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Ailing Riverside tops Nitro 30-8

By [D.J. Williams](#) for the Charleston Gazette



Kenny Kemp

Nitro's J.T. Flint (5) is wrapped up by Riverside's Seth Shanklin.

Coach Ralph Hensley and the Riverside Warriors football team has been no stranger to injury this year.

Already without the services of leading rusher Brian Blankenship, who suffered a broken leg on the next-to-last play versus Huntington, and junior linebacker-fullback Anthony Simmons, Riverside suffered a crushing blow when first team all-state wide receiver Raheem Waiters went down last week with a knee injury last week against George Washington.

With the playoffs not completely out their grasp, Hensley hoped his players would be up to the challenge. On Friday night, they showed that they just might be.

Sophomore running back Patrick Hess rushed for 119 yards and senior Nick Smith contributed with 105 rushing yards and a touchdown as Riverside cruised to a 30-8 victory over visiting Nitro.

"Patrick was recently playing junior varsity," Hensley said. "With Raheem's injury, he was the next guy to step up along with Nick Smith. Nick is a very hard-nosed guy and we think when you add [fullback Jimmy] Ruiz to the equation that we have some threats in the backfield."

Ruiz finished with 20 yards rushing and a 5-yard touchdown reception from Seth Shanklin for the No. 15 Warriors (5-3).

"We really needed this win," Hensley said. "We have been trying to get this win for two weeks now. Brooke and GW really took it to us, so this win was very important."

The Warriors lost 27-0 to Brooke, ranked No. 1 in class AAA, and dropped a 27-20 decision to George Washington last week.

In the Warriors' wins this year, they have averaged 29 points, while only averaging nine points in their losses. Their other loss was a 17-6 defeat to Woodrow Wilson.

"Our goal is to try to get into the playoffs," Hensley said. "I told the kids that anything can happen if you make the playoffs. We have Parkersburg and South Charleston left. They are both tough times and it won't be easy."

When asked about Waiters' injury, Hensley said, "He has a very bad hyperextended knee. The doctor told him to put pressure on it, but don't do anything to cause any more damage to it. Right now, I don't know if he will be able to play this year."

The Warriors took the early first quarter lead on a 1-yard touchdown run by Shanklin and a 4-yard touchdown run by Smith.

Nitro (1-7) never threatened the Warriors offensively as it had three straight three-and-out possessions.

After the first quarter, the Warriors had 141 yards of total offense, while Nitro managed negative-9 yards.

Kicker Chris Knapp added a 27-yard field goal in the second quarter after a Nitro fumble was recovered by Jay Pennington inside the Nitro 10. At that point, the Warriors led 17-0 and took that lead into halftime. At the half, the Warriors had accumulated 211 total yards of offense, while Nitro only managed 20.

The second half didn't go much better for Nitro as Shanklin scored on an 11-yard run and also throw a 3-yard touchdown pass to Ruiz. Nitro scored its only points on a 53-yard touchdown scamper from Alex Taylor. Kicker Kevin Sloan tallied the 2-point conversion.

Taylor led Nitro with 98 rushing yards and a touchdown.

"We thought we could come out with something different this game, said Nitro assistant coach John Painter, who has taken over the coaching duties since coach Bob Gobel suffered a leg injury during practice last month.

"We put two running backs in the backfield at the same time because we thought we could run. Recently, we have been having problems throwing the ball and it didn't help that our two starting receivers have been sick all week. But you have to give credit to Riverside's front line because they did a great job."