

breaking the huddle in his first game under the lights of Johnson Stadium, junior quarterback Brandon Whitaker noticed the large Madison defensive linemen across from him. He took his position behind the center and yelled for the ball. As soon as it hit his hands, he took off to the right for a bootleg pass. With no open receivers in sight, he tucked the ball in his right arm and rushed into the end zone for the first touchdown of the season.

More than 50 years earlier Brandon's grandfather, Bill Whitaker, a running back, rushed for the first touchdown ever on Johnson Field. Now Brandon, a third generation football player, is taking his turn leading the offense and adding to his family's legacy at the school.

"It is a pretty cool feeling having your grandfather score the first touchdown," Brandon said. "He always tells me the story, and now I am just trying to top his stories with my own."

Brandon is the fourth member of the Whitaker family to play football for the Falcons. His brother Blake, a 2013 graduate, played wide receiver and quarterback. His father Paul, a 1987 graduate, led the team as quarterback. Paul is currently a physical education teacher and has served as the football team's head coach since 2005. He served as assistant coach from 1997 to 2004.

*"It has been a great opportunity to coach both of my sons. Not every head coach gets to do that," Paul Whitaker said. "The hardest part for them was learning that on the practice field I was coach, and when we got home, I was dad again."*

Playing for his father, Brandon has felt some pressure. However, he acknowledges that the extra coaching and advice from his father has opened him up to a new view of the game he did not realize before. "My dad and I are both option quarterbacks. We would rather run than sit in the pocket and wait," Brandon said.

As Brandon has grown as a football player, he has received advice from the three Whitakers who played before him. His brother's leadership skills are something he tries to emulate. "I have tried to model my leadership after Blake's," Brandon said "He did not say much, but he was a strong leader on and off the field, and I hope to be the same."

Brandon has one more season to add to his family's football history at the school. "It has felt great to continue my family's legacy. Their success has driven me," he said. "You always want to be better than everyone else in your family, and in high school you only have four years to do it."