

Blount suffers tough loss to Toros

BY DARRON PATTERSON
Staff Writer

SPANISH FORT — Sometimes, good fortune can quickly turn bad.

Spanish Fort's 24-14 Class 6A quarterfinal win over Blount was the product of one disastrous Leopards play that proved to be a saving grace for the Toros season.

"We're practicing on Thanksgiving? That's special." Spanish Fort coach Ben Blackmon said quizzically about his 7th-ranked Toros (10-3) now preparing to host 5th-ranked Saraland (11-2) in the semifinals Friday for the right to play for the state championship Dec. 4th at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa.

Saraland, which beat Opelika 46-27 in its quarterfinal game, lost at

home to Spanish Fort 24-21 on Oct. 2. Blount ends its season 8-5.

Behind a defense that refused to wilt under relentless pressure from the Leopards' offensive arsenal, and the alertness of linebacker Logan Ganey, the Toros will indeed practice on Turkey Day.

With Blount trailing 17-14 midway the fourth quarter, but knocking on the door at Spanish Fort's 15, wide receiver Kameron Grays flattened out his route on a swing pass from quarterback Melvin Williams Jr., but dropped what would've been a sure walk-in TD.

As Grays flailed his arms in frustration over the drop, Ganey swooped in to pick it up what was ruled a lateral and took off the other way with at least three

referees in tow.

He was finally run down by Williams just short of the goal line to set up quarterback Brendon Byrd's 1-yard plunge two plays later that completed a huge 14-point swing.

"He should've got in front of it, it's something we go over, but it didn't happen so ... we had our chances," said Blount coach Lev Holly of the costly play.

"But I'm so proud of this team for what they fought through all year long, and to still get here. I love these guys."

Byrd said it was an uphill battle, but his team just kept fighting.

"Their defense is really good, but our offense just had to hold up and block right," said the Toros

sophomore quarterback before disappearing into a jubilant Spanish Fort locker room.

"We're just glad to get a win."

Blount defensive tackle and Auburn commit Lee Hunter had 13 solo tackles and was sought out afterwards by both Spanish Fort players and coaches for congratulations on his dominant final high school performance.

"We wanted to run the ball away from Number 7," said Byrd on the Toros' game plan to run plays away from wherever Hunter lined up.

Jacob Godfrey ran in from 4-yards out, Byrd found wide receiver Micah Gaffney all alone on a blown Leopards coverage for a 64-yard TD pass and Lucas Breuax connected on a 35-yard field goal

for the Toros' other score.

Blount's Jarris Williams, committed to Troy University, ran in from 3 and 66 yards out for both Leopards' scores.

Byrd was only 4-of-7 and was intercepted twice for a meager 82 yards, most coming on his 64-yarder to Gaffney, but he picked up a timely 47 yards rushing to keep critical possessions alive.

Despite COVID-19 recommendations on social distancing, the game was played in front of a standing-room-only crowd, with those not having a seat gathering around the fence that rings the field.

Those tuned away at the gate parked on a hill overlooking the stadium and watched from their cars.

FOOTBALL SCHEDULE & SCORES

State championships

The 2020 Super 7 State Championships will be held at Bryant-Denny Stadium on the campus the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa, Dec. 2-3-4.

The Super 7 schedule will be as follows:

Wednesday, Dec. 2

Class 7A Championship Game, 7 p.m.

Thursday, Dec. 3

Class 3A Championship Game, 10 a.m.

Class 1A Championship Game, 2:45 p.m.

Class 5A Championship Game, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Dec. 4

Class 4A Championship Game, 10 a.m.

Class 2A Championship Game, 2:45 p.m.

Class 6A Championship Game, 7:30 p.m.

Semifinals schedule

AHSAA 2020 State Football Playoffs

Semifinal Pairings

Friday, Nov. 27

CLASS 1A

Brantley (13-0) at Linden (13-0)

Pickens County (10-3) at Berry (11-1)

CLASS 2A

Abbeville (11-1) at Leroy (11-1)

Spring Garden (12-1) at Mars Hill Bible (11-2)

CLASS 3A

Montgomery Catholic (11-2) at Montgomery Academy (13-0)

Piedmont (12-1) at Fyffe (13-0)

CLASS 4A

Handley (11-1) at American Christian (13-0)

Gordo (12-1) at Etowah (10-2)

CLASS 5A

Faith Academy (12-1) at St. Paul's Episcopal (13-0)

Pleasant Grove (10-2) at Ramsay (12-0), Legion Field

CLASS 6A

Saraland (11-2) at Spanish Fort (10-3)

Mountain Brook (12-1) at Pinson Valley (10-2)

CLASS 7A Finals

Thompson (13-0) vs. Auburn (11-1), Wed., Dec. 2, Bryant-Denny Stadium, 7 p.m.

Quarterfinals results

CLASS 1A

Linden (13-0) 35, Sweet Water (8-3) 6

Brantley (13-0) 21, Maplesville (9-4) 19

Berry (11-1) 42, Brilliant (7-6) 21

Pickens County (10-3) 40, Hubbertville (9-3) 24

CLASS 2A

Abbeville (11-1) 38, Isabella (11-2) 20

Leroy (11-1) 28, Lanett (10-3) 21

Spring Garden (12-1) 21, North Sand Mountain (11-2) 0

Mars Hill Bible (11-2) 55, Aliceville (7-5) 14

CLASS 3A

Montgomery Academy (13-0) 42, Trinity Presbyterian (10-3) 21

Montgomery Catholic (11-2) 24, Thomasville (10-2) 15

Fyffe (13-0) 26, Ohatchee (11-2) 7

Piedmont (12-1) 38, Saks (8-4) 20

CLASS 4A

American Christian (13-0) 38, Alabama Christian (10-3) 7

Handley (11-1) 35, Bibb County (10-3) 21

Etowah (10-2) 49, Northside (10-3) 14

Gordo (12-1) 48, West Limestone (11-2) 13

CLASS 5A

Faith Academy (12-1) 37, UMS-Wright (8-5) 16

St. Paul's Episcopal (13-0) 27, Central, Clay County (11-2) 13

Pleasant Grove (10-2) 35, Alexandria (11-2) 7

Ramsay (12-0) 54, Russellville (10-3) 14

CLASS 6A

Saraland (11-2) 46, Opelika (9-3) 27

Spanish Fort (10-3) 24, Blount (8-5) 14

Pinson Valley (10-2) 34, Oxford (11-2) 2

Mountain Brook (12-1) 21, Clay-Chalkville (11-2) 10

CLASS 7A

Auburn (11-1) 35, Central-Phenix City (8-5) 17

Thompson (13-0) 52, Hoover (11-2) 14

Citronelle football program names 2020 award winners

STAFF REPORT
www.thecallnews.com

Citronelle's football team held its final gathering of the season last week as the squad came together to formally recognize the top Wildcats of the 2020 season.

To say the year 2020 has been a challenge is likely to be an understatement when it comes to high school athletics. Teams across Alabama had to cancel all spring sports as well as spring training for football. Football teams were also restricted on the dates they were allowed to practice and the time that went into preparation.

In addition to those challenges, the Citronelle Wildcats also had to move up in classification of their athletic competition, moving from 5A, Region 1 into 6A, Region 1. The move proved to be as big of a challenge as the day-to-day preparations of football practice. But through it all, the Wildcats were able to participate in the football season and never backed down from their opponents. Being competitive was something that Citronelle head coach Jason Barnett said he wanted to see out of his team this season and they didn't disappoint.

Although the Wildcats were outmanned much of the season, Barnett said he saw a lot of his players grow up fast.

"We all knew that moving from 5A to 6A was going to offer its own set of challenges," Barnett said. "These were challenges that we knew we could work around, and in the end, we would be better as a team for the challenges that we faced. As the head

coach I can tell you this, I have never been more proud of a group of players than I am of this year's team. They knew most of the teams we were playing this year were going to be from much larger programs but our guys never backed away from the challenge."

Citronelle closed the season with an overall record of 3-6 and 1-6 in region competition.

The following are the players who were selected by the team for their contributions to the Citronelle Wildcat football team of 2020.

Best Junior Varsity Offensive Player - Jarius Benjamin

Best Junior Varsity Defense Player - Bradyn Rivers

Best Freshman Impact Offensive Player - Justin Adams

Best Freshman Impact Defensive Player - Rivers Johnson

Best Linebacker - Lathan Farmer

Best Defensive Lineman - Joe Byrd

Best Defensive Back - BJ Jones

Best Offensive Back - Tyler Miller

Best Offensive Lineman - Harold Rocker

Best Wide Receiver - Jaurica Benjamin

Most Valuable Player for Offense - Jonathon Worles

Most Valuable Player for Defense - Dorian Weaver

Most Valuable Player for Special Teams - Pedro Rodriguez

2020 Coaches Award - Jonathon Turner

2020 Team Captain - Jason Weaver

2020 Team Captain - Cam Odum

2020 Team Captain - Sawyer Simison

SATSUMA: Five softball standouts sign scholarships to perform in college

FROM PAGE 1B

ing at the next level.

The players were not the only ones to be excited for the Lady Gators to be moving on. Satsuma head softball coach B.J. Darawich said the day was a memorable one for him as well as his team.

"These kids have known me for a long time; three of them have been with me since seventh grade," he said. "Two of them had transferred in and one of the transfers I coached when she was a kid, during the time I was at the University of Mobile and she attended camps there.

"They're not just special softball players, they're great kids, including academically and the way they handle themselves in the community. They come from great families that really raised some of the finest young women I've ever been around. What's also cool is that a lot of these kids are little sisters of other kids who have been through the program, so keeping that tradition is important."

Page, currently a shortstop for the Gators, will play middle infield and outfield at UAB. She said playing at the next level was made possible thanks to a lot of widespread support.

"It's awesome," she said. "I'm so excited, and I couldn't have done it without the help of my teammates and coaches and family. The coaches sold me on UAB — I love the coaching staff there; they're like family."

"It's the family atmosphere that really got me," Stewart said of UM. "They're really welcoming and they take you in."

Sheffield, who like Stewart is a catcher and utility player, echoed Stewart's opinion of the University of Mobile, as both will be playing for the Rams next season.

"My decision really came down to the atmosphere at UM and how welcoming Coach (Alison) Cook was,"

Sheffield said.

When asked about the prospect of playing together for another four years, both Stewart and Sheffield were very enthusiastic.

"We do get on each other's nerves sometimes, but we talk our way through it," Stewart said, laughing. "But we're hoping to play for a national championship."

For Booker, a pitcher, going to a Division II school such as UWF had its advantages.

"I enjoyed the family atmosphere, the small environment, and being right by the beach," she said. "I'll also pitch at West Florida. The coaches gave me advice—they told us we got to stay practicing and working out."

"It was definitely the community and the team that attracted me to Coastal Alabama," said McDonald, an outfielder. "The team is extremely close, something that I'm really used to. I've been playing with the same group of kids my whole life, so I wanted to make sure I have that through college, too."

For the signees, the goal right now is to get back to the state softball championships in Montgomery. The COVID-19 crisis not only cut the 2020 season short, but there was no state tournament.

"Last year, we were hoping to go to state, and it's going to be our goal this year," Page said.

"Getting that blue map and a ring," that's what's important," said Booker.

"We were really looking forward to state, but this year, we're definitely going to make it," McDonald said.

For Darawich, the multiple signings were an emotional time.

"They all have been together for a long time," he said. "This is a very close group. It's hard for them to see them go, but I'm also excited because their work ethic is going to go where they go."

Faith's Emma Harrell will play for Southeastern Baptist's first softball team

BY ARTHUR L. MACK
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MOBILE — Faith Academy's Emma Harrell signed a softball scholarship with Southeastern Baptist College of Laurel, Miss., during ceremonies held in Faith Academy's cafeteria on Nov. 18.

Harrell, an outfielder and second baseman for the Rams, has been with the Faith softball program for three years. During her junior year, she was named to the Mobile County Coaches Association's All-County team. Her career average is .310, two triples, two home runs, and 11 RBIs. Because of the statewide shutdown for all spring sports, Harrell's stats were reduced as Faith managed to play only nine games.

Southeastern Baptist is starting a women's softball team for the first time in history, and Chargers' head coach Stephen Ulmer said that Harrell's signing was very special.

"It's a very special day for us," he said. "Emma's the type of player that will help our team. But it's not just about softball, it's about serving the Lord."

For Harrell, signing with Southeastern Baptist was special for another reason. She thought about her late grandfather, Glenn Harrell, and how he encouraged her to do her very best.

"He always pushed me to be the best athlete I could be, so today it (the signing) was definitely for him," she said.

Harrell, who fought back tears while signing with Southeastern Baptist when reflecting about her grandfather, said signing with SBC was a chance to develop spiritually.

"It was definitely an opportunity to grow spiritually closer to God and athletically closer to God, because he gave me the opportunity to play the game I'm going to play in his name," she said. "At Southeastern, I'll be a utility player, but I'm actually specifically going to start at shortstop."

Harrell, who has a 3.75 grade point aver-



Photo by John O'Dell/Call News

Faith Academy's Emma Harrell

age and a weighted GPA of 3.80, said playing for a team that has yet to play an official game may be challenging, but she is up to the task.

"I'm always up for a challenge, and I always have those leadership values in my heart that I can take charge," she said. "This season is going to be a great season next year."

"Emma is one of seven senior players at Faith who are going to sign scholarships," said Faith head softball coach Rae Lynn Dennis. "I'm really excited, because it is historical to have seven to commit in one softball season. Emma's strength, dedicating and hard work have gotten her this far."