

TIGER FLASHBACK

JEFFERSON

1993

In the eighth game of the 1993 season, the Commerce Tigers ventured across the North Oconee River invading Jefferson for the 23rd version of the River War in Dragonland and came away with their 13th win against seven losses and three ties along with their eleventh straight over the Dragons dating back to 1983 as Commerce won easily.

Normally swampland is not precious real estate. But on this night Jefferson's Memorial Stadium was a quagmire, and the Commerce defense guarded every inch of its valuable muck in route to a (26-6) victory over the Dragons. The field was a saturated mess with hardly a dry piece of clothing in the stands let alone on the field. With these horrible conditions, give the Tiger offensive and defensive lines credit; they dominated the ball game in the trenches on not only this very rainy night but also a cold evening as well.

The game was played in a downpour for the entire game, and the Tiger wishbone offensive attack slogged its way to a (14-0) halftime lead pounding out 173 total yards and eight first downs, while the stingy Commerce defense limited the Dragons to only one first down and a mere 19 total yards to set the tone for the evening.

For the game, Commerce controlled the ball and the clock, as they kept the wet pigskin for a total of (28:12 to 19:48) for Jefferson and scooped up one fumble recovery and snagged four interceptions from the inconsistent, error prone and out-classed Dragons.

"I believe we played as good as we have all season," commented Tiger head coach Steve Savage after the game. "We were all on the same page. I'm extremely proud of our players, especially the way we played in the rain," he added.

Commerce got its first score on the Tiger's second possession after holding Dragon's quarterback Jody Pollock on a fourth and inches sneak attempt at the Jefferson 32. This was a big gamble by the Dragons that put the Jefferson defense in a precarious position that they were unable to defend.

After Tiger running backs Brian Stockton, Steven David and Andre Pattman moved the Tigers into scoring position with some bruising runs over guard and tackle, quarterback Kevin Poe got Commerce's initial points with a one-yard quarterback sneak to complete the seven-play, 32-yard drive. Poe's two-point conversion pass was incomplete leaving the Tigers with a (6-0) lead with only five ticks left in the initial stanza.

Following a Dragon punt to the Commerce 45, the Tigers scored again in short fashion. Junior fullback Andre Pattman, on first down, exploded over right guard on a trap play and rambled 54 yards down the middle of the field before being dragged down from behind at the one.

After a procedure penalty forced the Tigers back to the six, sophomore halfback David, two plays later, plunged into pay dirt from two yards out for the Tigers' second tally of the evening. Poe then passed successfully to Bradley Cowart for the two-point conversion in the right corner of the end zone upping the Commerce lead to (14-0) early in the second period.

A series of two successive punts by the two water-logged teams at the end of the second period sent the wet and cold Commerce and Jefferson players into the dressing quarters with the Tigers holding a two touchdown advantage at (14-0).

Three plays into the second half, Tiger defender Chad Sosebee picked off Dragon QB Pollock's pass attempt and returned it 7 yards to the Dragon 41. However, Pattman fumbled it back to Jefferson at the Dragon seven a few plays later.

No problem though, for Pattman shortly thereafter scooped up a Pollock fumble behind the line of scrimmage and squirted 17 yards to glory land for the third Tiger touchdown of the flooded evening. Poe's attempted run for the conversion failed leaving the score at (20-0) with 8:09 to go in the third period.

The Tigers were unable to generate much offense for the remainder of the period but forced the third and fourth Dragon turnovers of the quarter, as Sosebee stepped in front of another Dragon pass, but the Tigers squandered the opportunity.

However, a short time thereafter, Commerce cornerback Clifton Bonds picked off another aerial which set up the final Commerce score of the night, as he returned it 13 yards to the Dragon 45 to open the final period.

Commerce then mounted an 8-play, 45-yard touchdown drive all on the ground, to put the final nail in Jefferson's rain-soaked coffin.

The offensive line of ends--Kevin Neely and Bonds, tackles--Jeff Culpepper and Casey Westbrook, guards--Joe Anderson and Richard Vickery and center--Philip Seabolt enabled the Tiger wishbone to be run to perfection by Poe, as he directed Pattman on plunges up the middle and David over tackle and on the corner to eat up chunks of yardage at four and seven yards a clip.

Pattman capped the march by plunging over guard from three yards out for the night's final score to put the icing on a wet evening. Following the unsuccessful conversion

run by Poe at the 7:55 mark, Commerce lead (26-0) enabling the Tigers to swamp the Dragons again.

Jefferson tacked on a late score to avert a shutout when Donnie Denton scored against the Tiger reserves from four yards out. The unsuccessful conversion pass made the scoreboard final score read ----- COMMERCE--26 and JEFFERSON--6.

Danny Wilson and Culpepper led the Tiger defense with 10 tackles each, while cornerback Steven Rogers added a fourth game interception for Commerce, as the Tigers dominated the game in every statistical category defensively.

On the offensive side of the ball, Pattman led all rushers for the game with 158 yards in 20 carries, only two less than the 160 generated by the entire Dragon offense for the game.

En route to a (7-4-0) season record, the 1993 Tiger team also defeated Oconee County, Oglethorpe County, Towns County, Social Circle, Banks County and Monticello while losing to Madison County, Buford and Dacula twice, the final game being a playoff contest.

Others on the 1974 squad were: Brent Nichols, Chad Wheeler, Greg Sorrow, Matt Stephenson, Chad Eubanks, Gary Brown, Tony Allen, Josh Spear, Tommy Horne, Chad Ashley, Brad Daves, Michael Ward, Russell Shore, Stevie Cotrell, Adam Allen, Michael Reynolds, Brian Craig, Craig Ellis, Brad Fleeman, Matt Sears, Keith Savage, Brandon Bruce, Quincy Strickland, Jody Rogers, Jason Lord and Stef Rucker.

Partially compiled from *THE COMMERCE NEWS* reports

July 2005, Jeff Prickett