threw a TD pass to an open receiver all alone in the end zone for the score. The score remained at (26-18) following the unsuccessful two-point conversion run midway of the final stanza.

Undaunted and determined, Ray Lamb's forces methodically used their powerful wishbone attack to run out the clock on an 11-play, 47-yard drive and got out of Cartersville with one of the Tiger's greatest come-from-behind victories.

It was a gut wrenching nail-biter that has gone down in Commerce football lore as a classic.

Moon ended the game with 183 yards in 32 totes, while Raymond Harris contributed 108 yards in 16 carries, as the team amassed 359 total yards on the ground along with 18 first downs.

Others that contributed greatly in the Tiger effort in this classic game were: Allen Lacey, Randy Butler and Ronnie Vinson.

The 1973 Tigers went on to post a record of (13-1-0) as they also defeated Banks County, Oconee County, Madison County, White County, Lumpkin County, Rabun County, North Hall, Pickens County, Jefferson, East Hall, Briarwood and Carrollton before losing the state championship game at home to Mt. de Sales.

