

PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW

Backfield duo leads South to Foothills victory

By Jimmy Johnson
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The South's duo of running backs, Shane Brooks and Dana Brown, took turns frustrating the North's defense in the 10th annual Foothills Football Classic.

The two backs combined for 167 yards and two touchdowns, as the South defeated the North, 13-8, at Norwin High School on Saturday.

"We're natural ball players," said Brooks, who won the team MVP. "We've been doing it for years. I'm comfortable with him back there."

Duquesne's Brooks sparked the South's dormant first-half offense with an 81-yard scamper down the right sideline late in the second quarter. He was tackled just short of the end zone -- or that's at least where the referee spotted the ball.

"Ah, I was in there. I was in there. No doubt about it," said Brooks, who will play for Pitt in the fall. "We got the touchdown anyways, so no hard feelings."

Clairton's Brown capped the drive two plays later, with the 2-yard touchdown to give the South a 7-2 lead.

Brown, who won the game MVP, scored again in the fourth quarter, this time from the 5-yard line, pushing South out in front for good, 13-8.

Before that, the South trailed by one since the North's A.J. Graves worked together with his Jeannette teammate Jordan Thomas to complete a hook-and-ladder play.

Thomas caught a 13-yard pass from Burrell quarterback Garyn Ehrlich and tossed it back Graves, who sprinted 51 yards for the score.

The North went into the half with the 8-7 lead because of its defense, which, besides Brooks' long run, kept the South offense under control for the first half.

Burrell's Bob Johnson, who was the MVP for the North, sent South quarterbacks scrambling for their lives. He recorded three sacks in the game, including a safety in the first quarter, which gave the North a 2-0 lead.

"It felt great," Johnson said of the safety. "I'm just glad I stayed home on it. I give a lot of credit to the guys behind me. They were yelling 'Waggle! Waggle!'"

Johnson, however, could not help his team's offense, which fell victim to several turnovers and penalties.

Ehrlich ended two drives by throwing interceptions, and Greensburg Central Catholic quarterback John Rahl, who started the game, fumbled on the 4-yard line after the North compiled an 18-play, 77-yard opening drive.

The North had one final chance with 4:51 left in the fourth to drive for the game-winning score, but penalties and sacks led to a fourth-and-34.

Rahl's last-chance heave flew harmlessly out of bounds, and the South took over, running out the clock for its eighth win in the Foothills Classic.

Brooks and Brown could have rushed for more yards if given the chance, but South coach Bill Cherpak looked to do what anyone coaching an all-star team should do -- give everyone an opportunity to play.

"We probably tried too much," Cherpak said. "We wanted to give everyone a chance."

That was the mood after the game -- everyone was just happy to play in the game.

"I'm mainly just glad I got to play with my boys again," Brown said.

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