

WEEK THREE RECAP



Paschal Dominates South Hills In All Phases of the Game, If not the Scoreboard

It's sometimes hard to know exactly what we mean by maturity. Is it that graying at the roots some of us work so hard to suppress? Or is it that decision we make to forego the Caribbean cruise in favor of a timing belt change?

Of course the two really go hand in hand. We mature as we grow more mature, and yet, maturity remains a funny thing, an inexact and elusive concept. Just as the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court finally threw up their hands and said they'd know obscenity when they saw it, we know maturity when we see it without being able to say exactly what we think it is. Maybe we see maturity in a sudden appreciation of green peppers and mushrooms. Maybe we see the harbinger of maturity in a desire to go to bed early in order to be rested for the big test the next day. Maturity takes many forms and manifests itself in myriad ways.

Consider the Paschal Panthers football team. Entering the season, the team hadn't tasted victory in 26 games. After winning its first game in the season's first contest, the team celebrated like it was VJ Day, yelling, crying and hugging anyone within arms' length. After winning its second game in the season's second contest, and doing so in dramatic fashion, the team celebrated like it had won the Super Bowl, culminating in a delirious purple and white celebration and smiles that wouldn't go away.

But when they won for a third time, in the season's fourth game, they smiled but with some hesitation, as if they'd simultaneously learned they'd won the lottery and that their dog required emergency surgery. It was no time for high celebrations, no time for feeling on top of the world, no time for dwelling on something that was already done, even if it was the team's first Homecoming victory in dog years.

The Panthers won, but each player knew the team could have performed better. The 24-7 victory was nice, but the players knew they could have won 49-0. The Panthers understood that they'll have to perform better beginning Friday when district play commences against Weatherford. The Panthers have learned that good enough is inadequate.

And that, when you get down to it, is as sure a sign of maturity as we're likely to see from young men who have to be reminded to please put those dirty socks in the wash when anyone with normal olfactory powers would have reached the conclusion on his own two weeks earlier.

One week removed from a woodshed session with Arlington Heights, the Panthers took the field Friday night burning with a mission. They pounded South Hills on both sides of the ball, and it all began at the line among the unsung and unheralded yeoman. The O-line served up pancake dinners all night, opening holes as big and broad as the Nile. The D-line either created piles and lanes for the linebackers to get into the backfield or got into the backfield on their own. It was a dominant, breakthrough performance by a team that desperately wanted to exorcise the demons of the Heights debacle, and the tone was set on the opening possession.

Paschal received the game's opening kick, which Michael Schroeder returned to the Panthers' 34. On the second play from scrimmage, RB Emmanuel Smith took it to the South Hills 21. When a personal foul against South Hills was tacked on, the Panthers had the ball at the Scorpions' 11. RB Angel Arguetta followed with a nice run to the 4, but Paschal was flagged on the play. But then, at 10:44 of the first quarter, RB William Hix broke through to the end zone, K Chris King added the PAT and Paschal took a 7-0 lead.

The defense picked up right where the offense left off, playing with something approaching anger, as though someone had keyed their cars and made passes at their girlfriends. Someone was going to pay, and South Hills happened to be in the way. Forcing a three and out, the defense set up what promised to be an early romp.

Unfortunately, Paschal misplayed the punt, and South Hills ended up with the ball on the Panthers' 13. The enormous Paschal Homecoming crowd collectively cleared its throat and shifted nervously in the stands. They'd seen this movie before, in the 2007 and 2006 seasons, and they hadn't liked how it had come out. But they need not have worried, because the defense was really mad now.

On the first play, the Panthers threw the Scorpions for a loss. On the second and third, fine coverage by the secondary resulted in incomplete passes. And on the fourth play, because surely this is go-for-it territory, big Alec Baker stuffed the run at the 12 yard line.

The offense continued firing on all cylinders. Smith took it to the Paschal 24, then Arguetta busted out to the Paschal 40. Smith pounded it to the South Hills 48. South Hills then shot itself in the foot again with another personal foul, giving Paschal the ball on the Scorpions' 23. Hix ground out another first down to the South Hills 10. But then, just when it looked like the Panthers were going to run away in a laughter, a fumbled pass turned the ball over to the Scorpions at the 2 yard line.

The fumble bug would hit Paschal again in the second quarter, snuffing out another promising drive. Through it all the defense stayed strong, forcing three-and-outs with regularity. Toward the end of the second quarter, one of those defensive stops resulted in a punt to the Panthers' 4 yard line. It was time to take care of the ball and to take care of business.

The Panthers combined a nice run by Smith and a nifty pass from QB Brian Gallagher to Sasha Lovett to pick up a first down to the 15. Paschal later returned to the air with Gallagher finding Smith for a first down to the South Hills 32. The team got another first after a Gallagher to WR Travoy McCarver pass and a Smith run to the 17. Hix pounded it to the 10, and Smith eventually found pay dirt at the 2:11 mark in the second quarter. King parted the uprights and Paschal had a 14-0 cushion.

It was an odd dominance, this, with Paschal clearly owning the line of scrimmage, indeed the entire field, with but a 14 point lead.

And so it would continue in the second half. A drive that began on the Paschal 16 sputtered in the Red Zone, and the Panthers had to settle for a King field goal and a 17-0 lead.

On South Hills' ensuing possession, the defense again came up large, forcing a fumble deep in Scorpions territory, with Luis Garcia scooping it up and taking it to the South Hills 15. Lovett ran a reverse to the South Hills 4, and Smith followed with a TD run. With King's PAT, Paschal owned a 24-0 lead with 2:10 left in the third quarter.

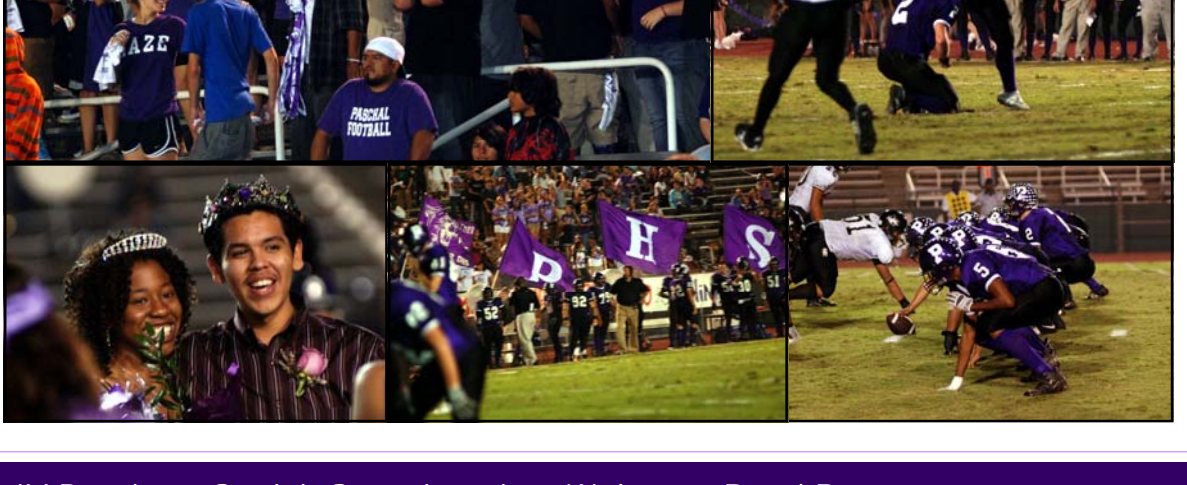
And that would be it for the scoring until the waning seconds of the game, when South Hills managed to break through on the strength of two plays the defense believed it should have stopped.

It would have been hard, if not downright ungrateful, to have asked for a more splendid evening. The air was cool though a bit muggy, and was filled with an electrical sense of excitement, energy and enthusiasm. For the second straight week, an enormous Paschal crowd filled the stands. This week, though, the presence of the large crowd lifted the Panthers instead of weighing them down. When the game was over and the Panthers recorded a 24-7 win, an enormous three-quarter moon hung heavy and low over downtown Fort Worth, a luminous orb ripe for plucking. But on this evening that began with tailgating and high expectations in Panther Nation, there was no dancing in the streets. There were no dog piles, no hugs that went on forever.

That's because the Panthers were already beginning to focus on their next task, Friday night's road game against the Weatherford Kangaroos. The 'roos enter the contest at a hard luck 0-4, but they are not an 0-4 team. Besides, Weatherford entered last year's game against Paschal with no wins, but quickly and decisively demonstrated the previous record meant nothing. The 7:30 p.m. Friday contest at Weatherford Roos Stadium will set the tone for the rest of the district schedule, and the Panthers emerged from the South Hills game knowing they'll have to perform better in all phases of the game in order to accomplish their larger mission of reaching the playoffs.

This is a different breed of Panther, out to prove that the season's early success is not reflective of an inchoate longing but of a flesh and blood reality. Past editions might have sought comfort in a touching faith in a better tomorrow, a belief in the power of belief itself and the soothing Couéistic mantras that outcomes notwithstanding, they were getting better in every way each and every day. The 2008 Panthers could be forgiven for believing only in the totemic power of the victory, no matter how sloppy or incomplete or miraculous, could be forgiven this luxury because victory has been so long and hard in coming. But this Panthers team finds the flaws in dominant victory, and seeks to correct them. This Panthers team is not content with winning, is not content with good enough, is not happy with adequate. This Panthers team is seeking perfection. This Panthers team is growing up and coming of age.

This Panthers team is maturing before our eyes.



JV Panthers Squish Scorpions in a Welcome Road Rout

If a team is to reach its potential, each player must be willing to subordinate his personal goals to the good of the team.

--Bud Wilkinson

Week 3 of Panther football brought a hungry JV team to the home of the South Hills Scorpions. The JV Panthers were looking to right their ship with a much needed win. And in what is becoming a weekly ritual, the stands were full of enthusiastic, purple clad Panther fans, loudly cheering on the Panthers and coaches.

The JV team did not disappoint. After a nice opening kickoff return by Rafael Sandoval the Panthers good starting field position, the offense took over the field led by dominating line play that gave a clinic on smash mouth football. The QB tandem of Marshall Norment and Robert Dennis could sit back and watch the RB rotation of Connor Pitts, Connor Curtis, Emory Nash and Daniel Jackson as they ripped apart the Scorpion defense with big gains on almost every touch of the football. After marching up and down the field the entire first half, Pitts had two rushing touchdowns and QB Dennis had two first half touchdown passes, one to Pitts and one to Tyler Anderson. Not to be outdone, the JV defensive unit simply created havoc for the Scorpion offense, holding them to constant three and outs and forcing several turnovers. With every phase of the game rolling the way of the Panthers, the first half ended with a score of 28-0.

The second half of the game started with the Scorpions scoring quickly to bring the score to 28-6, sending a clear message that there are four quarters of football and two of them were still to be played on the field. The JV offense accepted the challenge and methodically drove down the field to put up another 7 points with a TD run by QB Norment. The Panther defense went back to work and overwhelmed the Scorpion offense with Sandoval and Jaron Johnson providing big hits that excited the crowd. With seemingly every defender swarming to the ball, the Scorpions hope for a comeback was crushed.

The JV squad welcomed back K Chris Smith from a "two-a-day" injury, and he showed he was happy to be back. He was perfect on extra points and hammered the final nail in the Scorpion coffin with a field goal from 23 yards out.

With a final score of Panthers 38 to the Scorpions 6, the JV team more than proved the principles of Bud Wilkinson and put on a display of team play that utterly overwhelmed an opponent that was outplayed, outcoached and overmatched.

The JV Panthers look to improve their 2-2 record when the Weatherford Kangaroos visit Bill Allen Field at 7 p.m. Thursday. Come early, wear purple and be loud!

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



Freshmen Panthers Split Forces and Gain a Victory and Needed Experience

Because South Hills has only one freshman squad, the Paschal Freshmen White squad hosted Trimble Tech's A team Thursday, suffering some bumps and bruises along the way but showing continued growth and development.

QB Joe Buiutron hit paydirt for the White squad's only touchdown, and then found RB Willie Nelson in the flat for a nice two-point conversion. The White squad had two other receptions in the game.

Though the White squad has yet to taste victory, the team is continuing to grow with each passing week. The team is now focused on a Thursday match up with the Weatherford Kangaroos.

The Freshmen Purple team (two) cruised to a dominant 19-0 victory Thursday over the South Hills Scorpions. Connor Fanning's 3 interceptions led the way for the defense. On the other side of the ball, Chris Hanson quarterbacked the offense and got ample yardage from Tyler Arner, Ben Bradley and Matthew Young.

The Purple team's victory could have been much greater, with three drives deep into South Hills territory cut short by two fumbles and a penalty. Nevertheless, it was a showing for the team.

The freshmen squads hit the road Thursday to tangle with the Weatherford Kangaroos. Freshmen White action is scheduled for 5 p.m. Thursday at Weatherford Roos Stadium, with Freshmen Purple action to follow.

Special thanks to Coach Michael Snapp for his game day reporting on freshmen White action and to Coach Robert Harper for his game day reporting on the freshmen Purple game.

Visit The Panther Football Website at www.leaquelineup.com/paschalfootball

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

Questions or comments? email PHSFootballBooster@msn.com.