

# TIGER FLASHBACK

## GREENE COUNTY

### 1981

Finally, after having come close on numerous occasions, the Tigers under Coach Ray Lamb got the victory they so greatly desired in winning the Class AA State Football Championship in 1981 by defeating a formidable Greene County team (28-14) en route to a 13-1-1 season record.

Tiger fans had dreamed of this since modern football began in Commerce in 1940. The feeling was indescribable as fans, coaches and players hugged, kissed and shook hands on the field and in the field house following the game.

It was a long time coming but now it had come true. For players, coaches, school officials and fans it truly felt great. The ultimate victory in high school sports now resided in Tigertown.

Senior quarterback Bobby Lamb connected on the first three passes he threw and of the four touchdowns scored by the Tigers, he passed for two and ran for two more as approximately 7,000 wide-eyed fans not only from Commerce but many others from north Georgia filled Tiger Stadium to over-flow capacity.

After an exchange of punts to open the game, the Commerce Tigers took possession at the Commerce 33 from where quarterback Bobby Lamb and Company proceeded to pick the Greene Co. defense apart en route to the first score of the night. Lamb passed to tight end Terry Howard for 26 yards as he tight-roped the sidelines before being forced out of bounds at the Greene 36.

Two plays later, Lamb rolled out of the backfield to his right and lofted a 34-yard TD pass into the end zone where brother Hal easily gathered it in five yards behind any Greene defender with 3:49 remaining in the initial period. Freshman Todd Lord toed the PAT, his first of four on the evening to make the score (7-0) for Commerce.

Greene Co. could get no farther than their nine yard line following Lord's kickoff, and after knocking out two initial first downs, these foreign Tigers bogged down and were forced to punt. Delano White fair caught the kick at the Commerce 47 early in the second period, but a Greene tackler made a late hit on White which was a crucial

mistake that helped set up the second Commerce score placing the ball on the Greene County 38 yard line.

Commerce then began a 38-yard TD march in seven snaps primarily behind the running of fullback Tony Smallwood who garnered 34 of the yards on five bursts up the middle. His efforts set up Bobby Lamb's one-yard touchdown sneak behind right guard Clay Hendrix and center Nathan Anderson. After the PAT at 8:47, the Commerce lead was now (14-0).

Now trailing by two touchdowns, Greene County went to the air, as signal caller Willie Hill threw the bomb which was picked off by Commerce cornerback Taylor Rucker at the Commerce 31. At this point the Greene defense stiffened, and Greene County then mounted its first serious scoring threat of the game.

After a 41 yard pass from Hill to halfback James "Seed" Miller, the Tigers of Coach Tom Temple found themselves knocking at the TD door on the Commerce 10 yard line with a first down.

However, Smallwood from his linebacker position came up with three big plays to thwart the drive. On second down at the Commerce six, Smallwood stopped halfback Fred Terrell for no gain. On third down, the Commerce linebacker blitzed up the middle to help cause a fumble which Greene Co. was able to recover at the six. On fourth down, he sacked Hill for a 14-yard loss, thwarting Greene's only scoring opportunity of the first half.

Greene opened the second half determined to put points on the board, as they blitzed down the field primarily behind the passing of Hill to the Commerce nine where Hill's second and seven pass was intercepted by senior free safety Clark Williams.

It was his third snare in two games. As Williams stepped in front of the Hill pass at the Commerce goal line, the senior defender raced 68 yards down the Commerce sideline before being stopped at the Greene County 32.

On third and four shortly thereafter, Lamb lofted a perfect strike to senior halfback Delano White streaking down the right sideline for the score at the 7:30 mark of the third period. It was Lamb's 48th career TD pass. The successful PAT now propelled Commerce into a (21-0) lead over the Greene Co. invaders.

Greene's next possession resulted in another interception, this one by defensive end Terry Howard who leaped at the line of scrimmage and latched on to the pigskin to deny Temple's Tigers another scoring opportunity at the Commerce 40 yard line.

Lamb and Company, now put the dagger in the throat of Greene County, as they mounted a 5-play, 60-yard drive behind a 17-yard run by White and a 19-yard aerial from B. Lamb to Howard. This completion set up a 15-yard option keeper for a TD by Lamb around left end with only five ticks left in the third period. Lamb's fourth successful PAT on the night made the scoreboard read (28-0) in favor of Commerce.

Greene dominated the fourth period running 23 plays for two TD's to only six plays for Commerce but it was not enough.

Greene drove 90 yards to score its first fourth period touchdown of the evening at the 6:52 mark on a 3-yard plunge by Terrell. Hill then passed to Miller for the two-point conversion to cut the Commerce lead to (28-8).

On its next possession, Commerce gave up the ball on downs at the Greene 39. Three plays later Greene ran an illegal play, the center keep where the center snaps the ball to the quarterback but brings the ball back down and runs with it. Center David Thornton raced 49 yards untouched for a TD through a startled and stunned Commerce defense.

No Commerce defender could find the ball until it was too late; nor could the officials or the Commerce coaching staff until they looked at film on the following Sunday.

The resulting PAT pass was incomplete, and the score stood at (28-14) with 3:08 to play in this monumental game for the city of Commerce.

Greene County then tried an on side's kick which Hal Lamb couldn't gather in as the visitors took possession at the Commerce 49.

Eight plays later, with 1:01 on the clock, Temple's charges faced a fourth-and-two at the Commerce 28. Hill's desperation pass was batted down by Terry Howard at the line of scrimmage giving Commerce the ball and the game.

It was the greatest game in Tiger football history, because it was the one that brought Commerce its first state football championship. Wow! What a game it was.

As hundreds of fans mobbed the field during the final ticks, the chant loud and clear was "We're Number-One! We're Number-One!". Truly they were Number-One not only in the polls but in the hearts of the people of Commerce, Ga.

"It was a great team effort," stated Coach Ray Lamb after the game. "It's a sweet victory."

During the 1981 state championship season, Commerce also defeated: Cartersville, Madison County, Oconee County, North Gwinnett, Duluth, East Hall (twice) with the latter being a playoff game, Jefferson, Loganville, Rabun County, Darlington and North Springs while losing only to Buford and tying Hart County.

Others on the 1981 Tiger State Championship team were: David Thomas, Greg Davis, Bill Finch, Greg Zak, Daniel Ford, Rodney Bell, Tim Pritchett, Kenny Wood, Brian Hill, Nathan, John Pittman, Ted Studdard, Vaughn Howington, Allen Adams, Carl McWhorter, Tim Seabolt, Bart Haggard, Chris Tarkenton, and Bret Haggard.

*Partially compiled from THE JACKSON HERALD and ATHENS DAILY NEWS reports*

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