



## Injury-riddled Whitefield rallies past Fellowship

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MABLETON — Down its starting quarterback, running back and center, Whitefield Academy still managed a late comeback to defeat Fellowship Christian 31-24 on Friday.

Tied 24-all in the fourth quarter, Whitefield (4-2, 3-1 Region 6A) took advantage of a turnaround that completely shifted the game.

Fellowship quarterback Brooks Bryant found Cam Cochran for what appeared to be an 84-yard touchdown pass, but a holding penalty negated the play. After the Paladins (3-3, 1-3) punted, Bryce Davis' 40-yard touchdown run put Whitefield ahead for good with 6 minutes left in the game.

“You talk about stuff and you hope, at some point in time, it sinks in,” Whitefield coach John Hunter said. “And it just felt like (Friday) that it did. We challenged them before and said, ‘Are you for real?’ That was our thing. I’m just happy we won.”

The Wolfpack defense buckled down and forced two more stops late in the fourth, allowing them to kneel the ball out and grab their fourth consecutive win — their longest streak since 2009.

Whitefield's halftime lead quickly disappeared in the second half. A safety caused by a snap over the punter's head in the third quarter cut the lead to 10-9. Murphy Reeves then ran in a 1-yard touchdown, and the 2-point conversion put Fellowship ahead 17-10 going to the fourth quarter.

The Paladins quickly struck again, this time through the air, with Braden Webb catching a 51-yard touchdown pass to give them a 14-point lead.

Whitefield would not go away, however.

Austin Sumter's spectacular 70-yard touchdown catch early in the fourth quarter turned momentum again. The Wolfpack elected to try and onside kick and recovered at the 29-yard line. A few plays later, Kaleb Brooks grabbed an 8-yard touchdown pass from Thomas Joiner to tie the game again.

"You hear a lot of people talk about the next- man-up concept," Hunter said. "Thomas did an exceptional job. I can't say enough about your starting linebacker playing quarterback on a week's notice. The whole team did a great job. They rallied around the moment and stepped up."

Neither team could generate much offense in the first quarter as punts were traded in a scoreless 12 minutes.

Fellowship finally connected for a big play a couple minutes into the second quarter. Quarterback Brooks Bryant dropped back and found Casey Barham jetting up the middle for a 49-yard touchdown pass to give the Paladins a 7-0 lead.

Whitefield quickly responded as it also got its offense moving.

The passing game helped the drive, with Joiner completing three passes on the possession, but the key play came on the ground near midfield. Davis scampered down the right side and lost the ball on a long run, but the Wolfpack were able to fall on top of it for a 12-yard gain and first down.

Joiner finished off the drive with a 1-yard touchdown run to tie the game.

With Fellowship trying to punt late in the first half from its own 25-yard line, a mishandled snap allowed the Whitefield defensive line to tackle the punter for a huge loss at the 13-yard line. The Wolfpack were unable to convert a touchdown, with a key drop on third down in the end zone

forcing a field goal attempt, that Matthew Sumlin knocked in from 31 yards out to give Whitefield a 10-7 lead at halftime.