

# Warriors' Edwards helps lead GCHS past Jersey in opener, Panthers explode for 41 points

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer  
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GRANITE CITY – Friday night's season-opening football game between Jersey and Granite City turned into a shootout well worthy of a Canadian Football League game – a wide-open affair with plenty of scoring.

In the end, it was the Warriors' Freddy Edwards that proved to be the difference as the sophomore quarterback accounted for six touchdowns and 366 yards of total offense in GCHS' 52-41 over the Panthers at Granite City's Memorial Stadium/Kevin Greene Field.

The Warriors went to 1-0 on the year with the win; the Panthers fell to 0-1.

It wasn't error-free football, to be sure. “You never know what's going to happen in that first game,” said Warrior coach Carl Luehmann. “You got your jitters, you got your offsides, you've got a couple of fumbles here and there – I think we won the turnover (battle) there, so that was good.

“We've got some speed to break some big plays, but we've got to get into better shape, work harder on our line-blocking assignments – we missed a lot of assignments – so we'll watch the film and see where we're at. I'm proud of the way the kids played – we got a big win, it's our first win and we've got eight more to go.”

Luehmann knew the game could be a shootout going in. “We knew it was going to be a shootout with their quarterback (Drew Sauerwein, who went 25-for-36 for 222 yards and a touchdown on the night) and Blake Wittman (who had 11 catches on the night for 115 yards and a touchdown) – they're very good football players – and they are a senior football team; they've all been playing for awhile on the varsity. We knew they were going to be a good team and we knew they were well-coached.

“We knew it was going to be a shootout and we ended up with a win.”

“We made too many mistakes tonight,” said Panther coach Jon Adkins. “I get it – we're going to have first-game mistakes, but we made too many of them; we didn't finish tackles, we didn't finish plays. We fought hard, I can't take that away from our kids; we never gave up and never quit. We fought to the end. At the end of the day, those are the kind of kids that I want to be around, kids who never quite and never give up. I was really thankful for that.

“We certainly have some work to do; they're a good ball club, there's no doubt about that. But we have some work to do; we'll come in tomorrow, watch that film and get ourselves better and get ready for next week.”

Jersey knew that Edwards' abilities would provide a test for them. “We knew that,” Adkins said of Edwards. “There's no doubt – we knew that coming into this ball game; we saw him last year and obvious once Kendrick (Williba) got hurt and he came in as the quarterback, he was successful.

“He's a very good ball player – I hate the fact that he's only a sophomore; I get to see him two more times, but he's a good ball player – he showed tonight that maybe he's better than some other people thought.”

That he may have – Edwards called his number 20 times for 247 yards and four touchdowns while going 7-for-9 passing for 119 yards and two touchdowns to Eugene Williba and Brennan Haddix; Jerry Watson also played a role in the GCHS win by running 14 times for 152 yards and scoring twice, the second TD a 55-yard scoop-and-score early in the second period.

Edwards' highlights included TD runs of 38 and 54 yards and a 68-yard pass to Eugene Williba; for the Panthers, Wittman hauled in a 29-yard touchdown pass from Sauerwein and Jack Brandt scored twice for JCHS on runs of 11 and nine runs in the first half.

Jersey hosts Metamora next week while the Warriors host Carbondale; both games kick off at 7 p.m. Friday.

