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## Lift for Life Academy Triumphs Over Bearcats, End the Season 11-1

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The Bearcats concluded their 2024 football season with a tough loss to Lift for Life Academy by a final score of 50 - 12. Despite the competitive start, Lift for Life took command in the third quarter, leading to a decisive victory over the Dexter.

“Oh, man, it's been a great year,” noted Head Coach Chad Jamerson. “I'm so proud of all that these kids have accomplished this year. It's just, you know, sooner or later the magic, I guess, runs out.”

Live for Life elected to kickoff to the Bearcats to begin the game. Unfortunately on the first series of downs, LLA's defensive back Cameron Hurst stepped in front of a Jackson Howard (D) pass and returned it 33 yards for the first score of the game. This gave the Hawks a 6-0 lead as the 2-point conversion failed.

The Bearcats battled back with a strong running game moving the football down the field. At the 1:05 mark in the first Quarter, Devin Turnbo was able to respond with a 5-yard touchdown run to tie the score. The PAT kick by Parker King was wide left and failed, ending the first quarter tied at 6-6.

“I thought the offensive line did a really good job of creating space for (Turnbo) and creating lanes and I thought he ran hard,” commented Coach Jamerson. “He ran into a bunch of walls at that second level and that was kind of the story of the day. On offense, we had trouble getting down to the second level with their linebackers.”

The speed on the Lift for Life defense was notable from the beginning of the game. The Bearcats saw some offensive holes open up and those holes would close really quickly.

Jamerson added, "We saw gaps and, before you knew it, you could blink and the gap closed. And that's kind of the story, especially the second half in what was typically a 7 to 10 yard run for us turned into two, three, and five yard runs."

Lift for Life came storming back quickly in the second quarter as they got the ball on their own 42 yard line and moved it down the field. Then the Hawks, Marco Jackson took a handoff from his quarterback and ran for a 31-yard touchdown. The Bearcat defense stood strong and denied the Hawks the 2-point conversion, holding the lead to 12-6 with 11:05 remaining in the first half.

The Bearcats continued to move the football on the ground with powerful running of Grams and Turnbo. Jett Grams' 4 yard touchdown run tied the game 12-12 with 4:03 remaining in the half.

At that point, many fans may have felt that two prize fighters were exchanging blows offensively on the football field. However, Lift for Life was not finished. They began a 10 play, 65 yard drive that ended with a QB Mikey Gerdine 37-yard pass completion to Aireon Jones to recapture the lead at halftime 18-12.

The Bearcats have been known all season for the halftime adjustments. But the 2<sup>nd</sup> half started with each team unable to move the football. Defense appeared to have been a strong adjustment for both teams.

The Bearcats struggled and really couldn't get outside on the Lift for Life Defense. The Hawks had a strong game plan and executed that plan very well.

"They are simply athletes. They were able to make adjustments and they took away our perimeter game and gave us a lot of the interior stuff. We weren't able to get the interior stuff going like we have in the past," said Jamerson.

But with 6 minutes left in the third quarter, Mikey Gerdine delivered a pass over the Bearcat defensive backfield and completed a 55-yard touchdown pass to Daishawn Houston to increase their lead. A 3-yard PAT was good by Phoenix Isaiah and the Hawks lead by a score of 26-12.

With 4:27 remaining in the third quarter, the Hawks Cameron Hurst found his second pick-six of the day and again for a Live for Life tem. The PAT pass from Phoenix Isaiah to Mickell Burden was good making the score 34-12.

Lift for Life continued their dominance throughout the remainder of the contest adding two additional rushing scores by Karnym Johnson and Jayveon Scott making the final score of 50-12.

"Defensively I think they had a really good game plan to take Lee-Michael away from us, and they did," Jamerson noted. "They took away our sweep game and he was able to get a couple counters, but he wasn't able to just do the things that Lee-Michael does."

"They made good defensive adjustments and credit to Life for Life ... They had guys in the right position today." Jamerson continued.

The Bearcats had a total offense of 105 yards compared to 279 yards for the Hawks. Jett Grams was the leading rusher for the 'Cats with 16 carries for 54 yards. Grams suffered a strained hamstring last week and was felt to be only at about 70% strength for today's contest.

The end of the Bearcats' remarkable 11-1 season was marked with many highlights including the leadership and play of their 19 senior players. These young men have given a community a 2024 Fall filled with exciting Friday Nights and a record performance only achieved by 3 previous teams at Dexter High School.

Seniors Include: #2 Jett Grams, #7 Lee Michael McDonald, #12 Nolan Alford, #16 Jackson Howard, #20 Rylee Cochran, #21 Joseph Passley, #22 Logan Pullum, #26 Christaan Wirz, #53 Caleb Gott, #54 Zach Billingsley, #56 Caden Lee, #66 Peyton Hartline, #73 Sawyer Rascher, #74 Ethan Glaus, #75 Tyler Spence, #78 Parker King, and #79 Donovan Micheal.

"You could talk all day about the effort and the hard work and the heart of this senior class and everything they did to get this program back on track", stated Coach Jamerson. "Without those seniors, we don't have 11 wins. We don't win a district championship without their dedication and their hard work. We're not where we are today. So all that credit goes to those guys for trusting the plan and trusting the process and coming out and executing the things that we do."

The game emphasized the support from the community and the impressive resilience of the team throughout the season. The game served as a poignant conclusion for the 19 seniors playing their final game, with many notable contributors leaving a lasting legacy. In all they scored a total of 500 points this season in twelve games ending with 11 wins and 1 loss. The defense held strong allowing only 146 points all season with 50 of those points from LFL in the last game of the season. The 2024 season will go down in the history books for sure and these young men will have memories for years to come.

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