

TIGER FLASHBACK

BUFORD

1994

Buford rolled into Tigertown with a three game winning streak over the Tigers dating back to 1989, but the Commerce lads were not to be denied on this night, as they sewed up the regular season Region 8A championship for Coach Steve Savage with a hard-fought (17-7) victory over the bigger Wolves.

The Tigers trailed 7-6 at the half, but rebounded with 11 second-half points for the win, and their seventh in a row since opening the season with back-to-back losses.

It was the Commerce defense that really rose to the occasion on this cloudy but mild evening in Tiger Stadium. Coach Savage had said earlier that the defensive unit would have to make some big plays if the Tigers were to defeat the Wolves.

Indeed, big plays on the defensive side of the ball were the order of the evening, as Commerce defenders forced three interceptions, two of which were turned into touchdowns by the Tiger offense.

The game started slowly with neither team managing much on offense on two early possessions each. Buford finally broke into the scoring column in the second quarter with an 8-play, 55-yard drive which Buford's Brett Richards finished off with a one-yard plunge. Heath Bowman, who ran two reverses for 36 yards in the 55 yard march, kicked the PAT to give the visitors the early lead at 7-0 with 8:02 to play in the half.

The Commerce offense continued to sputter until the 4:10 mark of the second period when Tiger cornerback Clifton Bonds gathered in the first of his two interceptions on the evening.

Starting from the Tiger 45, Commerce moved to the Wolves' 15 yard line in eight plays. Fullback Andre Pattman bowled over several would-be tacklers and carried Buford's Kiki Collins with him into the end zone from 15 yards out to climax the drive. The Tigers now had narrowed the Buford advantage to (7-6) at the half after Adam Allen's PAT kick sailed wide to the right at the 1:30 mark of the second stanza.

Buford's Marvin Tanner opened the second half with a 40-yard kickoff return to the Commerce 36. The Wolves quickly drove to the Tiger 5 yard line where the Commerce defense finally bowed their necks and held at the four. Bowman's 21-yard field goal attempt was no good as it angled off to the right and Tiger fans breathed a collective

sigh of relief with the Tigers now taking over at their 20.

Three plays following an eventual Tiger punt, Brent Nichols picked off a Richards' pass and returned it 22 yards to the Buford 25 to set up the Tigers' second score.

Six plays later, Tiger quarterback Kevin Poe scored from 13 yards out on the option keeper around left end to give the Tigers the lead for good at (12-7). Fullback Andre Pattman then bulled his way up the middle of the Buford defensive wall for the successful two-point conversion to give Commerce a (14-7) advantage with 2:24 left in the third quarter.

Buford came right back down the field with a 12-play drive that finally stalled at the Commerce 20 when a fourth down and nine pass by Richards was batted away on great efforts by defensive back Brent Nichols and safetyman Greg Sorrow.

Commerce now secured the win in driving 64 yards on six plays to the Buford six. Pattman provided the big play, rumbling 45 yards up the Buford defensive middle on the drive's first carry. After the drive bogged down, big Adam Allen drilled a 23-yard field goal with 4:44 left in the game to provide the final margin of victory at (17-7).

Buford stormed back down the gridiron to the Tiger 33 behind the passing of Richards, but the drive was squelched when Bonds made his second theft of the evening at the Commerce 13.

Pattman led Tiger ball carriers with 129 yards on 19 carries. The (17-7) win gave Tiger head coach Steve Savage his first regular season region title.

During the 1994 football campaign, Commerce also defeated Oglethorpe County, Rabun County, Monticello (1), Athens Academy, Social Circle and Union County.

These seven wins in the middle of the season were sandwiched by losses in the first two games of the season to Madison County and Oconee County, as well as two losses at the end of the year to Jefferson and a second meeting with Monticello in a playoff game.

Other members of the 1994 Tiger squad were: Russ Gregg, Chad Wheeler, Reggie Collins, Chad Sosebee, Scott Sanders, Terrell Beasley, Craig Mathis, Larry Venable, Stevie Cotrell, Tim Booth, Josh Spear, Casey Westbrooks, Tommy Horne, Michael Ward, Keith Savage, Craig Ellis, Brad Fleeman, Chad Ashley, Matt Sears, Matt Stephenson, Tony Allen, Joe Anderson, Seth Scoggins, Chad Eubanks, Brandon Bruce, Jason Lord, Steven David, Bradley Cowart, Jody Rogers and Michael Fitzpatrick.

Members of the 1994 Tiger cheerleading squad were: Kelly Brown, Shannon Patrick, Julie Goodnight, Ashley Williams, Heather Tolbert, Heather Backer, Kelly Clark, Clare Lyn Bryant, Lisa Duncan, Jessica McFadden, Meg Davis and Sammi Kay Tonge.

Primarily compiled from *THE COMMERCE NEWS* and *ATHENS DAILY NEWS* reports

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