

# PEACHTREE RIDGE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL



## Plenty on line for Peachtree Ridge, Norcross

Lions gunning for region title; Blue Devils aim for playoff spot

By WILL HAMMOCK  
SPORTS EDITOR  
will.hammock@  
gwinnettdaily.com

The goal, a second straight Region 7-AAAAA title, hasn't wavered for the Peachtree Ridge football team. It's been the focus for months.

The Lions, with a perfect region record, are two wins away from accomplishing that feat. A huge game, possibly a winner-take-all title game, looms next week against fellow 7-AAAAA unbeaten North Gwinnett.

But Game 10 will be tarnished if Peachtree Ridge doesn't win tonight's Game 9 against playoff-hungry Norcross.

"(Norcross) is very impressive," Lion head coach Bill Ballard said. "They've got four receivers that can beat you down the field at any time,



Photo: Anthony Stalcup

Peachtree Ridge quarterback Nick Lombardo (13) scrambles out of the pocket during the Lions' game against Mill Creek earlier this season.

two huge defensive ends, a huge offensive line of scrimmage, a good quarterback and two running

backs who could start for most any team in our region.

"They're a very explo-

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>NORCROSS AT<br/>PEACHTREE RIDGE</b>   |  |
| <p><b>NORCROSS<br/>BLUE DEVILS (7-AAAAA)</b><br/>                 ■ Coach: Keith Maloof<br/>                 ■ Record: 4-4, 4-2 region<br/>                 ■ Last week: Beat Duluth 29-7<br/>                 ■ When: Today, 7:30 p.m.<br/>                 ■ Last meeting: Peachtree Ridge won 20-7 last year<br/>                 ■ Directions to 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.<br/>                 ■ Series history:<br/>                 2008 — Peachtree Ridge 20, Norcross 7<br/>                 2007 — Peachtree Ridge 26, Norcross 14<br/>                 2006 — Norcross 6, Peachtree Ridge 3<br/>                 2005 — Norcross 45, Peachtree Ridge 7<br/>                 2004 — Norcross 27, Peachtree Ridge 0</p> | <p><b>PEACHTREE RIDGE<br/>LIONS (7-AAAAA)</b><br/>                 ■ Coach: Bill Ballard<br/>                 ■ Record: 7-1, 6-0 region<br/>                 ■ Last week: Beat South Forsyth 17-10</p> |

sive team. ... kind of an up-and-down team, but a very scary team."

And a desperate team, which Ballard also knows is scary. Norcross has no margin for error after an upset loss to North Forsyth.

The Blue Devils must win tonight at Peachtree Ridge, then upset Collins Hill next week to make the playoffs.

"If we win both we're in, if we lose one we've got to get some help," said Norcross head coach Keith Maloof, whose late father George coached Ballard in high school.

Norcross got off to a slow start last week against Duluth, but cranked it up in the second half behind speedy running back Delino DeShields. The Blue Devils should get a nice boost this week with the return of lineman Terry Hollingshed from an injury.

Peachtree Ridge also was affected by an injury last Friday as starting quarterback Nick Lombardo sat most of the night to heal. Ballard hoped to rest his QB the whole night, but called on him with 22 seconds left to throw the

game-winning touchdown pass.

If rescued the Lions from a major upset.

"Tanner (Mack) did pretty good for his first start," Ballard said of Lombardo's replacement last week. "If you go back to Nick's first start a few years ago, he looked pretty rough, too. But Tanner did a nice job most of the night. ... And that's invaluable experience for Tanner. If we need that down the road, it's going to be a huge help."

Peachtree Ridge's defense also showed up, as offensive mistakes gave South Forsyth its points. The Lions allowed only 78 yards of offense.

The offense produced more than 300 yards, but not many points.

"(Peachtree Ridge) is very aggressive on defense, they play really fast and they've gone to that Georgia Tech offense," Maloof said. "They come off it and use play action very well. And they fly around on defense. And we've got to know where (Brad) Roby is. The guy's scored a touchdown in every way possible."

