

Johnson Runs for 194 Yards, Four Touchdowns, But Cadets Use Big First Half to Defeat Tigers 44-27

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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EDWARDSVILLE – Junior running back Justin Johnson, Jr., ran unofficially for 194 yards on 31 carries, and scored four touchdowns, but a 30-point blitz by CBC in the first half helped carry the Cadets to a 44-27 win over Edwardsville in a Week Two matchup between two of the best football programs in St. Louis on Friday night at Tiger Stadium.

CBC scored 30 unanswered points after the Tigers had taken an early 7-0 lead on the first possession of the game. Edwardsville had difficulty adjusting to the Cadets' speed and tempo of their offense.

“They’re pretty quick,” said Tigers’ coach Matt Martin. “That’s hard to simulate in practice, especially when you have a JV game on Tuesday, and you don’t have a lot of kids. You can’t run two huddles. Bottom line: Our kids didn’t quit, they fought hard, at times, it looks like they were playing their first game. We made a lot of mistakes. You can’t make those kind of mistakes against a very good team like that. And that’s the bottom line. Even if we play well, we’re in a game with them. We can’t play against them and ourselves. Bottom line. Bad snaps, dropped balls, missed protection, blocks, poor tackling, not getting off blocks. But I’m encouraged. There’s a lot of positives. If our boys are willing to fix it, we’ll be a better team.”

After the opening possession, where the Tigers marched 86 yards in 12 plays and took 6:08 off the clock, the Cadets were able to counter in one fell swoop with a 93-yard touchdown run by Jordan Clay, a play that helped turn the momentum around to CBC.

“I don’t know, I didn’t ask the kids,” Martin said. “I just know it was poor defense. We’re going to play man, we’re going to play zone, and we’ll find out who’s good at it.”

To the Tigers’ tremendous credit, the team kept battling throughout the game, never giving up, and kept plugging and pounding away throughout.

“They didn’t quit,” Martin said. “You want a moral victory? I think we won the second half 13-7. They didn’t quit, they executed well. I think we’re, as coaches, are learning a little bit more about this team. Maybe if we had a full game, we would have known a little bit better. But I think that’s going to change our game plan, who we’ll go to, who we want to get the ball more, things like that.”

In addition to Johnson, tight end Mason Ahlers had a good game, making some big catches, and looks to be an important part of the Tigers’ offense.

“He can make plays,” Martin said. “He can be a good one.”

And Johnson had a tremendous game rushing, getting some big runs.

“Absolutely, Justin,” Martin said. “And Kenyon (Johnson) made a couple of nice catches there. Those guys are going to be our playmakers. And our O-line’s mainly seniors, and let’s go. We gotta run behind them, and count on them.”

The Tigers received the opening kickoff and at first, the drive didn’t start out very well, as a false start penalty and a run by Johnson put Edwardsville in an early hole. But a pair of penalties against CBC, along with a 12-yard run by Johnson, got them out of trouble, then Ryan Hampton completed a pair of passes to Kenyon Johnson and Noah Goldsmith to put the Tigers in CBC territory. Later, on a second-and-two, Johnson went 26 yards around the right side to put the ball on the Cadet two, and then scored on the next play to put the Tigers out in front 7-0 after the convert from Jonathan Rothert.

The Cadets only took one play and 13 seconds to get back to within 7-6 on Clay’s 93-yard run, but on the conversion, the snap was fumbled, and a pass to Tyler Dixon in the end zone was complete to give CBC an 8-7 lead with 5:39 left in the first quarter.

On the next possession, Hampton ran for 19 yards to give Edwardsville a first down, but the drive stalled, and a punt went out of bounds at the Tiger 42. The Cadets took

advantage of the good field position, getting a 12-yard run from Zach Hahn, and then quarterback Ayden Robinson-Wayne threw 28 yards to Hahn for the second CBC touchdown. On the convert, holder Dylan Wardenburg fumbled the snap, ran right and got into the end zone for a two-point conversion to make the score 16-7 for the Cadets with 1:23 left in the first.

The Cadets recovered a fumbled snap on the first play following the kickoff, and from there, CBC needed only 59 seconds to go 16 yards, the scoring play being a one-yard run by Robinson-Wright 20.2 second from quarter time, with the kick being good to make it 23-7.

On their next possession, the Cadets took only four plays to go 37 yards, as a pass to Chevalier Brenson was good for 24 yards, and Clay ran up the middle for another 10, with a flag against the Tigers putting the ball on the Edwardsville two. One play later, Clay went up the middle for the final yard and the touchdown with 9:10 left in the first half to make it 30-7 after the conversion.

The Tigers then took the ball off the kickoff and drove 53 yards in exactly three minutes, the key plays being a 14-yard completion to Goldsmith, a 14-yard run by Justin Johnson, and a pass interference call against the Cadets. Two plays later, Johnson ran three yards to the left side for the touchdown, with Rothert's kick being good to cut the lead to 30-14 with 6:03 left in the first half.

CBC countered with a three-play, 64-yard drive that ended when Patrick Heitert threw 46 yards up the middle to Hahn, who broke a number of tackles on his way to the end zone for the touchdown. Eric Loomis' kick was good with 4:55 left in the half to make it 37-14 for the Cadets.

Undaunted, the Tigers then started a drive that looked promising, as Johnson ran 19 yards on the first two plays, and an encroachment call gave Edwardsville another first down. A pass interference penalty on the next play gave the Tigers a first down on their own 45, where Johnson ran three plays for 21 yards, and Malachi Revis ran for five. But on a second-and-three on the Cadet 23, the snap got away, causing a 19-yard loss, and CBC took over on downs, running out the first half clock with the Cadets up 37-14.

The Tigers turned the ball over on a fumble after a long drive to start the second half, but the Cadets couldn't do anything with it, and on the next Edwardsville possession, the Tigers went 76 yards in 10 plays, with Kenyon Johnson going 14 yards on a reverse, and Justin Johnson going up the middle three times for 21 yards. Justin Johnson then went right for five yards and his third touchdown on the night with 9:53 left in the final quarter, with Rothert's kick good to make it 37-21.

The Cadets then went 75 yards in nine plays to extend their lead, with Clay going 52 yards up the middle after a penalty to set up the touchdown, with Arthur McAlpine going the final eight yards to score, making it 44-21 after the conversion.

Edwardsville kept coming, and after an excellent kickoff return by Kenyon Johnson to the CBC 44, Hampton completed a fourth-down pass to Ahlers for 11 yards for a first down, then hit Kenyon Johnson for another 10 yards. Justin Johnson then went right for a 12-yard gain, and then went the final four yards up the middle for the touchdown with 3:03 left, but the conversion was blocked, keeping it 44-27. The Cadets then ran out the clock to preserve their win.

The Tigers are now 1-1 on the year, and Martin feels that the players will learn from their mistakes, and keep moving forward.

“I hope so,” Martin said. “But it’s still like anything. Film doesn’t lie, the information’s there. But it’s always, the onus is on the kids. Do they want to look at themselves critically, and make the adjustments or not? I think that this group is like that; I think they will. I think they’ll get better. They’re a very mature group. But they’re inexperienced, a lot of them, and the only way to get experience is what?”

Edwardsville goes on the road next week to face DeKalb in a 7:15 p.m. kickoff and Martin is looking forward to the challenge.

“That’s right,” Martin said with a smile. “That’s going to be another good game, so here we go.”

[Dan Brannan also contributed to this story.](#)