



WEEK ONE RECAP



Nimitz Gets Revenge but Panthers Get Object Lesson in Focus, Hard Work

An evening that began with great promise ended in sorrow and concern – not because of what happened on the field but because of what happened to a citizen of Panther Nation.

And perhaps this is the big takeaway from Friday night's lopsided loss to Irving Nimitz. No matter how much we invest in each block, each tackle, each score, the outcomes of these contests matter less than the relationships forged each season. We are Paschal, yes. But more importantly, we are family.

Panther Nation held its collective breath Friday night when Hayes Tucker suffered a stroke after the Panthers were ambushed by Irving Nimitz. Tucker, grandfather of Panther Kevin Deal and father of Cindy Hunter, improved markedly by mid-week – a welcome relief to Panther faithful.

An evening that ended with such sorrowful concern began with the fresh promise of spring. As a large Paschal contingent streamed into Farrington Field underneath gun metal skies, a cool breeze made watching conditions ideal. But these favorable omens instead turned out to be harbingers of disaster as the Panthers endured an evening to forget.

The Panthers came onto the field appearing unstoppable.

K Chris Smith's opening kickoff was downed by Nimitz in the end zone for a touchback. The defense got busy, allowing just a half yard on Nimitz's first play from scrimmage and then throwing Nimitz for a loss on the second. The Panthers again came up big on third and long, forcing a Nimitz punt to the Paschal 41.

The offense appeared to pick up where the defense left off, carving up huge chunks of real estate. QB Brian Gallagher hit WR Travoy McCarver for a six-yard gain, then RB Emmanuel Smith ran twice to put the ball at the Nimitz 31.

Gallagher then hit WR Rochell Johnson for a 10-yard gain and another first down at the Nimitz 21. Smith picked up two on a run, and Gallagher and Johnson again teamed up on a nine-yard pass play for a first down at the Nimitz nine.

That's when suddenly and without warning the engine overheated, the wheels fell off and the roof collapsed. Momentum, so clearly riding Paschal in the opening minutes, showed its fickle nature. A fumble on an extra-effort play gave Nimitz the ball on the 20, and the game quickly turned south.

Nimitz, aided in part by an interesting interference call and intriguing non-call, marched down the field and went up 6-0 at the 6:16 mark of the first quarter. Nimitz never looked back in a game that featured some of the oddest turns of fate.

Item: Paschal marches down the field but is thwarted in a scoring attempt on an interception.

Item: S Kirby Campbell recovers a fumble at the Paschal one-yard line, ending a Nimitz scoring threat. The Panthers appear to get breathing room on a nice pass play, but a fumble at the end of the run turns into a Nimitz touchdown.

Item: The defense makes a stop, forcing a Nimitz field goal attempt, which is blocked by S Aaron Stafford. But when a Paschal player picks up the ball and begins to run, he is stripped of the ball and Nimitz runs it in for another touchdown.

It was that kind of game. But there were some positives. The Panthers never gave up and kept slugging it out. Stafford blocked another field goal attempt as well as an extra point attempt. And the Panthers, trailing by 40, carved out a nice drive to get on the board in the fourth quarter.

Taking over on their own 24-yard line, RB Ricky Valdez ran for two yards. Smith then had a big run to the Paschal 42 for a first down. Gallagher then found RB Campbell for a 12-yard gain and a first down.

Smith picked up eight on a subsequent carry, and Gallagher went to TE Doug Parkhurst for a first down at the Nimitz 27. The aerial assault continued when Gallagher connected with McCarver for another first down at the Nimitz 16. The duo teamed up on the next play for a touchdown. Chris Smith added the PAT, and the Panthers left the field with something to build upon.

In the end, of course, the game meant nothing. Sure, no one wants to lose. Clearly, no one wants to be humiliated. And granted, Nimitz had the date circled on the calendar ever since the Panthers stunned it with a thrilling last-play touchdown last fall. But in a larger sense, the game was meaningless. Though hard-fought on both sides, the game was not a life and death struggle. That, it turns out, was being fought – and won -- by Paschal's Tucker.

Even without that reminder of what's truly important, the contest was a non-conference game that has no bearing whatsoever on whether the Panthers make the playoffs in 2009. At this juncture, Panther faithful can view it as an early-season correction, an opportunity to scrape off some rust and figure out what works – and what doesn't.

Those will be important lessons as the Panthers face the archrival Arlington Heights Yellowjackets Friday night. The game, scheduled for 7:30 p.m. at Farrington Field, is expected to draw a large and boisterous crowd. Last year's matchup did not begin, or end, well for Paschal.

The Panthers, emboldened by victory, chastened and wiser by defeat, will be looking to change all that Friday night.



JV Panthers Torpedo Irving Nimitz in Taut, Defensive Thriller

The JV Panthers clawed and scratched to overcome a 6-0 halftime deficit to defeat Irving Nimitz 8-6 in a game marked by stellar defensive play by both squads.

Paschal's offense appeared to be able to move the ball at will, but somehow came up short once within the red zone. Two turnovers inside the Nimitz 10 appeared to spell doom, but the fighting Panthers were able to figure things out when necessary.

The defense, which was lights out all evening, came up huge at game's end. Pinning Nimitz deep and forcing a punt attempt with three minutes remaining, the Panthers pounced when a bad snap left the ball rattling around the end zone. DB Chris Hanson came up with the ball for a touchdown and tie score.

The defense again stepped up on Irving's subsequent possession, giving the Panthers another bite at the apple. QB Hanson ate up yards with passes to Adam Ruffu in a drive also propelled by nice runs by Hector Mendez. The drive eventually stalled, but the defense proved unstoppable.

With 30 seconds remaining in the game and Nimitz pinned at its own one-yard line, LB Ben Hoyt jarred the ball loose from the Nimitz quarterback. It rolled through the end zone for a safety and a hard-fought 8-6 Paschal victory.

Defensive standouts included DLs Tyler Arner, Daniel Rieling, Dominic Ravenelle and S Ben Bradley. Gold stars also to OL Matt Keller and OL Austin Gansky.

The JV Panthers are scheduled to return to action at 5 p.m. Thursday at Arlington Heights High School in a bragging rights match with the archrival Yellowjackets.

Special thanks to Coaches Darrell Preston and Brandon Lillard for their insights into the JV contest.

Freshmen Panthers Endure Mixed Night against Nimitz

The freshmen Panthers had a long night last Thursday in a twin bill against Irving Nimitz. The white squad took some lumps in its contest, but showed continued growth and development. Defensive end Riley Van Gorder was in the Nimitz backfield all night, and finished the evening with two sacks.

The purple team ended with a 0-0 tie. With six minutes remaining in the second quarter, inclement weather delayed and ultimately canceled the contest.

Several Panthers players got off to fast starts before the cancelation, including Jerronald Tate, who made a 35-yard interception return, and Ambrocio Ramos, who had a 17-yard reception.

The fresh are slated to return to action Thursday night. The white team is scheduled to kick off at 5:30 p.m. Thursday at Bill Allen Field on the Paschal campus against the loathed Yellowjackets of Arlington Heights. The purple contest will follow the completion of that game.

Special thanks to Coach Mike Snapp for his game day analysis of freshmen action.

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

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

Questions or comments? email PHSFootballBooster@msn.com.