

# COBB FOOTBALL FRIDAY

## Postseason in sights for county's private-school programs

- Oct 21, 2017



With two weeks left in the regular season, Whitefield Academy coach John Hunter has his team in position for a potential state playoff berth. In fact, the Wolfpack could be joined in the tournament by each of the county's other three private-school programs. / William Lofton

It was a good week to be a fan of Cobb County's private-school football programs.

All four — Mount Paran Christian, Whitefield Academy, Walker and North Cobb Christian — won their respective Region 6A games Friday.

The victories were significant in that they kept all four teams squarely in the hunt for a Class A private-school state playoff berth. The top 24 teams in the power ratings will qualify for the tournament.

As of the most recent ratings last week, Mount Paran was the only lock to make the field, with the Eagles fifth with two games remaining on the schedule.

Whitefield was 19th and Walker 20th, with the teams set to face one another this week. North Cobb Christian, 3-5 and looking for its third consecutive victory, will travel to 2-6 Bowdon on Friday before the region crossover game next week.

The four private schools have never made the state playoffs at the same time, but there is a chance that could change this season.

“I think it’s good for all of us,” Mount Paran coach Mitch Jordan said. “Competition makes everybody better, and it’s clear that all four schools are seeing the progress of the hard work they’re making.

“I’m great friends with the guys on the staffs at Whitefield and Walker. I think (Whitefield coach John Hunter) and (Walker coach Matt Casper) are doing a great job, and I’m excited with what North Cobb Christian is doing and the stability that (coach Mark Hollars) is bringing over there.”

**FEELING THE RUSH:** Friday night was also a banner evening for rushers as 14 players topped 100 or more yards.

Kennesaw Mountain running back Keyon Brooks led the county with 251 yards and one touchdown on 29 attempts against Hillgrove.

Harrison quarterback Justin Fields also got in on the action, displaying his dual-threat ability to a national television audience in the Hoyas’ win over Region 6AAAAAA rival Dalton. Fields totaled 211 yards and two touchdowns on 23 carries before leaving the game with a broken index finger.

Pope dug itself into a 39-13 halftime hole against Region 7AAAAAA rival Chattahoochee, but it crawled out behind strong rushing performances from Zach Owens and Paris Cameron before

ultimately losing by five. Owens finished with 147 yards and two touchdowns on only nine carries, while Cameron delivered 21 rushes for 145 yards and a score.

Hillgrove's Trevor Smith very likely tied the state record for longest touchdown run after scampering 99 yards for a third-quarter score that put the Hawks in front of Kennesaw Mountain.

**FINISHING LINE:** A key for every team as the regular season comes to a close will be learning how to finish.

That theme rang true for a few teams that each won by a touchdown or less Friday, including Allatoona, Sprayberry, McEachern, North Cobb, Pebblebrook and Harrison. Kell and Pope lost their games by a combined eight points.

**QUARTERBACK INJURIES:** One more name was added to the injured quarterbacks list after Walton's Austin Kirksey left the field with an undisclosed injury with 8:27 left in the third quarter in the Raiders' game against Lassiter.

Kirksey gave two thumbs up to the fans as he walked off the field under his own power. Walton coach Daniel Brunner could not be reached to give an update on Kirksey's status.

A day before Kirksey's injury, Fields suffered a season-ending injury to the index finger on his throwing hand. Marietta's Harrison Bailey has been sidelined for weeks with a shoulder injury, and Osborne has had injury problems to all of its quarterbacks. North Cobb's Dillon Waye has also been absent from the lineup for the past two weeks.

Having an injury at arguably the most important position on the team shows how important it is to have a quality backup, as Walton's Avery Cybul, North Cobb's Trevor Lovett, Harrison's Gavin Hall and Marietta's Ra'Shun Bass have played well in reserve.

"We had a similar situation this year with our starter Kyle Terry going down," Jordan said.

"Niko Vangarelli came on against Bremen. You need to have depth at every level. Fortunately,

our offensive coordinator, Logan Beer, has been able to work both guys in ever since they're both very talented."