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# Sports

Covering Kickoff to the Final Out in Clinch County Athletics



Clinch's Tyler Morehead takes off for one of his four touchdowns of the night at Pelham Friday night.

## New coach pleased with Panthers despite being outscored in spring game, 49-35

By Len Robbins  
Editor/Publisher

His Panther defense giving up 49 points Friday night at Pelham didn't dampen new Clinch County head football coach Don Tison's enthusiasm for his team's "spring season."

"I couldn't be happier with the spring turnout and how it went overall," said Tison, whose team was outscored at Pelham, 49-35, in their spring game. "We had about 60 (players) out, and the enthusiasm was great from the first day to the last. At the scrimmage, our offense moved the ball, and I was very happy with how they performed. We just have to eliminate those turnovers. We came up a little short, but that makes us a little hungry this summer, and shows us what we need to work on."

The Panthers had five turnovers in the three quarters of varsity action – two returned for touchdowns. But they more than doubled the hosts in terms of offensive output – 482 total yards for Clinch to Pelham's 193 yards. Clinch's offense was led by rising junior quarterback Tyler Morehead's 246 rushing yard on 13 carries and four touchdowns, while rising senior Michael Walker had 122 rushing yards and one touchdown on seven carries.

"The biggest question mark coming into the spring was the offensive line, because we had only one starter coming back, and lost a lot of experience and leadership to graduation," said Tison, who was named head coach in February. "I thought they (the offensive line) had a great scrimmage. I was very pleased. I feel they have gelled very quickly."

The spring game started with one quarter of junior varsity play. In that quarter, the only scoring was a fumble recovery in the endzone by Pelham on the Panthers' first possession. Pelham's offense only managed nine yards total offense in the quarter, while the Panther



Clinch's Perry Williams tackles a Pelham runner during action from Friday's spring game at Pelham High School.

JV had right around 50 yards on three possessions – two which ended in fumbles recovered by the Hornets.

Clinch's fumbleitis continued into the first varsity quarter, as the second snap by the visitors was recovered by Pelham at the Clinch 35. The Hornets would take advantage of the short field, scoring on a 13-yard pass moments later. They led 7-0 with 10:40 remaining in the second quarter (first varsity quarter).

It took Clinch two plays to answer. After a 55-yard run by Walker to the Pelham 10, Morehead scored his first touchdown of the night with 10:18 left in the second period.

The two teams traded possessions until late in the quarter, when Pelham struck paydirt on a 6-yard Kendrick Patterson quarterback keeper to give them a 14-7 lead.

On the ensuing Panther snap, Morehead took off for a 54-yard run. Clinch then fumbled on the Pelham 3-yard line, which was returned to the Clinch 39.

A play later, Patterson threw a 39-yard touchdown pass. That gave Pelham a 21-7 lead with just 18 seconds left in the first half.

That's all the Panthers needed.

Morehead then hit a streaking Jeremiah Johnson down the Panther sideline for a 65-yard, one-handed catch worth six more points. Zack Robbins added the PAT to the cut the halftime Pelham advantage to 21-14.

Clinch had possession to start the last two quarters, and continued their turnover parade on the second half's first snap. Morehead was intercepted on the first play, which was returned for a 40-yard touchdown. Pelham led 28-14 after the point-after kick.

It took Clinch three plays to score again, this time on a Walker 49-yard touchdown run with 10:20 remaining in the third quarter. Robbins' PAT made it 28-21.

Pelham would answer with their most impressive drive of the day, going 65 yards in 10 plays, finishing with another Patterson touchdown toss. They led 35-21 with 4:54 left in the third quarter.

Four plays later, Clinch was back in the endzone – this time on a Morehead 37-yard touchdown run. Robbins made it 35-28 with 2:55 left in the third period.

After a stop by the Clinch defense, Clinch had a chance to tie the game early in the final quarter. But an interception was returned to

the Clinch 45 with 10:12 left in the scrimmage.

Pelham returned the favor, with their only turnover of the night – an interception by Clinch's Derion Simon with 9:55 left in the fourth stanza.

On the ensuing snap, Morehead took off for a thrilling 89-yard touchdown run. Robbins tied it up at 35-35 with the extra-point.

The Hornets answered with another long scoring drive, as Patterson threw a 14-yard touchdown toss with 6:45 remaining to give the hosts the lead again.

Down 42-35, Clinch had one more opportunity to tie the game, taking possession with 1:50 left in the spring game.

They drove to Pelham's 18-yard line, where they committed their last turnover of the night – a fumble that was returned 72 yards for a touchdown with 30 seconds left in the final quarter. The point-after kick gave Pelham a 49-35 final score.

Patterson led the Pelham offense with 148 yards passing (15-of-25 with one interception). The Hornets had 45 yards rushing on 23 carries.

Defensively, the Panthers were led by Craig Harris, with six tackles (including one sack), and Darius Dorsey, with five stops.

"We got down by two touchdowns a couple of times, and had some turnovers, but with that adversity, this group didn't point fingers or get down," said Tison. "They just played hard to the end. They stayed poised. I was impressed and pleased with that."

Clinch will start their 2019 football, and defense of their 2018 state championship, on Friday, August 16, at home vs. Hebron Christian. Their preseason scrimmage will be at home against New Hampstead on Friday, August 9.



Clinch's Darius Dorsey carries the ball during action from Friday's spring game at Pelham.

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Tyler Morehead