Written by MIke Kelly
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Butch Carter and the South Caldwell High football team have a simple philosophy---run the ball successfully, and play solid defense.

Well, the Spartans (7-0 overall; 2-0 in the Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) did just that on Friday night as they knocked off Watauga 27-7 at Jack Clarke Field in Sawmills. The Spartans held the ball for nearly 31 minutes and they gobbled up 261 yards on the ground in 55 attempts. It was the perfect example of smash-mouth football.

“That’s the way we make our living,” Carter said. “I said it at the beginning of the season that we were going to run the ball straight at people this season, and we were going to be tough on defense. And I’m very happy with the results, so far.”

Devin Potter, who came in with a team-leading 809 rushing yards and 13 touchdowns on the season, backboned the attack. He rambled for 169 yards on 31 carries and scored twice.

His eight-yard run in the second quarter capped off a seven-play, 71-yard drive on South’s second possession, and his two-yard scamper a little less than two minutes later gave the Spartans a commanding 14-0 lead at the 4:23 mark of the first quarter. Hayden Frank’s pooch kick set up South Caldwell’s second touchdown.

Blake Johnson pounced on the loose ball at the Watauga 30-yard line, and the Spartans punched it in five plays later.

“You just can’t fall behind like that,” WHS coach Tim Pruitt said. “They picked up two quick

scores and our offense never got on the field. We had problems handling kick-offs tonight, and it really hurt us."

A pair of Frank field goals (from 20-and 29-yards) in the second quarter gave the Spartans a 20-0 lead at the halftime break. But the Pioneers (2-4; 0-1 NW3A/4A) , who got pushed around early in the game, finally stiffened up in the later stages of the second quarter.

They carried that momentum into the third period, when they scored on their opening possession of the second half. Kyle Chambers scored on an 11-yard run, capping off a six-play, 65-yard drive to make it 20-7. The Pioneers also exceeded their entire first-half total of 62 yards on that scoring drive.

"We made some adjustments at halftime," said WHS senior Mo Gore. "And scoring on our opening drive in the second half gave us some life. But in the end, the bad start really hurt us. We just couldn't recover."

What really killed WHS was not talking advantage of great field position following Chambers' touchdown. The Spartans were flagged for a block in the back on the ensuing kick-off, which pushed them all the way back to their 10-yard-line. Following a three-and-out, the Spartans punted and WHS got the ball at the South Caldwell 36.

The Pioneers marched it down to the 15, where they were looking at third-and-one. But David Crouch of the Spartans dropped Baker Stanley for a four-yard loss back to the 19, and on fourth down, a bad snap skipped by Ethan Greene.

He ran it down, but was sacked back at the 35 and the Pioneers turned it over on downs. WHS also turned the ball over four times.

"That really hurt us," Pruitt said. "We had a chance to get back in the game, but we didn't take advantage of the situation. We had great field position, moved it deep in their territory, and then we had two breakdowns and it killed the drive."

The Spartans finally put the game away with a smash-mouth, time-consuming drive in the fourth quarter. They marched 72-yards in 12 plays as Brandon Ervin scored from 14-yards out with 4:21 left to settle the issue. The drive took 5:18 off the clock.

“This team is very mature,” Carter said. “Every time we’ve been challenged, we’ve never panicked. We’ve had an answer for whatever people have thrown us. I’m very proud of this team. They’ve done a tremendous job.”

The Spartans have a bye next week; they take on Hibriten on October 15. For WHS, the Pioneers return home to play Hibriten next Friday night. The Panthers (6-1; 2-0 NW3A/4A) were ranked fourth in the state in Class 3A in the Associated Press Top 10. Our coverage begins at 6:30 pm next Friday night on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: South Caldwell leads the all-time series 19-15……South also picked up its first win against WHS at home since 2005…..Since 1997, the Pioneers are 2-4 in Sawmills….WHS only had possession for 6:12 in the first half.....Friday’s loss also leaves WHS with an 0-1 record in the Class 4A division of the NW3A/4A. That makes the Alexander Central game on October 22 (the Homecoming game as well) a must-win to have a shot at making the playoffs. The Pioneers haven’t missed the playoffs since 2005.

1 2 3 4

WHS 0 0 7 0 – 7

South Caldwell 14 6 0 7 – 27

FIRST DOWN: SC 18 WHS 11

TOTAL YARDS: SC 299 WHS 163

RUSHING YARDS: SC 55-261 WHS 23-60

PASSING YARDS: SC 38 WHS 103

TIME OF POSSESSION: SC 30:27 WHS 17:33

TURNOVERS: SC 1 WHS 4

SOUTH CALDWELL:

RUSHING: Devin Potter 31-169-2 TD

PASSING: Scout Houston 3-6-1 24 YDS; Jay Johnson 1-4-0 14 YDS

RECEIVING: Aaron Annnas 2-14 YDS

WHS:

RUSHING: Kyle Chambers 8-47-1 TD

PASSING: Ethan Greene 11-20-2 103 YDS

RECEIVING: Seth Sloan 3-25; Matt Scott 2-28; Trey Kavanaugh 2-27