

Same play, same result



Jackets stop 'Dogs in fourth quarter

By RON EVANS
Times-Enterprise

Corey Clark knew it was his game to win, or ...
Faced with stopping the cross-town rival Thomasville Bulldogs on a fourth-and-one at the 1, the senior cornerback and his Thomas County Central High Yellow Jackets knew the state Class AAA football championship weighed in the balance. They held, they win; they don't ...
They held.

For the second time in as many seasons the unheralded and overachieving Yellow Jackets won the state championship 14-12 Saturday night before an estimated 11,500 at Jackets Stadium, successfully defending their state crown in dramatic fashion, much like last season.

"I thought last year was hard," said a jubilant, yet composed Jacket head coach Ed Picheer, "but this is really hard. Winning it the second time is definitely harder."

Irony ruled in this game played on high emotion before a partisan-partisan crowd.

It was ironic that the game really came down to one play as it did last season. And it was amazing the two principle characters in this unfolding drama were teammates not too long ago.

Corey Clark said after the Bulldogs called timeout following Josh Lewis' and J.T. Fuller's stop of Nic Davis on a third-and-two inches (at the most), the Bulldogs were coming.

"Coach told us to watch for the option. When they lined up I knew they were coming my way because the tight end lined up on my side. They always run to the strong side," said Clark.

Picheer, too, knew what the play was. "We told them (during the timeout), 'make them pitch. They had to go wide and we wanted them to pitch,' he said.

As the play unfolded, Clark came hard upfield almost catching quarterback Kevin Thompson, but he settled

STATE CLASS AAA CHAMPIONSHIP

Thomas Co. Central 14
Thomasville 12
at Jackets Stadium

Scoring Summary
First Quarter
TJHS-Kevin Thompson 27 FG, 7:22
Second Quarter
TCC-Johnny Cooksey 2 run (Klats Roberts) 8:42
TCC-Rickey Stacy 16 run (Klats Roberts) 1:32
Fourth Quarter
TJHS-Thompson 2 run (Thompson) 10:45
TJHS-Safety tackle by Picheer (TJHS) 07

Thomas Co. Central
First downs 12
41-142 Rushes-Yards 30-140
38 Passing yards 92
6-13-0 Comp-Att-Int 7-16-0
1-0 Fumbles-Lost 1-1
1-0 Punting 4-20-7
3-25 Penalties 6-47

Thomasville 3 0-0-12
Thomas Co. Central 0-14-0-14

Individual Statistics
Rushing-TJHS, Thompson 5-115, 1 TD, Keith Williams 3-2, Nic Davis 16-56, Danny Jones 14-108, Team 1-13 (10). TCC, Stacy 5-77, TJ, Cooksey 12-29, TJ, Larry Clark 11-22, Gentry 1-24.
Passing-TJHS, Thompson 6-12-0-28 yards, Shown-Johnson 6-10-0 TCC, Stacy 2-16-0-92.
Receiving-TJHS, Johnson 2-1-11, Davis 3-32, Keith Williams 1-7, TCC, Stacy 1-11, Byron Andrews 2-23, Paul Miranda 3-42, Clark 1-13.

Instead for the pitch man, senior running back Danny Jones, throwing him for a 4-yard loss. Jones was the leading rusher last season for the Jackets through six games before an injury forced an end to his jacket career. He ultimately opted for the rival school where he contributed greatly, including a game-high 108 yards on 14 carries in the championship game.

The Jackets had made yet another outstanding defensive stand, proving once and for all

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Thomas County Central's Bobby Brooks (No. 43) and Leon Stephens hug after winning their second straight Class AAA state football championship. (Mike Tanner/Staff)

Victory was only an inch away for THS

By DAVID ZANARDI
Times-Enterprise

As his players, caked in mud and sweat, slowly made their way back to the lockerroom, Thomasville High School head football coach George Bobo stared down at his hand. He had spread his forefinger and thumb an inch apart. That inch was all that kept him and his players from celebrating a AAA state championship.

"We should have gotten in when we were on the one-inch line," Bobo said, still looking at the space between his fingers. "We should have won, but we didn't."

Just moments ago, the Bulldogs had made their way to Thomas County Central's one-yard-line as the clock dwindled down to just 2:35 left in the game with the score 14-10 Yellow Jackets. It was second down and Bobo called the number of Bulldog fullback Nic Davis.

As 11,500 fans drew silent, Davis took the handoff from quarterback Kevin Thompson and plunged into a sea of Thomas County Central players. He pushed and stretched against the weight of the Yellow Jacket defense. Then the officials blew their whistles. The play had ended with the ball one-inch from a go-ahead touchdown.

On third down, the Jackets were ready for another assault by Davis and stacked the line. This time Davis didn't get as close. On fourth down, an option pitch from Thompson to tailback Danny Jones was smothered at the five-yard-line. As a roar erupted from the

Yellow Jacket side of the field, it became clear an inch was going to be the difference on a clear December night in Thomasville. A Bulldog safety would follow to make the final margin 14-12 Thomas County Central. This wasn't how it was supposed to end. Everything had been building towards a classic storybook ending for the Bulldogs.

On the game's opening drive, Thomasville capped a 55-yard drive with a 37-yard field goal by Thompson with 7:22 left in the quarter. First blood to the Bulldogs, and things were about to get even better for Bobo's team.

The Yellow Jackets went down quietly on their opening possession, punting on fourth down. Thomasville's offense, however, continued its rampage with Davis and Jones playing their way down to Thomas County Central's six-yard-line. But the Yellow Jackets allowed no further advancement, and the Bulldogs looked like they would have to settle for another field goal.

But as Thompson's leg made contact with the ball, the Yellow Jacket's Cedric Johnson exploded in front of the ball, blocking the attempt and changing the game dramatically.

Thomas County Central's offense stuttered again after Johnson's block, and looked to punt again on fourth down. As the ball sailed into the air, an official threw a flag. A clipping penalty on Thomasville gave the Yellow Jacket a first down and another chance.

Thomas County Central quarterback Ricky Stacy took

TCCHS joined hands to secure a win

By RACHEL FREY
Times-Enterprise

The 12-2 Thomas County Central High School football team stood separate and scared along the sideline with 2:30 remaining in the Class AAA state championship game. Thomasville was on the TCCHS five-yard line with four plays to go.

Offensive line coach Bill Wilhelm ran up and down yelling, "think fumble, think fumble." For the first three plays of the drive he would kneel down on the field and send a jinx through his fingers to the Bulldogs' offense, and then jump up and down trying to get the crowd into the game.

But on fourth down, he did something different. Instead of having the players stand alone and praying to themselves, he drew them together. "Everyone, grab a hand," Wilhelm yelled. Hands across the sideline. Thomas County Central style, was pulling the players back into a team. With 2:03 left in the game the Yellow Jacket's defense held at the one-yard line, and kept their four-point lead.

"We did that last year at the Stevens County game ... we got everybody up there to do it. I'm a big believer in positive reinforcement and it worked," Wilhelm said.

Head coach Ed Picheer said if there was a better defensive stand in the school's history, he missed it.

TCCHS went into the half with a 14-0 lead, but the Bulldogs' Kevin Thompson scored a two-yard touchdown with 10:45 left in the third quarter, bringing Thomasville within four points. The continual sounds of coaches yelling plays in came to a halt as



Thomas County Central teammates Isiah Myrick (No. 38) and Amos Perry (No. 85) join hands in the final seconds of their Class AAA state championship victory over Thomasville 14-12 Saturday night. (Mike Tanner/Staff)

they saw Thompson run right on the keeper. There he goes," was the last sentence a coach said before quiet spread down the sideline.

Wilhelm saw the need to get the team's spirits back into the game and went through the sidelines yelling, "think positive, think positive."

Although the Yellow Jacket offense did not score again, they still had a four-point buffer which was secured by a two-yard

Johnny Cooksey run and a 16-yard Ricky Stacy keeper.

After the defensive stand, the next job on the coaches' mind was to run the clock down. Coaches timed the plays on their watches; unfortunately for the Yellow Jackets the referees did not use the same watch. TCCHS was called for delay of game, pushing them back to their five-yard line on a second down. Players on the sideline softly said, "tick, tick, tick."

But another penalty was called on TCCHS, pushing them to the three-yard line. Coaches then wanted to control when and if the safety would occur. They did not want it to happen too soon, and allow the Bulldogs the opportunity to score. So, once again the watches popped up, hoping to put time on their side. Then on a fourth and 11 with 12 seconds left, the Yellow Jackets took the safety, giving them a kickoff instead of a punt.

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