

Pioneers Hold That Tiger

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 17 September 2011 09:35

The Watauga High football team staved off a huge challenge from a former Pioneer Friday night. The Pioneers (3-2 overall; 1-0 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) defeated Fred T. Foard 23-17 in the NW3A/4A opener for both teams at nippy Jack Groce Stadium. The win derailed the return of former Pioneer Jason Phelps, who took over the Fred T. Foard program last May.

And Phelps, who graduated from WHS in 1992 and from Appalachian State University in 1996, wanted nothing more than to beat his old team on his return to Boone. But a strong defensive effort by the Pioneers thwarted those plans. The biggest stop of the game came after Sam Hefner of the Tigers (1-4; 0-1) recovered a Kyle Chambers' fumble at the WHS 14-yard-line with 10:48 to play and the Pioneers leading by six.

The Tigers marched their way to the five and were facing a third and one. But Robinson was thrown for a three-yard loss at the nine by Taylor Shuford, and following a time out, the Tigers went for it on fourth-and-six and were denied as the Pioneers, led by Victor Hamby and David Martin, stuffed the play at the six.

"Our defensive line got a great push and the linebackers just closed off the gaps," said WHS junior Taylor Shuford, who turned in a career-high 16 tackles. "Blow 'em up, block 'em down and bust 'em in the mouth. (Robinson) was our priority tonight, and we pretty much covered him up."

Shuford also had a fumble recovery just before halftime that led to a WHS touchdown with four seconds left in the second quarter and a 17-7 lead. And the Pioneers, who bent but didn't break, held Robinson, who was leading the NW3A/4A in rushing, to 82 yards on 20 carries. On the other hand, the Tigers did a pretty good job containing Chambers.

He only had 27 yards on ten carries in the first half. But his 36-yard run with 1:42 left in the third quarter snapped a 17-17 tie and put WHS on top to stay. Chambers also turned in his fourth consecutive 100-yard game as he finished with 102 yards on 21 carries.

"The offensive line did a great job getting me downfield (on his touchdown run)," Chambers said. "But all game long and all week, the defenses keyed on our running backs. It was tough, but we finally got things going in the second half."

But the Pioneers nearly gave the game away, thanks to three turnovers and a blocked punt. Fortunately, the Tigers only mustered ten points off those miscues. The tables turned on WHS on its first possession of the second half. Brandon Owensby forced a Chambers fumble at midfield, and Hefner recovered for the Tigers. The Tigers punched it in nine plays later on Robinson's 11-yard run, narrowing the gap at 17-14. A blocked punt by Tanner Fleming led to Zack Schellenberger's 27-yard field goal that hit the cross bar and bounced over to tie game with 2:16 left in the third quarter.

"That was a big play, no doubt," said WHS coach Tim Pruitt, who is 3-0 lifetime against the Tigers. "I really felt we were in control of the game, especially after we scored just before halftime. We got the ball to start the second half, and if we punch it in from there, it may have put the game out of reach.

"But our defense made the big stops when it had to. They moved the ball on us, but our defense bowed its neck and really stepped up when the game was on the line. The game was in their hands and they did a great job."

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WHS's defense made its final stand with 1:38 to play. Facing a fourth-and-two at their 41, the Tigers came up short as Robinson was thrown for a two-yard loss at the 39. Hamby and Shuford disrupted the play, and ended any hopes the Tigers might have had.

"It was nice to get the conference win and get this one out of the way," said WHS quarterback Ethan Greene. "It always good to play in games like this, where you have to battle. Our defense really stepped up. They made some big stops when they had to. We put our defense in some bad situations. And most of the time, you won't get out of it, but they really made some big stops. Our defense played with a lot of heart."

Greene was 9-12 passing for 127 yards; he also ran for 49 yards. He hooked up with Brian Bolster on a three-yard scoring toss just before halftime, and he scored on a 33-yard run on WHS's opening possession of the game that gave the Pioneers a 7-0 first-quarter lead. In his career, Greene has six touchdown passes and has scored a touchdown against Fred T. Foard. "Ethan did a great job managing the game," Pruitt said. "That's why he's our quarterback. He's a senior and he's been through stuff like this before. He's a heady guy and he's our leader out there."

Shuford, who had a career-high 16 stops and a fumble recovery, also had a quarterback sack and three tackles-for-loss; Colin Augustine had 12 stops and 1.5 TFL; Alex Fox and Cody McKinney each had ten tackles; David Martin had eight. The Pioneers travel to Hickory next Friday night. Our coverage begins at 6:30 p.m. on Oldies 100.7 FM.

NOTES: The Pioneers are 3-0 lifetime against the Tigers.....WHS also won its first conference opener since 2009. They beat South Caldwell that season, 20-15.....The Tigers have lost eight consecutive league games since 2009. The last team they defeated in league play was South Caldwell.....Chambers now has 554 rushing yards and nine touchdowns in five games. It's the most rushing yards by a WHS running back this deep in the season since Eric Breitenstein in 2007.....The Pioneers had 83 tackles as a team in Friday night's win.....The Tigers closed out a four-game road trip against WHS Friday night.....Fred T. Foard has lost 18 of its last 19 games dating back to 2009.

SCORING:

	1	2	3	4	T	
FRED T. FOARD					0	7 10 0 - 17
WATAUGA					7	10 6 0 - 23

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FIRST QTR:

7:43 WHS - GREENE 33 YD RUN (PARSON'S KICK), 6-56 (2:06) 7-0

SECOND QTR:

9:10 WHS - PARSONS 30 YD FIELD GOAL, 7-34 (2:38) 10-0

5:00 FTF - WARE 27-YARD RUN (SCHELLENBERGER'S KICK), 9-67 (4:05) 10-7

0:04 WHS - GREENE 3 YD PASS TO BOLSTER (PARSON'S KICK), 3-25 (0:22) 17-7

THIRD QTR:

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6:12 FTF - ROBINSON 11 YD RUN (SCHELLENBERGER'S KICK), 9-50 (4:46) 17-14

2:16 FTF - SCHELLENBERGER 27 YD FIELD GOAL, 5-34 (2:52) 17-17

1:42 WHS - CHAMBERS 36 YD RUN (KICK BLOCKED), 3-59 (0:27) 23-17

STATISTICS:

TOTAL YARDS: WHS 278, FTF 235

RUSHING YARDS: WHS 151, FTF 235

PASSING YARDS: WHS 127, FTF 0

TURNOVERS: WHS 3, FTF 1

TIME OF POSS. WHS 21:32, FTF 26:28

3RD DOWN EFF. WHS 2/7, FTF 3/12

4TH DOWN EFF. WHS 0/1, FTF 0/2

RUSHING:

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WHS: CHAMBERS 21-102-TD, GREENE 10-49-TD

FTF: ROBINSON 20-82-TD, WARE 20-81-TD

PASSING:

WHS: GREENE 9-12-127-TD

FTF: WARE 0-1

RECEIVING:

WHS: BOLSTER 4-44-TD, POULOS 2-41, CHAMBERS 2-27, TRIVETTE 1-15

NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE STANDINGS AND RESULTS

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WATAUGA 3-2; 1-0

SOUTH CALDWELL 4-1; 1-0

ALEXANDER CENTRAL 2-3; 1-0

HICKORY 3-1-1; 0-0

FRED T. FOARD 1-4; 0-1

HIBRITEN 3-2; 0-1

ST. STEPHENS 0-5; 0-1

FRIDAY NIGHT'S SCORES:

WATAUGA 23, FRED T. FOARD 17

ALEXANDER CENTRAL 40, ST. STEPHENS 7

SOUTH CALDWELL 42, HIBRITEN 14

HICKORY 16, PFAFFTOWN-REAGAN 13 (OVERTIME)

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 23RD

WATAUGA @ HICKORY

ALEXANDER CENTRAL @ FRED T. FOARD

SOUTH CALDWELL @ ST. STEPHENS

DAVIE COUNTY @ HIBRITEN

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