

Kendrick isn't victorious, but creates a history

By Don Coble

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Kendrick may be the middle school football team without a home, but after Wednesday's regular season opener, at least the Comets now have a football history.

With 5:30 remaining in the third quarter, Cameron Essex became the first player in Kendrick history to score a touchdown. Unfortunately for the Comets, it was the only touchdown scored by the expansion team in a 26-8 loss.

Essex's 47-yard return of a fumble recovery seemed to complete the coronation into the local middle school football fold. The Comets may be waiting for their school to be completed, but they already have a home on the football field.

"When I saw the ball on the ground, I just reacted and ran," Essex said. "That was our first touchdown and it felt great. If we practice more, we're going to score more."

Only 12 players were in the original preseason camp, perhaps the result of confusion surrounding construction of the new campus. The current student body is divided among three other middle schools — Mundy's Mill, Pointe South and Jonesboro — while workers complete the new facility.

Fourteen more players joined the squad after school started Aug. 26. For all practical purposes, the Kendrick team has only been together for seven school days.

"They're trying to make our situation as easy as possible, but I can't lie — it's not easy," said Comets coach Jeff Hubbard. "We didn't get a lot of kids out in the summer, but we got some more out once school started. We're really behind. But the kids have worked hard. You could see our progress."

"We made too many mistakes in the first half, but we were much better in the second half. I was happy with the way we hung in there."

"I know we're a new school, but I still don't like losing," said Jamille Dorsey, a cheerleader. "Since we're in three different schools, we can't even have a pep rally. That's bad."

Essex is attending Mundy's Mill; Dorsey is at Pointe South.

Adamson, 0-6 last year, more than doubled its entire 1995 scoring output in one afternoon. The Indians only scored 12 points last season, and the 26 points Wednesday was an indication last year's experiment to play seventh graders was finally paying dividends.

Like Adamson, Kendrick will suffer through its own growing pains this year.

"We knew it was going to be tough bringing three schools together," Essex said. "We're not doing too bad considering we've really only been together for less than two weeks."

Kendrick will look for its first win on Sept. 17 at North Clayton, while Adamson will try to make it two in a row next Tuesday against Morrow.

Since there are 11 teams in the county, one club will have a week off. This week, Babb took its turn on

the sidelines. Next week, Kendrick will enjoy its bye week.

In other games Wednesday:

N. Clayton 8, P. South 6

Ken Porter's 70-yard kickoff return with less than three minutes remaining and Antwain Norman's two-yard run for a 2-point conversion gave the defending county champions a successful 1996 debut.

"We were kind of rusty for our first game," said Tigers coach Ralph Morris. "But we came up with some big plays when we needed them. And we got some good plays on defense from Brian Carrol and Otis Spates."

North Clayton entertains rival Riverdale next Tuesday, while Pointe South hosts Mundy's Mill.

Mundy's Mill 22, Morrow 6

The Razorbacks jumped out to a 22-0 lead at halftime and coasted to their first win of the season.

"Score-wise, it wasn't good," said Morrow coach Chuck Dyer. "But we came alive in the second half. Mundy's Mill scored twice in the first half off of fumbles deep in our own territory."

"But after halftime, we really got it going. I think we found some things we can build on."

Mundy's Mill travels to Pointe South next Tuesday, while Morrow is on the road at Adamson.

Jonesboro 12, Riverdale 6

Tony Bryant and Ali Smith both scored touchdowns to give Jonesboro a 12-6 win over Riverdale.

"Both teams played hard," said

Bears coach David Smith. "I think we made fewer mistakes and that helped us."

Riverdale's only score came on a 61-yard pass from D.J. Shockley to Kenneth Thrash.

"It's not fun to start a season with a loss," said Spartans coach Rickey Hershey. "We made some mistakes and Jonesboro played well. They have a fine football team."

Jonesboro hosts Lovejoy next

Tuesday and Riverdale plays at North Clayton.

Forest Park 6, Lovejoy 0

The Panthers scored late in the fourth quarter to break a scoreless tie and win the season opener for both clubs.

Forest Park plays Babb next Tuesday at Kiwanis Field, while Lovejoy travels to Jonesboro.

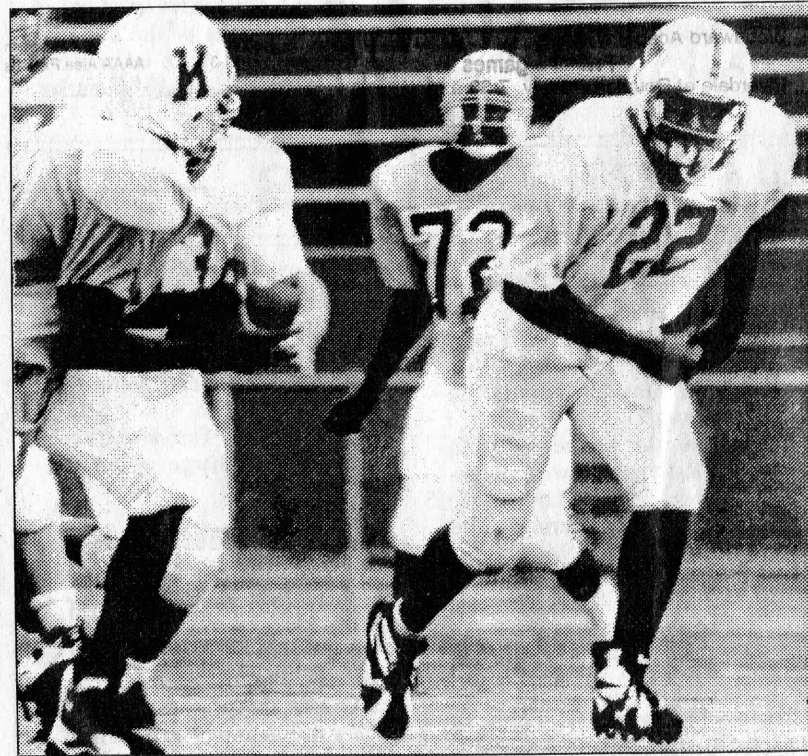


Photo by Wayne Parham

Kendrick Middle School defensive player Cameron Essex (with ball) picks up a fumble and runs 47 yards for a touchdown, the first score ever in the new school's history.