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Sports

Vikings Seeking 1st 1-AA Victory

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Emerald High School's football team has just four regular season games remaining and the number of opportunities for the team to pick up victories is dwindling.

This week's game against Crescent could be as good an opportunity as any for the Vikings. Emerald is seeking its first Region 1-AA win when it travels to face the Tigers at 7:30 p.m. Friday in a matchup between two teams who have not met expectations this season.

The Tigers are one game up on Emerald with a 2-4 record, but Crescent has been outscored 125-33 during a three-game losing streak.

Crescent's main concern all season has been hanging on to the football. The Tigers fumbled four times on five possessions in the Abbeville Jamboree against Ware Shoals.

Against Ninety Six in Week 4, they had three first-half fumbles that translated into touchdowns by the Wildcats.

"I think the biggest thing with them is they've made some mistakes, just like we have," Emerald coach Mike Clowney said. "A couple games they've turned the ball over and put themselves in a bad position, but overall I think they've got a good football team."

The Tigers operate a Wing-T offense, giving Emerald the task of facing that rush-oriented offense for the third time in four weeks after games against Ware Shoals and Pendleton.

The Vikings were able to defeat the undermanned Hornets in Week 4, 22-16, but fell last week 31-10 to the Bulldogs. "Crescent, you watch them on tape, and you can see their coaches do a great job," Clowney said. "They're running this Wing-T, and I think their guys do a good job of knowing what they're supposed to do."

Both teams allowed big plays through the air in their losses last week. Pendleton quarterback John Michael Gibson completed just seven passes against Emerald, but he tallied 172 yards on the strength of two throws for more than 40 yards and four that were 20 yards or more.

Facing Abbeville, the Tigers faced just four passes from Panthers quarterback Jimmy Thackson, but they went for 118 yards and three touchdowns. "I think one of the biggest things we talked about before last week's game was limiting the big play. We wound up giving up the big plays, and we never really made it," Clowney said. "As far as this week, we've got to make sure we keep everything to 5 or 10 yards, but in order to be successful, we've got to make some runs of our own and get in the end zone."

The Vikings relied on senior running backs Dee Parks to move the ball last week on

offense, and Clowney is anticipating some more variety from Emerald in the spread, which will be run mostly by Billy Pooser at quarterback. Senior Zane Newton took all of the snaps last week and passed for 141 yards in his first start at quarterback since injuring his shoulder against Greenwood in Week 1.

Parks had 86 yards rushing while no one else had more than 38. Reggie Haskins was the team's leading receiver with 56 yards on four catches. "We want to try to get the ball to as many people as we can, spread it out to as many guys on offense," Clowney said. "(Parks) is that center point, and he'll get his carries, but we want to make sure we spread the wealth so (Crescent) just can't key on Dee."