

# Oilers come out on fire, thrash Dupo 47-0 in season opener

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**WOOD RIVER** — It was the opening night of the 2016 IHSA football season, and if the first game is any indication, the **East Alton-Wood River Oilers** could very well be ready to shine the spotlight on themselves.

The Oilers turned in a masterful performance in all phases of the game in a dominating 47-0 win over Dupo in their season opener Friday night at EA-WR's Memorial Stadium.

Afterwards, **Oiler coach Garry Herron** was very pleased with the way his team played.

“It feels really good,” Herron said. The kids really played their tails off on both sides of the ball.”

Herron had some good words for his quarterback, **junior Justin Englar**, who ran his offense nearly flawlessly.

“Justin really worked hard in the off-season, learning the offense, and he really did a great job,” Herron said.

It was quite the shaky start for both teams, however, as the Oilers fumbled the opening kickoff to the Tigers. Just as quickly, Dupo fumbled the ball right back to the Oilers. Two plays later, an interception gave Dupo the ball right back. A three and out gave EAWR the ball right back, and it was where the Oilers started their dominance.

“it was kind of disheartening to start out like that,” Herron said. “It was important to get the ball back and start things rolling.”

Once the Oilers got the ball back, they established a very powerful ground game, with Englar and T.J. Lawson ripping off big runs on the drive. It was capped off by Gabe Grimes’ five-yard run with 7:29 left in the opening period that gave EAWR a 7-0 lead.

Dupo fumbled the ensuing kickoff back to the Oilers, and it took them two plays and 18 seconds to cover 40 yards. A 12-yard run by Lawson and a 29 yard jaunt by Englar put the Oilers up 14-0.

The Oilers were able to turn the corner and get outside consistently, which Herron felt was a key.

“Once we were able to get outside on them, we could do pretty much what we wanted.” Herron said.

The Oilers dominance continued on their next drive. Starting at their own seven, the Oilers were able to keep the ground game going with good runs. The key play, however, was a 50-yard pass completion to Christian Hunter at the Dupo one, where Grimes brought it home on the next play for a 21-0 lead with 2:28 left. The drive covered 93 yards in six plays, taking 2:16.

Grimes scored his third touchdown of the night on the Oilers next possession, a nifty 35-yard breakaway after breaking free at the line, making it 27-0 with 11:11 left in the first half after the convert was missed. Lawson contributed with a couple of nice runs of 12 and 22 yards during the march.

Much credit should also be given to the Oiler defense, who constantly bottled up the Tiger offense and didn't allow quarterback Tyler Kyle any room to operate and get things going. Dupo was held to many three and outs in the first 24 minutes, and when they get some momentum going, the defense rose to the occasion and stopped the drives.

The Oilers scored on their last two possessions of the first half, a 60-yard reverse by Zack Womack and a 5-yard pass from Englar to Lawson to make the score 40-0 at halftime.

Even with a running clock during the second half, EAWR continued to dominate. The Tigers were able to have one sustained drive in the fourth quarter, in which they had their two longest plays of the game, a 20-yard pass completion from Kyle to Taylor Stanek in traffic, and later a 19 yard catch on a fourth and four situation. The Oiler defense stiffened and forced the Tigers to turn in over on downs.

On the ensuing drive, Thad Weaver scored on a brilliant 35-yard run around end, making a couple of nice spin moves on his way to the end zone. It accounted for the 47-0 final score.

Despite the big win, Herron knows there's always room for improvement, especially after the opening game.

"It's the beginning of the season, and mistakes will be made," he said. "We need to learn how to bounce back from them and clean up the mistakes."

The Oilers have a very good opponent coming in next week in Taylorville, and Herron knows how tough the Tornadoes will be.

"They're a good team" Herron said. "We have to keep up the intensity in practice and we can't let this win into our heads too much."

That being said, Herron is still very pleased with his team's performance in the lid lifter.

"I'm really super proud of the kids." he said with a big smile. "They worked really hard and really deserved this win."