

THE INDEX-JOURNAL

Sports

Abbeville-Emerald Notes

By SCOTT J. BRYAN/Index-Journal sports editor
Published: Saturday, October 25, 2008 1:25 AM EDT

Entering Friday night's matchup with Class AA power Abbeville High School, Emerald's football team entered the game with a losing record. But the Vikings had momentum, and a first-quarter surge had the Emerald faithful thinking upset.

Mike Clowney, Emerald's third-year coach who has never guided the team to the postseason until this year, said he didn't have to say much to garner the inspired performance. "The biggest thing is we've finally got to a point where we don't have to say a lot," Clowney said. "It's gotten to the point with our guys where we've gotten a couple wins the last two weeks, and they see that if we do play hard it helps accomplish the things we want to accomplish. I think coming in Monday, there was a whole different mood and guys were focused on winning."

Emerald jumped out to a 13-0 lead, stunning the Abbeville crowd and causing a bit of anxiety among the Abbeville sideline. The Panthers, however, did win 43-22.

Abbeville running back Dureal Elmore, who rushed for 232 yards and three touchdowns on 33 carries, said the Panthers' response to the 13-0 lead -- driving the field and scoring quickly -- was necessary to halt the momentum. "It was very important," Elmore said. "The intensity of the game and with all the momentum on their side, we needed a stop by our defense. We knew we had to take to the end zone quick and that's what we did."

EXCELLENT ENWRIGHT: Abbeville coach Jamie Nickles wasn't the only person impressed with Gavagio Enwright's 92-yard punt return touchdown for a fourth quarter. Elmore, the Panthers' leading rusher out of the vaunted A-Bone offense, was also impressed with Enwright. "That was real big," Elmore said. "That was a game-breaker. That's what we needed. He's an excellent punt returner, and so is (the other deep back) Channing Kennedy. With those two back deep, they're a double-threat."

NEWTON'S LAW: Emerald's Zane Newton was back at quarterback for the Vikings on Friday.

Newton was injured against Greenwood in the Vikings' season-opener, then missed a few games before returning as a utility player of sorts for Emerald.

Prior to Friday, Newton had taken a few snaps at quarterback, but he had mostly been used as a running back, receiver and defensive back. Newton continued to play on defense, but he also took the bulk of Emerald's snaps, completing 16-of-29 passes for 131 yards while rushing for 52 yards and six carries. "We knew tonight that we'd have to run the football with our quarterback," Clowney said. "Zane runs it better than Billy, so you

wind up getting into that situation a little bit that Florida had with (Chris) Leak and (Tim) Tebow. Zane gave us something tonight that we thought would really help us, and it did.”

Billy Pooser, who had been filling in for Emerald, was not absent from the offensive, however. Pooser completed 4-of-4 passes for 36 yards, plus had two catches for 35 yards. One of those catches was impressive 24-yard grab that gave Emerald a first down late in the ballgame. “Billy’s a football player,” Clowney said. “Billy is one guy, we could probably put anywhere on the field, and he knows what to do. Him being able to do that gives us a lot of options.”