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Sports

Emerald-Southside Notes

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GREENVILLE -- The first time Emerald High School faced Southside this season, the Vikings allowed 588 total offensive yards to the Tigers and 59 points, a school record. Southside increased its point total against Emerald on Friday in the first round of the Class AA playoffs by scoring 74 points, but most of the Tigers' scores came on short yardage runs in the red zone.

While Southside dominated Emerald through the air in the two teams' first meeting in Week 3, the Tigers on Friday scored four of its 11 touchdowns, and three of their first five, on rushing plays from within Emerald's 10-yard line. Two of Southside's rushing touchdowns in the first half came on quarterback keepers by Justin Goldsmith. The Tigers benefited from strong field position thanks to six turnovers by the Vikings. "We told them to just execute every single play and let the scoring take care of itself," Southside coach Greg Porter said. "The defense did help getting us in good field position, creating turnovers, and that just gave us the motivation we needed to continue."

FUMBLITIS: The Vikings managed to play through its Region 1-AA schedule without giving up too many turnovers, but Emerald made up for lost time early on against Southside.

On the second play of the game, Emerald running back Dee Parks lost the ball at the 50-yard line for his first of two fumbles. That miscue set up the Tigers' first scoring drive and on the first play of Emerald's next drive, quarterback Zane Newton lost the ball, which was picked up by Marlin Butler and returned for a 35-yard touchdown return, inciting Clowney to remark on the sideline, 'OK, what just happened?'

What occurred was Emerald found itself trailing by two touchdowns within less than three minutes of the start of the game.

The Vikings lost the ball again on their next drive when Jared Norman fumbled on first-and-10 from the Tigers' 22-yard line, but Emerald managed to stop Southside on the ensuing possession. "We just came out against a good ball team and we played flat. They're better than us," Clowney said. "We played them twice and they're probably just a better football team than we are."

AN ORWELLIAN WIN: The Vikings' loss Friday was Emerald's first playoff appearance since 2005, but it's playoff drought in no way compared to Southside. The Tigers last made the playoffs in 1995, as a Class AAA team, and hadn't won a game in the postseason since defeating Batesburg-Leesville 13-12 in the first round of the state playoffs in 1984. "Words can't express it. I'm glad for the program," said Porter, who is in his first year with the Tigers. "I'm grateful to the school for giving me the opportunity to have my first head coaching opportunity. But just knowing that this was our first playoff win (since 1984), it's a great feat."

The Tigers will next face Strom Thurmond on the road next Friday.