

# TIGER FLASHBACK

## NORCROSS

### 1967

Intending to strike fear into the Tigers, the Norcross Blue Devils flew into Commerce to demonize the Black and Gold in 1967. The Commerce lads were not in awe, as they saved their best game of the season for the last one. The rejuvenated CHS Tigers built up a seemingly comfortable 26-7 lead and then fought off a late rally to win their third game of the season and second in a row (26-20) for new head coach Ray Lamb.

Quarterback Jimmy Bray, having his best night ever, set up the first score with a beautiful 28-yard pass to Wendell Wilson, then the senior QB raced 72 yards for the second Tiger tally with only 31 seconds remaining in the first half. He scored the third on a nine-yard sweep, added the last on 15-yard toss to Wilson, and passed for a couple of PAT's.

However, all this still might not have been enough if it hadn't been for his interception of a desperate Blue Devil pass in the Tiger end zone on the last play of the game.

Early in the first quarter, Norcross launched a drive to the Tiger 13 primarily behind two roughness penalties but could go no farther against the tough Tiger defenders, as the Devils eventually gave up the ball on downs.

Commerce then bolted into Blue Devil territory on a 42 yard burst up the middle by fullback Roger Beauchamp, but a fumble stopped the drive and the first quarter ended scoreless.

Midway through the second stanza, the Tigers began their first scoring drive of the evening. A six yard smash into the line by fullback George Allen gave the Tigers a first down at the Norcross 45. Bray moved the chains again with an 8 yard sweep around the right side and a three yard sneak to the 34. Bray then hit Wilson with a pass at the seven with the Tiger halfback waltzing into the end zone putting the Commerce on the board with 2:09 remaining in the half and out front to stay, as Commerce jumped out front (6-0).

A short time later, the Tigers again gained possession of the pigskin at their own 27 with just seconds remaining. Bray set sail around the right side on a sweep, cut back across the middle of the field and outran everyone on a 73-yard touchdown gallop. Bray subsequently threw a strike to wingback Al Fleming for the PAT bolting Lamb's troops into a (13-0) halftime advantage.

Norcross got back into the game immediately after intermission on a 10-play, 73-yard drive primarily behind the running of halfback Larry Walker and a 35-yard pass down to the Tiger two from quarterback Wayne Womack to flanker Philip Johnson. Fullback Kenny Payne later bucked over from the one for the score at the 7:00 mark. The successful PAT kick cut the Tiger lead to a score of (13-7) in the third stanza.

Following the kickoff, Commerce moved 63 yards in 13 methodical plays behind the running of Wilson, Beauchamp and Bray for their third touchdown. Bray put the icing on the drive as he scampered out of the shotgun formation for nine yards and a TD giving the Tigers a (19-7) advantage following the unsuccessful PAT attempt as the third period waned.

The Tiger defense caused the Blue Devils to cough up the ball at their 27 shortly after the kickoff with Tiger defensive lineman Gerald Maxwell claiming the loose ball for the Black and Gold. The short touchdown drive for Commerce was culminated by another aerial by Bray to Wilson of 15 yards for the final Tiger tally of the evening. Bray spotted Fleming again with a pass for the PAT and the Tiger lead had mounted to (26-7) with 5:01 remaining in the final stanza.

The Devils came flying back down the field on a touchdown march of their own and scored a short time thereafter. Womack scored for the never-say-die visitors on a four yard run to cut the Commerce advantage to (26-13) following the unsuccessful PAT.

The Tiger's next drive was short-lived, and Norcross took possession again at their 40 yard line following a punt. The Devils then stormed 60 yards down the field in 5 plays for another score. The successful PAT cut the Tiger lead to (26-20) with only 28 seconds left to play.

Norcross then successfully recovered an onside kick and with two quick completions were again threatening the Tiger end zone at the Tiger 19 yard line with only a few seconds left in the game. The Devils were now putting more pressure on the Tigers than an over-heated boiler, as fans on both sides were on their feet with great anticipation of the final play.

The Blue Devil signal caller drifted back into the pocket and lofted a high pass into the end zone where Bray, with seven seconds remaining, saved the day with his leaping interception.

This victory ended a frustrating season of (3-6-1) for the Tigers, as they defeated Norcross, East Hall and Hart County but lost three games by a 7-6 score, another by two points and again another by only seven.

Coach Ray Lamb later would go on in the 70's and 80's to build one of the great high school football powers in Georgia at Commerce High School eventually ending a 22 year career in Tigertown with a (190-58-9) record.

Others on the 1967 squad were: Tony Barnett, Clyde Houston, Keith Massey, David McCoy, Dwayne Owensby, Marvin Blalock, Ken Cowart, Shirley Lord, Ricky Vickery, Dennis Kesler, Greg Smith, Mike Pace, Ray Seabolt, John Mize, Mike Carlan, Keith Ariail, Tommy Andrews, Gene Jacobs, Danny Cotrell and Jimmy Cooper.

Primarily compiled from *THE COMMERCE NEWS* reports

July 1995, Jeff Prickett