

Piasa Birds Get Back To .500 With Win Over Staunton – Must Win Two Of Final Three Games To Make Playoffs

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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PIASA – It was pretty much a must-win game according to Piasa Southwestern football coach Pat Keith.

“Definitely,” he said about the importance of each win from here on out. “It’s a win and a win’s a win.”

At the beginning of the season, he said that if his team just won all their home games, that would do the job to make the playoffs.

That's still the case.

Friday night, the Piasa Birds hosted the Staunton Bulldogs in South Central Conference action.

After a scoreless first quarter, Piasa would score three touchdowns before halftime, taking the lead at 20-7.

Hunter Newell got the Birds on the board with a 32-yard rushing TD. The kick from Ian Brantley was blocked, so the score stood 6-0.

On their next drive, Blake Rimbey ran one in from 61 yards out. A two-point conversion attempt came up short to make it 12-0.

Rimbey, the quarterback, chose to stay on the ground most of the night as he finished with 155 yards rushing.

The Bulldogs scored on a nice trickery play that cut the score down to 12-7, but just for the moment.

After trading possessions, Rocky Darr had a big return taking it up to Staunton's 31-yard line. On 4th-and-5 the Birds went for it and they found pay dirt when Rimbey hit Brantley in the endzone for 26 yards.

Rimbey only threw two completions on the night, and one was a TD.

Newell successfully ran in the two-point conversion. That made the score 20-7. Newell finished with 72 yards on seven carries.

Rocky Darr finished the night with 50 yards rushing and another 71 from punt returns.

That score proved to be important heading into the locker room. It made it a two-possession game with Piasa getting the ball to open the second half. It was a big momentum play.

The Birds did not take advantage coming back out onto the field. Instead, the Bulldogs scored and cut the score back down to 20-14.

But, on Piasa's next drive, they made things right when Logan Keith ran one in from 37 yards out. He finished the game with 76 yards rushing on 11 carries. His score made it 26-14 after another failed two-pointer.

The final score of the game came midway through the fourth quarter when the Bulldogs scored a rushing TD from the one-yard line. They tried to fake the punt but came up short. The score stood at 26-20, the eventual final.

It wasn't pretty, but like coach Keith said, a win's a win at this point of the season.

"It's nice to get back to .500," he said, "we were on a bit of a losing streak. Gaining some confidence, but we got a lot of things to work on."

The win brings Southwestern to 3-3 on the season, snapping a three-game losing streak. The team's playoff chances are still high, they just have to win two of their last three games, and two of them are at home.

Next week they'll host Virden North Mac for Homecoming, then head on the road to the undefeated Greenville Comets before finishing off the season at home against Hillsboro in what could be a do-or-die scenario.

It's more than doable if the Birds just stay healthy.

"We have a couple of guys dinged up here, so we'll see how that goes," Keith said. "Our kids battled, we probably got a little tired in the end."

Most notably, one of the team's go-to receivers, Greyson Brewer, is still sidelined all season with a broken clavicle. Ryan Lowis left Friday's game in the second half and never returned, favoring his right ankle.

It doesn't matter who steps up, just that someone does, and the team keeps winning.

"They're all must-win for us now," Keith said.