WEST BRUNSWICK GETS REVENGE

Trojans Rally Past East Bladen For Eastern Championship

BY DOUG RUTTER

West Brunswick played tough defense and scored three fourth-quarter touchdowns to defeat East Bladen 27-7 last Friday in the N.C. Eastern 2-A High School Football Championship.

With the win, West Brunswick avenged an earlier loss to the Waccamaw 2-A Conference Champion Cougars and advanced to the state 2-A finals for the first time in school history.

The Trojans will face Thomasville Saturday at noon in Kenan Stadium in Chapel Hill for the state championship. Thomasville beat Swannanoa Owen 14-0 Friday night to advance. Both teams ended the season with 13-1 records.

West Brunswick's Aldwin Lance rushed for 208 yards and scored three touchdowns to lead the Trojan offense in last Friday night's game at East Bladen.

"It's great," Lance said afterward. "Something told me we were going to meet them again. I knew we could beat them."

East Bladen, which finished the season at 12-2, had handed the Trojans their only loss of the season on Nov. 1. Both teams had won three playoffs to advance to the eastern finals.

With Lance leading the offensive attack, the Trojan defense scored eight points of its own in the second half Friday night.

Sophomore Wayne Branch helped turn the game around midway through the third quarter when he blocked a punt for a safety.

Linebacker Aaron Butler picked up an East Bladen fumble and ran 50 yards for a touchdown in the last quarter. It was Butler's second score off a fumble recovery in the last three games.

Both teams rushed for more than 200 yards Friday night, and they were close in every category except turnovers.

For the second consecutive week, West Brunswick didn't commit any turnovers, but forced several on defense. Two of the three East Bladen fumbles led to West Brunswick touchdowns, and the other halted a Cougar drive.

West Brunswick started the game in impressive fashion, taking the opening kickoff and marching 76 yards in 13 plays for a touchdown.

Lance, who scored on fourth-and-goal from the 1, carried nine times for 65 yards in the drive as the offensive line created huge holes for the speedy tailback.

Brian Alderson's extra point attempt sailed wide left, and the Trojans had a 6-0 lead with 5:22 to play in the first quarter.

Neither team scored the rest of the half, but East Bladen threatened late in the second quarter.

With the Cougars facing a second-and-six at their own 16, running back John Lewis took a pitch from quarterback Robby Priest and sprinted around the left end of the Trojan defense.

Lewis, who rushed for 171 yards in the game, appeared to be headed for an East Bladen touchdown.

But West Brunswick's Jimmy Grissett ran him down from behind and knocked the ball loose as he tackled Lewis around the Trojan 35. Jerry Reeves recovered for West Brunswick.

East Bladen scored its only touchdown of the game early in the second half. Monta Davis plunged in from five yards out, following a 51-yard run by Lewis.

Tyrone Mathis' extra point gave the Cougars a narrow 7-6 lead with 11:01 remaining in the third quarter.

West Brunswick failed to move the ball on its next possession, but a 45-yard punt by Alderson pinned the Cougars back at their own 2-yard line.

After three short runs, East Bladen's Warren Scholar dropped back into his own end zone to punt.

Branch, one of the smallest players on the West Brunswick squad, then came up with one of the biggest plays of the game.

He rushed from his right defensive end position and stuffed Scholar's kick. The ball rolled out of the back of the end zone for a safety.

The blocked punt gave the Trojans an 8-7 lead with 6:24 left in the third quarter, and stole the momentum from East Bladen.

West Brunswick increased its lead to 14-7 early in the fourth quarter. Lance scored on a 20-yard run to cap a six-play, 29-yard drive. Grissett helped set up the score with a 20-yard punt return.

East Bladen's next two drives ended with fumbles, and led to touchdowns for the Trojans.

Gary Rhoda, the Cougars' reserve quarterback, fumbled after being hit by West Brunswick's Reeves. Butler picked up the ball and rumbled 50 yards for a touchdown with 6:47 to play.

East Bladen's Lewis fumbled on the next Cougar drive, and Branch recovered for the Trojans.

Lance scored his third touchdown on the next play, running 41 yards up the middle to give West Brunswick the final 27-7 advantage.

The victory over the Elizabethtown squad ended a long dry spell for the Trojans. It was the first time West Brunswick has beaten East Bladen since 1985, and made up for the 16-7 loss six weeks ago that ultimately decided the conference championship.

West Brunswick Head Coach Marshall Seay said the biggest difference between the two games was that West Brunswick's offensive line did a better job last week blocking East Bladen's quick defensive front.

"We've got great skill people, and if we block we can run on anybody," he said. "Our offensive line did the job tonight."

Seay also said a fatal accident near West Brunswick on the morning of the first East Bladen game affected his team.

"I didn't feel like we played well," Seay said of the regular-season contest. "Our offense was definitely off track. We played hard, but we didn't play well. I think that accident might have had something to do with it."

The eastern final win was Seay's first victory over East Bladen in six years as West Brunswick's head coach.

"I'd say this erases those other losses," a relieved Seay commented. "This is number seven and it's the big one. It's the one that counted."

Grissett, who caught two passes for 21 yards in the game, said he didn't expect the Trojans to win by 20 points.

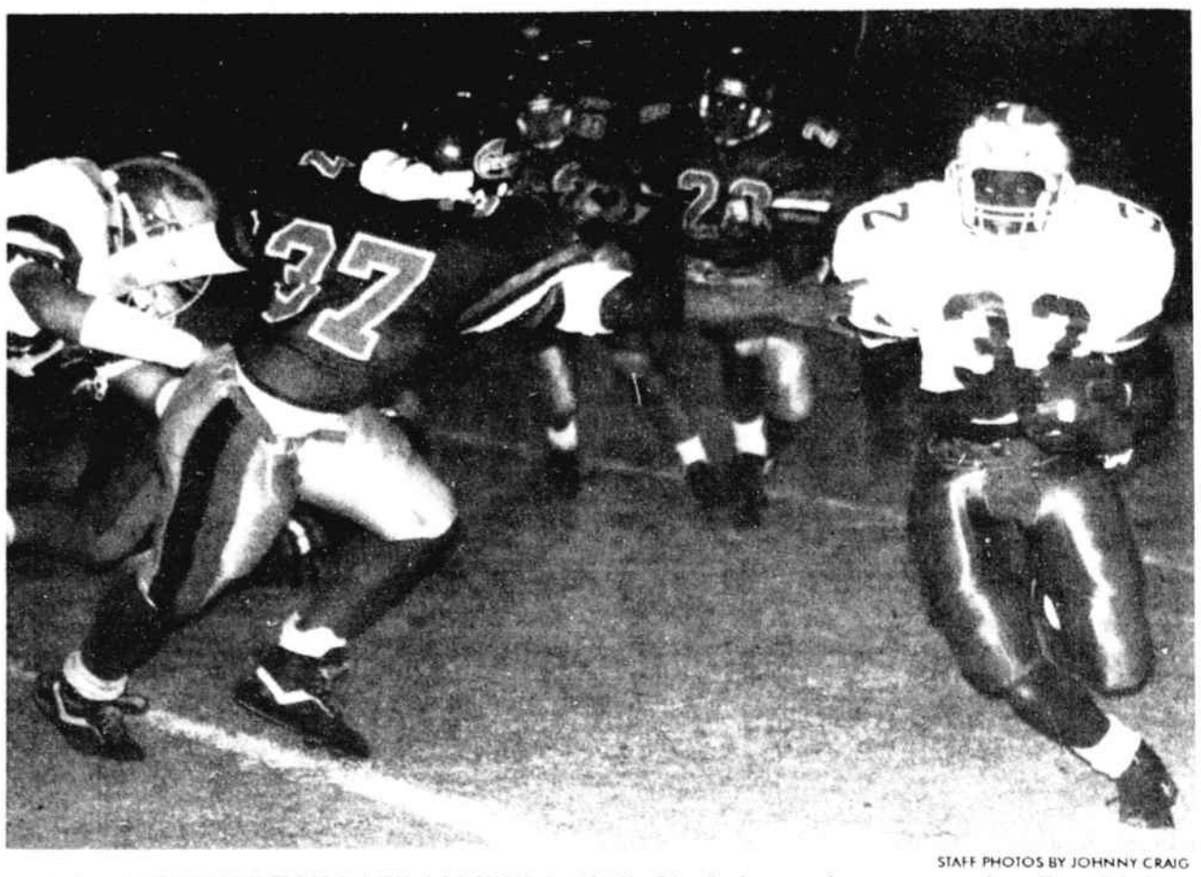
"I knew we could win. I knew it would be a hard game though," he said. "I think they just laid down after we went up that touchdown."

Lance, who was held to just 34 yards rushing in the third-round playoff game at Whiteville two weeks ago, went over 1,500 yards rushing for the season last week.

The 208 yards Friday night in Elizabethtown was his best effort of the year, and Lance increased his season touchdown total to 28.

But the senior was more concerned with George Daniels, the former West Brunswick student-athlete who was killed in a car accident in May. The Trojans have dedicated their season to Daniels.

"I know he's proud of us right now for making it this far," Lance said. "He wants us to win the big one. We're gonna do it for him."



STAFF PHOTOS BY JOHNNY CRAIG

WEST BRUNSWICK TAILBACK ALDWIN LANCE (32) finds running room against East Bladen last Friday in Elizabethtown. The senior rushed for 208 yards and scored three touchdowns to lead the Trojans into the state championship. Trying to make the tackle for the Cougars is Monta Davis (37).

THE YARDSTICK

West Brunswick		East Bladen
11	First Downs	10
38-226	Rushes-Yards	32-251
31	Passing Yards	12
3-9	Pass(Comp-Att)	2-8
0	Interceptions Thrown	0
3-40	Punts(No-Avg)	4-25
0-0	Fumbles-Lost	3-3
8-70	Penalties-Yards	5-55

Score By Quarters

West Brunswick	6	0	2	19	—27
East Bladen	0	0	7	0	— 7

Scoring Summary

(WB) Lance, 1-yard run (kick failed)

(EB) Davis, 5-yard run (Mathis kick)

(WB) Branch, punt blocked for safety

(WB) Lance, 20-yard run (2-point conversion failed)

(WB) Butler, 50-yard return of fumble recovery (Alderson kick)

(WB) Lance, 41-yard run (kick failed)

Individual Rushing

West Brunswick: Lance, 22-208; Butler, 9-41; Russ, 1-0; Holmes, 2-minus 3; Alderson, 4-minus 20.

East Bladen: Lewis, 13-171; Davis, 7-34; Smith, 5-7; Lesane, 2-11; Simpson, 2-10; McKoy, 1-14; Rhoda, 1-8; Priest, 1-minus 4.

Individual Passing

West Brunswick: Alderson, 3-9-31.

East Bladen: Priest, 2-8-12.

Individual Receiving

West Brunswick: Grissett, 2-21; Bowen, 1-10.

East Bladen: Davis, 1-14; Lewis, 1-minus 2.

TROJAN RECEIVER JIMMY GRISSETT (83) struggles for yards as East Bladen's Gary Rhoda wraps him up. Grissett, who had been chosen to play in the Shrine Bowl Saturday, will instead play for West Brunswick in the state 2-A championship game.

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