Carney-To-Bradner Bombs Make Bulldogs Champs

SPORTS
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By WENDELL TIDWELL, T-E Sports Writer

ALBANY — All season long, the Thomasville Bulldogs have believed—it was said—that they were the best football team in 1-AA West.

They proved it here last night, and did it the hard way—bouncing back from a first period bad break which could have crippled their spirit and confidence, to humble Tift County's Blue Devils, 27-7, before an estimated 10,000 fans at Mills Memorial Stadium.

It might be said that the first two minutes clearly belonged to the Blue Devils. If so, it must also be added that most of the remaining 48 were the Bulldogs'—and with them, the prize three two teams put on the line last night—the sub-region championship of 1-AA West.

The victory earned Thomasville a trip to Jesup Saturday night, where the powerful 1-AA East champions will play host to the 1-AA region playoff.

The Bulldogs had more than their share of heroes in this one—and for a variety of reasons. Turning in particularly outstanding efforts were:

—Quarterback Ronnie Carney, who completed six of 13 passes for 163 yards and three touchdowns.

—Halfback Charles Lane, who recovered his poise following two first period fumbles to turn in some of his hardest running of the season.

—Middle guard Andy Seary, who constantly harassed Tift County quarterback Hugh Gordon on passing attempts, and made the center of the Bulldog line an unhealthy place for Blue Devil ball carriers all evening.

—And of course, Phil Bradner, who turned in one of the most spectacular pass-catching performances in recent Thomasville High football history.

It started out as a long, unprofitable night for the Bulldogs. They won the toss, ran the kickoff back to the 34, and called on Charles Lane for a first down gain.

Instead, the Bulldog halfback was met hard at the line of scrimmage and fumbled the ball. Alert Tift halfback Mike Waldrop picked it up and raced all the way to the Thomasville eight before being pulled down from behind.

Fullback Bob Jones ripped off tackle to the two, before Gordon threw high into the end zone with a receiver open.

On the next play, however, the stocky QB elected to keep, and slid over the double stripe to score with 10:17 left in the first period.

Mike Henderson, a former Thomasville resident, kicked the placement, and Tift had taken the lead.

Probably, it wondered aloud for he (and his teammates) had taken the Bulldogs in stride in the first 8½, it appeared, that the Bulldogs — as well as their fans — had been badly shaken by a development which might indicate that this was to be the Blue Devils' night to "pull the upset."

That feeling was not relieved when Lane, carrying again on the first play following the kickoff, let the ball get away again. But an alert Andy Seery fell on it, and actually converted possible disaster into a three-yard gain.

Then, slowly but surely, the tide began to turn.

Twice in the space of the next four minutes, Lane's booming punts stuck Tift in the hole, and twice Bulldog defenders stopped Tift backs inches short of first down yardage.

Still, the Thomasville offense had been no ball of fire either. Until George Truitt blasted off tackle for four yards with 28 seconds left in the period, neither team had a first down.

Early in the second period, a Tift punt started the Bulldogs from their own 34. Their running game virtually hemmed in by the tough Blue Devil defense, Carney began to explore the air, and almost immediately, discovered receivers open all over the place.

His hit Gary Brady for 17, only to have a penalty nullify the play, but kept throwing. And the more he threw, the more impressive were the results.

Bradner caught his first—good for 26 yards, and Lane continued his redemption program for the costly fumble with a 14-yard exhibition of power running.

In only eight plays, the Bulldogs marched to the Tift 18, where Christy and Bradner teamed up again. The result was a 18-yard scoring strike, which, along with Les Martin's perfect placement, knotted things at 7-7.

Tift moved for one first down—on a Hugh Gordon to Dana Faulk pass—before Mike Pack broke up a third down "bomb" and forced a punt.

The result was end Gordon Clyatt's poorest effort of the night, giving Thomasville good field position at the Tift 47. Immediately it was back to the air, and Bradner, Carney and Bradner beauty picked up 34 before Carney aerial went incomplete. But on third down Carney went back to Bradner again, and Bradner's sure catch shot the Bulldogs into the lead with just seven seconds left on the clock. Martin's placement made it 14-7.

An onside kick put up an other Bulldog effort, but after a 12-yard result Tift was guessed it—Bradner, then, but the clock, Tift was called for holding. Thomasville wiped out the pass halt to give them one last scoring shot, with no time left, but the pass fell incomplete.

The second half was all Thomasville.

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Tift was only stopped in the fourth period, while Thomasville not only dominated the ball, but got to the scoreboard again, rewarding Bradner for his brilliant receiving by letting him try his hand at running with the ball.

The versatile senior weight lift last 18 yards of a short drive to wind up scoring with 2:34 left in the game.

Anyone searching for one phrase to describe last night's action could do no better than "field position."

Thomasville had it. Tift County — thanks mostly to Lane's brilliant punting—never did. Once they were behind, and forced to rely more than ever on their passing game, it became the game's major factor.

Another was pass protection. There were times when Carney had as many as three choices to throw to, and more than enough time to pick them out. In that sense, it was in every sense a team victory. For it was Carney's protection which not only gave him time to throw, but permitted his receivers to run their routes unhurriedly.

★ ★ ★

Score by Quarters:

Thomasville	7	0	0	20
Tift County	7	0	0	0

Scoring: Tift Co.—Garden, two yd. run, PAT: Henderson (kick). Thomasville — Bradner, 26-yd. pass from Carney, Bradner, 18-yd. pass from Carney, R. Roper seven-yd. pass from Carney, Bradner, 18-yd. run, PAT: Martin (three kicks).

Staff Photo—Jack Kelly

BULLDOG HALFBACK CHARLES LANE (WITH BALL) HITS TIFT LINE FOR YARDAGE. Lane, Whose Fumble Gave Tift TD, Went On To Have Great Night Running, Punting

TD Club Planning Jesup Train

The Thomasville Touchdown Club met early this morning to make arrangements for a Bulldog "Special" train to Jesup Saturday night.

The train will be leaving Thomasville at 4:15 Saturday afternoon. Tickets for the round trip will cost $6.50. The tickets will go sale tomorrow morning at 8 o'clock at Neel's Men's Shop.

Reserve seat tickets will also go on sale at Neel's tomorrow at $2.00 each.

All seats sold this way will be "Back of Jesup" Saturday morning so that they can be put on sale before the Bulldog "Special" arrives.

It is quite possible that the tickets will be taken off sale Friday afternoon when Neel's closes.

"Fair weather" fans who wait to see if it's going to rain before buying tickets may get left out in the cold.

The reserve seat tickets must go off sale after 6 p.m. Friday afternoon so. Hurry! Hurry! Hurry!

—But Teammates Proved Him Wrong—

'We Ain't Got A Chance', Said One

By WENDELL TIDWELL, T-E Sports Writer

ALBANY — The Thomasville Bulldogs were trailing 7-0 early in the second quarter and had just coughed up the ball to the Tift County Blue Devils for the fourth time in a row.

One of the players on the Bulldog bench remarked, "We ain't got a chance."

Fortunately, the young Bulldog was alone in his opinion. Although the Bulldogs were discouraged and perhaps angry with themselves, not one of the "starters" ever gave up.

A few minutes later Carney completed his first pass of the game—a 17 yarder to end Gary Brady. Although the pass and the gain were nullified by a penalty and the Bulldogs were 77 yards away from paydirt, Les Martin—the Thomasville place kicker—began to warm up his kicking leg.

Now that's what you call positive thinking!

Eight plays later the Bulldogs scored and Martin kicked the extra point to tie the game at 7-7.

In the first game with Tift County, the Bulldogs did not show this optimism or determination. On several occasions in the 7-7 tie, Carney faded back to pass but could find no Army of his receivers in the field. The ends were having trouble avoiding getting blocked out at the line of scrimmage.

This was not the case last night. Not only did the Bulldog pass receivers get away from the scrimmage line, but got behind the defenders to catch 188 yards worth of passes — mostly on sheer determination.

Some of the Bulldogs played their best game of the season. Most of them gave everything they had.

End Roy Roper, for example, was forced to sit out the first few minutes of the second half due to exhaustion.

—Early Fumble 'Just One Of Those Things'—

Bulldogs Refused To 'Rattle'

By ED KELLY

ALBANY — How does it feel when you fumble the opening kick-off and fall behind 7-0 before a championship game is less than three minutes old?

That's what happened to the Thomasville Bulldogs last night, and that's how Tift County's seven got into that 7-7 score. Except for that lucky break, considering Thomasville's overpowering onslaught, a casual spectator might have reasonably asked how Tift County's Blue Devils landed in a championship game anyway.

"It shook us up a little bit, but not too much," said quarterback Ronnie Carney, whose deadly passing beat the imps at their own game. Carney completed six of 13 for 163 yards and three touchdowns, not to mention his personal average of 4.1 yards a carry.

—"We were ready for them," Carney added. "And I don't think their quick touchdown affected our spirits at all."

Halfback Charles Lane, who bobbled that fumble, agreed.

"It was just one of those things," said Lane, who more than atoned for any damage done." He was a consistent ground-gainer and a key reason for Tift County's troubles. Lane's superb punting — a 44-yard average on three kicks — kept the imps in a hole and with poor field position all night.

BUT THE MAN the Blue Devils would like most to forget is halfback Phil Bradner, one whom the Bulldogs will long remember.

"He was simply fabulous," backfield coach Art Williams beamed. "He was All-State, All-America ... he's everything out there tonight."

Williams allowed that Bradner was "a sight to behold" on defense, even if you discount his offensive contributions which brought glowing praise from friend and foe alike.

Bradner scored on passes of 14 and 18 yards and caught one 37-yard toss that set up a subsequent touchdown by end Roy Roper, another bright star in smoggy Mills Memorial Stadium.

Bradner capped off his personal exploits on a 18 - yard run from scrimmage when he exploded through Tift County's tough defense and scored with two Blue Devils unsuccessfully trying to ride him down.

AS USUAL, Coach Joe Sumrall was elated but reluctant to single out any stars.

"It takes a lot of pride for a team to shake off an early disaster and come back the way our kids did," Sumrall said. "They showed a lot of poise and a lot of courage and I'm proud of them."

Sumrall had praise kind words to say about the rugged defense thrown up by the Bulldogs, which gave up only 22 yards on the ground and 80 in the air. One goes into the fourth period, when Thomasville had the game on ice, accounted for 47 of those 80 yards.

Thousands of supporters from both schools, plus interested fans from all over, almost fill-

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BARWICK ..... NOV. 16 P.M.
MEIGS ..... NOV. 17 A.M. & DEC. 8 ALL DAY
OCHLOCHNEE ..... NOV. 17 P.M.
COOLIDGE ..... NOV. 18 A.M. & DEC. 9 ALL DAY
MERRILLVILLE ..... NOV. 18 P.M.
PAVO ..... NOV. 19 P.M. & DEC. 10 ALL DAY
WAYS-PATTEN ..... NOV. 19 P.M.

THOMASVILLE CHEERLEADERS LEARN FROM IRISH
Sign At School Was Part of Pre-Playoff Game Build-Up

The Bulldogs 'Remembered'

By WENDELL TIDWELL, T-E Sports Writer

Last year the fighting Irish of Notre Dame went to the final game of the season undefeated and ranked Number One in the Nation. But in that fatal game with Southern California the Irish were upset in the last minutes, to knock them out of an undefeated season and the National Championship.

In this year's meeting of the two schools, it was the Californians who were undefeated. With watchword "Remember" the fighting Irish came back with a 28-6 victory.

And so it was with the Thomasville Bulldogs last night.

Several weeks ago, the Tift County Blue Devils ended a two-week string of Thomasville victories by tying the Bulldogs 7-7. They were also the first team to score a touchdown on the strong Thomasville defense.

So, because of the play with Tift, the Bulldogs were forced to play the second-string against powerful Albany rival Friday and consequently took their only season defeat.

And last night the Bulldogs gave the Thomasville fans "remembered!"

Ronnie Carney remembered—throwing two touchdown passes and completing six at-tempts together for 163 yards; running seven times for 29 yards and a 4.1 average—to redeem himself for his worst night of the regular season—against Tift on Oct. 1.

Charles Lane remembered—carrying the ball 18 times for 54 yards and a 3.3 average; throwing two passes and completing one for 26 yards.

Phil Bradner remembered—catching two touchdown passes of 18 and 14 yards; running 18 yards up the middle for a third touchdown.

Bunny Vann, Anna Dekle, Jane Thompson, Mary Smith, Lilly Ann Robinson, Suzy Cone, Sandy Norman, and Barbara Clark remembered—practically losing their voices cheering from the start of the pep rally in the gym Monday afternoon until they arrived home late last night; placing signs up all over the Thomasville High campus which read, "Let's win 1-AA West", "Go Bulldogs, Beat Tiffton."

And, of course, "Remember."

The Bench Warmer

By EARL RICKEY
T-E Sports Editor

Phil Bradner's Night

ALBANY—It was the final day of spring football practice at Thomasville High School. With the pads, jerseys and equipment put away until they would come out for full scale use again the following September, head football coach Joe Sumrall paused to take stock of the situation.

Much of his appraisal contained standard comments about the importance of experienced boys coming through, and the vital necessity of the somewhat thin Bulldog squad staying away from injuries.

'Our Best All-Around Back'

But when Sumrall, who does not like to talk about individuals at any time of the year, got to the heart of the problem, he was at his best.

Who, he was asked, figured to be the Bulldogs' big man on offense? "Phil Bradner," he said in reply, "looks like the best all around football player on the squad."

Bradner, of course, had just completed an outstanding junior season in the defensive secondary. His work there, both as a capable pass defender and sure-handed tackler, had had much to do with Thomasville's 8-2 record the previous season.

Now, with Phil Dekle gone from the offensive backfield, Bradner was being shifted to wingback, while still retaining his vital role on defense.

And yet, when the season started, and the Bulldogs started to win, it was not whose name kept cropping up in the headlines. Edward Stephens, Hugh Rockett and others were making big defensive plays, and Charles Lane, George Truitt and Ronnie Carney were the Thomasville offensive players who came up most often for mention.

Through it all, Bradner was there—playing his usual strong game on defense, blocking superbly, catching passes when he got them, and still managing better than a 4.0 running average when called on to carry the ball.

Through it all, Bradner was doing just exactly the type of job the entire Thomasville coaching staff had agreed he would have to do if the Bulldogs were to have a winning season, although the spotlight was continually being dominated by his teammates.

Until last night!

When an obviously inspired Tift County defensive line completely bottled up the Thomasville running attack in the first half, it left only one road open for the Bulldogs. They had to start passing.

And when they did, it was Phil Bradner who ended up doing most of the receiving.

He caught two touchdown aerials from quarterback Ronnie Carney, in addition to making several key receptions which kept drives going.

There Is Always One Like Him

In the Bulldogs ten he did his usual solid block-

PHIL BRADNER
Finally Makes Headlines

TUESDAY NOV. 16 1965