

Swain County Batters Avery In Playoff Opener

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The Avery High football team has had its share of problems stopping people this season. And that was clearly evident Friday night as Swain County defeated the Vikings 63-35 in the opening round of the Class 1AA state playoffs in Bryson City, NC. Neither team really played much defense in the first half as the Maroon Devils (11-1 and the No.2

seed in the Western playoffs) held a 35-28 lead at the intermission.

But the Maroon Devils broke the game open with a 21-point blitz in the third quarter. Swain County had 662 yards offensively, and 652 of those yards came on the ground. Three running back amassed the majority of that yardage. Josue Otero finished with 287 yards on 25 carries and scored three times; Austin Shuler had 152 yards on 19 carries and scored twice; and Garrett Lane had 140 yards on just eight carries and scored once.

The Vikings (6-6, and the No.7 seed in the West) never led, but they rallied from a 21-6 deficit to tie the game at 28-28 on Alex Villanueva's one-yard run with 5:03 left in the first half. That play capped off a four-play, 13-yard drive following a Swain County turnover. But the Maroon Devils regained the lead for good nearly three minutes later as Shuler scored on a one-yard run with 2:20 left in the first half for a seven-point halftime advantage.

Villanueva, playing in his final game for the Vikings, was 11-28 for 216 yards, two interceptions and a touchdown pass. Dustin Clark caught five passes for 77 yards and a touchdown; Luke Childress led Avery on the ground with 70 yards on 14 carries and a score.