



Whitefield Academy finds spark, beats King's Ridge

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MABLETON — With two of its top defensive players out, the offense got Whitefield Academy going Friday night.

Though linebacker Thomas Joiner and defensive end Kyle Holt were two of several players suspended for an altercation during last week's game against Mount Pisgah Christian, the Wolfpack had enough of a spark on offense to beat King's Ridge Christian 40-28 on Friday.

Whitefield's offense turned up the heat despite the missing suspended players, racking up 224 yards. Quarterback Luke Persons was 12-of-15 passing for 160 yards and six total touchdowns — five through the air and one on the ground.

"I thought the pass protection was really good, coach (Coleman) Joiner dialed up some great plays with coach (Dan) Moorer," Persons said. "They called great plays at great times, and they knew what their defense was doing. The seniors really stepped up this game."

The Whitefield defense got off to a hot start, forcing two fumbles, and keeping King's Ridge quarterback Caleb Flanigan at bay.

Younger players such as freshman linebacker Walker Smith stepped up, making critical tackles in key moments to keep the Tigers (1-2, 0-1 Region 6A) off the scoreboard.

"It was really impressive to see some underclassmen step up," Persons said. "It's promising for the future."

Whitefield (1-2, 1-1) got on the board late in the first quarter, as Persons fired a quick strike to Kaleb Brooks, who sped past the King's Ridge defense for a 40-yard touchdown.

After linebacker Jalen Miller recovered a fumble and returned it to the Tigers' 33-yard line, Persons went to the air again, finding Austin Sumter in the end zone.

The Whitefield offense then capitalized on a King's Ridge interception, as running back K.J. Cainion reeled off several lengthy runs that led to a 1-yard TD run by Persons.

The Wolfpack took a 19-0 lead into halftime, despite two missed extra-point attempts, one on which was blocked.

King's Ridge came out in the second half looking to get on the scoreboard. Flanigan put together a long drive on the ground, closing it out with a 10-yard touchdown run.

Taking advantage of field possession due to 60-yard kickoff return by Cainion, Persons tossed a 20-yard touchdown to Sumter in the right corner of the end zone. Then, following another King's Ridge turnover, he threw another, this one 15 yards to Brooks.

Flanigan got it going for the Tigers in the second half, reeling off a 77-yard touchdown run in the third quarter and a 58-yard scoring run in the fourth.

But the Whitefield offense, led by Persons, was too much for King's Ridge.

Persons tossed two more of his five passing touchdowns in the fourth quarter — one to Brooks and another on a 35-yard toss to sophomore Louis Brogan — to close out the scoring for Whitefield.

“You always pray and want to hope that somebody will be that next man up to step up and be that guy,” Whitefield coach John Hunter said. “I cannot say how proud I am of them to not let a circumstance like (last week) to be something they dwell on, but rather that they can overcome.”