

Gator safety repeats as Defensive POW

Mack, Burson, Lee also recognized for their performances

By Dennis Brunson

First-year Lakewood head coach Willie Offord has noticed a direct correlation between Tyler Washington-Broomfield and victory for the Gators this season.

“We’ve won two games this season,” Offord said of his team, which improved to 2-6 with a 14-8 victory over Marlboro County on Friday. “In both of our wins, Tyler has returned an interception for a touchdown.”

The junior safety’s 40-yard Pick-6 late in the third quarter gave Lakewood some breathing room as it held on for the 6-point victory.

“We were in Cover 2 (pass defense),” Washington-Broomfield said. “The quarterback went to the right seam and I went and got it. We had great pressure by our defensive line and the quarterback threw it up.”

Because of his performance, Washington-Broomfield has been selected as the SAFE Defensive Player of the Week for the Sumter Touchdown Club presented by FTC. It was the second time he has won the award this season.

The other three selections for the SAFE Players of the Week are Crestwood left tackle Aidan Mack as the Lineman of the Week, Laurence Manning Academy wide receiver Josiah Burson as the Offensive Player of the Week and LMA placekicker Mills Lee as the Special Teams Player of the Week.

The quartet will be honored at the club’s weekly breakfast meeting on Friday at the Sumter County Recreation and Parks’ Jasmine Hall located at 155 Haynsworth Street. Breakfast will start at 7 a.m. with the program beginning at 7:30. The guest speaker will be Andy Solomon, the executive director of the South Carolina Athletic Hall of Fame.

**DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE WEEK
TYLER WASHINGTON-BROOMFIELD
LAKEWOOD
SAFETY
JUNIOR**

Washington-Broomfield did more than just take the interception back for the score. That was his second pick of the game to go with six tackles.

“He’s been a consistent performer throughout the season,” Offord, the former South Carolina and National Football League safety, said of the 6-foot-4-inch, 190-pound Washington-Broomfield. “He made a great break (on the pass on the Pick-6). He then made a few nifty moves near the goal line to get in the end zone.

“He’s very smart and has good anticipation as a safety,” the coach said. “He’s old school in terms of size and stature. He has a knack for getting to the football.”

Washington-Broomfield’s other pick came around midfield in the second quarter of what was at the time a scoreless tie. The second one and its result obviously made it difficult for Marlboro County to secure a win.

“The second one was like a punch in the face,” he said

“That was our best game defensively as a whole,” Washington-Broomfield said. “The defensive line was doing its job, the linebackers were holding their zones down and the secondary was lights out.”

LINEMAN OF THE WEEK

AIDAN MACK

CRESTWOOD

LEFT TACKLE

SOPHOMORE

Mack graded out at 80 percent and had five knockdown blocks as the Knights rolled up 442 yards of total offense in their 39-12 victory over Darlington.

Mack is a 6-3, 285-pound sophomore who is in his first year on the varsity.

“Aidan did a good job being physical,” said Crestwood head coach Roosevelt Nelson. “If he continues to play to his potential and just being a sophomore, he has a bright future. He’s big, strong, quick athletic. He made a lot of key blocks.”

As the left tackle, Mack has the backside of senior Shrine Bowl quarterback Javion Martin, who passed for 242 yards and two touchdowns and ran for 72 yards and two more scores. Running back Azarian Yates was the leading rusher with 116 yards and a touchdown.

“No sacks, no pressures is my job,” Mack said. “I pay attention to how their (defensive linemen) chests move and try to have good footwork. If you follow the chest, you can follow everywhere they go.

“I was doing a good job going downhill on the blocks (in the running game),” he added. “With my speed and Azarian Yates running behind me, we can be very successful.”

OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE WEEK

JOSIAH BURSON

LAURENCE MANNING

WIDE RECEIVER

SENIOR

Burson had three touchdown catches among his four catches for 79 yards in the Swampcats’ 35-10 victory over Augusta Christian School. To make those numbers look even more impressive, Burson did that on just five targets.

“He’s been our go-to receiver all year,” LMA head coach Will Furse said. “He’s difficult to cover (6-0, 192), giving us a matchup advantage practically every week. He has the ability to body people out of the way and make a great catch.”

The player said there is no big secret to his success as a receiver.

“I just get ready and make sure I catch the ball,” said Burson, whose three TD catches all came off of patterns he ran into the end zone. “I try to get my body between the defender and the ball all the time just in case they try to deflect it.”

Two of the TD passes came from Tyler June and one from Grainger Powell. They have been sharing time behind center all season.,

SPECIAL TEAMS PLAYER OF THE WEEK

MILLS LEE

LAURENCE MANNING

PLACEKICKER

SENIOR

Lee connected on 5 of 5 extra point attempts and executed a surprise onside kickoff in the Swampcats’ 35-10 win over Augusta Christian School.

That Lee was 5-for-5 on PATs didn’t come as a surprise as he has developed into being almost automatic on extra points. He wasn’t surprised by the onside kick call at the start of the second half by Furse. In fact, it was part of the game plan should LMA get the opportunity to kick off at the start of the second half. And it really helped establish momentum.

“We had scored a touchdown late in the second half to go up 14-3,” Furse said. “We were kicking off to them and we were planning on doing (the onside kick), but we did it a little different. We were planning to kick it to the right, but we decided to kick it to our left. We liked kicking it to our sideline. Mills executed it perfectly.”

Lee said the change didn’t catch him off guard.

“It wasn’t that different,” the senior placekicker said. “I practice onsides in practice, both to the left and the right. It was really a relief to me when we decided to kick it to the left. It just feels more natural, easier to wrap your foot around the football.”

The Swampcats recovered the onside kick and they scored to go up 21-3 to swing the momentum of the game.