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TIGER FLASHBACK MONROE AREA 1961

In the 1961 homecoming game for the undefeated (4-0-0) Tigers, Commerce entertained the (0-2-1) Monroe Area Purple Hurricanes who were eventual winners of only two games during the season.

The 'Canes blew in from the south and up Highway 15 into Commerce in an attempt to burst the Tigers' four game undefeated bubble.

However, the Tigers after having earlier waylaid Madison County, Winder-Barrow, Central Gwinnett and Jefferson in their first four games now had to play a tough hard-hitting game with the 'Canes and their fabulous single wing tailback Tony Adams.

Commerce narrowly prevailed by one touchdown for a (20-13) very hard-fought victory over Monroe Area, as the Tiger defense stopped Adams for minimal yardage for most of the night.

The Tigers had to score two touchdowns in the last five minutes of play to finally defeat their foe and subdue the winds of the little zephyr forcing a trek for the Monroviens back to their Walton County home.

The Purple Hurricanes scored first on a blocked punt that rolled into the end zone where defender Billy Benton recovered the loose pigskin for a Hurricane touchdown. The PAT was unsuccessful but Monroe Area led (6-0).

Both defenses played well in the first half with neither team able to mount a sustained offensive effort in the first two quarters of the game. It seemed that each team's offenses were stymied at every turn. Therefore the (6-0) score as a result of Monroe's defensive touchdown from the blocked punt stood and enabled the 'Canes to hold a one touchdown lead at the half.

During the Homecoming festivities of halftime, Miss Helen Carol Thompson was crowned Commerce Homecoming Queen for 1961.

Following the homecoming ceremonies, Commerce took the second half kickoff and scored in nine plays to knot the score at six.

Tiger quarterback Farris Gary sneaked over from the one yard line, after a drive of 60 yards. The PAT run was unsuccessful leaving the score at (6-6).

Later, Monroe Area running back Benton, behind splendid blocking by his teammates, scored his second TD of the night this time on the reception of a screen pass play which began at the 50 yard line. He was unhampered by Tiger defenders and scored untouched.

The PAT attempt was good and now Monroe Area had reclaimed the lead at (13-6) in the third quarter.

Undaunted, Commerce was able to put more points on the board in the final stanza after a sustained march when Gary lofted a swing pass to halfback Roger Love in the right flat. The junior speedster gathered in the aerial and scampered into the end zone from 21 yards out. Love also added the PAT on a run around right end to once more tie the game at (13-13). Love led the Tigers in points scored in 1961 with 103.

Later in the quarter with Monroe in punt formation, an errant snap from center had the Tigers scrambling for the loose ball. Linebackers William McClure and Tommy Touchstone teamed up for the recovery by Commerce deep in Monroe territory at the 13 setting up a possible game winning score.

Gary ran for six yards on a quarterback keeper, and Love added six more on an end sweep. With the ball now on the one foot line, Gary sneaked over for the final go ahead and decisive Tiger score. The PAT run was successful, as the Commerce Tigers had pulled out a hard-fought squeaker for victory by a (20-13) score.

There were numerous Tiger stars on this special and eventful evening. They were: linemen Joseph Beauchamp, McClure, Touchstone, Robert "Runt" Smith, Kenneth Lord, Toye Brown, Johnny Langston and Jimmy Moss. Backfield superlatives went out to Roy "Doc" Savage, Buford Howell, Love and Gary.

Following the season, fullback Ken Davis and end Kenneth Lord were awarded AJC All-State honors for their superb efforts and accomplishments during the season in leading the team to the Commerce Tigers' first ever region title and a (9-3-0) season record for 1961.

Others on the 1961 team were: Buzzie Blalock, Jack Carlan, Steve Castellaw, Tim Childs, Ken Davis-usually a starter but injured and unable to play in this game, Jim Dickerson, Bob Harper, Larry Martin, Sammy Massey, Mike McClure, Russell McCollum, Hoyt Stowe and Rodney White.

This 1961 Tiger team en route to the region title also defeated eight other teams: Madison County, Winder-Barrow, Central Gwinnett, Jefferson, South Habersham, Stephens County, South Hall and Toccoa (2). They lost three contests to Toccoa (1), St. Pius and Carrollton which was the eventual state champions in Class A that year.

Primarily compiled from THE COMMERCE NEWS reports