

# THE INDEX-JOURNAL

## Sports

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### **Emerald Enters Boiling Springs Game With Added Confidence**

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If the Emerald High School football team's meeting with Class AAAA Boiling Springs tonight appears to be an uphill climb, the Vikings at least enter the game riding some momentum.

Emerald allowed an average of 47.7 points over its first three games, but the Vikings limited Ware Shoals to 16 points last week and subsequently won their first game of the season. "I think the situation has been good for our guys because they've won before, but to get the first win of the season, it's a like weight being lifted," Emerald coach Mike Clowney said.

The Vikings will most likely have to play even better to come out on top against Boiling Springs at 7:30 p.m. today at Frank Hill Stadium.

The Bulldogs are not only a Class AAAA program, one of two Emerald has on its schedule, but have also proven to be a stout offensive team.

Boiling Springs scored 62 points in each of its first two games and is averaging 45.7 points after the opening four weeks of the season. "Boiling Springs is a good team, and they've done a great job (offensively) as far as spreading people out," Clowney said. "Defensively, they're solid as well and have good tacklers, which is what you'd expect from a Class AAAA program. "It's going to be a challenge."

Since the Vikings already take on one Class AAAA opponent, Greenwood, each year as part of a cross-town rivalry, a matchup against another AAAA program would not normally be scheduled, but extenuating circumstances forced Emerald to seek a new opponent. "They closed Calhoun Falls, so we were looking for a game and it turned out that Boiling Springs was the only team looking for a game that same week that wasn't three hours away,"

Clowney said.

Tonight's game will be the first-ever meeting between the two teams. On paper, Boiling Springs is a logical favorite against Emerald, but the Bulldogs are coming off their first loss of the season, a 23-21 loss to Aiken, and to make matters worse, they will be playing without injured starting quarterback Dylan P. Thompson.

In a setback that Clowney, who will be without starting quarterback Zane Newton under center for the fourth straight game, can relate to, Thompson suffered a shoulder injury last Friday against the Hornets. Newton went down with a similar injury facing Greenwood in Week 1. "I think we grew up a lot last week," Boiling Springs coach Bruce Clark said. "Obviously, we didn't play as well in the second quarter as we thought we should've, but I think in the long run it will benefit our team."

Emerald, which has several players injured on defense in addition to Newton, defeated a similarly banged up Ware Shoals team last week. "It's just kind of like no matter who it is (injury-wise), it's the type of team that handles that type of situation the best that wins football games," Clowney said.

Injuries set the Vikings back on their defensive line, but Emerald's play up front against the Hornets last Friday was crucial in setting up the win. Ware Shoals, playing without senior wingback Ladarius Hawthorne, tallied just 105 yards on the ground, including a mere 39 yards on 15 carries from senior Lance Richardson against Emerald's defensive front.

The Bulldogs are not as rush-oriented as Ware Shoals, but the Viking defense will be called upon once again to put pressure on Boiling Springs backup quarterback Taylor Anderson. "(Taylor) will do well," Clark said. "He's a young kid, so he'll be nervous, but if you're not nervous out there then you're not a real football player."

Clowney thinks the younger replacements who have come into replace defensive starters like lineman Rashad Robinson and linebacker Taylor Johnson, who are both out for the year with knee injuries, are finally beginning to adjust to their enhanced roles. "Inexperience is always a big factor, and we had four guys projected as starters who are not out there," Clowney said. "They were not getting a whole lot of reps, but after the past four or five weeks, we're starting to see some improvement."