

HIGH SCHOOL SPORTS

# Friday prep report: Collierville earns emotional second-round playoff win

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Collierville

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Everyone in Collierville maroon did his part to help the Dragons secure a second-round playoff victory over Arlington Friday. The prize job, however, was given to someone who didn't play a single snap.

After congratulating his team on a 30-20 victory over the visiting Tigers, Collierville coach Joe Rocconi introduced his men to his former teammate, Ricky Bretherick. Bretherick, a "Dragon through and through," has recently had to endure the deaths of both of his parents within just a few days of one another. So it was Rocconi's pleasure to allow Bretherick to ring the Paul Cox Victory Bell to celebrate the school's first playoff victory on the field since 2016.

"He's a year older than me and we played together," said Rocconi. "His parents, Richard and Suzanne ... I guarantee you saw them at some point. They were always involved in the booster club. They worked in the concession stand for, like, 30 years. They were both in the hospital together and died within a week-and-a-half of each other.

"Literally, the biggest Dragons fans you could imagine and over 30 years of volunteer service. It's pretty emotional. We (coaches) were all very close with them and a lot of our players knew who they were. We talked about playing for them tonight."

The Brethericks would have undoubtedly been pleased after a game in which their team performed well in all three phases.

Troy Martin ran for 135 yards and a touchdown while Ethan Pettigrew threw a 29-yard touchdown to Tyler Collier. The defense held Arlington to just 51 yards on the ground. And kicker Hudson Hollenbeck booted three field goals, while raising nearly \$10,000 for the fight against lung cancer thanks to pledges and donations.

Every bit of it was needed against a battling Arlington team that was playing its first game since Oct. 8. The Tigers took a 20-17 lead in the third quarter on Zach Baker's 1-yard run.

"Arlington, I'm so impressed with how they played," said Rocconi. "We know they haven't played in over 30 days so to come out and not only play as hard as they did but as well as they did, that's just a tribute to (head) coach (Adam) Sykes and the job him and his staff did.

"They did some things that really messed with us and we had trouble figuring it out in the first half."

Somewhat uncharacteristically, Collierville came out flinging the ball all over the yard and went ahead early on Pettigrew's pass to Collier. Arlington responded immediately thanks to Baker's 20-yard pass to Cannon Linebaugh and the Tigers went ahead 14-7 when Gabriel Torres intercepted Pettigrew and went 85 yards the other way.

The Dragons countered with a 40-yard run by Martin and then Hollenbeck's longest field goal, a 45-yarder, made it 17-14 at the break.

"I said at halftime, 'lets not forget about running the ball,'" said Rocconi.

Hollenbeck's next two kicks tied the game and put his team in the lead. The Dragons finally shut the door when Gyasi Wallace forced a fumble and Christian Flynn recovered, setting up a 5-yard touchdown by Dylan Powell that gave them a 10-point lead with 1:09 left.

Collierville, which is in the quarterfinals for the first time since 1996, takes on the winner of Saturday's game between Houston and Bartlett in the quarters. The Dragons beat the Mustangs, 21-14, in the regular-season meeting on Oct. 19 and lost to the Panthers in overtime, 34-28, three weeks later.

Arlington ends the year with a 5-6 mark. The Tigers were bidding to reach the quarterfinals for the first time since 2014.

### **Friday's scores**

Memphis Nighthawks 22, PURE Youth Athletics 18

### **Class 6A**

Collierville 30, Arlington 20

### **Class 5A**

Henry County 51, Brighton 16

### **Division 2-AAA**

Chattanooga McCallie 42, CBHS 28

MUS 41, Nashville Father Ryan 17

### **Division 2-AA**

ECS 14, Battle Ground Academy 13 (OT)

### **MHSAA 6A**

Hernando 36, South Panola 33

### **MHSAA 5A**