

Edwardsville sports new football cast, pummels Quincy 34-9

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August 29 2015 2:55 AM





EDWARDSVILLE - **Edwardsville's Tigers** replaced a lot of players on offense and defense going into Friday's football opener against Quincy, but came out flexing their arms with a new cast and triumphed over the Blue Devils 34-9.

Edwardsville dominated **Quincy** most of the game, taking a 20-0 halftime lead. The Tigers were ahead 34-3 until late in the game when Quincy punched in a touchdown.

Riley Jones, a strong, solid running quarterback, replaced All-State player Dan Marinko to start the season. Jones is 6-foot-3, 215 pounds and is a former running back, so he is not easy for defenders to bring down. He had one of the best games of any Tigers player, rushing for 72 yards in 12 carries in unofficial stats, tossing a touchdown and running for two scores. Jones was 6 of 10 passing for 100 yards.

A.J. Epenesa was the anchor of the Tigers' defense, with several tackles throughout the night and was a constant presence, hindering the Blue Devils. Late in the game, Epenesa had a crunching sack, something he said he was looking for to close the game.

Jackson Morrissey, the other Tigers' back, had 65 yards rushing. Morrissey rushed for 54 yards in the first half. Jones was 5 of 8 passing for 96 yards and a touchdown in the first

half. One impressive player through the entire evening was kicker Riley Patterson, with four PATs. He also booted the ball well into the end zone nearly every time on kickoffs and appears to be an offensive force to be reckoned with for The Tigers this season.

“I had jitters and you have to stop them and luckily for the most part, we did,” Coach Matt Martin said. “We were not as effective as wanted to be in all areas, we had three turnovers. That is no discredit to Quincy.”

“Riley Jones has potential to be a good football player; he can be a very solid quarterback,” Martin added. “He has room to improve, but our whole team does. Win or lose, we wanted to play well. In some ways we did, some ways we didn’t.”

Jones is a load when he runs the ball because of his size, Martin said. The coach pointed out that Jones will need to learn when he should run the ball and not take the hits, but he believes that will come as the system unfolds.

On the second play from scrimmage, with 11:42 remaining in the first quarter, Jones connected with tight end Nathan Kolesa for a 32-yard touchdown pass over the middle. The extra point was no good after a botched snap, but the Tigers led 6-0.

Tigers’ running back Kendell Davis scored the next Edwardsville score from 6 yards out and the PAT was good to make it 13-0. The Tigers recovered a fumble and a few plays later, Jones rambled in from 6 yards out for the score and the kick was good to increase their lead to 20-0.

Cornerback Justin White intercepted the ball and ran it back 16 yards for a touchdown and Patterson made the PAT to up the score to 27-0 Edwardsville.

Quincy finally kicked a field goal, but Edwardsville scored again to make it 33-3 on a 1-yard run by Jones.

Coach Martin said his team caught the ball better than they did in the scrimmage and the perimeter blocking of the team was better.

He pointed out that his team made mistakes, but it wasn’t from a lack of effort. “If you don’t have a good effort it is a heart issue and we didn’t have that,” he said.

Quincy has an offense that will give a team a gut check, Martin said.

“They will keep hitting you and hitting you and test your toughness,” he said. “If you are not tough, they will big play you. Where I was proud of our kids, particularly our defensive backs, was how well we defended the play action.”

Epenesa showed Martin he is coming into his own as a true third-year player.

“A.J. was up against a good defensive line and that wasn’t easy to defend,” Martin said.

Edwardsville travels to Rock Island for a contest on the upcoming Friday. Martin said he expects a good game and that the Rocks are a “well-coached team,” although he said he has yet to analyze any film yet.

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