



# **Bush Scores Three TDs, Epenesa Scores First Varsity Touchdown, Defense, Special Teams Also Score As Tigers Bounce Back With 48-12 Win**

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BELLEVILLE - Junior running back Jordan Bush scored three touchdowns, freshman receiver Iose Epenesa scored his first varsity touchdown, James Distaso-Hutchins returned a fumble for another score and the special teams turned a blocked punt into another touchdown as Edwardsville bounced back to win over Belleville West 48-12 in the Maroons' homecoming game Saturday afternoon at Bob Goalby Field.

The special teams helped make the difference in the game with the blocked punt and a big kickoff return by Kellen Brnfre after the Maroons scored their first touchdown in the first quarter.

"Coach (Dave) Dougherty always has them prepared, and I think you see the difference in the program - two programs," Edwardsville head coach Matt Martin said. "We took advantage of special teams, stole some possessions, got some turnovers, and scored points."







Brnfre's return was an indicator of how he helps make a big contribution to both the special teams and to the offense, where we made some key catches to help keep Tiger drives going.

"Yeah, he's explosive with the ball in his hands," Martin said, "and if you get kids to consistently block for him, good things will happen."

The Tigers were also able to finish drives in the red zone, and it was one of the goals Edwardsville was working on for the game.

"One of our goals this week was to finish drives and a kick," Coach Martin said. "There was a lot of good today."

It was a very good bounce-back game for the Tigers, who were coming off a 30-14 loss at O'Fallon last week, and it was also a badly needed win.

"Yeah, we need to win," Martin said, "if you're going to try to put yourself in a position for the playoffs, and who knows what will happen in the conference, you've got to win these games."

The Tigers scored on the Maroons' opening possession of the game when a West runner was stripped of the ball, and Distaso-Hutchins, playing on the defensive line, recovered the fumble and ran 52 yards for the first touchdown of the game to give Edwardsville a 7-0 lead after Gavin Walls' conversion kick.

"Yeah, I'll have to watch film, but it was interesting, wasn't it?" Martin said with a smile on the Distaso-Hutchins return. "Second guy came in and stripped the ball, right? Sounds like he did."

West came right back on their ensuing possession and used their ground game to eat up chunks of yardage, and was also aided by three Edwardsville penalties for encroachment, two of them giving the Maroons a first down. Jahkori Adams, who carried most of the way on the drive, took a direct snap and went in from three yards out with 5:33 left in the first to cut the lead to 7-6, with the conversion kick missing right.

Brnfre returned the ensuing kickoff back to the West 24 to set up shot, and it only took two plays for the Tigers to extend their lead, with Jake Curry passing 21 yards to David Deuanepenh for a first down, and Bush running up the middle the final three yards for his first touchdown of the game to make the score 14-6 after the conversion.

On the next Edwardsville possession, De'Shawn Larson had a pair of important plays, catching a pass for 14 yards and rushing for another 10, and Bush climaxed the drive with two runs for 23 yards, including a five-yard jaunt for his second touchdown right before the end of the first quarter, giving the Tigers a 21-6 lead. On the next West possession, the Tigers blocked the punt, which rolled into end zone where Deuanepenh fell on the ball for the touchdown with 9:24 left in the first half to up the lead to 28-6.

On the final two possessions of the first half, Walls kicked field goals of 22 and 19 yards to give the Tigers a 34-6 lead at halftime, then struck quickly on the opening possession of the second half, recovering an onside kick, then driving down the field, where Bush ran in from one yard out to give Edwardsville a 42-6 lead after Curry's two-point pass was caught by Deuanepenh with 10:24 left in the third.

The final Tiger score came later in the quarter, with the drive climaxing with a 22-yard Curry pass to Epenesa in the end zone to open his varsity touchdown account with three minutes left in the quarter, making it 48-6 after the conversion was missed, triggering the running clock rule for the remainder of the game.



The Maroons scored the game's final touchdown in the fourth quarter on a one-yard pass from Jaylen Hess to Damien Farley, but a two-point play was stopped. The Tigers ran out the clock to give them their 48-12 win.

Edwardsville is now 3-2 on the season and hosts Alton in their homecoming game Friday night at Tiger Stadium in a 7 p.m. kickoff. West falls to 0-5 and hosts East St. Louis next Saturday afternoon in a 1 p.m. start.









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