

By KENNETH SCHOTT
DNJ

MURFREESBORO -- The first three running plays resulted in lost fumbles for Middle Tennessee Christian in its home opener against Friendship Christian Friday night. All told, the Cougars committed eight turnovers — six fumbles and two interceptions — as they went down in defeat to the Commanders, 47-3.

The Commanders started things off by scoring on their first possession, driving 64 yards. Friendship Christian senior quarterback Lee Maasen capped off the drive with a 25-yard touchdown pass to Parker Teeter.

The Cougars took possession after the kickoff at the 23. After two passes — one a seven-yard completion from Ivey Starling to Jordan Watson — MTCS had third-and-three from the 30. The handoff to Nathan Coats resulted in a fumble, and the Commanders recovered.

It only took them two plays to score on a 27-yard pass from Maasen to John Markham.

After the next kickoff, the Cougars attempted a running play to junior Christian Barrett, their third-string back. He was stripped of the ball, and the Commanders recovered.

But the Cougars got the ball right back. Maasen made his only mistake in the game, throwing an interception into the end zone to MTCS' Watson.

The Cougars had the ball at the 20 on the touchback. Another running attempt resulted in another fumble recovered by Friendship, and this time the Commanders drove 25 yards in seven plays. Maasen took it in from two yards out on the quarterback keeper to score.

The three first-quarter touchdowns off fumbles put the Cougars to far down to recover.

Maasen threw for 253 yards, completing 12-of-14 passes, three for touchdowns. "I have good receivers who hardly ever drop anything," Maasen said.

Friendship will host Macon County Feb. 28 in the Commander home-opener. Kickoff is set for 7:30 p.m. at Pirtle Field on the FCS campus.