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Terry Pope
County Editor

Society and self-control

More important lessons are learned from defeat

It's unfortunate that Friday's football game between South Brunswick and East Columbus will be remembered for one thing -- the bench-clearing fight that stopped the game. It was going to be South coach Kirk Brozy's first conference win, and it still is.

Only there is an asterisk beside the 28-18 score for it was halted in the third quarter when six Cougar players and a host of Gators were tossed from the game as officials decided it was too risky to continue playing with emotions high and the anger level a bit too intense.

"The game was one of our better performances, both offensively and defensively," said coach Brozy. "We were holding their running back from gaining yards. We were boxing them in. We executed what we wanted to."

But late in the third quarter, players turned the contest into something football games are not suppose to be. Ironically, about 40 miles away in Leland, North Brunswick had just whipped up on Lejeune, 43-14, to take over sole possession of first place and the field overflowed with sportsmanship.

Nothing to be ashamed of

After the game, Lejeune coach Tom Childs gathered his players at the 50-yard line along with the North Brunswick players. Together they knelt on one knee and listened as Childs spoke. He told North Brunswick players that they were an excellent team and played with a lot of class. He told his own players they had nothing to be ashamed of. It was a hard-fought football game and not one ugly incident resulted in the lopsided score.

Then he led the teams in reciting the Lord's Prayer. I thought at the time, "Wow. What class. What a show of sportsmanship." Two teams that just went after one another for first place are now reacting to one another as best friends. Childs went around the group and gave big hugs to Pedie Byrd and other key Scorpions and congratulated them on the win.

Over at Lake Waccamaw, the game there had already been halted following a fight in a game where the loser would remain at the bottom of the Waccamaw 2A Conference. I have covered South Brunswick's football team all season and I have watched as coach Brozy preached sportsmanship to his team. I have watched his young and inexperienced team get pounded by West Brunswick and let games slip away at East Bladen and to West Columbus.

Blame to go around

But never have I seen this Cougar team, or its players, come close to doing anything like what erupted at East Columbus on Friday. If that kind of violence was there, I have not witnessed it. That is not to say there isn't enough blame to go around, despite who started the fight or which players got involved. I do know that the coach and athletic director at South Brunswick was still upset on Monday when I visited with him.

He didn't want to talk about the incident itself, and that's understandable. It is an issue that the state must make a judgment on. Brozy did reflect on what makes a player turn to violence during the heat of a sporting event. "After we lost last week, Monday's practice was as enjoyable as any we've had," said Brozy. "Realistically, probably the most important lessons you learn from sports occur following a loss instead of a win. But the perception of society in how you view winning or losing has its effect on the game and the players."

There is a stigma attached to losing, and sometimes it takes more class to accept a loss than it does to celebrate in victory. The penalties are high, and should be, for players who get out of hand. It is a shame when something like this happens, but it's also unpredictable. I never would have believed it.

▶ AT A GLANCE

PGA qualifiers

Wrightsville Beach resident Brian Hepler was one of 24 golfers who advanced Friday to the next stage in the PGA Nike Qualifying Tournament after shooting a 2-under-par 290 in the first stage at Magnolia Greens Golf Plantation in Leland.

Hepler shot a 1-over-par round Friday and just slipped into 23rd spot. The second stage will be held in two weeks at four locations around the country. Golfers who finish among the top there will advance to a third and final stage, which allows entry to the PGA Tour.

Chip Sullivan of Maudlin, SC, finished as tournament medalist at 14-under-par and with an even-par 72 round on Friday under windy conditions at Magnolia Greens.

Cougars appeal to state

Game-ending fight gives South a joyless 28-18 win

By Terry Pope
County Editor

South Brunswick coach Kirk Brozy didn't want his first 2A Waccamaw Conference win to end this way.

He pictured a victory celebration but instead saw that scenario ruined as a game-ending fight halted the contest at East Columbus with South Brunswick ahead, 28-18.

"I'm really disappointed in the out-

come," said coach Brozy. "This is not what high school athletics is all about. It's not a war between two teams. It's an athletic event. I can guarantee that our boys learn just as much from a losing situation as from a winning situation. It's just the way society perceives it that produces a problem."

Six South Brunswick players were ejected from the game by officials, and nine players from East Columbus were also disqualified following the fight. It

occurred with 2:29 left in the third quarter when a South Brunswick turnover resulted in a change of possessions and also an altercation as tempers flared.

At that point, the Cougar defense also took the field on the transition, and it is unclear whether players left the bench area to participate in what turned into an ugly situation. An appeal filed by South Brunswick with the North Carolina High School Athletic Association on Monday

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Stallions in Top 10 poll

South Columbus brings its high-powered offense to Jack Campbell Stadium at Boiling Spring Lakes for a 7:30 p.m. kickoff Friday.

The Stallions are undefeated at 8-0 and 5-0 in league play and have allowed just 31 points all season. In one poll this week, the team is ranked 8th in the state among 2A teams. It was the Stallions' first ranking of this season.

Cougars nip Pack

Soccer team ends with 2-1 victory

By Douglas Cutting
Staff Writer

South Brunswick had three things in its favor Thursday night - heart, guts, and a penalty kick.

The unofficial last game of the Cougar soccer season was a defining moment for coach Gary Downing's young program as it topped Whiteville, 2-1.

Coming off a string of tough losses, the Cougars desperately needed a bright spot at the end of the season, and every piece of the puzzle seemed to fit Thursday. With ankles healed and cuts banded, South looked solid, keeping steady pressure on the Whiteville goal all evening.

The first half ended in a 1-1 deadlock, and neither team could break free for much of the game. Finally, on a hard foul in the box, South's Daniel Martin blasted a penalty kick past a Whiteville keeper who had stunted Cougar shots all night.

One of the keys to South Brunswick's win was midfield ball control. It was also clear that every player on the field had his heart in the game, scrapping for possession and winning balls in the air.

Normally quiet freshman John Sledge looked strong in the back and midfield, adjusting to a new defensive position. Coach Downing was pleased with his play, and that of the whole team.

"John normally plays up, but he was super in the back tonight. Everyone played hard, and it was a

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South makes state playoffs

Extends win streak

South Brunswick's volleyball team finished the season last Thursday with a win over South Columbus and extended the team's winning streak to seven games. The Lady Cougars improved to 12-4.

The Cougars finished third in the Waccamaw 2A Conference behind St. Pauls and Whiteville and earned a state playoff bid.

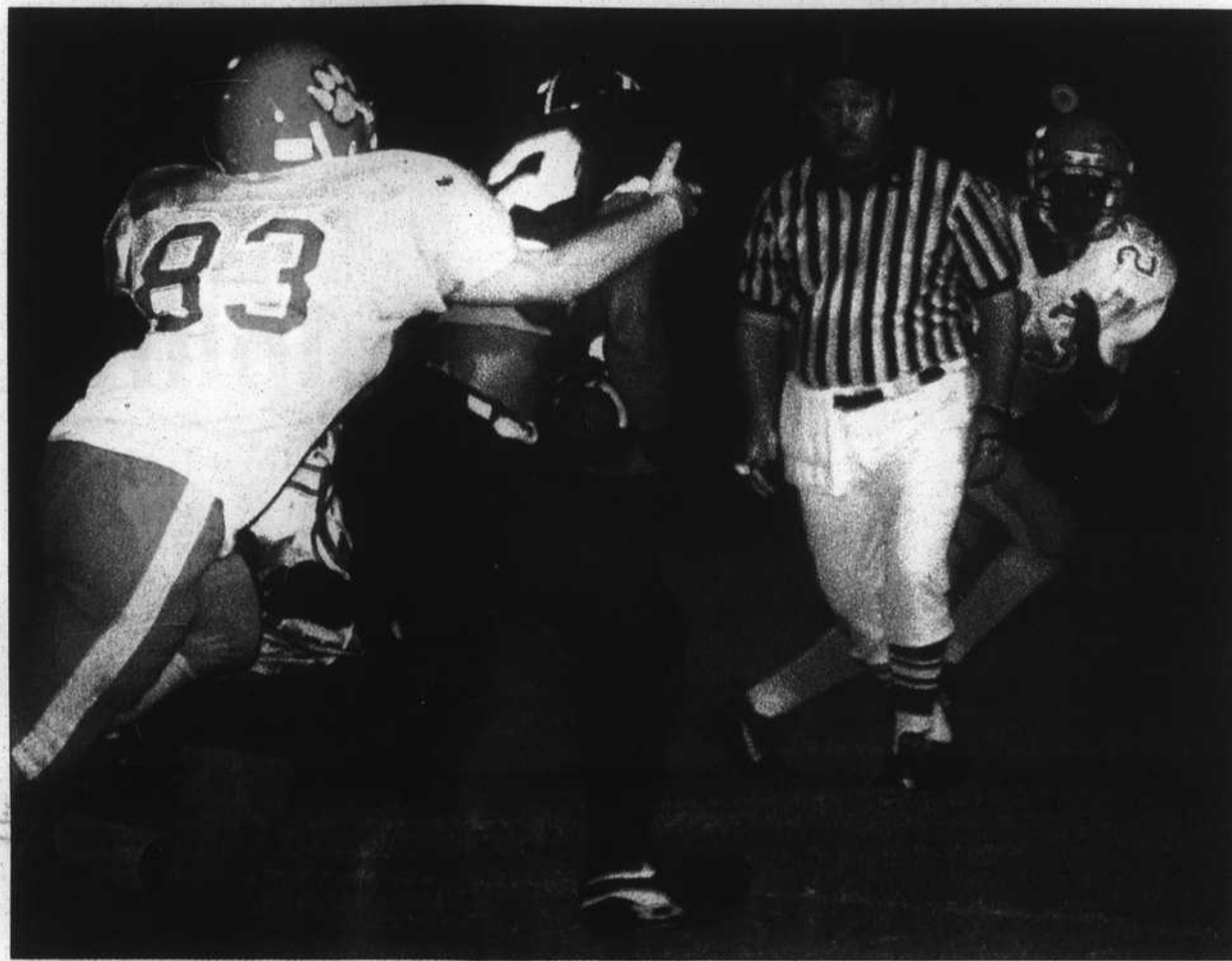
On Tuesday, the team traveled to Swansboro in a rematch of last year's state playoff game.

"I don't think our team was prepared for the playoffs last year," said South Brunswick coach Steve Clark. "We were just happy to be there, and we did not focus on the match."

"We're glad to be there again this year, but now we want to take home a W," said coach Clark. "I believe our team has more balance and depth than we had last year, so we should perform well in the playoffs."

Swansboro placed first in the East Central 2A Conference this season. Should South Brunswick win the match, the Cougars will return home to play a second-round match this Thursday, October 22.

PEDIE AT HIS PEAK



North's Pedie Byrd rushed for 272 yards and four touchdowns in a showdown between two undefeated Coastal Plains 1A teams to help his Scorpions take over sole possession of first place.

Photos by Jim Harper

Bye-bye Byrd

Senior running back leads Scorpions to first place

By Terry Pope
County Editor

During one stretch of Friday's showdown between North Brunswick and Lejeune in Leland, Scorpion full-back Pedie Byrd rushed four times and scored four touchdowns -- from 21, 54, 48 and 81 yards away. He made it look easy.

The senior leader had 240 yards at halftime as North (6-1, 2-0) pulled out to a 34-6 lead and coasted to a surprisingly easy win in the battle for first place in the Coastal Plains 1A

Conference, winning over the Devilpups, 43-14.

"Our line was doing a good job," said Byrd. "They opened up the holes. I just took advantage of the open holes."

Heading into the game, North coach Garry Bishop was worried because of injuries that forced him to bring up some junior varsity players to fill key holes along the offensive line, especially for lineman Will Yates who is out with a hurt shoulder. But the younger Scorpions picked up the slack and the defense held the Devilpups' (4-3, 1-1) leading rusher Brandon Jackson to fewer than 25 yards for the night.

"We had him keyed," said coach Bishop. "We had potentially seven guys on the sweep because they ran the sweep last week 48 times against Topsail. At least we had that play stopped. And it worked. We shut him down."

What made Byrd's performance so impressive was that he carried the ball just 12 times and four of those were for consecutive touchdowns in the first half. He ran just three times in the second half as Bishop used a host of backs to gain them experience, including sophomore Harold Andrews, who rushed for another touchdown from 41 yards out.

Byrd performed in front of a host of relatives who made the trip from Atlanta, GA, to watch him play. And he did not let his folks down. He is North Brunswick's all-time leading rusher and surpassed the 1,000-yard mark for the season Friday on just his second carry, for 33 yards. The Scorpions have three more games to go in the regular season, so Byrd



North Brunswick head coach Garry Bishop (center) saw a weakness in the Lejeune defensive front.

could exceed the 1,400 yards he gained last year.

"Everything was just happening so fast," said Byrd. "You go out there, and I just hit it hard. My brother came up from Atlanta to see me play. I had family

from all around Atlanta that came to see me play. I'd like to thank them for coming to see me play. Everything just happened the way God let it happen."

Byrd scored his first touchdown with 9:26 left in the first quarter off a 21-yard run. Lejeune answered by returning the kickoff to the Scorpion 34 and was able to gain a first down

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Who's number one in the Coastal Plains? Pedie Byrd and the Scorp.

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