

Peeples gets award in 1st QB start

Williams, Canty, Tye also recognized by Sumter TD Club presented by FTC

By Dennis Brunson

John Peeples has seen plenty of time taking snaps at quarterback for the Sumter High School football program – in practice. He was the backup signal caller on the junior varsity team as a freshman in 2021 and has been the backup on the varsity team the past two years while being the star running back.

On Friday against Socastee, Peeples got to see if all of that practice had paid off. He started at quarterback for the Gamecocks as regular Pate Merchant was sidelined with an injury.

“Doing it in practice is one thing,” said SHS head coach Mark Barnes. “Doing it in game is another.”

Peeples acquitted himself quite well. He ran the football 12 times for 116 yards and three touchdowns while completing 8 of 8 passes for 192 yards and one touchdown in the Gamecocks' 36-6 win.

Because of that, Peeples has been selected as the SAFE Offensive Player of the Week for the Sumter Touchdown Club presented by FTC.

The other three selections for the SAFE Players of the Week are Sumter left guard Jerius Williams for Lineman of the Week, Manning linebacker Jontavious Canty as the Defensive Player of the Week, and Crestwood punter/returner Timothy Tye as the Special Teams Player of the Week.

The foursome will be honored at the club's weekly breakfast meeting on Friday at the Sumter County Recreation and Park's Jasmine Hall located at 155 Haynsworth Street. Breakfast will start at 7 a.m. with the program beginning at 7:30. The speaker will be Danny Reed, the voice of Georgia Southern football.

OFFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE WEEK

JOHN PEEPLES

SUMTER

QUARTERBACK/RUNNING BACK

JUNIOR

That Peeples ran for more than 100 yards as the quarterback against Socastee is not surprising. The 6-foot-1-inch, 185-pound junior takes plenty of direct snaps in Sumter's heavy package when his team is getting close to the end zone. He ran for 1,209 yards and 20 touchdowns with seven 100-yard games last season. So far this year, he has rushed for 764 yards and 17 touchdowns on 141 carries with five 100-yard games.

The passing, now that's a different matter. Peeples had completed 4 of 8 passes for 77 yards and a touchdown prior to the Socastee contest. Most of the passes came in the game in which Merchant was injured, a 17-10 win over Oceanside Collegiate Academy. He was 3 of 7 for 12 yards.

Peeples said he wasn't nervous about lining up behind center for his first ever start, knowing he'd have to put the ball up in the air to keep the Braves defense honest.

“I said to myself, ‘Just play your game,’” Peeples said. “You know what you're supposed to do, but if you mess up, you mess up. Move on to the next play.”

“It’s certainly different than practice; it’s more up tempo, it’s moving faster. (Sumter head) Coach (Mark) Barnes told me to just go out there and play. Have fun and play your game.”

The coach said Peebles has the ability to practice at different positions, absorb what he is learning and apply it on the field when the time comes.

“He was prepared,” Barnes said. “John is strange, but in a good way. He’s the kind of player who can learn multiple positions, feel comfortable in two positions. He did a good job in our passing game.

“We had five routes that we worked on in practice, and we used all of them,” Barnes added. “He did a good job. He’s an accurate thrower of the football. We knew he was going to have to play, so he got all the reps. He knew what he was supposed to do, and he played with confidence.”

LINEMAN OF THE WEEK
JERIUS WILLIAMS
SUMTER
LEFT GUARD
JUNIOR

Williams graded out at 90 percent and had six knockdown blocks as the Gamecocks compiled 443 yards of total offense against Socastee.

The 5-11, 275-pound junior said he took advantage of his size for the big knockdown numbers.

“It really started with the strength of their defensive line,” Williams said. “They weren't the strongest I’ve gone up against, so I was able to get them off balance a lot. There were some double teams, so I got some solo down blocks. I just overpowered them.

“I’ve put in a lot practice, and all season I’ve been working on the playbook. I’m comfortable, I know what to do. That’s what I’m here for.”

Barnes said Williams is capable of playing all three O-line positions, having started some at center last year due to injury. However, it is at left guard where Barnes feels he is most effective.

“He’s a team-oriented guy,” the coach said. “He’ll play wherever he is needed. He is a physical blocker, what we liked to call a violent blocker He wants to try to knock people down. He’s not tall, but he has great leverage, great strength, great fundamentals.”

DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE WEEK
JONTAVIOUS CANTY
MANNING
LINEBACKER
SOPHOMORE

Canty had 17 tackles and recovered a fumble in the Monarchs' 28-24 victory over Aynor.

There was no secret what Aynor was going to do offensively. The Blue Jackets do the same thing week in and week out; they have a pounding running game, often resembling a rugby scrum.

Canty, a 5-10, 185-pound sophomore said he was prepared for it, and that’s why he was successful.

“I just got out there and did my job,” he said. “I know what they do, so it was easy. I knew where I needed to be. It was easy because I knew what the guard was doing. I just got my hands ready and I waited for it.”

Monarch head coach Reggie Kennedy said Canty had a great week of practice leading up to the game.

“I felt it coming,” Kennedy said of Canty’s performance. “He’s improved so much in the past six weeks. I’ve been watching him grow into that position. He has a nose for the football and he’s a head hunter.

“The way he played Friday is because of the way he practiced all week.”

Canty also recovered a pair of onside kicks playing on the front line of Manning’s kickoff receiving team.

SPECIAL TEAMS PLAYER OF THE WEEK

TIMOTHY TYE

CRESTWOOD

PUNTER/KICK RETURNER

SENIOR

Tye had one punt for 49 yards and returned a kickoff 50 yards for a touchdown in the Knights' 41-0 victory over Lake City.

That Tye can punt the football is old news. He was named the club’s All-Area team last year as the punter and has won the Special Teams Player of the Week before. This returning-a-kickoff-for-a-touchdown thing is something new.

Tye, who is a senior, is a regular on the front line of Crestwood’s kickoff receiving team. He is there because of his good hands and his ability to cover an onside kick. He was ready for that moment against Lake City.

“We came out at halftime leading 13-0,” said Knight head coach Roosevelt Nelson. “Lake City went out at halftime with some momentum, and we figured they’d try an onside kick to try and get the possession back. We told them to be aware of that.

“He made a great play. He picked it up and ran it back. It was a heads-up play, being alert.”

Tye said he got the kick on a bounce at midfield and broke down the Panther sideline for the touchdown.

“I jumped on it early, picked it up and I got out of there,” Tye said. “I said to myself, ‘You’ve got to score.’ When it bounced, I said, ‘You’ve got to get the ball and score.’”

Tye sees some action at running back, having carried the ball 17 times for 60 yards this season. However, Friday’s touchdown was the first of his high school career.

Did he anticipate returning a kickoff for a score as the way his name would be etched in the annals of Crestwood history for Knights who have scored touchdowns?

“Not in a million years,” he said.