

GOOSE CREEK GATORS HOLD OFF WANDO WARRIORS FOR 10th STRAIGHT TIME

By Danny Reed

MOUNT PLEASANT – After a near upset one week ago at home against Cane Bay, the Goose Creek Gators were in need of a standout performance at Wando in their first road game in over a month.

What they got was 313 yards rushing and an eighth consecutive win, spoiling Senior Night for the Warriors in a 28-16 smashmouth victory in Region 7-AAAA play Friday evening.

Ty'rik Johnson led Goose Creek (8-1, 3-0) with 171 yards rushing on 21 carries, including a 31-yard TD run that iced the game with less than three minutes remaining. Quarterback Dominique Jefferson accounted for 222 total yards and two scores in leading the Gators to their 10th consecutive triumph over Wando.

Despite four turnovers that led to Wando (4-5, 0-3) starting each ensuing drive in Gator territory, Goose Creek's defense allowed just 10 points in those situations and limited the Warriors' rush offense – which played without tailbacks Kenny Waring (collarbone) and Kevin Brown (concussion) – to only 52 yards on 27 total carries.

“We have a lot of confidence in our defense, and they did a tremendous job against the run tonight,” said Goose Creek head coach Chuck Reedy, whose team has won 19 consecutive region games. “We had to find a way to win, and fortunately, we were able to.”

With Goose Creek ahead 14-10 at the 7:19 mark of the third quarter, Johnson's second lost fumble of the game was pounced on by Wando's Colton Feinberg at the Gator 42. A 20-yard pass from Bailey Hurt to Ortre Smith gave the Warriors first-and-goal at the Goose Creek 6. But on second-and-goal, reserve tailback Jalen Mauldin coughed up the football, and Jeffrey McElveen recovered for the Gators at their two.

Goose Creek needed only six plays to travel 98 yards in 2:29 for the 21-10 cushion. Jefferson hit Dijon Profit for 25 yards on third-and-seven from the Gators five, and Jefferson finished the quick strike with a 50-yard option keep around left end with 2:29 remaining in the quarter.

“I thought he [Jefferson] played exceptionally well tonight,” added Reedy. “He's a guy that can make plays with his feet, and he throws the ball a lot better than people give him credit for.”

Wando got within 21-16 by virtue of an 11-play, 98 yard drive finished by Mauldin's one-yard touchdown with 3:29 left in the game, but Hart's two-point pass fell incomplete.

A failed onside kick attempt by Wando gave Goose Creek possession at midfield, and Johnson hit pay dirt from 31 yards out two plays later to conclude the scoring.

Wando started the scoring a 3-0 lead on Parker White's 32-yard field goal with 32 seconds left in the first quarter, but Goose Creek's response was swift.

Quintavis Davis' 40-yard kickoff return set up the Gators at their own 45, and eight consecutive running plays later, fullback Robert Matthews scored on a two-yard plunge. Jose Almaraz-Adame's PAT put Goose Creek in front 7-3 at the 9:54 mark of the first half.

Johnson's first fumble was snatched by Wando's Ryan Williams at the Goose Creek 20, and Hart found Smith on a crossing route on third-and-six from the Gator 16, and Smith did the rest, breaking a tackle at the two and diving into the end zone for a 10-7 Wando advantage with 2:59 left in the second quarter.

The Gators once again immediately chomped back in assuming a 14-10 halftime lead, when Jefferson dropped a beautiful fade into the waiting hands of Profit in the back left corner of the end zone for a 10-yard touchdown with 12 seconds left in the half. Jefferson hit four of his five passes on the drive for 54 yards, hooking up with Profit three times.

Goose Creek visits West Ashley next Friday, while the Warriors – losers of three straight - journey to Cane Bay.