

Whiteaker unable to contend with Parrish



KEIZERTIMES/Matt Rawlings

Whiteaker running back Marquis Jackson breaks away from defenders to pick up a first down. The Wolverines, however, would fall to Parrish 34-3 on Wednesday, Sept. 19.

By **MATT RAWLINGS**
Of the Keizertimes

In a rematch of last year's Salem-Keizer Middle School Championship game, the inexperience of the Whiteaker football team proved to be costly.

After taking a 3-0 lead in the first quarter, the Wolverines were plagued by turnovers and penalties, allowing Parrish to runaway with the 34-3 victory on Thursday, Sept. 19.

"We handled ourselves pretty well in the first part of the game, then we just started to turn the ball over," Whiteaker head coach Tom Lar-

imer said. "You can't do that when you're facing a good team and stay in the game. We were just careless with the ball."

Even though the Whiteaker roster features several players who are competing in the sport for the first time, the Wolverines held their own with Parrish in the first half.

A pair of first down runs from running back Marquis Jackson and quarterback Tony Bravo had the Wolverines inside the red zone. Even though they were stopped on third down, Bravo connected on a 36-yard field goal to

give Whiteaker the early lead.

Field goals of that length are pretty rare in high school football, let alone middle school football, which is why the Whiteaker team was pumped when Bravo ran back to the sideline.

"That was fantastic. Our kids are going to remember that for a long time," Larimer said.

The Wolverines defense then turned around and stuffed Parrish on fourth down to give their offense the ball back. However, a pair of holding penalties, as well as an unsportsmanlike conduct flag, pushed the Wol-

verines deep into their own territory.

Moments later, Bravo threw an interception that was returned to the Wolverines seven-yard line. Parrish scored two plays later to take a 6-3 lead midway through the second quarter.

Despite getting the ball at midfield after recovering an onside kick, Whiteaker fumbled on their next offensive play to give the ball right back to Parrish.

Parrish was able to punch it into the end zone with one second left in the half, giving them a 12-3 lead at the break.

After another Parrish

touchdown late in the third quarter, Whiteaker committed their third turnover of the contest. The Wolverines defense gave up two long touchdown runs in the final period to make the score more lopsided.

"When we turned the ball over on offense, I think the kids got discouraged and got a little flat," Larimer said. "We fell for some (Parrish's) ball-fakes and our guys on the outside got beat for a few long ones."

Offensively, Whiteaker was able to get just two first downs in the second half.

"We're pretty inexperi-

enced, so we have to try and keep things really simple," Larimer said.

While Larimer knows that his team needs improvement going into the rest of the season, he also feels like this squad has what it takes to be more competitive.

"We're big enough and physical enough to compete, we just need to work really hard on our blocking schemes and work really hard on our containment," Larimer said.

Whiteaker goes on the road to take on Stephens at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, Oct. 2.

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