

Tigers continue to make progress in 7-on-7 sessions

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – **Edwardsville's football team** continued preparations for the upcoming 2016 season at Tiger Stadium Monday night with the second of three Monday-night 7-on-7 sessions.

The drills involved passing-game situations with a quarterback, running back and receivers going up against linebackers and defensive backs; the Tigers drilled against **Highland, Gateway STEM of St. Louis and Hazelwood Central** in 30-minute sessions against each team. One more 7-on-7 session will take place July 25 before preseason practices get under way Aug. 8; the Tigers will open the season Aug. 26 at Quincy, with the home opener Sept. 2 against Rock Island.

The drills give both the offensive and defensive units chances to practice techniques and to work on in-game situations that might be seen once the season gets under way.

“We'll always find things to get better at,” said **Tiger defensive coordinator Kelsey Pickering** following Monday's drills. “I think the one important thing is that we had some young guys out there – both of our safeties (**Kendall Abdur-Rahman and Norman Harris**) – got a lot of work, and that's a positive; whether they earn a starting spot or not, I think one of the nice things is always young guys getting more reps and more experience. The game becomes easier for them; they both did a good job.

“Our linebackers return quite a bit of experience; the progression week-to-week, we got better from last week, but we're still not close to where want to be. 7-on-7 is a good way to practice some of those things we're not always going to do on Fridays; we ask the kids to do things on a night like tonight that they don't normally do. It's a positive to get that look now and it pays off later in the season.”

“I think we had less errors in our route running, our quarterback (**Brenden Dickmann**) had some better decisions – not as many errors – so we definitely improved from last week, which is positive,” said **Tiger offensive coordinator Doug Heinz**. “He's doing a good job; we've got two very capable kids who can play quarterback for us, so it's fun to have them battle it out right now.

“I'd like to see our (players) get lined up faster, our procedure part of it; we have some guys who aren't getting lined up as quickly as we'd like. I like to see them hustle to their spots, get ready to run. I want to see them get a little faster tempo, but overall, I'm pretty pleased, comparing last week to this week.

“Last week, we were coming off a 10-day break and it was our first day back and we've got some young guys who have to learn to become Tiger football players; being a part of Tiger football is something that's really demanding. We have some kids answering the bell right now, so we're happy with them.”

Two-time Stanley Cup-winning hockey coach **Fred Shero** once said, “it's what you learn after you know it all that counts”, and that continual learning process is an important part of the game. “If we're not continual learners in the game of football, shame on us,” Pickering said, “because once I know it all, we're going to get passed; once any of us, as coaches, know it all, we're going to get passed by another staff, and that's not what **coach (Matt) Martin's** standard is. It's a 12-month deal for us; it's working in the off-season, reviewing films, being able to get back, so this year, regardless of who we have, let's cater to what we have and make that work to be successful.”

And the season is quickly approaching. “It's coming fast,” Pickering said.

