

## Defense carriers Chiefland to spring game victory over Dunnellon

By **NICK ANSCHULTZ**  
News Reporter/Editor

CHIEFLAND — Spring football continued on May 25 in Levy County, as Chiefland played host to Dunnellon in one of two spring games.

And in what could be described as a defensive slugfest, it was the Indians who would ultimately edge out the victory, defeating the Tigers, 12-0, in a game that featured four 12-minute quarters, with a running clock in the final period. “Spring football is a grind,” Chiefland coach James Corbin said. “It’s long. Kids get burnt out on it real quick.”

“When we get to the end of spring every single year, it always becomes a test of our will to be able to come out there and get better every single day, even though it just really turns into a grind,” he said.

“Thankfully, even with the rain this week, I think our kids really turned it on,” Corbin said.

Dunnellon wasted no time moving the ball into Indians’ territory on its opening drive. A long pass and a 17-yard quarterback keep by Dylan Curry quickly set up the Tigers at the Chiefland 31-yard line.

After being forced into a 4th-and-short, Dunnellon would end up turning the ball over on downs following a pass that was knocked down by Indians’ junior Reggie Adams.

Chiefland also found itself on the Tigers’ side of the field on its

first offensive possession. This was after Indians’ junior Osten Jones broke free for a long run down the near sideline. A third-down pass completion by sophomore quarterback Matt Goodale to junior Jamarion White would move Chiefland into the Tigers’ red zone.

However, the Indians’ drive would stall following an incomplete pass on 4th-and-long. This was after a false start penalty backed Chiefland up.

With the first quarter winding down, the Indians managed to work back into Dunnellon territory on their second offensive series after a facemask penalty moved the ball to the Tigers’ 24-yard line. However, the Chiefland drive would end once more following a Goodale interception on third down to open up the second quarter.

Looking to capitalize off of the Indians’ mistake, the Tigers were quickly able to flip the field after a late hit out of bounds moved them to the Chiefland 30-yard line. But, Dunnellon would turn the ball over again after the Indians’ defense stuffed the Tigers on a 4th-and-1 attempt.

Following the turnover on downs, Chiefland was able to work its way back into Dunnellon territory with a little over six minutes to play in the second quarter after another Tigers’ penalty put them just outside the red zone.

Faced with another fourth down, the Indians got a little tricky, as senior Anthony Blackman connected with junior Michael Goodale on a

14-yard score via a reverse pass to the end zone to put Chiefland on the board first. An unsuccessful two-point conversion put the score at 6-0.

“It was kind of a cheeky thing to try and see if it would work,” Corbin said of the trick play.

“We practiced it at practice all week,” he said. “Ironically, my tight end (Michael) seems to do much better when he’s covered than (when) he’s wide open. So, when I saw him wide open, I got real nervous for a second that he was going to drop that ball anyway.”

“It was pretty good,” Corbin said. “I’m glad that it executed and it worked out for us.”

With the first half nearing a close, and looking to respond to the Indians’ score, Dunnellon found itself back on Chiefland’s side of the field again following a 28-yard pass by Curry to senior Amari Francois to set up the Tigers at the Indians’ 21-yard line with just over a minute to go.

After a holding penalty backed the ball up to the Chiefland 35-yard line, Indians’ sophomore Jon Adams sacked Curry on third down to set up a 4th-and-long for Dunnellon.

The Tigers would end up turning the ball over on downs following an incomplete pass by Curry to the send game to halftime.

The second half was an opportunity for some of the younger guys on both squads to come in and get some playing time. This includ-



Photo by: Nick Anschutz / News Reporter / Editor  
The Chiefland football team takes the field prior to its spring game against Dunnellon on May 25. The Indians defeated the Tigers, 12-0.

ed Chiefland freshman Reggie Cromartie.

On the Indians’ third offensive possession in the second half, Cromartie was subbed in at running back in the fourth quarter for a chance to get a carry. Once the ball was snapped, and the big man took the handoff, Cromartie made his way down the Chiefland sideline untouched for a 40-yard score, sending the Indians’ sideline into a frenzy.

Corbin said after the game that this was something he and Dunnellon coach Tommy Sutton had discussions about prior, noting his good relationship with Sutton and the other Tigers’ coaches.

Corbin talked about Cromartie’s commitment to the sport, saying that “he does what he’s supposed to do.” This was his chance to reward Cromartie for his dedication and hard work he has put in.

“I couldn’t thank Tommy Sutton enough for allowing us to do that,” Corbin said. I asked him, I said,

“coach, I don’t care if we just let him get a first down. But I really want to let this kid get a carry.”

“I couldn’t be happier for him,” Corbin said. “It was really a special moment.”

Cromartie’s score would wind up being the only points scored in the second half, as the Indians ultimately closed out the game with a 12-0 victory.

With the spring now behind them, one of the focal points for Corbin the next few months will be the progression of his young quarterback, who he said started at the position during practice after Chiefland entered the spring with no quarterback.

“I’m actually really pleased with how successful he is throwing the ball,” Corbin said.

“Looking forward into the summer, I really want to see how far we can take it with him (Matt) and being able to kind of throw the ball around a little bit more than what we have been in the past,” he said.

## It’s good to have ‘Friends’ like this

By **FRIENDS OF THE LOWER SUWANNEE & CEDAR KEYS NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGES**

If you like biking, hiking, observing wildlife, hunting and fishing, you may have spent time on parts of the 53,000 acres of the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge (LSNWR) in Levy and Dixie counties. If not, you may want to consider it.

The Refuge is managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and offers more than 50 miles of primary roads available for driving, hiking or bicycling. An additional 150 miles of secondary roads are open to foot and bicycle traffic. Canoe trails, boat launch areas and observation areas located on the Refuge offer excellent access to many areas that are off the beaten track.

State and federal agencies, including the USFWS, have limited resources and rely on volunteer organizations for support, such as the Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuges (Friends), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Nationally, there are 200 Friends organizations supporting other Refuges.

This article is focused on the LSNWR, but don’t forget about the Cedar Keys NWR, which involves 13 islands in the Gulf of Mexico, accessible only by boat.

The local Friends organization, with a growing membership of 250-plus, provides advocacy and physical support for the successful stewardship of the Refuges. Activities include promoting awareness of the Refuges’ habitats, management projects, conservation and preservation efforts, and advocating for responsible habitat use.

Since the Friends of the Lower Suwannee & Cedar Keys NWR organization was established in 2006, activities and projects conducted to support the Refuges continue to grow, including:

- Trail Improvements – Maintain existing Refuge trails including the River Trail and Tram Ridge Trail near Refuge headquarters. Projects include heading and repairing boardwalks, placing benches at critical rest stops, and producing and installing informational signs.

- Website – Provide a wealth of Refuge information and updates including trail and paddling guides, membership information



Bird watchers.

and more! Visit [www.friendsofrefuges.org](http://www.friendsofrefuges.org).

- Welcome Booths and Info Tables – Provide volunteer staffing at various visitor locations and events including the Cedar Key Chamber Welcome Center, Shell Mound, the River Trail and area festivals.

- News Brief – Inform over 600 subscribers with a monthly update on Refuge research projects, wildlife sightings, road conditions and upcoming activities, like the Summer Solstice Event at Shell Mound on Saturday, June 24.

- Brochures – Design, publish and maintain 21 print and electronic brochures highlighting Refuge-specific wildlife and nature activities to educate and guide the public.

- Invasive Species Control – Organize volunteers to assist Refuge staff with a 12-plus-year grant to perform the necessary labor to check the spread of the invasive Brazilian Pepper on the Refuges. They contribute hundreds of hours of difficult work in harsh conditions to control this extremely invasive plant.

- Nature Walks – Walks led by butterfly experts, native plant society members, hawk-eyed birders and nature enthusiasts who can point out the diverse flora and fauna throughout the Refuge.

- Shell Mound Archaeological Trail – Friends designed and produced interpretive signage for the trail – a popular Refuge attraction and important historical site, which draws hundreds of visitors each year. Friends spearheaded, designed, and co-funded this work in partnership with the Laboratory of Southeastern Archaeology at the University of Florida.

- Swallow-tail Kite Tracking – Friends co-sponsored, along with Cedar Keys Audubon, the attachment of electronic trackers on two birds. The trackers assist current research by the Avian Research and Conservation Institute in Gainesville and have demonstrated that Swallow-tail Kites migrate to Brazil and back to the same part of the Refuge each year. Updates can be found on the Friends website [www.friendsofrefuges.org](http://www.friendsofrefuges.org).

- Lecture Series – Provide financial support to the Cedar Key Library for nature-based topics. Recent topics presented by experts in their fields included: The Incredible Horseshoe Crab, The Story and Significance of Shellfish Aquaculture, Manatees – Sirens of the Seas, Butterflies of North Florida, and What to Do and See on the Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge, to name a few.

- And more – Friend also de-

veloped a Junior Ranger Program for kids ages 5-12, and maintains an online store with items including Refuge-themed shirts, hats, earrings and books.

### Ongoing refuge projects

Refuge staff have begun two habitat restoration projects that will serve as prescribed fire safety and wildfire risk reduction efforts, and benefit pollinator activities.

The first project is a longleaf pine habitat restoration on a 330-acre area covering 23 sites in Dixie County east of County Road 349.

This restoration project involves a site conversion from slash pine to longleaf pine. The longleaf pine once encompassed much of the Refuge before deforestation from logging and the eventual replacement with commercial forest trees such as loblolly and slash pine.

The project began in May and is expected to be completed in 2024.

The second project involves 70 miles of LSNWR roads and will

remove hazard fuels from 20-foot horizontal distance on either side of road center line, creating a right-of-way 40 feet wide.

Overhanging tree limbs within the 40-foot right-of-way to a height of 15 feet vertical distance from road surface will be removed.

This project will allow a greater degree of safety and access during wildfire control and while conducting controlled burns. Work is expected to start this summer and be completed in early 2024.

The USFWS assistant forester from the regional office made a recent visit to the Refuge and commented that restoration efforts over the last 5-7 years have been critical to the improvement of pollinator habitat. He suggested the Refuge contract with someone to do vegetation diversity surveys as well as pollinator surveys to highlight the Refuge’s restoration strategies.

While forest health has been the primary goal of restoration efforts, the successes of rejuvenating pollinator habitat has been important to the overall ecological health of the Refuge and a joy to butterfly, bird, insect and wildlife enthusiasts, as well as hunters and anglers. Insects, especially pollinators, are key indicators of ecosystem health.

Forest restoration, trail improvements and regular maintenance, such as prescribed burns, are also critical to those who come and take part in the Refuge’s several hunting seasons.

So, if you’re after spectacular vistas, amazing wildlife, serene backwaters for paddling, exciting hunting and fishing, scenic trails and drives, and a way to reconnect with vanishing nature, come visit and access the more than 150-mile trail system on the Refuges.

Check out the Friends’ website at [www.friendsofrefuges.org](http://www.friendsofrefuges.org) or email them at [friends@friendsofrefuges.org](mailto:friends@friendsofrefuges.org) for more information, to become a member or to volunteer for upcoming outreach activities.



## Recreational harvest of gray triggerfish closes in Gulf state waters on June 1

By **FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION (FWC)**

The recreational harvest of gray triggerfish in Gulf of Mexico state

and federal waters closes June 1 and will remain closed through July 31, reopening from Aug. 1 to Dec. 31.

Seasonal harvest closures help conserve Florida’s valuable gray

triggerfish populations and improve these fisheries for the future.

For current recreational triggerfish regulations, visit [MyFWC.com/Marine](http://MyFWC.com/Marine) and click on

“Recreational Regulations,” “Reef Fish” and then “Triggerfish.”

You can also download the Fish Rules App to keep up to date on current recreational regulations.

