

Dora's season ends at UMS-Wright
by W. Brian Hale



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MOBILE — The No. 7 Dora Bulldogs' quest for an ASHAA Class 4A state championship came crashing to a halt on Friday night, following a 35-21 fourth-round playoff defeat to the UMS-Wright Bulldogs at Erwin S. Cooper Stadium in Mobile.

Dora outgained UMS-Wright on offense in the contest, 343-286, as well as a 293-219 ground game edge. UMS-Wright however held a 3-2 advantage in turnovers — which ultimately proved to be too much for Dora to withstand.

Kai Thomas was able to top the 2,000 yard rushing mark on the season with his performance on the night — carrying the ball 23 times for 142 yards and scoring one touchdown on the ground. DeMarcus Kirk added a rushing touchdown of his own to go along with his 77 rushing yard effort for the evening. Caleb May recorded 109 all-purpose yards, passing for 50 yards and one touchdown, while also carrying the ball 12 times for 59 yards.

Cade Stone led the Dora defense with eight tackles, including two tackles for a loss. Joel Parrish also contributed with four tackles, including two tackles for a loss and an interception.

“We really lost the game in the first half when UMS-Wright was able to take a 28-6 lead over us. We had opportunities in the second half to come back and make it a seven-point contest, but we weren't able to take advantage of the chances that were given to us,” Dora coach Johnny Wright said. “UMS-Wright has a great team — you don't make it to the fourth round of the playoffs and move on to play for the championship if you aren't. They made the big plays where we couldn't.”

It took UMS-Wright just three plays to score the first points of the contest, driving 44 yards to take an early 7-0 edge.

Dora answered with a 15-play, 71-yard drive of its own, with Thomas taking the ball in from a yard out. A missed extra point kick however left UMS-Wright in command, 7-6.

UMS-Wright then scored on their next three possessions — finding the end zone on drives of 68, 71 and 66 yards to take a 28-6 lead into halftime.

Dora drew within 14 on the first possession of the third quarter, with Kirk scoring on a 15-yard run. May scrambled into the end zone for the two-point conversion to cut the lead to 28-14.

UMS-Wright reestablished a 21-point edge at the end of the third quarter following a 7-play, 40 yard drive for the 35-14 edge.

May found Devonta Gosha on a 9-yard touchdown strike midway through the fourth quarter to end an 80-yard, 18-play drive to cut the UMS-Wright to 35-21.

A big defensive stand in the final moments of the game by UMS-Wright enabled the program to preserve its victory and enter the state championship finals for the sixth time.

Both teams were presented with plaques following the conclusion of the game for their semi-final playoff appearance.

Dora finishes the year with a 12-2 record — the team's best finish in a decade — and captured its first region title since 2004.

The program finished the regular season with a spotless Region 4 record, with its only loss coming to Class 5A top-ranked Muscle Shoals. The Bulldogs produced three 1,000-yard rushers on the year — Thomas, Kirk and May, with Thomas finishing the season at 2,058 yards on the ground. May also ended the year with over 1,000 yards passing. Behind a veteran offensive line, Dora rushed for an average of over 350 yards per game and scored 39.1 points per game.

“Although this was a heart-breaking loss for these kids, when they get up in the morning and look in the mirror, they’ll be proud of what they have accomplished this season,” Wright said. “We have had some great leadership from the seniors in our classes and we improved on both offense and defense as they year went along. I’m very proud of them all, and I know the parents, students and staff at Dora High School and our community are proud of them as well.”

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