



Pirates in Driver's Seat in MEAC, Remain Undefeated

McDaniel's two touchdown receptions proves to be the difference

By Ronald Clark

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HAMPTON, Va., Oct. 22 – Billed as the game of the year in the MEAC conference, the contest featuring the #4 Hampton Pirates (8-0, 6-0) and #19 South Carolina State Bulldogs definitely lived up to the billing.

After going down 10-0 early, Hampton rallied to score 14 points in the second quarter to defeat the Bulldogs 14-10 at Armstrong Field. With the win the Pirates remain the only undefeated nationally-ranked team in Division I-AA.

Though filled with multiple moments of sloppy play, the Pirates and Bulldogs played a physical and inspiring brand of football. It started on the Bulldogs' (5-2, 3-1) opening drive when they marched down the field, running the ball at will led by DeShawn Baker (22 carries, 106 yards). Freshman running back Jonathan Woods capped off the drive scoring on an 8-yard run of left tackle to give the Bulldogs a 7-0 with 9 minutes, 13 seconds remaining in the first quarter. After the Bulldogs defense stopped the stagnant Pirates offense one more time, they managed a 29-yard field goal by Stephen Grantham with 3:09 remaining in the quarter to extend their lead to 10-0. The packed stadium of alumni and students, who were at the game for homecoming, were completely silenced by the early success of the Bulldogs.

With the score still 10-0, and both defenses stifling the opposition's offense, the Pirates realized they needed a spark. So, head coach Joe Taylor substituted junior quarterback Antwan Smith for senior Princeton Shepherd, and he immediately came through on his first play from scrimmage, with a 52-yard touchdown pass to senior wide receiver Marquay McDaniel. On the next series, Smith and McDaniel connected again for a 9-yard touchdown pass, and with that, the momentum had officially shifted into the Pirates' favor. Smith, as he's been all season, was ready when he was called upon to contribute.

"You are always one play away from being a starter, so you always have to be ready," Smith said.

The second half was filled with turnovers and penalties. Smith and Pirates running back Alonzo Coleman, both fumbled in the third quarter, but in neither instance were the Bulldogs able to take advantage of the Pirate mishaps. Hampton was also called for 10 penalties for 68 yards, often negating big plays in the return game by McDaniel with clipping penalties and giving the Bulldogs multiple opportunities by making defensive and special teams mistakes.

After a first half that produced 24 points, the game turned into a defensive struggle in the second half. With each offense sputtering and struggling for points, the defenses had to be the backbone of each team. The Pirates eventually won that battle, led by junior linebacker Justin Durant, who had 15 tackles and a key interception at the 10:38 mark of the third quarter that thwarted a potential go-ahead score by the Bulldogs. Senior linebacker Rudolph Foye led the Pirates with 2 sacks, including one on the last offensive play for the Bulldogs with 1:27 left in the fourth quarter.

South Carolina State head coach, Oliver 'Buddy' Pough, was disappointed in the outcome, but proud of the way his players played.

"We played hard, we just didn't get it done," said Pough.

Now, the Bulldogs will be looking to rebound next week when they host the Delaware State Hornets, while the Pirates will be looking to continue their undefeated season in hopes of receiving the MEAC's automatic bid into the Division I-AA playoffs.