

## Salem fights to the end, falls short

Written by George Browning  
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First-year Salem High School football Head Coach RJ Hartsfield has won a lot of games in his career, so he is not into moral victories.

While he wasn't happy with his team's 29-20 loss at Paoli Friday, he did think he saw the Lions take a step toward shedding a tag they've been given over the last five years.

"We were down 22-7 at halftime and I told them, the knock on Salem football over the past five years is if you get them down early, they will fold," Hartsfield said. "I challenged them to step up and change that Friday night. They did that."

Hartsfield knows that from personal experience where he spent the past several seasons coaching against the Lions as a member of the Paoli coaching staff.

He said that's what they told their kids when playing SHS and the Paoli players executed the game plan.

Entering Friday's game, Salem had been outscored by Paoli 157-7 over the past five seasons.

Last Friday, when faced with the opportunity to give up, this time, the Lions made a contest out of it.

"I am not happy with this game, but what I am happy with is that we kept fighting," he said. "The effort was there on defense and special teams, but we have to get better in every area. We need improvement at every position and as coaches we've got to do better. I've got to get better at calling the offense."

On offense Salem finished the game with negative yards. In fact, most of the scoring game from stellar defensive plays.

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Hartsfield said if improvement is going to come in the Salem offense, it is going to have to start with the line upfront.

“Paoli has a great defensive line, they go 260, 270 upfront and those aren’t fat kids, they are big, but they can also move,” he said. “Now, that’s not an excuse because there are a lot of those types of defenses in the Mid Southern Conference, but we’ve got to keep working and getting better in that area.

‘There were times Friday when it seemed like everything we worked on all summer went out the Window,” he said.

Hartsfield noted the play of Kody Kramer who intercepted a pass and returned it deep into Paoli territory and Brent Garriott, who caused a turnover and had a touchdown called back.

As for the emotions of coaching his first game at the high school where his name still fills the record books, against the team he got his coaching experience with, Hartsfield enjoyed the experience.

“I mean it was great and all, but I told our kids, that game, this season, is not about that,” he said. “It’s about those young men working hard and buying into what we are doing here.”

Hartsfield and the Lions will look for their first win of the season Friday when they travel to Silver Creek.

to play the Dragons.

This is the third year of varsity of football, but it will be Salem’s first trip to the Dragon’s Lair.

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The Lions are 3-0 lifetime against SC.