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Sports

Vikings Blank Crescent, 36-0

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IVA -- Emerald High School's football team's defense has only shown up intermittently so far this season, but Friday night it finally came together for a full game. The Vikings put together their best all-around effort for a 36-0 shutout victory and their first Region 1-AA victory after falling to Pendleton in the region opener last week.

The win, Emerald's second, was a huge factor in keeping alive the Vikings' dwindling playoff hopes with three games remaining and Liberty coming to Frank Hill Stadium next Friday. "I definitely think this was our best effort as far as keeping points off the board," Emerald coach Mike Clowney said. "I'm proud of, more than anything, just the effort."

Vikings running back Dee Parks, usually Emerald's main force on offense, rushed for 216 yards and three touchdowns on 19 carries, but it was Emerald's defense that sparked the Vikings.

Emerald limited the Tigers to just 71 total yards in the first half and capitalized on a number of offensive penalties by Crescent for a 15-0 lead at halftime. "That's one of the things we've talked about this week -- focusing on the little things," Clowney said. "It all just goes back to working on focusing on the little things."

Emerald's defensive line, already a strong asset for the Vikings, was particularly effective Friday, as linemen such as Kent Kelley and Lucas Mathis neutralized the Tigers' running game. "I thought our defensive line played well," Clowney said. "They did a good job as far as attacking and giving our linebackers a chance to run down guys."

With the linemen playing their role, Parks was free to take over on offense. The Vikings built off five Crescent penalties in the first half, and Parks rushed for two of his three touchdowns.

On the second play of the second quarter, Parks had 5-yard run up the middle for a score, and then he put it in the end zone again late in the quarter on a 2-yard hand-off from quarterback Billy Pooser.

Parks scored once more in the third quarter. "Going into it, we knew they would try to take him out of the game, which they did, but I think the biggest thing for him was he had a good offensive line working for him," Clowney said. "That gave him a lot of opportunities and, you know, I think those guys up front are one of the biggest parts of his success."

Parks echoed those sentiments following the game. "I've got to credit my (offensive) line," Parks said. "The line blocked good, and my wide receivers blocked good."

The game was well out of hand early in the third quarter, but the Tigers had an opportunity to gain momentum when they recovered a fumble on Emerald's first possession on Crescent's 14-yard line.

Instead the Tigers went three-and-out and didn't move the ball outside of their own territory after their own first possession. "Right now, we're not a very good football team and worse than that, is right now we're a very poorly coached team," Crescent coach Troy Gamble said. "When you make penalties and stupid mistakes, that's a sign of a poorly coached team."