

# 'The Big Payback'

## 'Cats Coast Past Vikings, King Scores 3 TDs

### The Valdosta Daily Times

#### SPORTS

By MIKE CHASON  
For Valdosta's Wildcats, once was plenty enough. Stung bitterly by last year's 7-2 loss, Valdosta hacked its way past a gutsy little Lowndes' team 22-0 here

Valdosta Lowndes

First Downs	20	25
Yards Gained	411	570
Passing	61	57
Rushing	350	513
Time of Possession	32:00	33:00
Penalties	4-20	4-20
Fumbles-Lost	1-0	1-0
Returned	0-0	0-0

Friday night in a high school football game Wildcat fans were terming "The Big Payback."

It was a year ago that Lowndes turned the tables on the fabled black-and-gold Valdostans for the first time in the history of their 10-year rivalry. But before a standing room only crowd of 11,800 at Cleveland Field, the state's number one-ranked team rolled to its seventh consecutive victory without a loss this season.

And Valdosta did it in true "Cats" fashion... by sealing in the dark.

At 7:03 p.m., 57 minutes before the scheduled start of the Region I-AAAA non-suburban bout, a loud "boom" penetrated the buzz of the rapidly filling stadium. Immediately, the lights went out on the home side of the field.

It was later explained a wire had broken behind the concession stand on that side of the stadium, causing a short circuit and a blown fuse.

An attempted repair job commenced but the problem involved an underground cable which could not be reached in time for the game to be played.

Finally, at 8:30 p.m., after both bands had long since played the national anthem in semi-darkness, the rumor spread through the stands that the game was to be postponed.

Three minutes later, the exact opposite happened when VHS Principal Lloyd Mims and Valdosta City School Superintendent Ralph Brandon said the game would go on as scheduled.

"Both coaches agreed on Mims said. 'You just can't give this money back there was really no other choice.'"

With all eyes straining just a bit to identify player numbers and yard-line markers, the game began 45 minutes late.

Nearly two hours and three Ernest King touchdowns later, the lights came back on.

"I don't want no credit at all," King, the flashy VHS

halfback who wears number 44 on his back, said. "Give all the credit to the offensive line. All I did was follow them."

The high-stepping senior did that very well indeed, scoring on 3 and 1-yard runs in the second quarter and on a 4-yard burst in the final period.

For the night, King picked up 74 yards in 16 carries to add some backbone to a Wildcats running game which totaled 247 yards. Speedy Irvin Row had 65 yards in 14 trips, and quarterback John Lastinger carried out 59 yards in 14 hauls.

After holding Valdosta deep in its own territory, Lowndes got a 13-yard return from Robin McElroy to set up shop first-and-10 from the VHS 34-yard line.

Fullback Steve Thomas bolted up the middle for five yards on the first play. On the second play, "Thom dropped the ball, VHS's Carroll Johnson fell on it, and Lowndes' own came close to scoring again.

At the end of the first half, all the 5-7 Vikings had only one first down. They wound up with minus 22 yards rushing. A year ago, they were held to zero yards rushing but still won the ballgame.

But Friday night was not like a year ago.

"Valdosta just took charge and drove our throats," Sprengle said. "But I think we'll get to play them again. We'll live through it. It's not the end of the world."

"Valdosta didn't hit as hard as '77, but they just

kept coming," Thomas, who was held to four yards rushing in nine carries, said. "We had to do something about that seven-to-two. We remembered that Roberts was one member of an avalanche of Wildcats who crashed on DeVane for a safety with 4:18 remaining in the first period. Lowndes had taken over the ball when Hal Sprengle picked off the first of his two interceptions at the LHS 37-yard line.

DeVane was asked for the two-point over play later.

A few minutes earlier, on the Vikings' first possession, one of those life-threatening breaks might have set the stage for Lowndes' luck on this unhappy Friday the 13th.

While the VHS defense was enjoying short sprints on the field, the maroon and silver "Plowboys" looked to be on the wet turf of "The House That Bazemore Built" most of the night.

With a forward wall of such stalwarts as Andy Chapman, Scott Griffin, Harvey Carter,

linebacker Ronnie Adkins said. "They beat us like they were supposed to do. Now, we know what to expect next time."

Adkins' six individual tackles topped the Vikings' defensive effort, which received a mild boost from the end-of-the-game when veteran tackle Keith Hitchcock had to be helped from the field because of a knee injury.

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