

Panthers Pick Up First Win On New Turf In Lopsided Game Over CM

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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JERSEYVILLE – The Jersey High School football team hosted the Civic Memorial Eagles for the second year in a row. A new field, but the same result over their rivals.

For the second year in a row, it was a lopsided game as the Panthers earned their first win on the brand-new turf at Donald W. Snyders Community Sports Complex.

Jersey improved their all-time record against CM to 14-11 after Friday night's 48-6 win. Last year Jersey won 42-0. This was the teams' 25th meeting dating back to 1999.

"Always good to beat our rivals," Jersey head coach Caleb Williams said. "We talked about being undefeated in the MVC after week one and we got that done tonight."

Everyone in the Mississippi Valley Conference got conference play underway Friday night with the Panthers picking up the ever-so-important first conference win of the season. This game was a bounce-back win following last week's home loss to Charleston.

"They knew they had to rebound from last week," Williams said. "We knew this was a big game, a must-win situation for us, and they came out and did it."

"We came out with a whole lot of confidence tonight. The kids executed tonight and that makes a big difference," he added.

The Panthers executed early and often on the seven-score night.

On their first possession, senior receiver Aiden Talley ran one in from 13 yards out. Jaxon Brunaugh's extra-point kick was good to make it 7-0. That's how it would stand after the first quarter.

After trading possessions, and punting on fourth down, the Panthers got the ball back on their 38-yard line. Quarterback Easton Heafner quickly hit Talley for a 63-yard catch and run touchdown. Brunaugh's kick was good again to go ahead 14-0.

A couple of possessions later, CM was pinned way back at their own two-yard line. While trying to escape, they turned the ball over to Landon Jones who ran it into the endzone.

When CM got the ball back, they were forced to punt on fourth down yet again but fumbled the ball on the attempt. The Panthers recovered the ball and got it back 15 yards away. Talley again rushed one in, this time from four yards out. Brunaugh missed the kick low and it was 27-0.

For the Eagles, it was a night of many mistakes, mental and physical. On their next drive, Jersey's Aiden Taylor would intercept a long pass attempt and bring it up to about the 50.

Heafner found Jude Jones in the endzone from seven yards away. The two-point conversion attempt was successful, and it was 35-0 at halftime.

Talley scored his fourth and final TD of the night with a 37-yard run to open the second half.

CM would immediately turn the ball back over giving Jersey great field advantage at the 30. On first-and-goal, Brunaugh was at QB, keeping the ball for a short rushing TD. He turned around and kicked another PAT to make it 48-0.

CM's consolation was a 30-yard catch from Christian Garrett as time expired to get to the eventual 48-6 scoreline.

As a result, both teams moved to 2-2 on the season.

CM will host Mascoutah (1-3) next week for their Homecoming game.

For Jersey, it all depends on what happens in the next four weeks with games against Triad, Waterloo, Mascoutah, and Highland.

"It's only going to get tougher for us week after week. It's a tough conference," Williams said.

Last season, the Panthers came into this same stretch of games sitting 2-1 after their first three non-conference games. They proceeded to lose four straight to those aforementioned teams before shutout wins over CM and Columbia to wrap up a 4-5 season.

If Jersey plans on getting back to the postseason, they'll need results against some of these teams. Next week they'll be on the road at Triad. The Knights are 2-2 this season and just beat Waterloo 41-21.

"They're still a really good football team," Williams said of Triad. "They're one of the ones to beat in the conference, but I think we just got a whole lot better tonight and hopefully we keep on that path."