

COBB FOOTBALL FRIDAY

Whitefield handles Walker again

- By Jeff Dickinson MDJ Sports Correspondent
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MABLETON — A stout defense and timely offense and special teams helped lead Whitefield Academy past Region 6A rival Walker for a 26-7 win in the first round of the Class A private-school playoffs.

After holding the Wolverines (5-6) to only 49 yards of offense in the first half and clinging to a 6-0 lead, the Wolfpack (8-3) scored 13 points in the final quarter, en route to the victory.

With the win — the program’s first in the postseason since 2008 and just its third overall — Whitefield advanced to play at Prince Avenue Christian in second round.

“I am so proud of our assistant coaches and players,” Whitefield coach John Hunter said. “This is a big win for our program. This is only the third playoff win in our school’s history, and the first one was a long time ago.

“Walker is a good football team, and we knew that they have a very talented quarterback (Joseph Vose). Our defense did a great job, though, and gave us a great chance to win the game.”

With Whitefield leading 13-0, Vose connected on a 15-yard scoring pass to Beau Slay, and Kyle Goldstein’s extra point cut the lead to 13-7 with 5:58 left in the game.

On the next play, however, Whitefield’s K.J. Cainion broke Walker’s hearts, taking the ensuing kickoff at his own 12-yard

line and racing 88 yards for the score. A missed extra point left the lead at 19-7.

Whitefield then completed the game’s scoring when Thomas Joiner blocked a Walker punt and recovered it in the end zone for a touchdown with 48 seconds left in the game.

Although his team fell short, Walker coach Matt Casper saw plenty to build on for next season and beyond.

“We have an outstanding senior group of football players,” Casper said. “I’m super proud of them and of all of our players, and if the younger guys can follow the lead of our seniors, the future of Walker football is bright.

“We want something like (Friday) and making the playoffs to become the norm at Walker. We want to start a tradition and make the playoffs the expectation every year.”

Whitefield's defense made things difficult for Vose all night. The Walker quarterback, who entered the game with 877 passing yards on the season, struggled mightily under a fierce Whitefield pass rush.

Vose was 11-of-37 for 106 yards and got sacked three times.

In addition to his 88-yard kickoff return, Cainion had a game-high 55 yards on 13 carries. Luke Persons led Whitefield through the air by completing eight of 12 passes for 102 yards.

Hunter said he and his players will probably enjoy this playoff win a little differently.

"Our players are hopefully going to enjoy this win all night, and then we'll get back to work tomorrow for next week," Hunter said, "but I'm going to get to work tonight."