

PEACHTREE RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL



Lions aim to bounce back against hot Kell

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The response to the first loss was overwhelmingly positive.

Peachtree Ridge played poorly in a 51-17 loss at Lowndes on Sept. 4. But the Lions answered with seven straight wins, posting three shutouts and holding all seven foes to 10 points or less.

But that streak hit the skids last Friday when they were defeated 21-7 by North Gwinnett in the Region 7-AAAAA title game. It prevented Peachtree Ridge from repeating as region champion, but it didn't take away the ultimate goal of a Class AAAAA state championship.

That quest begins tonight when the Lions (8-2) host a 6-4 Kell team that has heavy late-season momentum.

"I think that's what we're going to find out (tonight), we'll find out how hungry Peachtree Ridge is," Lions head coach Bill Ballard said. "If they're hungry enough, we can make a run



Photo: Kevin Hinton

Peachtree Ridge's Brandon Stanley (2) outruns a tackle by Collins Hill's Chris Caspari (3).

(at a state title). But that's got to come from the seniors. They have to decide if they want to make a run. We certainly have the

potential to do it."

The early signs Ballard got this week were positive after last week's tough loss. The Lions took six

KELL AT PEACHTREE RIDGE

- **Who:** Kell Longhorns (6-AAAAA) vs. Peachtree Ridge Lions (7-AAAAA)
- **When:** Today, 7:30 p.m.
- **Where:** Peachtree Ridge High School (From I-85, take the Old Peachtree Road exit and go west. School is roughly two miles ahead on the right)
- **Coaches:** Derek Cook, Kell; Bill Ballard, Peachtree Ridge
- **Records:** Kell 6-4, Peachtree Ridge 8-2
- **Last week:** Kell beat Milton 45-21; Peachtree Ridge lost to North Gwinnett 21-7
- **Winner plays:** Brookwood-McEachern winner
- **Peachtree Ridge leaders:**
 - **Rushing:** Chris Sawdey, 728 yards
 - **Passing:** Nick Lombardo, 1,048 yards
 - **Receiving:** Brad Roby, 362 yards
 - **Tackles:** Tanner Botts, 94
 - **Interceptions:** Roby, 5
- **Game-by-game:**

Kell Longhorns (6-4)		Peachtree Ridge Lions (8-2)	
at Woodstock	L 17-0	at Harrison	W 35-13
Walton	L 21-16	at Lowndes	L 51-17
at Lassiter	L 28-17	Northview	W 44-0
at Roswell	L 14-0	at North Forsyth	W 33-0
Pope	W 21-20	Duluth	W 42-7
Centennial	W 34-33 (OT)	at Mill Creek	W 28-0
at Campbell	W 17-0	Collins Hill	W 21-7
Wheeler	W 41-0	at South Forsyth	W 17-10
Alpharetta	W 24-21	Norcross	W 20-10
at Milton	W 45-21	at North Gwinnett	L 21-7

scoreless trips into North territory, with miscues or fourth-down failures causing major problems.

"We just didn't finish last week, that was the big thing," Ballard said.

Peachtree Ridge's opponent tonight is Kell, a fel-

low 7-year-old school. The Longhorns don't have the Lions' football tradition yet — outside of producing Georgia Tech star running back Jonathan Dwyer — but they are moving in the right direction, particularly late in the season.

After starting the season 0-4, Kell has won six straight games to make the playoffs. The first two wins of that streak were the most important in turning the season around, a 21-20 win over Pope and a 34-33 overtime win over Centennial the following week.

Versatile running back Brian Randolph is the Longhorns' offensive focal point, while fellow back Jordan Chambers also is a physical runner. They will encounter a Peachtree Ridge defense that has been stout since the debacle at Lowndes.

The Lions quickly put that loss behind them, which they will need to do again tonight in hopes of returning to the AAAAA finals, where they lost last year to Camden County. Their path this year changed Monday when the GHSA changed the brackets.

"It was kind of a shocker I guess, we didn't know that would happen," Ballard said. "But in our situation, we swapped Lowndes for Northside (Warner Robins) if we're fortunate enough (to make the quarterfinals). I don't know if that really gained us anything."

