

TIGER FLASHBACK

ELLIJAY

1947

The Ellijay Indians trekked along their warpath from high in the mountains of north Georgia to do battle with the Commerce Tigers who were hosting their first game in the new Commerce Tiger Stadium located behind the high school which was situated on Shankle Heights Road in Commerce.

The Tigers from “The City on the Right Track” gave the visitors an unceremonious scalping of their own, as they trounced the young braves to the tune of (25-7). The Tigers, exhibiting some excellent blocking and splendid play in the offensive and defensive lines, handily defeated the Indians in this inaugural game at the new Tiger Stadium.

After this shellacking by the Tigers, the Indians gathered their war bonnets, got on their four wheeled ponies and slowly motored back to their camp grounds to lick their wounds. The ‘Injuns from Gilmer County wanted to see no more of the Commerce Tigers.

This was the beginning of a eighteen year reign for the Tigers in this facility that lasted through the 1964 season where the lads from Tigertown accumulated a stadium record of (59-29-4), a .640 winning percentage.

The old Hardman Field behind the Commerce Grammar School just off South Elm Street which was a length of only 80 yards, had been used by Commerce teams from 1909-1928 and 1940-1946, before this new Tiger Stadium was erected for the football team.

Commerce had only one casualty in the contest when Howell Little, Jr. had to leave the game with a sprained wrist. Herman Smallwood, Don Burchett and Ray Fruit were slightly injured but later reentered the contest to do battle with these warriors from the north.

After receiving the opening kickoff, the black and gold Commerce lads marched down the field in seven plays without a bobble to score the initial tally of the season.

Halfback Herman Smallwood capped the drive with a 15-yard score, as he sailed around

right end untouched to pay dirt.

The PAT pass from Heyward Tarpley to Smallwood was successful for an early first period lead of (7-0) for the Commerce Tigers which were led by head coach Howard Chambers and assistant coach Ralph Chambers. The two were cousins.

Following a series of punts in the first two quarters of play, Commerce gained possession once more at the Tiger 35 and began another march to glory land.

Later in the second stanza, fullback C.W. Crawford culminated the drive with a burst over the goal line from 10 yards out to cap an eight play drive. The unsuccessful PAT left the Tigers with a (13-0) advantage at halftime, as the remainder of the period was uneventful.

Halfback Curtis Elliott scored the two Commerce touchdowns in the second half with one coming in each quarter. Elliott's first score came on a 20-yard scamper around right end, and later the young running back tacked on the final march into the end zone with a four yard thrust over right tackle. Both PAT's failed leaving the Tigers with a (25-0) lead with little time left in the first ever encounter between the two teams.

Ellijay later scored a token touchdown, as the fabulous Tigers marched off the field with a (25-7) win to the cheers of their dedicated and enthusiastic fans.

Don Burchett was the star lineman of the game, as he played a stellar game in the offensive line at left guard. He, along with Sidney Waters, was a thorn in the side of the Indians all night, as he time and again made vicious and superb tackles to stop the Indian ball carriers.

Smallwood sported new lenses (eye glasses) in this game enabling him to see clearer. His kick returning duties and punting were outstanding all evening.

The Tiger linemen consisted of ends-Howell Little, Jr. and Heyward Tarpley, tackles- Gerald McClelland and Richard Alexander, guards-Burchett and "Iron Man" Sidney Waters, center-Buddy Harber as well as quarterback Tommie Syfan who along with all the other ball carriers played a fantastic game.

The efforts of the defense were superb as they shut down and shut out Ellijay for most of the contest.

The 1947 Tigers went on to post a fine record of (6-3-0) as they also defeated Eastanollee, Jonesboro, Cornelia and beat Jefferson in two contests both of which were played in a deluge of rain. Commerce only lost to Toccoa, Washington and Buford.

Others on the 1947 Commerce team were: Gene Baird, Bradley Caudell, Verne Davis, Otho Dodd, Roy Fruit, Ralph Green, Waymond Ingram, Ebb Kilpatrick, Richard Kirby, Dewoodie Martin, Theron Stancil, Charlie Ray Stephenson, Curtis Stowe, Thomas

Sweetser, Warren Toney, Amory Williams and manager-Terrell Tanner.

Primarily compiled from *THE COMMERCE NEWS* reports

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