



# WEEK TWO RECAP



## Panthers Regroup after Falling to Heights

It was a beautiful night Friday, if not muggy and still, the air crackling with electricity, weighted with tension and buzzing with intensity. Outside the visitor's entrance to the east stands at Farrington Field, shadows enveloped the swelling crowd, softening the most characteristic attribute of Fort Worth Independent School District athletic facilities, an air of dispirited abandon that serves as a sharp counterpoint to the modern coliseums of suburban districts. One was put in mind of a "Twilight Zone" episode, the ghost town brought suddenly to life, teeming with the vitality of pulsating youth, alive after a lengthy slumber.

Inside, the field looked greener than it ever has, and the air itself seemed alive. Even the home team stands, though not as full and seething as the visitors', were well-filled with Arlington Heights Yellowjackets partisans. As the pre-game clock wound its way to zero, the growing, restless, panting, boisterous Paschal crowd became one loud roar for the Panthers, a tribute and send-off all in one for the boys in purple and white as they faced off against the archrival Yellowjackets.

And that is the *sotto voce* subtext of the Panthers' season of revival, this reinvigoration of school spirit, this reawakening of Paschal pride. True, students and parents have long taken justifiable pride in the school's stellar academics. Likewise, they've been proud of the school's award-winning band and some of the school's other athletic teams, including the traditionally strong volleyball squad, the back-to-back district champion baseball team and perennially strong golf team, the nascent boys' and girls' soccer teams. But it's been some time since students proudly wore purple face paint to football games, wore spirit wear without a kitschy sense of irony, attended games to see the games instead of just to hang out with friends. The bandwagon was full to overflowing Friday to watch the Panthers put their then-unblemished 2-0 record on the line.

And what they saw was a competitive first half (though it was clear from the beginning that the Panthers lacked the crispness and élan of their previous efforts) before the wheels came off and momentum jumped on Heights' back and rode the Yellowjackets to a runaway victory.

In the second half, the Yellowjackets (3-0) took the Panthers to the proverbial woodshed in what may turn out to be a blessing in disguise, a reminder to the Panthers of what it takes to win, of what brought them their early and spectacular success.

There's no question the game was a train wreck for the 2-1 Panthers. Sifting through the wreckage like forensic scientists, however, it can be hard to understand what we find. On the one hand, we find evidence suggesting that perhaps Heights wanted it more, that Heights was hungrier and grittier and more determined to win. On the other, we can find evidence that perhaps the Panthers wanted it too much, that they wanted victory so badly that they tensed up and nearly paralyzed themselves with desire.

Neither theory, of course, changes the outcome. And neither theory negates the Panthers' hard work or intense desire, or the stellar plays the Panthers did make.

RB Emmanuel Smith scored two touchdowns and rushed for more than 200 yards, perhaps the quietest 200 yards on record considering the lopsided final score. TE Michael Schroeder caught an 18-yard TD pass. LB/P Kevin Deal recovered two onside kicks and showed he is coming into his own as a punter, earning special teams player of the week honors from the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. DB Arron Stafford forced a fumble. Every Panther played hard, each player's drenched uniform a silent testament to honest and honorable effort.

In the end, Panther Nation left the art deco confines of Farrington Field disappointed. Fans left disappointed not in the Panthers, but for them. Fans left aching, not for any emptiness inside of themselves, but for the emptiness they knew the players felt, that understandable letdown that comes with failure. But the Panthers didn't really fail. On this particular night, they just did not succeed.

And that may not be an entirely bad thing at this juncture in the season. As Thomas Jefferson once said, "A little rebellion now and then is a good thing," the idea being that it's sometimes good to be uncomfortable, to shake things up, to experience tumult. In that discomfort and tumult, the Panthers rediscovered why they play the game and what they need to do in order to enjoy continued success.

Besides, to young players unaccustomed to the scrutiny and popularity engendered by the team's fast start, the unblemished record was becoming a burden, something to defend as opposed to something that must be earned. Consider it a lesson learned with practical psychological benefits going forward. Confederate President Jefferson Davis noted that, once Richmond fell, his armed forces were relieved of the burden of defending the city and could then harass Union forces with guerilla strikes. Though history amply demonstrates how that turned out, the concept remains sound. The Panthers are now free of the burden of defending a perfect record and can now concentrate instead on doing the things that have made them otherwise successful.

The Panthers will now look to put those lessons to work and rebound in this Friday's match-up with the South Hills Scorpions. The homecoming contest is slated for 7:30 p.m. Friday at Farrington Field – not at Scarborough-Handley Field as originally scheduled. Scarborough-Handley, a moth-preserved-in-opaque-amber facility that can politely be called "cozy," would likely have been overrun by the Paschal homecoming crowd.

Whether that crowd will include some of the late bandwagon hoppers is uncertain, but Panther Nation was turning out large crowds even before it was cool to be a Panthers fan, even outdrawing opponents on the road. These purple-bleeding die-hards have internalized Paul's message to the Corinthians, "And these three things remain: faith, hope and love; and the greatest of these is love." Panthers' fans have faith in the team, hope for its future and unconditional love for its players -- win, lose or draw.

As one philosophical fan said at the conclusion of last Friday's game, "If you'd told me at the beginning of the season that we'd be 2-and-1, I'd have said, 'I'll take it.'"



## Enthusied Home Crowd Energizes JV Panthers though Team comes up just Short

The much anticipated PHS vs. Heights rivalry week kicked off at the home of the Panthers when week two of JV football brought the Yellowjackets to Bill Allen Field and its enthusiastic, energized crowd of Panthers faithful.

The Panthers kicked off to open the game and then it was up to the JV defenders to set the early tone with their typical hard-hitting style of play. The defense did not disappoint, giving the ball to the offense several times throughout the first quarter. Late in the first quarter the Jackets were able to penetrate the Panther defense, scoring on a reverse from 20 yards out. A missed extra point kept the early score, Jackets 6, Panthers 0.

In the second quarter, the Panther offense showed glimpses of what it is capable of accomplishing when QB Marshall Norment hit WR Tyler Anderson on a long pass, giving the offense a much needed first down and putting it in position to score. The Panther offense continued to try and pound the ball into the heart of the Jacket defense but wet and muddy field conditions made running the ball tricky. The first half of the game ended with the Jackets up 6 – 0.

The second half of the game started with the special teams unit on the receiving end of the opening kick off and looking to provide a spark for the home team. Morgan Hix fielded the kick at the Panther 13 yard line. Textbook blocking from the entire kick return unit left the Jackets chasing Hix down the field and into the end zone for an 87-yard touchdown. With the home crowd cheering and the players energized, the Panthers sought to keep the second half momentum going with the defense being led by seemingly non-stop tackles by Alex Hansen and an athletic interception by Blake Sayles. The third quarter ended with a 6 – 6 score and the Panther faithful cheering for a win.

In what has become a calling card of the early JV season, defense, defense and more defense, the Jackets were held in check until late in the fourth quarter, when a field goal put the Jackets up 9 – 6. The Panther offense made several gallant attempts to answer the field goal, moving the ball with some hard-nosed runs, but the clock became the enemy in this game and it ended with the Jackets prevailing 9 – 6.

The JV Panthers played a hard-fought game and showed that it has the talent and heart to compete with any team that takes the field against them. The team now squares off against the South Hills Scorpions at 5:30 p.m. Thursday at South Hills High School.

*Special thanks to Winky Hix for his game day reporting on JV action.*



## Freshmen Panthers Hit Rough Patch but are Poised to Rebound v. South Hills

Despite big games by several players, the freshmen white squad (0-2) fell to the Arlington Heights Yellowjackets last Thursday in a hard-fought affair.

QB Joe Bulttron had a fine day, completing five passes for more than 100 yards. On defense, Jacey Benton and Christopher Cortez came up big. Cortez racked up seven tackles and several big hits.

The freshmen purple team (2-1) likewise came up just short, but not for lack of effort or desire. LB Connor Fanning had another huge game with two sacks and several big-time hits. LB Ben Hoyt had his best game of the season, recording six tackles.

Disappointed with the outcome but not with their effort, the freshmen were back on the practice field Friday at work and getting back on track for Thursday night's match-up with the South Hills Scorpions. The white team game is slated for 5 p.m. Thursday, with the purple team game to follow, at Paschal High School -- the teams' first home contests of the 2008 season.

*Special thanks to Coach Michael Snapp for his game day reporting on freshmen action.*

Visit The Panther Football Website at [www.leaguelineup.com/paschalfootball](http://www.leaguelineup.com/paschalfootball)

*Special thanks to Geoff Campbell for his insightful game day analysis.*

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