

September 8, 2025

By Dennis Garcia

SportsTone.net

ASHEBORO - Winning a high school football game is hard. It's quite demanding. It's physical, tests a team's ability to make adjustments and certainly requires mental toughness, perhaps more than any other sport.

For the past two weeks, the Providence Grove High School varsity football team has been more physical than its opponent, made some nice adjustments to their offensive attack and rode some huge defensive plays to gain momentum.

Last Friday night's 31-0 shutout over Southwestern Randolph, the first time the Patriots had ever shut out SWR in 15 games, was the second straight whitewash recorded by the Patriots this season. After a loss to Randleman to start the campaign, PG recorded a 23-0 win over Morehead and last week's 31-0 win over the Cougars.



*Cody Moran is in his first season as head coach of the Patriots.*

While containing the opponent's running attack each week, the PG secondary put the clamps on two teams who like to throw the football. The Patriots allowed just five passing yards against Morehead and 26 against the Cougars. Throw in two interceptions Friday night, a stout defensive line, an athletic linebacking crew who loves to cover receivers as much as hitting running backs and you have a defense primed for success.

And success is exactly what the PG defense has enjoyed the past two weeks.

"The last two weeks our defense has carried us," said first-year head coach Cody Moran, the fourth head coach in the past four seasons for the Patriots. "I can't be more proud of the senior leadership on this team with the adversity they faced the last four years to have a different coach every year. For them to keep showing up and putting in the work. Their leadership is what carries this team."

That, and a young defensive coordinator in Tanner Breedlove, a PGHS graduate.

At Providence Grove, we've always been, okay, let's just get the stop," Moran said. "This year, we've focused on playing to your potential and it starts with Coach Tanner Breedlove as defensive coordinator. This is his first year and he brings that energy every day and they feed off him."

All three levels of the defense were outstanding Friday night. Although the Cougars rushed for 154 yards, there were plenty of negative plays along the way, while the secondary blanketed SWR receivers. Andrew Thomas, Malachi Combo, Jameson Summey and Landon Fox

caused problems for the Cougars' passing game, while linebackers Jacob Flinchum, Connor Haithcock, Chase Collins and Nick Straughn led the linebacking group.



*PG junior Nick Straughn.*

"Pretty solid, one of our main strengths is our defense," said Straughn, a junior who also carried the ball on offense. "We had opportunities to get to the quarterback, to get to the guys running the ball, on pass plays. We did a pretty good job. It's a great feeling for all our boys enforcing their will on the other team."

Haithcock, just a sophomore, picked off two passes from Levi Dalke, who barely had time to throw when he was able to corral the snap from center while in the shotgun formation. Haithcock picked off one pass late in the first quarter and added another in the fourth.

"We shut down their pass plays really well," Haithcock said. "The first interception was a wheel route and I was ready for it. I had been working on that in practice all week. Their quarterback was kind of just throwing it up there. Our

defense did an outstanding job. Two shutouts. Put up a goose egg on the scoreboard and scored 31 points. That's a great game in my book for the defense."

Linebacker Chase Collins said it all starts up front.

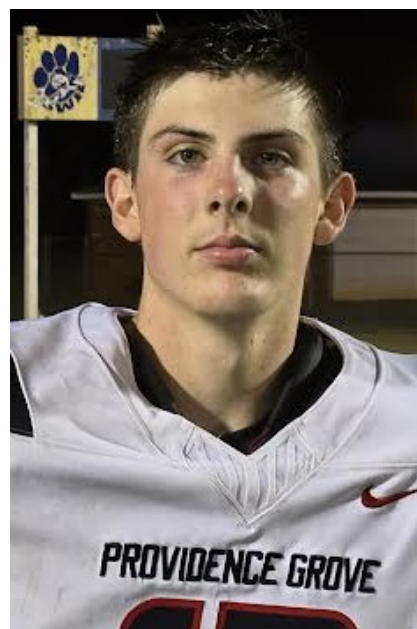
"Our (defensive line) and our secondary was really good," Collins said. "We have a great coaching staff and a lot of the credit goes to Jacob Flinchum. He's a senior and the leader." Flinchum is one of the 12 seniors on the roster.

"It feels great, two weeks, two zeroes," Flinchum said. "The work we put in the last two weeks has paid off, this week especially. It shows how really good we can be when we put everything together."

The defensive front of PG, including Wyatt Brinkley, Charles Villaggio, Easton Ibe and Ryan Bullard among others, have now had two straight weeks of solid contributions.

"We're clicking right now, but we know it's going to be a difficult week." Moran said of the Patriots' game Friday night against Eastern Randolph. "Keep chopping wood. That's what we keep telling them."

There's plenty of firewood that has been stacked up during the past two weeks.



*Providence Grove sophomore Chase Collins.*