

Coach Pickering, assistants, defensive team put together valiant playoff effort

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Making adjustments in the midst of a game is a part of football; sometimes those adjustments can make a big difference in the game's outcome.

Edwardsville's football team went into halftime of their **IHSA Class 8A second-round game** Saturday night against **Oswego** trailing 14-10 and made some key adjustments that proved to be decisive for the Tigers.

“Coach **Kelsey Pickering**, the defensive coordinator, made great adjustments at halftime,” said **Tiger coach Matt Martin**. “Coach Pick is the hardest-working defensive coordinator; I'm proud of him. They were simple adjustments; they gave us some tough formations. He got us lined up right, we made some personnel changes that helped too, and that was all Coach Pick.”

“We were pretty good in all three phases tonight, and that's what makes it a nice team victory,” Pickering said. “That's the big deal we always preach; it's about all three phases of the game, it's offense, defense and special teams. I think we started a little slower than normal, and that'll happen on these long road trips.

“Against a great team like Oswego, you have to be able to make adjustments because they do so many different things; they use formations to their advantage, they're a very well-coached team and if we're not able to match with what they're doing, they easily could have been able to win that ball game, so for us to make adjustments and for the kids to also accept the adjustments and do well, that was a big difference.”

Some of the adjustments came to react from the style of blocking the Panthers used. “They had really good angles on their blocking,” Pickering said. “For us to be able to adjust was a big deal. You have somebody like A.J. (Epenesa), Tate (Rujawitz) and (Nathan) Kolesa; Josh Anderson stepped in as a sophomore and did really good; I just think our linebackers did a good job.

Pickering added that without coach **Alec Holler** and coach **Michael Cory** the Tigers' defense wouldn't be where it is today.

"Coach Holler has been with us for seven years now and has had an integral part in developing our defense," Pickering said. "I lean on him a lot. His work with our secondary is paramount to our success. He continually gets players better and ready to play. This year alone we had four first-year starters, including two sophomores and they have performed outstanding.

"Coach Cory has been with us for two years now and he jumped right in and has quickly made a difference in our perimeter play and getting our outside linebackers ready each week. With his fresh eyes, he has brought many additions to what we were doing defensively.

"I can't leave out coach Matt Martin. Obviously, he is the head coach, but the work he does with the defensive line and how he prepares them on a weekly basis is just amazing. He has really challenged me to be better every day and because of that we never stay stagnant. It is because of him and his leadership that we all have grown as coaches, but specifically for me, without him, I am not sure where I would be today."