

Burden Scores Three Touchdowns, Battle Passes For Two, Runs For A Third as East St. Louis Wins SWC Title In 58-0 Win At Edwardsville

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EDWARDSVILLE - Sophomore quarterback Robert "Pops" Battle threw twice to Luther Burden III for touchdowns, while Burden ran a punt back for a third score and running back Tyrone Martin scored twice as East St. Louis defeated Edwardsville 58-0 in a Southwestern Conference game Friday night at Tiger Stadium.

The win officially gave the Flyers the Southwestern Conference championship and the league's automatic IHSA playoff berth with the win, scoring 30 unanswered points in building a 38-0 halftime lead in going on to the win.

The Tigers hung in and played hard throughout, but East Side made things difficult throughout the night.

"I think you have to think about your assignments, and be able to execute against some very good athletes," said Edwardsville head coach Matt Martin. "So, who executed under pressure, who competed, who was physical?"

The Flyers took advantage of great field position in building up their lead in the second quarter, with their powerful offense scoring three times in the period.

"We were disappointed," Martin said. "We made some mistakes. We understood if there was a bigger, stronger, faster issue. We were willing to accept that. But we made some mistakes, we hate giving up long plays for touchdowns when we're not doing what we're supposed to be doing."

The Tigers kept hanging in throughout and did some good things, but couldn't overcome the deficit.

"Yeah, there were some positives," Martin said. "I think we can use this to grow."

East Side held the Tigers' offense in check, and their defense was very good all night.

"It's definitely a strength of these guys," said Flyers' head coach Darren Sunkett. "They put in a lot of work during the off-season, and it's showing up now on Friday nights."

East Side was held on their first possession, but after that, never punted again during the game.

"A couple of mental breakdowns, that's all it was," Sunkett said. "Something we just had to clean up after that first drive. So I believe we just got into trouble on second down, and were forced to do some things we didn't want to do, and things like that happen. We rebounded, and we don't use (the punter) the rest of the game."

After the two teams exchanged punts to open the game, East Side went 55 yards on its second possession, with Battle hitting Burden with key passes, and Martin and Ali Wells gaining key first downs. Battle climaxed the drive with an 11-yard touchdown run with 6:24 left in the first to give the Flyers an 8-0 lead after Martin's two-point conversion run. On the next possession, East Side drove 87 yards in 13 plays, taking only 3:30 as Martin scored on a one-yard run to double the lead to 16-0 after the two-point conversion.

It only took the Flyers one play to score again on the next possession, as Battle got off a pass while falling down, hitting Burden in the back of the end zone with a great catch with 9:50 left in the first half to bring the score to 24-0 after the two-point convert. On the next possession, the Flyers took advantage of a short field, going 30 yards in six plays, with Wells scoring from 24 yards out on a good run to make the score 30-0 after the two-pointer was missed.

The Flyers defense was shutting down the Edwardsville offense, and on the subsequent Tigers' possession, East Side scored a safety when a Tiger player was tackled in his own end zone, making the score 32-0, and on the possession following the free kick, Battle hit Burden from 20 yards out with 2:30 left in the first half, bringing the score to 38-0 for East Side at halftime.

On East Side's first second-half possession, Martin scored his second touchdown of the game on an 11-yard run down the left side to make the score 44-0, triggering the running clock rule for the remainder of the game. Burden scored his third touchdown of the game later in the period, taking a 42-yard punt return on a brilliant run into the end zone, and in the fourth quarter, Carson Boyd threw a 35-yard touchdown pass to Dejerrian Sadler, who made a great catch in the end zone to make the final 58-0 score.

The Tigers are now 5-3 and conclude the regular season next Friday at home against CBC in a 7 p.m. kickoff. The Flyers are now 7-1 and take to the road to play IMG Academy of Bradenton, Fla., in a 7 p.m. kickoff. Sunkett knows that his team will be ready to go when the postseason starts in two weeks.

"You look to grow, week in and week out throughout the season," Sunkett said, "and I feel like we're definitely growing. If we keep doing what we're doing, going into next week, going into the playoffs, we really feel like we've got a shot to win the Class 6A title."



