

# Mistakes, penalties costly as LIFT Academy suffers first loss

## Jaguars host homecoming game at Carver tonight

By THERESA DAVIS  
For THE CHRONICLE

**CARTHAGE** - LIFT Academy's football team did something it had never done before last Friday night.

The Jaguars lost their first game in school history when they dropped a 27-12 loss to Union Pines.

And just like the rest of his team's first five games, coach Sam Davis said it was a learning experience.

"The one thing that I have emphasized to my team is the

fact that there are going to be lessons learned in each game this season," he said. "Friday's game was just another in a series of educational experiences that go along with a first-year program."

LIFT came into the game with an undefeated record and started off strong, taking a 6-0 lead on quarterback William Conrad's 3-yard touchdown run. But Union Pines, a 2-A program which made the playoffs with an 8-2 record last season, came back to lead 7-6. LIFT went to the locker room with a 12-7 lead after Jwan Walker intercepted a Union Pines pass and scampered 90 yards for a touchdown with two seconds remaining in the half.

Union Pines used a ball-control attack to take the second half kickoff and march deep

into the Jaguars' territory. LIFT's defense rose to the occasion and stopped the Vikings on the 2-yard line.

From there, however, things began to unravel for the Jaguars. After their goal-line stand, a miscommunication from Davis to his quarterback cost LIFT dearly. Rather than taking a safety that would have allowed the Jaguars to maintain their lead, Conrad tried to throw a pass that fell incomplete. Union Pines took over on the Jaguars two and scored two plays later to go ahead 13-12.

Things got worse before they got better for the Jaguars. LIFT fumbled the ensuing kickoff and Union Pines recovered deep inside the Jaguars' territory. The Vikings methodically marched in for another touchdown to

increase their lead to 19-12.

In the decisive third quarter the Jaguars had the ball for only six plays. LIFT fought hard to get back into the game, but mistakes cost them their first defeat. The Jaguars had three touchdowns called back because of penalties.

"This team has faced adversity all season and been able to overcome it on the road," Davis said. "This time it was just too much. We never gave up, though. We battled to the very end and that's the most important thing for these kids. Most of them have been in situations where they could have easily given up and resorted to negativity. But they've hung in there and battled. Now we have to do the same thing on the football field."

On the positive end, LIFT did have several players who played well in defeat. The most notable was Walker, a 6-1, 175-pound wide receiver/cornerback. In addition to his 90-yard interception return, Walker snared eight passes for 147 yards. He would have been over the 200-yard mark if his 63-yard touchdown reception wasn't negated by an illegal procedure penalty. For the season, Walker now has 18 receptions for 486 yards. He also has three interceptions.

"Jwan is playing at an extremely high level," Davis said. "He's a two-way player who stays on the field all the time because he's on our special teams."

Isiah France, the Jaguars' defensive captain, also had an outstanding game with 10 tack-

les. "Most teams try to run away from Isiah when he plays the strong side end, but we moved him around some to linebacker and he made a lot of plays for us," Davis said.

Roger Turner and JaDon Barkley also played well on defense for LIFT.

This week the Jaguars will play host to Blue Ridge Academy at Carver. Davis said he hopes his team rebounds against Blue Ridge, which is located north of Charlottesville, Va.

"This is a pivotal game for us," he said. "I don't know how the team will respond after a loss because it's a new thing for us. It's going to be a challenge to get the kids ready to play. It's a big game for us because it's our homecoming and our final home game of the season."

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season, but the threesome has posted good numbers thus far.

Livingstone will come into the game with a 2-3 overall record and 1-2 league slate. A victory would put them back in the thick of things, while a loss would all but prevent the Blue Bears from having a chance at a third consecutive conference crown.

Perhaps the missing element for the Bears this season is coach Rudy Abrams, who has jumped ship and headed east to North Carolina Central this season. First-year coach Greg Richardson hasn't been able to pull his charges together to make noise around the league. And WSSU is hoping things don't start clicking this week.

The Rams' defense certainly doesn't want to have any part of that. WSSU's defense has posted consecutive shutouts against Virginia Union and Fayetteville State. The challenge will be stiffer this week, but defensive coordinator Andrew Faison's unit has been among the league's best thus far. Through four games, including non-conference tilts against North Carolina A&T and Catawba, the Rams have yielded a conference-low 37 points. By contrast, Livingstone has allowed its opponents to put 100 points on the scoreboard in five contests.

In their wins over Union and Fayetteville, the Rams' best offense has been their defense. WSSU capitalized on Bronco turnovers on Fayetteville State's first four possessions of the game. The Rams' defense forced a total of eight turnovers in the game.

The Rams took a 13-0 lead after scoring a touchdown following an early interception and adding field goals after a fumble and another interception.

Facing an early deficit, Fayetteville was forced to go to the air often and the Rams continued to capitalize on their way

to the lopsided win.

WSSU will need to come out of the gate with the same intensity against a Livingstone team that is still looking to find its identity under Richardson. Perhaps the biggest question mark is how the offense will respond. The Rams managed just enough to get past VUU two weeks ago.

Last week quarterback Tory Woodbury completed only two of nine attempts. However, both completions went for touchdowns. Terry Newkirk, the Rams' starting tailback, had 55 yards and a touchdown on 14 carries. That type production will have to increase if the Rams hope to defeat the Blue Bears,

who employ a ball-possession option attack on offense.

If the Rams can find a way to control the Livingstone attack they'll stand a chance of heading home for a crucial three-game home stand with a 3-0 conference record. If not, another golden opportunity will slip away from Blount and the Rams.

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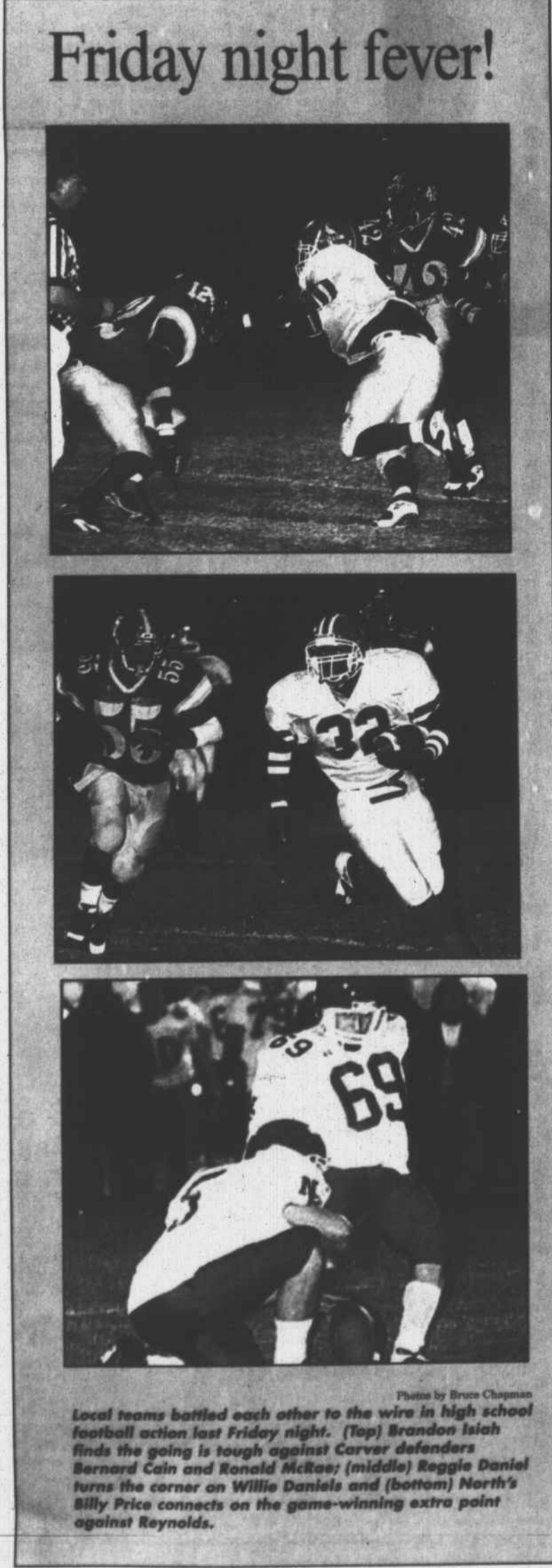
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Local teams battled each other to the wire in high school football action last Friday night. (Top) Brandon Isiah finds the going is tough against Carver defenders Bernard Cain and Ronald McKoy; (middle) Reggie Daniel turns the corner on Willie Daniels and (bottom) North's Billy Price connects on the game-winning extra point against Reynolds.