# Central wins Region 1-AAA championship

By KEVIN PRICE
T-E Sports Editor

The Central Yellow Jackets are the 1986 Region 1-AAA champions.

In a hard-fought, defensive struggle, the Jackets defeated defending region champion and cross-county rival Thomasville 13-7 before a standing-room only crowd of 8,000 at Thomas County Stadium on a rainy Friday night.

Central had to wait 12 long, and sometimes, frustrating years between region championships. The last title won by the Jackets came in 1974, when they were in 1-AA.

Coach Charlie Greene had to wait only three of those years after coming from Stephens County prior to the 1984 season.

"It was tiring and exhausting," he said in the light rain after the game. "I guess I will get to enjoy it in the morning.

"But then you don't have that much time to enjoy it because you have to get ready for the next game."

The next game comes in the first round of the Class AAA state playoffs, where the Jackets will face Westside, the 2-AAA champions after a 26-20 win over defending state champion Thomson, next week in Augusta. The winner of that game will host the South Georgia Championship.

It was the fourth straight time Central has beaten its biggest rival, including the second time this season. While this game lacked the offensive fireworks of the first game (Central won 35-28), it still had the elements of a memorable game.

In addition to being for the right to advance to the state playoffs, this game also had hard-hitting defense and plenty of controversial calls concerning both teams (see related story).

Perhaps, the most controversial

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| CHS | 7 | 6 | 0 | 0 | – 13 |
| THS | 0 | 7 | 0 | 0 | – 7 |

CHS: Ward 46 run (Baker kick)
CHS: Christopher 2 run (kick failed)
THS: Jones 20 run (Smith kick)

| | THS | CHS |
|---|---|---|
| First Downs | 10 | 14 |
| Rushes-yards | 30-117 | 45-150 |
| Passing yards | 71 | 86 |
| Passes | 4-15-0 | 6-13-0 |
| Punts | 4-30 | 5-35 |
| Fumbles lost | 0-0 | 0-0 |
| Penalties-yards | 4-55 | 9-60 |

INDIVIDUAL STATS

RUSHING — THS: Ellis 15-73, Jones 7-17, Coleman 7-20, Jackson 1-minus 3. CHS: Christopher 9-13, Ward 16-90, Fleming 11-79, Johnson 2-17, Raing 1-minus 0.
PASSING — THS: Jones 4-15-0 — 71, Ellis 0-1-0 — 0. CHS: Ward 6-13-0 — 86.
RECEIVING — THS: Harris 1-18, Coleman 2-23, Childs 1-30. CHS: Garland 1-11, Raing 1-29, West 1-[illegible], Johnson 2-21, Blake 1-8.
TACKLES — THS: Frederick 10, Simmons 7, Green [illegible], Arnold 4, Love [illegible], Harris [illegible], Curry [illegible], Williams [illegible]. CHS: Fletcher 10, Small [illegible], Gordon 2, McIntyre 3, B. Adams 7, Raddenberry 5, H. Adams 6, Reddick 1, McGraw 2, Gordon 1.

came on Thomasville's last drive. With a six-point deficit, the Bulldogs drove 78 yards to the Central 6-yard line. On a third-and-goal, halfback Eddie Coleman swept around right end for what would have been the tying touchdown.

But the Bulldogs were penalized for holding, setting them back to the 14. After an incomplete pass, quarterback Shawn Jones was sacked for a 10-yard loss on fourth down by Robert Fletcher.

Central quarterback Charlie Ward fell on the ball one time to run the final 44 seconds off the clock.

"They (referees) took it from us. It don't feel good when 16, and 17 year-olds play a good game and someone takes it away. This is the worst officiating I've ever seen.

I've been coaching 16 years, and this is the first time I've ever said that," said an angry Mike Hodges, the Thomasville coach.

Ward, who was able to throw for 270 yards against the Bulldogs in the first game, was limited to just 86 yards on six of 13 passing.

While most of his long bombs were misses, Ward let his feet do the job, as he led all rushers with 90 yards on 16 carries, including a 46-yard burst up the middle for the first Central score.

After Thomasville's second punt of the first quarter, Central put together a 69-yard drive in just five plays.

On a second-and-3 from the Thomasville 46, Ward faked a handoff to Steve Fleming and cut-back into the middle of the field and outran the secondary to the end zone with 18 seconds left in the quarter.

Andy Baker's PAT gave the Jackets a 7-0 lead.

After forcing another punt, the Jackets went 58 yards in eight plays.

Central had back-to-back big plays in the drive. On a third-and-8 from its own 44, Ward hit freshman Tommy Raing on a crossing pattern, which Raing turned into a 29-yard gain.

Fleming, who was starting in the place of Ronald Larkin who broke his foot earlier this week, then went off tackle for 14 yards.

Four plays later, Keith Christopher dove in from 2 yards out with 7:23 remaining in the first half. Baker's kick sailed wide left, leaving Central with a 13-0 lead.

But Thomasville got right back into the game with a 65-yard scoring drive of its own.

The key play came on a third and 8 at midfield, when Jones hit Joe Harris with a 18-yard completion over the middle.

Following a pair of runs by Alphonso Ellis, Jones ran a keeper around right end 20 yards for a touchdown. Danny Smith's PAT cut the deficit to 13-7 with 3:36 left in the first half.

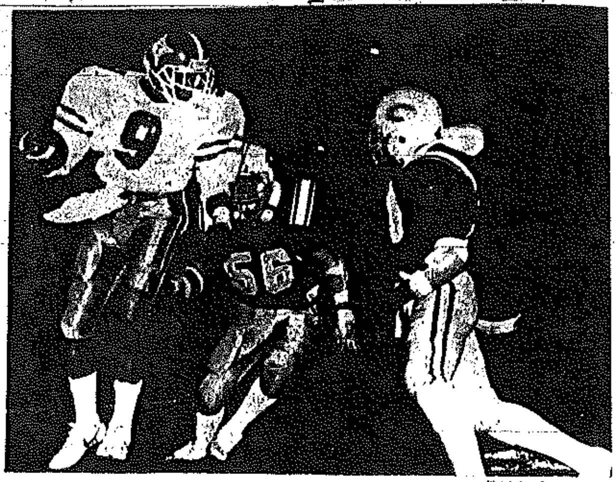

Photo by Greg Bryant

**Central defenders Robert Fletcher and Cedric Small prepare to tackle Thomasville quarterback Shawn Jones during Friday night's game**

Both defenses took over in the second half as neither team threatened to score until Thomasville's last drive.

The Jackets seemed to be able to move the ball just enough in the second half to allow Ward to kick the Bulldogs into poor field position.

Including the final drive, Thomasville started at its own 12, the Central 38, its own 15 and own 16 in the second half.

On the first three possessions of the second half, Thomasville ran three plays and punted.

"Anytime in this big a game, the kicking game is going to be important," Greene said. "And the kicking game was probably the difference tonight."

**Class AAA playoffs**
Central 13, THS 7
Westside 26, Thomson 20
Worth 15, Americus 14
Troup 21, McIntosh 3
Westminister 10, Clarkston 0
Lakeside 27, Fulton 0
Villa Rica 20, Dalton 10
Gainesville 24, Stephens Co 14

**Next weeks games**
Central at Westside
Worth at Troup
Westminister at Lakeside
Villa Rica at Gainesville

# Ward comes back from injuries to lead title chase

By RODNEY HOLT

From the sidelines to the spotlight that is the story of the Central Yellow Jackets' outstanding quarterback Charlie Ward.

The success story of Ward has been a long, hard struggle.

He has fought back from two knee injuries to lead the Jackets to a Region 1-AAA championship with a 13-7 win over cross-county rival Thomasville Friday night.

Ward injured his knee the first time during the summer of 1985. But recuperated enough to share quarterbacking duties with Chris Taylor during the following football season.

Injury struck again during basketball season of the same year. Ward, who is also an outstanding basketball player, reinjured the knee during the Christmas holidays, and missed the remainder of the season.

Surgery was required both times, and Ward's future as an athelete looked doubtful.

After missing the first three football games of this season, Ward was inserted in the second half of the Cairo game and led the Jackets to 20 second half points in a 30-0 romp.

During the first three games with Ward on the sideline, the Central offense had managed only one touchdown and the Jackets, ranked No. 1 in preseason Class AAA polls, had a 1-2 record.

Since then, the junior quarterback has led the Jackets to nine consecutive wins, including two thrillers against Thomasville.

"It was tough, not being able to play. But I knew the Lord was on my side, and that I would get another chance," said Ward.

Earlier in the season Ward had completed 11-13 passes good for 270 yards to lead Central to a 35-28 win over Thomasville.

By contrast, it was his running that led the Jackets to the victory during the championship match.

He had an average game passing by completing six of 13 for 86 yards. But he ran for 90 yards on 16 carries, including a 46-yard touchdown run to put Central ahead late in the first quarter.

"Thomasville was putting three defenders on our twins (two receivers on same side), and we had to go to the pro formation (receivers on opposite side). This made us change our style, but we were able to run," Ward said.

After forcing a Thomasville punt, Central took over at their own 31.

An illegal procedure penalty moved the ball back five yards. Two runs by Ward gained 10 yards. And on third-and-5, he connected with Steve Garland for 11 yards and a first down.

From there Steve Fleming carried once to the Thomasville 46.

On the next play, Ward faked to the fullback Fleming, who was crushed at the line of scrimmage and was almost knocked back into Ward.

But the quarterback took a couple of steps left, cut back across field, and was off on a 46-yard touchdown scamper, to give the Jackets a 7-0 lead with 18 seconds left in the opening quarter.

"They were fooled by the fullback fake, and that left the cutback completely open," said Ward.

On Central's following series, the junior signal caller also led the Jackets to paydirt with an eight play, 58-yard drive.

A 29-yard pass completion to Tommy Raing, on a third-and-8, moved the ball to the Thomasville 27.

Five plays later Keith Christopher dove in from two yards to give the Jackets the winning touchdown with 7:23 left in the half.

The 13 first half points held up, as Ward who also handles the punting chores, kept the Bulldogs pinned deep in their own territory for most of the second half.

The game ended with Ward falling on the football to run out the clock and preserve the win for the Jackets.

"It's a great feeling," said a grinning Ward.

Photo by Greg Bryant

**Charlie Ward takes off on one of his 19 runs Friday**

# Jackets' defense makes last stand

By TODD BUTLER

As was expected in the rain, the key to the Region 1-AAA championship game was defense.

"I thought both defenses played well," said Central defensive coach Ken Manwaring. "It came down to us though we got sloppy once and let 'em score."

The threat of Alphonso Ellis was neutralized by the strong Central defense.

The Central defense held the Thomasville strong man to a mere 73 yards gained — four yards less than in the regular season game. Both game were well below his average of 130 per game.

The Central defense gave up five first downs in the first half. Two were on long runs by Ellis and one by two of his shorter runs back to back.

Ellis' longest runs of the night were 19 and 13 yards. The rest averaged less than four yards each.

"He couldn't get his footing," said Central defensive leader Robert Fletcher. "But neither could we, so he didn't have much of an effect."

Fletcher led the Central defense with 10 tackles in the game.

The Jackets held the Bulldogs to no first downs in the entire second half until for the last drive.

"The kids were ready to play," said Manwaring. "We didn't make any adjustments at halftime. We just decided we wanted to win the game and we did."

Instead of talking about the defensive success of the second half, Fletcher has his mind on Thomasville's final drive, which was almost disastrous for Central.

Thomasville took the ball from its own 16-yard line to Central's 6. A holding call nullified a Thomasville touchdown and sent the 'Dogs back to the Central 14.

"I thought we were holding them good at first," said Fletcher. "But then, I don't know what happened. We must have gotten over-confident or something."

Fletcher remembers a tense moment just before Thomasville's last attempt to score Friday night.

And Fletcher spoke as if there were more than just hours of work and strategy being tested on the fourth down play with less than 50 seconds left in the game.

Fletcher rushed in almost untouched and sacked Thomasville quarterback Shawn Jones for a 10-yard sack which sealed the victory for the Jackets.

"We were in a huddle," he said, remembering how he and his teammates knew the play would decide the game.

"The coaching staff did a good job preparing," said Manwaring. He added "The players responded by doing their jobs. And that's what you asked for."

# Hodges upset over controversial calls

By RODNEY HOLT

As with most all big football games, there is almost always controversial calls by the referees.

For local people, football just doesn't get any bigger than the Central-Thomasville game.

Especially when it's for all the marbles, such was the case Friday night when the two teams met for the Region 1-AAA championship at Thomas County Stadium, which Central won 13-7.

There were some calls that went against both teams that were questionable.

For the night, Central was penalized nine times for 60 yards, while Thomasville had 55 yards on four yellow flags.

Thomasville was upset when, on two occasions, Central got first downs after the Jackets had punted the ball. Blocking below the waist was called against the Bulldogs, which cost Thomasville possesion of the football, and 15 yards which gave the Jackets a first down each time.

But the men in the striped shirts were correct on these calls.

Unlike professional football, where the receiving team has possesion once the ball leaves the punter's foot. High school rules are different, though.

Possesion does not begin until someone on the receiving team touches the ball. Therefore the punting team still has control of the ball while it's in the air, or rolling on the ground.

Neither time had a Thomasville player yet touched the ball, when the penalties occured.

But the truly questionable calls came on two apparent fumbles that were not called fumbles. Each team was the beneficiary of a quick whistle.

Trailing 13-7, Thomasville's Carlos Robinson and Gilbert Bryant hit Central's Keith Christopher with a bone-jarring tackle at the 25 that separated Christopher from the ball, and Thomasville recovered just 25 yards away from a go-ahead touchdown.

But the officials ruled Christopher's knee was down and therefore no fumble and the Jackets retained possesion.

In the fourth quarter, a seemingly quick whistle went against the Jackets.

Thomasville quarterback Shawn Jones hit A. J. Childs with an apparent pass completion. Childs was popped and the ball came loose.

Freddie Guyton recovered for Central, but it was ruled Childs never had control.

Thomasville continued to move the ball down the field, advancing to the Central 6 with time running out.

Eddie Coleman took a pitchout and raced into the endzone for the touchdown that would have tied the game, and a chance to win with the PAT.

But Thomasville was called for holding while blocking a cornerback.

The touchdown was nullified and Thomasville couldn't score, following the penalty.

"They (referees) took it from us. It don't feel good when 16, and 17 year-olds play a good game and someone takes it away. This is the worst officiating I've ever seen.

I've been coaching 16 years, and this is the first time I've ever said that," said an angry Mike Hodges, the Thomasville coach.

Fans of both schools will argue the calls for years to come, but the final score Central 13, Thomasville 7 will stand.

Photo by Greg Bryant

**Central's Steve Fleming and coaches look over Keith Christopher, who was shaken up on second-half kickoff**

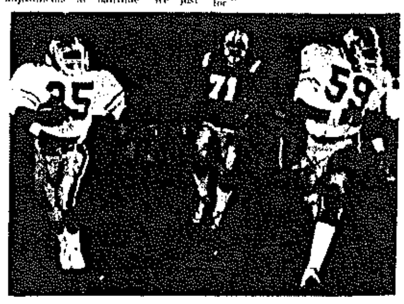

Photo by Greg Bryant

**Thomasville's Augustus Clark (59) leads Eddie Coleman (25) on a punt return Friday**

Photo by Greg Bryant

Thomasville's Alphonso Ellis finds the going tough Friday

## Footb[all]

## Picks

Games This Wee[k]

Georgia Te[ch]
Auburn at A[labama]
Florida at F[lorida State]
Tulane at [illegible]
Notre Dam[e]
Tennessee a[t]
Wyoming a[t]
Rice at Hou[ston]
BYU at San
Utah at UT[EP]

# Georg[ia]

ATHENS (AP) — [illegible] rekindled by Georgia [illegible] the last two meetings [illegible] 80th time Saturday [illegible] Jackets visit No. 18 Geo[rgia]

The Bulldogs had [illegible] consecutive victories [illegible] the edge off the series [illegible] November Southeastern [illegible] dates with Florida an[d] [illegible] more importance natio[nally]

But Georgia Coach [illegible] wouldn't adhere to su[ch]

# Semi[noles]

TALLAHASSEE (AP) [illegible] which reportedly stru[ggled] to squeeze into the [illegible] picture, shoots for [illegible] victory over arch-riva[l] [illegible] Doak Campbell Sta[dium] night.

A victory in the [illegible] would mean the diffe[rence] winning and losing se[asons] Gators, while FSU [illegible] half decade of fru[stration] Florida that have [illegible] successful seasons.

# Two [illegible]

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. [illegible] two runners in the [illegible] ference will be on the [illegible] and Alabama meet S[aturday] annual football game [illegible] thinking about the othe[r]

Brent Fullwood of Auburn has 1,216 yards [illegible] a 8.5-yard average [illegible] Bobby Humphrey of [illegible] Alabama leads the SEC [illegible] total, but that is for [illegible] 16.

Fullwood said he [illegible] game as a contest bet[ween] and him.

"I don't pay any att[ention] all," the 5-foot-11 [illegible] said. "He just goes out [illegible] his team, and I do [illegible] team."

# More t[han]

# stake i[n]

LA QUINTA, Calif. [illegible] than money [illegible] and [illegible] is at stake [illegible] Skins Game.

There is a matter [illegible]

"All our profes[sional] [illegible] Masters champion Jac[k]

"Nobody likes to [illegible] said Nicklaus, who [illegible] against Arnold Palm[er] and Fuzzy Zoeller [illegible] television match Saturd[ay]

They will play for $[illegible] hole Skins Game at the course, a Stadium Go[lf] ranked as the most [illegible] the country.

"One of the tough[est] toughest, I've seen," Zo[eller]

"A very, very diffi[cult]