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Sports

Emerald-Pendleton Notes

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In the Emerald High School football team's penultimate game last season against Saluda, Vikings quarterback Zane Newton made a triumphant return from a collarbone injury to lead Emerald to a win. His return from another injury this week against Pendleton was a bit more inconsistent.

Newton suffered a shoulder injury during the Vikings' season-opening loss to Greenwood, the same game he was injured in last season. He has played significant minutes at slot receiver for Emerald this season, but Friday was his first time back at quarterback since Billy Pooser, who had been filling in for Newton, suffered an ankle injury at practice this week. "We decided that since he got most of the reps this week, we'd just go with him there," Emerald coach Mike Clowney said.

Statistically, Newton had a solid night, completing nine of 15 passes for 141 yards and rushed for 38 yards on several read option plays. The senior's biggest mistake came when he threw an interception with seconds remaining in the second quarter and Emerald trailing 24-10. That turnover led to the Bulldogs scoring another touchdown and entering intermission with a 21-point lead. "He's still very inconsistent," Clowney said. "He was kind of playing on emotion rather than just playing to win."

NOT SO SPECIAL TEAMS: Pendleton's passing attack dominated Emerald on Friday and a great deal of that success came from the Vikings' poor play on special teams.

Emerald suffered a blow right from the start when it gave up a 50-yard punt on the opening kickoff that put the Bulldogs on the Vikings' 44-yard line. Pendleton quarterback then found C.J. Gleaton in the end zone for a touchdown seconds into the game.

Later in the first quarter, Pendleton's Tye Burke had a 42 yard kickoff

return that he brought back to the Vikings' 47-yard line, setting up another score.

Even with senior Jeremy Tommie back and getting good distance on his kicks, the Vikings' inability to tackle at times plagued them on special teams. "We always talk about field position and tackling," Clowney said. "It was a big plus as far as getting Tommie back, he was good kicking the ball, but we've got some new guys on the coverage team, so that got us there and we obviously gave up some long returns."

DEE DOMINANCE: The Vikings' lone bright spot Friday night was predictably once again senior running back Dee Parks, who has 470 yards and is averaging 5.1 yards per carry. Parks had 19 carries for 86 yards against Pendleton and also caught a pass from Newton for six yards. He had 58 yards in the first half, but Parks' numbers slipped because of negative yardage on several plays. In the second half he had 28 yards on five carries. "Dee's still been our steady workhorse," Clowney said. "He gives what he's got every single week and he's one kid where we don't have to worry about what we're going to get for him. "Now we've gotten to the point where people are really going to try to stop him and take him out of the game."