***PHS Football: It's All Different This Year***

By Jeff Stuart

Never judge a book by its cover. If you were quick to judge the PHS 2012 football team by the results of its opening game, a 42-12 loss to visiting Watkins Mill, you, and many others, would have been wrong. Three weeks later, the Falcons held a 3-1 mark after a pulsating come-from-behind win at Walter Johnson in overtime.

“We were ecstatic,” said senior Tyler Giarratano. “We all came out real hard that game. None of us gave up. Our captains kept us up even when we were down 28-13 late. They did a great job. C.J. Lee (senior, RB/LB) and Nikolay Henze (senior, TB/C) ran all over WJ's defense.” With senior Kirby Carmack at quarterback, the defense forced a fumble and the ball was carried roughly seventy yards. Junior Cody Zinnser caught a pass for the two-point conversion for the tying score. Henze's seven-yard run completed the drive. Carmack’s five-yard touchdown pass to Lee in overtime gave the Falcons the first score. The kick by senior Josh Womack was good, and the defense kept WJ off the board.

“It was by far the best moment of my high school career,” said Tyler. “Big turnaround in the program this year. Against Richard Montgomery (September 7, a 24-10 win), we kind of had a chip on our back from the year before when we lost in the last seconds to [Richard Montgomery]. We came out real hard and scored on the first drive and that kind of set the tone for the rest of the game. Every time they even scored a field goal or anything, we came right back and scored on them. Our defense had their offense stuffed the whole game. I am looking forward to the first round of the playoffs.”

Carmack echoed Giarratano, “The win over WJ was, by far, the favorite moment of my high school career. They are a 4A school. They crushed us last year, 42-14. When they went up by fifteen, we thought for a second that we were going to lose. We just decided we weren't going to let that happen. We picked it up. Once we got that first touchdown in the fourth, we needed the defense to step up and they did, they forced the fumble. Right then we knew we were going to win. We wanted to beat them, and to beat them in overtime on a comeback was amazing. The RM game? After getting shell shocked by Watkins Mill, we wanted to come out and make a statement so people would know we weren't the same team as last year. We scored a touchdown on the first drive. We wanted to prove a point. We did.”

What does senior Stanley Snowden like about this team? “Our intensity that we are coming out with; our winning. We turned a lot of things around. We are doing a lot of good things. The thing about the WJ game was we had a lot of critics saying, ‘Oh, you're going to lose,’ or asking, ‘Are you guys going to win this year?’ All we are doing is coming out and playing hard, and as you can see we kept our heads up high and that is what won the game for us.” For Snowden, starter since his freshman year, everything is different. “This year we are coming out to work, we are coming out to win, and we are coming out to prove things to people. Everything changed. I tell my boys before every practice that your goal is to beat the person who is standing right in front of you. If you do that, we win.”

Henze had 120 yards rushing against WJ and 148 total all-purpose yards. “There were a couple of practices rained out, but that didn't stop us,” he said. ”Throughout practice, Coach Gant would tell us that they are going to throw a punch at us. We have to throw a punch right back. They are going to score. Don't get down. We are going to come right back. That's what we did. I think the Watkins Mill game could have been a different game. We weren't ready for the first half. Based on the way things have been going, I think if we played them again, it would be different. Some people are starting to see that Poolesville is a different team. We aren't there to just enjoy the ride. We come to play. We have coaches that believe in us. We believe in ourselves. We believe in the system.”

Comparative scores don't prove anything but RM (2-2) lost to Gaithersburg (2-2) only 33-10 and beat Clarksburg at CHS, 15-8. It would seem the Falcons are very competitive and gaining respect every game. The Falcons' first home win, 26-15, came against visiting Williamsport on September 14, on the school's first annual Sports Hall of Fame induction night.

Against Watkins Mill in the opener, the Falcons repeatedly found themselves in three-third and-long situations. The very fast Wolverines seemingly always had good field position. They scored on the game's second play from scrimmage and built a huge halftime lead. For PHS, Carmack provided perhaps the first half's only highlight for the home fans, running down from behind and horse-collaring a WMHS corner back, who had just intercepted one of his passes, and preventing a touchdown. Kirby scored on a one-yard run right after half time, and Henze scored on a three-yard run right before the final whistle. Carmack was six for seven for sixty-five yards. Against RM, Charles Lyles scored on a thirty-four-yard run in the first quarter. Falcon place kicker Josh Womack had a thirty-five-yard field goal in the second quarter.

After a loss to 3A power South Hagerstown (5-0), the fourth-ranked team in Frederick County’s Monocacy Valley Athletic League, the Falcons rebounded by claiming their fourth win of the year (as many wins as PHS had all of last year) at Pikesville, 23-20. Poolesville rallied from a 14-13 half time deficit. Henze rushed for 167 yards and two touchdowns. Carmack completed eight of twelve for 107 yards and a touchdown pass to Andre Butler.

Running back Nikolay Henze helped solidify the Falcons’ third place position at 5-2 in the [Class 2A West](http://phsboosterclub.us1.list-manage.com/track/click?u=70ed2a6769696e599fcc2f9d5&id=b64690d483&e=b270f55ecb) playoff picture rushing for 256 yards on thirty-two carries and two touchdowns as Poolesville earned a long-awaited, 30-13, homecoming win over Kennedy. Quarterback Kirby Carmack completed six of ten passes for ninety yards, including a thirty-three-yard touchdown pass to Andre Butler who caught five balls for sixty-nine yards. Kicker Josh Womack connected on a thirteen-yard field goal and was three for four on points after touchdowns.

Their final home game is on Thursday, October 18 against Wheaton.