

PEACHTREE RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL



Lions rolling since defeat

Peachtree Ridge has
won four in a row

By DAVID FRIEDLANDER
STAFF WRITER
david.friedlander@
gwinnettdailypost.com

HOSCHTON

Peachtree Ridge head coach Bill Ballard said essentially the same thing following Friday's 28-0 win over Mill Creek that he did following a 51-17 loss to then-No. 1 Lowndes just more than a month ago.

"One game doesn't define our season," Ballard said Saturday.

Perhaps, but one game can prove to be a turning point to a season.



Bill Ballard

The Lowndes game already has been as the No. 9 Lions (5-1) have demonstrated by defeating four opponents by a combined score of 147-7 since that September night in Valdosta.

"That's behind us," Ballard said. "We've moved on, but no doubt, when you get beat like that, you go back and focus on what you're trying to do."

Judging from Friday's

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result, that focus seems to be much clearer these days.

The Lions outgained the host Hawks 298-161, including several big plays in the passing game with Mill Creek bunching the line of scrimmage to try to cut off the running game in their spread option offense.

After doing some fine-tuning during last week's open date, the Peachtree Ridge offense — led by quarterback Nick Lombardo and featuring play-makers like Brad Roby, Brandon Stanley, Chris Sawdey and Willie Udofia — seems to be working like a well-oiled machine.

But the Lions' defense, which posted its third shutout in the last four games, seems to be equally hitting its stride.

Big defensive plays from the likes of Roby, who grabbed his fourth interception of the season Friday, and Brian Williams, who has three picks, have been key during the run.

However, as Ballard pointed out, those big plays wouldn't be possible without others like leading tackler Tanner Botts (51 stops heading into Fri-

day) and Eric Mitchell (two sacks vs. Mill Creek) doing the grunt work to help out those play makers:

"Our front seven has a lot of leaders, like Botts and Mitchell and (Eric) Odonkor and A.J. McDonald," Ballard said. "You'll see a guy like Roby make a big play, but if you go back and look at the tape, you'll see those other guys putting pressure on the quarterback to force him into a bad throw or something that helps set it up. It really is a team effort."

That team effort will have to continue as Peachtree Ridge begins the home stretch.

Games with high-powered offenses await with Collins Hill and county rushing leader Charles Perkins on Friday, plus multi-faceted opponents like Norcross and North Gwinnett to follow before another possible postseason run.

"You have to be multi-ple on defense because you're going to see different offenses — from the wing-T to the triple option to a spread," Ballard said. "We are coming together as a team right now, but it's important for us to improve week to week."

