

GAME ENDS IN CONTROVERSY

Wildcats Knock Out Trojans 21-20

BY DOUG RUTTER

West Brunswick's Trojans felt both the intoxicating thrill of victory and the sickening agony of defeat in a matter of seconds Friday night in their high school football playoff opener at M.H. Rourk Stadium.

The Trojan sideline erupted in joy when, with 27 seconds remaining, senior offensive guard Kelly Wooten raced 52 yards on a fumblerooskie play for the apparent game-winning touchdown.

Moments later, the crazed joy turned to sorrow, frustration and heartache when game officials ruled that the football had been downed at the line of scrimmage. No touchdown.

The controversial call left the West Brunswick players, coaches and fans in a state of shock and allowed Eastern Randolph to escape Shallotte with a 21-20 win in the first round of the state 3A playoffs.

West Brunswick head coach Yogi Hickman, overcome by emotion, did not speak with reporters after the game. On Monday, he said he wasn't disappointed the Trojans lost but was upset with how the game ended.

"We're just so very disappointed in how it ended and the manner how it ended," he said. "We thought we did everything we had to do to win and came up a little bit short."

Hickman declined to comment on

THE YARDSTICK	
W. Bruns.	E. Randolph
10.....First Downs	15
35-214.....Rushing	30-126
3-8-27.....Passing	11-22-127
5-2.....Fumbles-Lost.....	3-2
3.....Ints. Thrown.....	2
2-24.....Punts(No-Avg).....	2-39
5-40.....Penalties-Yards.....	7-45
Score By Quarters	
W. Brunswick	0 7 7 6—20
E. Randolph	0 7 0 14—21

the ruling that center Brian McDowell had control of the ball on the ground before Wooten picked it up and ran untouched down the left

sideline.

Hickman said the game official made a judgment call, and it cannot be challenged.

"That's no different than ruling somebody is down before his knee hits the ground," Hickman said. "In his judgment Brian had the ball covered and he was down, meaning the ball was down."

Hickman said game officials were told in advance to look for the fumblerooskie—a trick play where the quarterback intentionally fumbles the snap and leaves it behind the center for the guard to recover and run.

Eastern Randolph head coach Burton Cates said he thought game officials "made a great call" on the fumblerooskie.

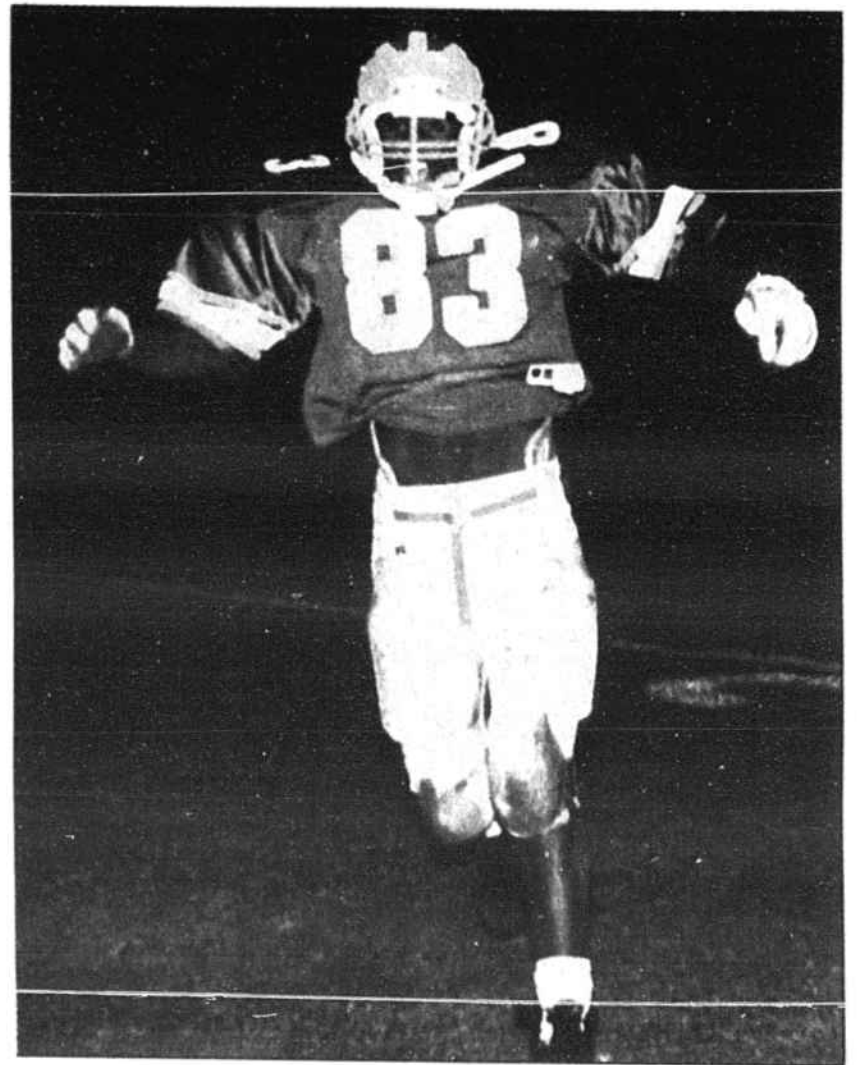
"A couple schools in our area run it. We usually defend it a little bit better than we did," Cates said. "We tell the officials before the game with any trick plays, like the fumblerooskie, if the knee is down it needs to be stopped."

Aside from the fumblerooskie—a play West Brunswick used to spark its game-winning drive in last year's state 3A championship game—Friday night's game featured two top-notch senior quarterbacks.

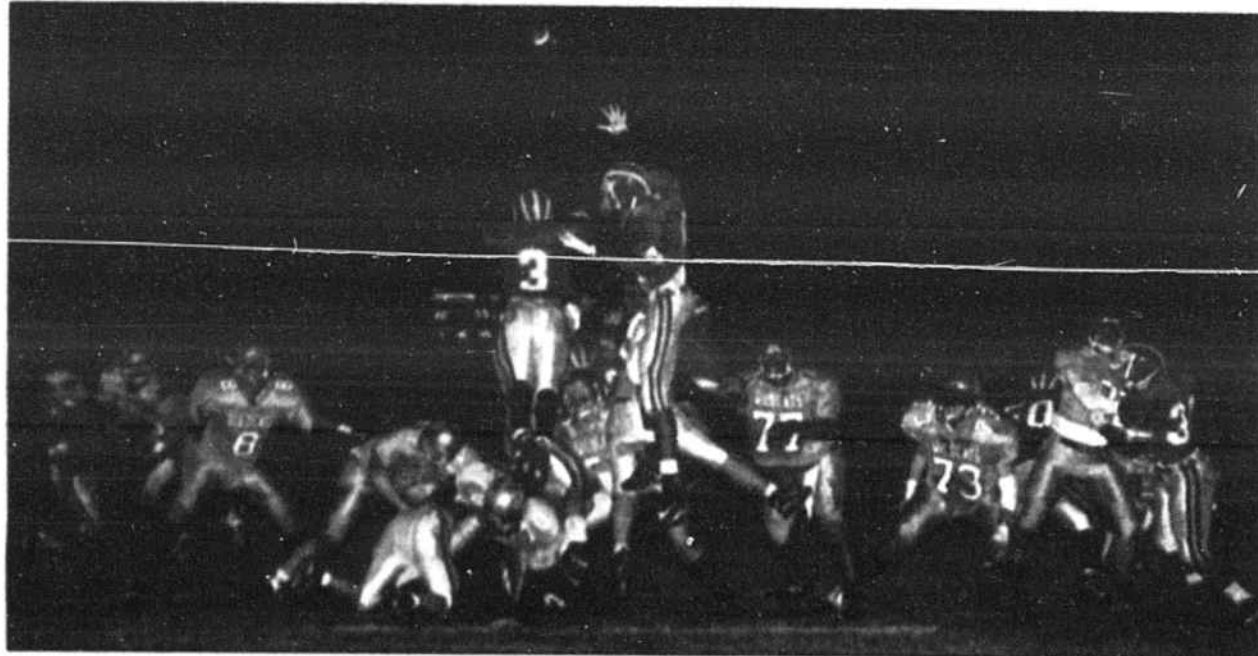
West Brunswick's Eric Johnson rushed for 133 yards and two touchdowns and Eastern Randolph's Lee Neilson passed for 127 yards and two TDs.

Neither quarterback was flawless, though, as the two defenses combined to force nine turnovers. Johnson had three first-half interceptions, and Neilson was picked off twice.

Eastern Randolph opened the scoring midway through the second



WEST'S TERRELL THOMAS celebrates teammate Kelly Wooten's apparent game-winning touchdown Friday night. The joy turned to sorrow moments later when the touchdown was called back.



STAFF PHOTOS BY DOUG RUTTER

THIS EXTRA POINT by Eastern Randolph's Tim Cyr was the difference in Friday night's 21-20 play-off win over West Brunswick.

quarter after an interception by Dale Moody set up the Wildcat offense at the West Brunswick 39-yard line.

The Wildcats ran eight straight running plays to move the ball to the 10. On third down from the 14, Neilson passed over the middle to receiver Travis Whitaker for a touchdown.

Tim Cyr's extra point gave the visitors a 7-0 lead with 6:41 remaining in the first half, but West Brunswick came right back with a 57-yard scoring drive of its own.

Johnson's 29-yard run was the big play of the drive. The senior QB then hooked up with junior receiver Derek Frink on an 11-yard touchdown pass, and Frink's kick tied the score at 7-7 with 2:18 remaining.

West Brunswick took its first lead of the game on its opening possession of the third quarter.

Senior defensive tackle Jonathan Faulk's second fumble recovery of the night set up the Trojan offense at Eastern Randolph's 35-yard line, and the Trojans scored eight plays later.

On second-and-goal from the 5, Johnson rolled right and scooted into the end zone for his 15th rushing touchdown of the season. Frink's PAT gave the Trojans a 14-7 lead with 4:18 left in the third quarter.

Eastern Randolph rallied to tie the score after recovering a fumble near midfield and returning it to the West Brunswick 36-yard line.

A 15-yard pass from Neilson to Andre Lowery set up a 1-yard touchdown run by Dale Moody on the second play of the fourth quarter. Cyr's kick knotted the score at 14-14.

West Brunswick regained the lead following an interception by junior linebacker Kwabena Green at the

Eastern Randolph 38-yard line.

A 23-yard run by senior tailback Timothy Daniels moved the ball to the 5-yard line, and Johnson scored his second touchdown of the night two plays later from 1 yard out.

Frink's extra point attempt was wide right, and the Trojans led 20-14 with 3:22 left in the game.

Eastern Randolph took the ensuing kickoff and impressively marched 76 yards in 11 plays for the go-ahead score. Neilson was 5-for-8, passing for 61 yards during the drive, and was successful on three third-down conversions.

Neilson's 7-yard touchdown pass to Terrance Jordan tied the score, and Cyr's kick gave the Wildcats a 21-20 lead with 55 seconds remaining.

West Brunswick had one last chance to win it after Ty Brown returned the kickoff to the Trojan 48-yard line.

Following an incomplete pass, West ran the fumblerooskie. The Wildcats sealed the victory when they recovered a Trojan fumble on another trick play, the hook-and-lateral, with 14 seconds left.

Cates said his players felt they had something to prove after last year's 43-12 loss to West Brunswick in the second round of the playoffs.

"Last year we were embarrassed coming down here," Cates said. "Three weeks ago we beat the number three team in the state, Southeast Guilford, so these kids know what they've got to do to win and they really wanted to prove something tonight coming back down here."

Eastern Randolph (10-2) plays a second-round playoff game this week at Southern Alamance (10-1). West Brunswick, champs of the

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BASEBALL SCHOLARSHIP

North's McBride Picks UNC Greensboro

BY DOUG RUTTER

Casey McBride, a senior at North Brunswick High School, signed a letter of intent Monday to play baseball next year at the University of North Carolina Greensboro.

A right-handed pitcher and first baseman, McBride will receive a full scholarship to play for the defending Big South Conference champions.

McBride was Brunswick County's high school baseball co-player of the year and was selected to the 1A all-state baseball team following his junior season last spring.

North Brunswick baseball coach Keith Moore said McBride also received scholarship offers from UNC-Wilmington and East Carolina University and heard from Elon College, Western Carolina University and Campbell University.

"It really came down to UNCW and Greensboro," Moore said. "He really liked it in Greensboro and I think he wanted to get away a little bit."

McBride combined with left-hander Paul Mintz to form a potent pitching staff that led North Brunswick to a 14-0 record in the



CASEY MCBRIDE

Three Rivers Conference last season. The Scorpions finished 20-6 overall and advanced to the third

round of the state 1A playoffs.

McBride had a pitching record of 10-3 last season with a 2.03 earned run average. He struck out 137 batters in 86 innings while also posting a batting average of .311.

During one three-game stretch last spring, McBride pitched a no-hitter against Bladenboro, perfect game against South Robeson and one-hitter against East Bladen. He had two other one-hitters last year.

McBride also helped lead the Brunswick County American Legion Post 68 team to the Area II East playoff championship in 1993 and regular-season title in 1994. Post 68's record is 48-27 over the last two years.

Moore said McBride's competitiveness and aggressiveness—not to mention a blazing fastball and nasty curve—make him a great pitcher.

"Every time out there you're going to get a good effort out of him. If there's some way to beat you he's going to find it," Moore said.

"I think if he can continue to develop and get better he's going to have a chance to go to the next level and play professionally like his old-

er brother."

McBride is the younger brother of Chris McBride, a former North Brunswick and UNC-Wilmington standout who is now playing in the Toronto Blue Jays organization.

Moore said McBride still has a chance of being drafted high out of high school next spring. If he is drafted high enough, he may choose to go straight into the minor leagues.

"This was the first goal to get a scholarship," Moore said. "The second goal is to continue to work hard and possibly get drafted high out of high school."

At UNC Greensboro, McBride will be a teammate of former West Brunswick High School standout Bryan Fleming.

Fleming, a redshirt freshman, sat out last season while recovering from back surgery. He is expected to play a major role on the Spartan baseball team this spring as a catcher and designated hitter.

UNC Greensboro has had a baseball team for the last four years. The Spartans, coached by Mike Gaski, finished 39-18 last spring and placed third in the NCAA South Regional.

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