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Hillgrove secures third seed with rout of South Cobb

By Jack Martin MDJ Sports Correspondent
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Hillgrove's Jaiden Moore ran for more than 200 yards against South Cobb on Thursday.

Special - Cecil Copeland, file

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MABLETON — Hillgrove wrapped up its regular season in dominant fashion Thursday, cruising past South Cobb 48-8 at Clay Stadium.

The Hawks (8-2, 5-2) secured the No. 3 seed in Region 3AAAAAA with the win, while the Eagles (2-8, 0-7) will look to carry the positives into 2026 despite the loss.

Hillgrove controlled all three phases of the game, jumping out to an early lead. It blended the run with the pass effectively, setting up a productive night for the offense.

Hillgrove coach Justin DeShon said the team has depth, and the players have known it all year.

“There are some things that we need to reevaluate in the bye week that we have,” DeShon said, “but we’re really excited to get going.”

Hillgrove will travel to either North Cobb, Marietta or North Paulding for the first round of the playoffs, with the finding out their opponent after Friday’s game between Marietta and North Paulding.

Hillgrove scored on its first two drives, and after each touchdown, it recovered an onside kick. The two onside recoveries were huge for momentum and allowed the Hawks to take a 27-0 lead early in the second quarter.

DeShon said his players practice onside kicks every week.

“The opportunity presented itself, and we had a different kicker tonight who’s really good at those things, and so we just took advantage of it,” DeShon said.

Hillgrove extended the lead to 41 points at halftime, but running back Jaiden Moore delivered the dagger with a 76-yard touchdown run to open the second half.

The offense ran through Moore as the junior running back had 211 yards on the ground through three quarters.

DeShon said Moore is fantastic and applauded the running back for reaching a milestone.

“For Jaden tonight, you saw that he got over 1,000 yards, and that was special to his O-line and his team,” DeShon said. “You saw the long run. He only needed 38 yards, so we are just extremely happy for him. So talented.”

Hillgrove’s defense was stout, holding South Cobb to six first downs. The Eagles did not record a play of more than 10 yards until their first drive of the second half.

South Cobb avoided the shutout with a 79-yard touchdown pass from Freedom Jones to Jaiden Knight with 7 minutes left in the game.

DeShon said he is proud of how the defense played.

“Statistically, it’s the best defense in Hillgrove history, and that says a lot with the amount of players that have come through our program,” DeShon said. “They’re prepared well every week by coach (Andy) Szatkowski, and we are excited for them.”

Hillgrove allowed just 86 points during the regular season, with 65 points coming in the two-game losing streak it snapped Thursday night.

The Hawks had two touchdowns erased by penalties, and DeShon said there is still room for improvement with the team.

“We beat ourselves last week and we’ll be better for it, and sometimes, when you face adversity, you grow from it. That’s our challenge,” DeShon said.