

Zach Keplar Will Be Key Player for Metro-East Lutheran in Inaugural Eight-Man Season

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EDWARDSVILLE – Senior quarterback and defensive back Zach Keplar is one of the leaders for Metro-East Lutheran’s football team as the Knights go into their first season of eight-man football, which is starting to grow in popularity among the smaller schools in Illinois.

And although the Knights lost to Rockford Christian Life 26-8 in the inaugural eight-man game Saturday afternoon at Knights Field, Keplar was happy with his team’s effort and perseverance. It was just a matter of experience and some missed open-field tackles, which is so important in the eight-man game.

“Oh, yeah. I just think it’s just experience,” Keplar said in a postgame interview. “It’s our first time ever playing eight-man, and the experience they have from playing in their

previous years, it definitely showed. It's just that open-field tackling. It's one of the hardest things in football; ask anybody who's played football, they'll say that. It's just something we've got to work on in practice in the upcoming week."

With the exceptions of playing on a field that's just over 13 yards narrower than a standard football field, and having three fewer men on either side of the ball, Keplar feels that there really isn't that much of a difference – it's still football.

"It's about the same, honestly," Keplar said. "You get big hits in eight-man, you get big hits in 11 man. Everything's the same, it's just three less guys and a little more open-field tackling. It's nothing different."

And the biggest takeaway from the game against the Eagles?

"I think just working on open-field tackling, and staying low," Keplar said.

Keplar also received the well-wishes from many of the Christian Life players during the interview, as the sportsmanship between both teams was very high during and following the game.

There's still very much a learning curve for the Knights as they get used to the eight-man game, and Keplar thinks once the team gets used to the game, the Knights will be ready to roll.

"Oh, yeah. I think just after we get a couple of games under our belt," Keplar said, "and getting used to the feel of eight-man, I think we can come out victorious in a couple of those games."

Metro-East hits the road next Friday night to play Champaign Judah Christian in a 7 p. m. kickoff, and Keplar is looking ahead to the challenge.

"Well, we're going to watch film on them Monday," Keplar said, "and we'll just go from there. I'm expecting us to do better in open-field tackling, and definitely wrap up, for sure, because there's a lot of missed tackles."

It may still be a learning experience for the Knights, but Keplar and his teammates are enjoying the game, and are having fun with it.

"Oh, no. I mean, we're all enjoying; we're having fun," Keplar said. "We're going away with a couple of bang and bruises, but I expect everyone back on Monday."