

TIGER FLASHBACK

ATHENS ACADEMY

2005

The Athens Academy Spartans marched their green army up Highway 441 with intentions of slaughtering the Commerce Tigers. But after the two teams slugged it out with little scoring for much of the game, the GOLD and BLACK clawed their way back into the battle for a victory that seemed lost.

After knocking on the door for more than three quarters, Commerce finally busted through and found the end zone, as they scored a pair of touchdowns in a span of 55 seconds in the final stanza and walked off the field with their heads held high after a great fourth period rally in winning this football war (14-6).

On the Spartans first possession of the game, AA drove in eight plays to the Commerce 21 where a fourth and fourteen field goal attempt of 38 yards by Sam Pittard split the uprights to put the green clad visitors on the board early with a (3-0) lead.

Four possessions later in this defensive struggle, Spartan quarterback Carter Gunn connected with split end Brett Satterfield for 36 yards to the Commerce 11. Here the Tigers bowed their neck and forced another Pittard field goal. This time it was good from 23 yards out and upped the Athens Academy lead to (6-0) at the half.

Commerce, in the first half, had trouble getting much of anything going offensively and were fortunate to just be down by six at halftime.

On their first drive of the second half, Commerce gained possession at the AA 37 following a botched run with the punt snap by the Spartan kicker.

Commerce moved to the AA 11 but lost the first of three fumbles on the night with a bobbled handoff to squelch the drive.

On the Tigers' next possession, they shot themselves in the foot once more following a 43 yard drive when QB Reuben Haynes fumbled on first down at the AA 39 to hobble another scoring drive possibility for Commerce.

The Spartans then streaked down the field to the Commerce 22 behind the running of big fullback Nick Stiles and the passing arm of Gunn. However, the fumblitis disease that had plagued the Tigers for three occasions on the evening proved to be contagious

and now jumped on the Athens Academy back, as they were about to lose the hot pigskin.

After receiving a pass from Gunn, split end Pittard lost control of the handle on the pigskin on this clear and cool evening, and a swarm of Commerce defenders pounced on the loose ball at the Tiger seven yard line with 5:17 to go in the game.

At this point, a somewhat slow contest in sheer excitement turned into a Fourth of July fireworks display with everyone on their feet for the rest of the night.

This recovery was the spark that the Tigers needed, as the Reuben Haynes led felines marched 93 yards in eight plays for the go ahead tally.

Commerce converted a fourth and two situation at their own 15 with a two-yard run by fullback Randy Womack who got the first down by inches.

Athens Academy was flagged for 15 more yards after several Spartan players reacted to the fourth down spot and the eventual first down call by the referee.

Sandwiched around two other penalties, Haynes then completed three consecutive passes of 11 yards to Josh Hill and 22 yards to Tony Crawford which set up the third and final pass which was a 46-yard beauty to Hill who streaked down the right sidelines behind the AA defender and caught the aerial in stride for the Tigers' first touchdown of the night at the 2:28 mark of the final stanza.

Dusty Black's PAT was true for a (7-6) advantage and the Tigers had finally garnered a lead that had slithered away from them for three and a half quarters.

Alas, don't sit down and relax now for there's more to come.

Then, after the KO on fourth and thirteen at the AA 14, Gunn's pass fell incomplete giving the Tigers a golden opportunity to increase their lead. Coach Gunn of AA called timeout just before the Tigers ran their second down play at the 10. AA determined they would relax on the play and allow the Tigers to score which Haynes did on the option keeper.

Man, was that a weird scene with all those green Spartans standing around doing nothing on the play. Black's PAT was good for a (14-6) Tiger lead with only 1:33 to go in the game.

Why you say? So that AA could get the ball back on the kickoff and hopefully score a TD and get the two point conversion for the tie, otherwise Commerce might run out the clock.

Following the kickoff, Dustin Alewine returned the kick 33 yards to midfield, where QB

Gunn completed four passes to Pittard, Satterfield and Ferrara to place the ball at the Commerce nine with first and goal and only 41 seconds remaining in the game.

However, the cream always rises to the top and the Commerce defense was the cream tonight as two passes fell incomplete. On a third down pass play, the Tiger defense sacked the quarterback, but the Tigers were called for a face mask penalty and the ball was moved to the four.

Halfback Bevan Hopper then ran for two yards to the two where AA called timeout with 25 seconds remaining in the game. On fourth and two, Hopper rambled around right end but was bolted out of bounds by Tiger defender Alonzo Huff at the five, after the Tiger defensive end had played the play with determination, skill, great technique and effort to deny the Spartans a first down.

CELEBRATE!!!!!! The Tigers had bowed their neck once again, as they came up with the big plays offensively and defensively when they had to in order to win a game that seemed to many Commerce onlookers to be out of reach of victory for on this cool night in Tigertown.

From the 0:20 mark, Coach Steve Savage's charges now took a knee on two consecutive snaps and walked off the field with a never say die victory of (14-6). "Determination and hard work are the path to success," Coach Savage once said. Tonight was a great example.

The (6-5-0) 2005 Tigers also beat Trion, Banks Co., No. Oconee, Jefferson and Towns Co., while losing to Franklin Co., Morgan Co., Lincoln Co., Soc. Circle and Warren County.

Others on the 2005 Commerce team were: Matt Adams, T. Green, Cohen Cooke, Tyler Ledbetter, Morgan Adams, Jack Lowe, Justin Askey, Thomas Sears, Jake Askey, Anthony Flaherty, Doug Maloch, Taylor Sims, Drake Cash, Dustin Holland, Jordan Nation, Austin Hanley, Cameron Billings, Brice Wilson, Josh Beauchamp, Baxter Barnes, Jamie Carmichael, Aaron Holland, Andrew Minish, Jake Flint, Chad Clark, Matthew Dean, Matt Shirley, Spencer Lord, Adam Carmichael, Taylor Wood, Jacob Lord, Kevin Jones, John David, Taylor Adams, Phillip Edwards, Jovan Womack, Quartez Hancock, Skyler Peek, Dillon Anthony, Dustin McLain, Cody Watson, Hunter Roop, Colton Brown, Brandon Turner, Taylor Streetman, Justin Henderson and Chase Bowen.

Partially compiled from *ATHENS BANNER-HERALD* reports

July 2007, Jeff Prickett

