

TIGER FLASHBACK

ELBERTON

1943

The Elberton Blue Devils rolled into Tigertown on December 3, 1943 to square off against the Commerce Tigers for the North Georgia District B Championship. Both teams sported fine winning records. Commerce had an (8-2-0) slate, as they hosted the one loss Elberton team on a cool night in late fall.

Commerce came away with a (34-12) victory, as they pummeled the devils in a game that they controlled from the outset to give the Tigers their first ever playoff victory.

The Tiger passing and ground attack rolled on like a Sherman Tank, as Commerce pile-driven through, around and over the Blue Devil defense. After building a (14-0) halftime advantage, Commerce met with some resistance in the second half when Elberton pushed across two touchdowns, however the Tigers countered with three more scores of their own to win the game by a sizeable margin.

The game was witnessed by a large and enthusiastic crowd. The game afforded many thrills and closed out a very successful season at (9-2-0) giving Coach Richard Nix his first winning season at Commerce after having started at (1-6-0) in 1940 and going on to (0-10-0) and (4-4-2) the following two seasons before this historic campaign.

In the first quarter, tailback Billy Rogers for Commerce capped a successful drive by skirting right end untouched for 40 yards and a touchdown. Kenneth Pittman tacked on the successful PAT to give the Tigers a (7-0) lead in the first quarter.

The offensive line of ends--Harold Perry and George Short, tackles—Farris Maddox and Raphael Barnett, guards—Joe Boyd Evans and Bill Brown along with center—Hoyal Hix opened up gaping holes for the backs all night long.

Jackson Jones and Roger Benton were stalwarts in the backfield, as they ran interference on the power sweeps as well as power plunges into the Elberton defense.

In the second quarter, the Tigers once more drove deep into Elberton territory behind the line plunges of Rogers and Perry (now at fullback). Perry eventually culminated the march with a buck over right guard from two yards out for the second Tiger tally of the night. Again, Pittman converted the PAT to give the Tiger lads a (14-0) lead at

intermission.

In the third period, the running of Blue Devil tailback Meredith was spectacular. However, the Tiger line held the first sustained Elberton drive of the night on their own three, and Perry later quick kicked out to the Tiger 25. Elberton then pushed the ball to the Commerce five where it was fourth and goal to go. Meredith then faded back to pass but saw an opening and scrambled up the middle of the field for the score. The try for the extra point failed leaving Commerce with a slim (14-6) lead.

Also in the third period, Commerce came storming back down the field and answered the Elberton score with one of their own. Tiger halfback Sid Johnston made a long pass to Perry who had sprinted across the goal line all alone as he gathered in the pigskin in for a touchdown culminating a 30-yard pass play. Again Pittman's PAT was good increasing the Tiger lead to (21-6).

In the fourth and final period, Elberton began to fill the air with passes, however the alert Pittman intercepted an errant aerial on a spectacular defensive effort and sprinted 30 yards for the fourth Tiger touchdown of the evening. Perry's try for the PAT failed leaving the Tigers with a substantial lead of (27-6).

Elberton then cut the Tiger advantage to (27-12) with a long TD pass of 60 yards to McLanahan. The PAT failed.

Commerce scored the final tally of the night when Johnston threw a perfect bullet pass to Perry who caught the ball in the midst of three Blue Devil defenders and raced 30 yards to score to put the icing on the playoff victory cake.

George Short added the successful PAT to make the final score read Commerce—34 and Elberton—12.

On the final play of the game the Cronic twins, Felton and Welton, made the last tackle of the season as they had done so many times during games earlier in the year. They were small but played with reckless abandon.

The announcer for the game was Hardman Jones who was the public address announcer for Commerce home games for all of the '40's and much of the 1950's and 1960's.

Commerce during the 1943 season also defeated each of the following teams twice during the year: Cornelia, Monticello, Greensboro and Hartwell while losing twice to a powerful Toccoa team.

Others on the 1943 team were: Ned Butler, James "Porky" Chandler, Cecil Harris, Farris Maddox, Billy Martin, Bill Mize, Gerald Mullins, John Lee Ray, B.A. Seagraves, Herman Smallwood, Paul Trawick, Luke "Junior" Vandiver, Sam Vickery and manager—Langford Wilburn.

Primarily compiled from *THE COMMERCE NEWS* reports

July 2006, Jeff Prickett