

Spartans Claim Share Of NW3A/4A Title

Written by Mike Kelly

Saturday, 15 October 2011 10:24

It's been a long journey for South Caldwell High football coach Butch Carter. He inherited a program that had only two wins in a three-year period. Any dreams of winning a conference championship at that time were nothing more than a pipe dream.

But the Spartans (8-1 overall; 5-0 Northwestern 3A/4A Conference) clinched a tie for the NW3A/4A Conference title by knocking off Watauga 20-0 at Spartans Stadium Friday night in Sawmills. It was South Caldwell's first conference championship since 1994 (when the Spartans won the old Western Piedmont 3A Conference) and only its second conference championship in school history.

"It took a while to get here, that's for sure," said South Caldwell coach Butch Carter, who took over the program in 2001. "We've had our ups-and-downs, but I never lost hope. My goal was to build a family atmosphere here, to develop a tradition, and it looks like we're finally seeing some results."

All the Spartans have to do now is beat Alexander Central next Friday night and they clinch the title outright. But the Pioneers (5-4; 3-1) nearly spoiled the party on Senior Night.

WHS, the most-improved team in the league this season, kept the Spartans in check for the most part through the first quarter. But with the game scoreless, and the Spartans facing a fourth-and-five at their 20-yard-line, Carter took a huge gamble. He called a fake punt. The end result, Jake Macchia, the up man on the play, rambled 39 yards for a first down at the WHS 44. "We practice that play everyday," Carter said. "Our special teams coach Mark Fitzpatrick looked at me and said 'do you want to do it.' We liked how things lined up, so I said, 'drop the hammer and run it, but make it work.'"

The Spartans punched it in six plays later on a one-yard run by Devin Potter for a 7-0 lead with 9:47 to play in the first half. That play capped off an eight-play, 87-yard scoring drive and it also gave South Caldwell some momentum.

"That fake punt really got them going," said WHS linebacker Colin Augustine. "It was the big punch they needed. That fake punt turned the game into their favor. We just struggled after that."

Potter, who led the league in rushing and touchdowns in 2010, turned in a yeoman effort with 155 yards on 28 carries and he scored twice. His one-yard run with 8:13 left in the game gave South Caldwell a 14-0 lead and put the contest out of reach. Sophomore Zac Pollard finished with 99 yards on 16 carries and the Spartans, as a team, ran for 267 yards.

"But we had to earn it," Carter said. "Watauga's defense is outstanding, and they popped us pretty good. It was really anybody's game until we pulled away in the fourth quarter."

But the Spartans, who are holding opponents to just 67 yards rushing a game, really kept WHS running back Kyle Chambers in check. The senior, who came in averaging more than 100-yards a game (101.8), was held to 17 yards on eight carries. It was his lowest output since week one when A.C. Reynolds held him to minus three yards.

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"And that was my fault," said WHS coach Tim Pruitt. "We needed to give Kyle more touches. But we just didn't execute. We had some good field position at times, but we couldn't take advantage of it.. And we also moved the ball well at times, but we'd get near midfield and we couldn't advance it any further."

The Pioneers only had 58 yards offensively, including 24 yards on the ground. Quarterback Ethan Greene was 3-11 for 34 yards. He was also sacked four times. Tight end Clint Trivette caught two passes for 25 yards. The Pioneers only made three first downs, none in the second half.

Defensively, the Pioneers had a bend-but-don't break philosophy. They kept the game close until some untimely personal foul penalties in the final period aided South Caldwell's two scoring drives.

"It's rough," said WHS linebacker Cody McKinney. "We played all right on defense, but we had some breakdowns, and we had some penalties and that really hurt us. But we still have two games to play. Next week is Senior Night against Hibriten and then we go to Saint (Stephens). If we can win those two, we have a chance to host a home playoff game, and that would be big."

NOTES: The Pioneers wore their new blue pants Friday night. It was the first time WHS has worn blue bottoms since 2008 against Crest in the opening round of the Class 4A state playoffs.....South Caldwell has won two in a row and three of the last four meetings against WHS dating back to 2008.....The Spartans lead the all-time series 20-15.....Friday night's shutout win was the first for South Caldwell in the series since 2008. The Spartans defeated WHS 13-0 at the old Jack Groce Stadium that season in a steady rain.....The Pioneers were shutout for the first time since a 42-0 loss at Hickory on October 29, 2010.

SCORING:

	1	2	3	4	T
WATAUGA	0	0	0	0	- 0
S. CALDWELL	0	7	0	13	- 20

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2ND QTR:

9:47 SC - POTTER 1 YARD RUN (FRANK KICK), 8-87 YARDS, 7-0

4TH QTR:

8:13 SC - POTTER 1 YARD RUN (FRANK KICK), 10-50 YARDS, 14-0
5:23 SC - BOWMAN 2 YARD RUN (KICK FAILED), 3-22 YARDS, 20-0

STATISTICS:

TOTAL YARDS: SC 267, WHS 58
RUSHING YARDS: SC 267, WHS 24
PASSING YARDS: SC 0, WHS 34

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FIRST DOWNS: SC 13, WHS 3
TURNOVERS: SC 0, WHS 0
PENALTIES: SC 8-60, WHS7-76

RUSHING:

SOUTH CALDWELL: POTTER 28-155-2TD, POLLARD 16-99
WATAUGA: CHAMBERS 8-17

PASSING:

WATAUGA: GREENE 3-11-35

RECEIVING:

WATAUGA: TRIVETTE 2-25, BOLSTER 1-9

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NORTHWESTERN 3A/4A CONFERENCE STANDINGS

SOUTH CALDWELL	5-0; 8-1
WATAUGA	3-1; 5-4
HICKORY	2-2; 5-3-1
ALEXANDER CENTRAL	2-2; 4-5
HIBRITEN	1-3; 4-5
ST. STEPHENS	1-3; 3-6
FRED T. FOARD	1-4; 2-7

FRIDAY'S GAMES

SOUTH CALDWELL 20, WATAUGA 0
HICKORY 34, HIBRITEN 28
FRED T. FOARD 27, ST. STEPHENS 14
ALEXANDER CENTRAL 35, STATESVILLE 21

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OTHER GAMES

WILKES CENTRAL 29, ASHE COUNTY 14
AVERY 25, MADISON 14
MAIDEN 48, EAST BURKE 7
FREEDOM 56, EAST RUTHERFORD 28
BUNKER HILL 21, WEST CALDWELL 18
A.C. REYNOLDS 17, McDOWELL 14 (3OT)
ASHEVILLE 42, T.C. ROBERSON 7