

Curry Has Big Game, Tigers Roll By Panthers 47-14

by Colin Feeney, Contributing Sports Writer
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O'FALLON - The Edwardsville special teams set the tone early with Jayden Cole taking a blocked field goal back 96 yards for the first touchdown, then Jake Curry and Joey DeMare connected twice for touchdowns while Curry ran in for two more as Edwardsville won the Southwestern Conference opener with a 47-14 win over O'Fallon Friday night at OTHS Panther Stadium.

The win allowed the Tigers to go to 4-0 on the season in a rivalry that has had many close games in its past. This time, the Tigers opened up a 19-7 lead after the first quarter and didn't let go.

The chemistry between Curry and DeMare has developed on the last few seasons and it was on display in the two touchdown passes, as well as a spectacular 50-yard plus catch DeMare had in setting up the first touchdown.

"Well, they go out and throw all the time in the offseason," said Edwardsville head coach Kelsey Pickering, "and they do seven-on-seven stuff. And they just built that connection, because they worked at it. That's something that it's nice to see the payoff. What we talk about is if you're gonna work, you have to see the payoff. That's what we saw tonight."

Curry is very confident that DeMare will be able to make the big play regularly and it's why he's become a key part of a talented Edwardsville receiving corps.

"Joey is just phenomenal," Pickering said. "He's got great radius, great hands, he's worked at it. And his length really, really helps. So, it's nice when you have a receiver. and again, I believe all of our receivers can do those things. But tonight, it was just a real case of Joey. And you know that Kellen (Brnfre) came in and he got his touches and did a great job. There are big catches, and there are big runs. The offense did such a great job. And again, that always goes back to the O-line."

Despite giving up a 52-yard touchdown pass from quarterback Braylon Grayson to Kortez Rupert in the first quarter that cut the Tigers' lead to 12-7 at the time, the defense also played solidly. Getting a pair of fumble recoveries to set up opportunities.

"Yeah, you know, that's what we talk about, again," Pickering said. "We want to come out and we want to try to limit people to come on down the field and especially on the scoreboard. And, again, it's nice, for defensively, that the payoff, that we can keep the score low, zero score can always be nice. But that's the payoff defensively is that you keep people out of the end zone, the payoff defensively, right?"





Although it felt like Edwardsville was in control at halftime, it's not the way Pickering, his staff and the players approach the break.

"We never approach that," Pickering said, "and we talk about different things at halftime. But for us, it's always a fresh start and don't worry about the scoreboard. we're supposed to go out and do what we're supposed to do. And again, you saw the explosiveness they do have. That touchdown was a deep ball. They could have come out and easily a couple more times, probably. No, you don't walk out at halftime, thinking all the game's in control, especially against O'Fallon."

The Tigers got off on the right foot on the Panthers' first possession, with the block of a 21-yard field goal attempt that was run back by Cole 96 yards for the opening touchdown. A two-point run was missed, leaving the score 6-0 for the Tigers. On the ensuing Edwardsville possession, Curry ran in from two yards out with 4:43 left to make it 12-0 after a two-point pass missed.

The Panthers struck two plays later when Grayson and Rupert connected from 52 yards out for the touchdown to make it 12-7 after the conversion. Edwardsville promptly answered back when DeMare made a spectacular fingertip reception of a Curry pass to the O'Fallon 11, where Curry and DeMare connected again for the touchdown that made the score 19-7 with 3:48 left in the term.

Late in the second, the pair connected once more, this time over the middle from 30 yards out, with DeMare catching the ball in stride to give the Tigers a 26-7 halftime lead. After taking the second half kickoff, Curry and Brnfre hit on a 25-yard touchdown pass to give the Tigers a 33-7 lead. After a blocked punt set the Tigers up on the O'Fallon 14 following a three-and-out by the Panthers' offense, Curry ran in from one yard out to up the lead to 40-7 after three quarters.

An early fourth quarter run of 10 yards by Gavin Yates for another touchdown gave the Tigers a 47-7 lead and triggered the running clock rule. The Panthers did get a consolation touchdown late in the quarter when Damari Johnson ran in from one yard out to make the final 47-14 for the Tigers.

The Panthers are now 2-2 and travel to East St. Louis next Saturday afternoon at Clyde C. Jordan Memorial Stadium, with the kickoff coming at 1 p.m. The Tigers are 4-0 and stay on the road to face Belleville West next Friday at Bob Goalby Field in another 7 p.m. kickoff.





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