

Southwestern Wins Homecoming Game And Keeps Playoff Hopes Alive

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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PIASA – After a 21-14 win over the visiting Vandalia Vandals (5-2), the Southwestern High School football team’s playoff hopes are still very much alive.

The win brings them to 3-4 on the season with two games remaining. They’ve got Hillsboro next week on the road and then close off the regular season against Gillespie at home for Senior Night. The Piasa Birds control their own fate now, if they win out, they’re in.

This win over the Vandals came after three straight losses to Greenville (26-13), Pana (35-21), and Carlinville (14-0). Their other loss was in week two to the best team in the conference right now, Virden North Mac by a score of 26-9.

It seems like Southwestern has turned the page though after beating a very good Vandalia team, one that entered the game with a 5-1 record.

The Piasa Birds did what they do best which is to keep the ball on the ground. They combined for 330 yards rushing. Greyson Brewer led the way with 151 yards on 16 carries. Jacob Fisher had 20 carries which were good for 133 yards. He also made a team-high eight tackles against the Vandals.

Lane Gage had 20 rushing yards while QB Quinten Strohbeck had 26 through nine runs.





Southwestern had a few chances early on. They received the opening kickoff but didn't come up with anything on that drive. They gained some momentum after they returned their own punt at Vandalia's 35-yard line.

On the ensuing play, the Birds were forced to go for it on fourth down and two but were unsuccessful.

It was Brewer who got the scoring started after a 66-yard run thanks to some great blocking by his offensive line, especially Fisher. The Birds missed the extra-point kick.

They scored again on their next drive after Fisher had a 19-yard carry into the endzone, this time going for the two-point conversion which was successful. They led 14-0 heading into the halftime break.

Vandalia opened up the second half with a massive punt return all the way down to Piasa's 11-yard line. After a recovered fumble in the endzone, the play has ruled a touchback giving the ball back to Southwestern.

It was a gift from Vandalia after what should have been a pretty easy score.

Fisher made them pay for that mistake with another long-rushing TD. The extra point was good from Ian Brantley to make it 21-0 with 8:22 left in the third quarter.

The Vandals once again had a big opening play, this time landing themselves on Piasa's 26-yard line. They wouldn't miss twice as they carried in about a 35-yard rushing TD. They went for the conversion and got it to make the score 21-8.

They scored again with 1:14 left in the game to make it 21-14. After an unsuccessful onside kick attempt, Piasa picked up the ball near half field, and with two timeouts remaining, all they had to do was take a knee.

Southwestern went on to win 21-14 to improve to 3-4 on the season and keep their hope of the playoffs alive.

"We're still in the hunt. It's kind of like the playoffs now for us. Kids were resilient, they played hard and I'm happy for them," Piasa head coach Pat Keith said postgame.

He knew that Vandalia was a good enough team to come back saying that "the last 15 minutes felt like 15 hours."

The Birds held out though and grabbed the win during their Homecoming game.

They'll be back in action next Friday to take on Hillsboro (4-3) with huge playoff implications on the line. That game kicks off at 7 p.m. in Hillsboro.

The Birds will be at home against Gillespie for their last regular-season game on October 21.

