

COBB FOOTBALL FRIDAY

Whitefield gets defensive in win over Walker

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MABLETON — After its offense built an early lead, Whitefield Academy’s defense stood tall, carrying the Wolfpack to a 24-7 win against Walker on homecoming night.

“You always believe that if your defense can play well, you give yourself a chance,” Whitefield coach John Hunter said.

The win gave Whitefield (6-3, 5-2) its sixth win in seven games, as it continued to make its push toward the state playoffs. The Wolfpack will get one last chance to boost its power rating next week when they host the No. 3 seed from the other half of Region 6A.

Before this year, Whitefield had just five wins combined in the previous two seasons.

“Senior leadership and we now believe, where maybe, in the past, we didn’t really think we could,” Hunter cited as the reasons for the program’s turnaround.

Trailing 17-7 in the fourth quarter, Walker (4-5, 4-3) converted a flea-flicker that came off of a double reverse for 42 yards and found itself at the Whitefield 22-yard line. The Wolfpack defense however, regrouped and took the ball over on downs four plays later.

“There’s always going to be something,” Hunter said. “The question is, how do you respond to that something? Holding them out on that next series was huge for us.”

Walker struggled to consistently move the ball the entirety of the game. The Wolverines managed 82 rushing yards and 10 first downs on the night.

Quarterback Joseph Vose passed for 116 yards in the first half, but the offense was unable to sustain drives and did not threaten the Whitefield defense aside from the aforementioned fourth-quarter drive.

The Walker defense did step up to start the second half. It overcame two personal-foul calls and a roughing-the-kicker penalty when Nikolas Talley picked up a fumbled Whitefield exchange and dashed 88 yards for the Wolverines’ only score of the night.

“The defense battled their tails off (Friday),” Walker coach Matt Casper said. “I’m proud of those guys, and I’m proud of our kids each week. (Friday’s) loss is on me and we’re going to get that fixed starting (in the) morning.”

The Wolverines will close out the regular season by hosting North Cobb Christian in a region crossover that could determine which of the two teams makes the state playoffs.

Defense kept Walker in the game in the second half Friday. However, after the fourth-quarter turnover on downs, the defensive unit finally broke when Thomas Joiner scampered 76 yards to give Whitefield its final margin of victory.

The Wolfpack found early success with their passing attack. Luke Persons connected with Jalen Miller for a 30-yard gain. The next play, Miller bullied his way 2 yards for the game's first touchdown.

In the second quarter, Persons found Kyle Holt on the sideline. Holt then broke a tackle and sprinted 59 yards to push their advantage to 17-0 at the half.

Whitefield's early advantage was built in part to its field position advantage. Walker fumbled a punt on its own 16 and kicked a short punt that gave the Wolfpack the ball 44 yards away from the end zone.