

Eastern Illinois University

## The Keep

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October

2023

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10-11-2023

### Daily Eastern News: October 11, 2023

Eastern Illinois University

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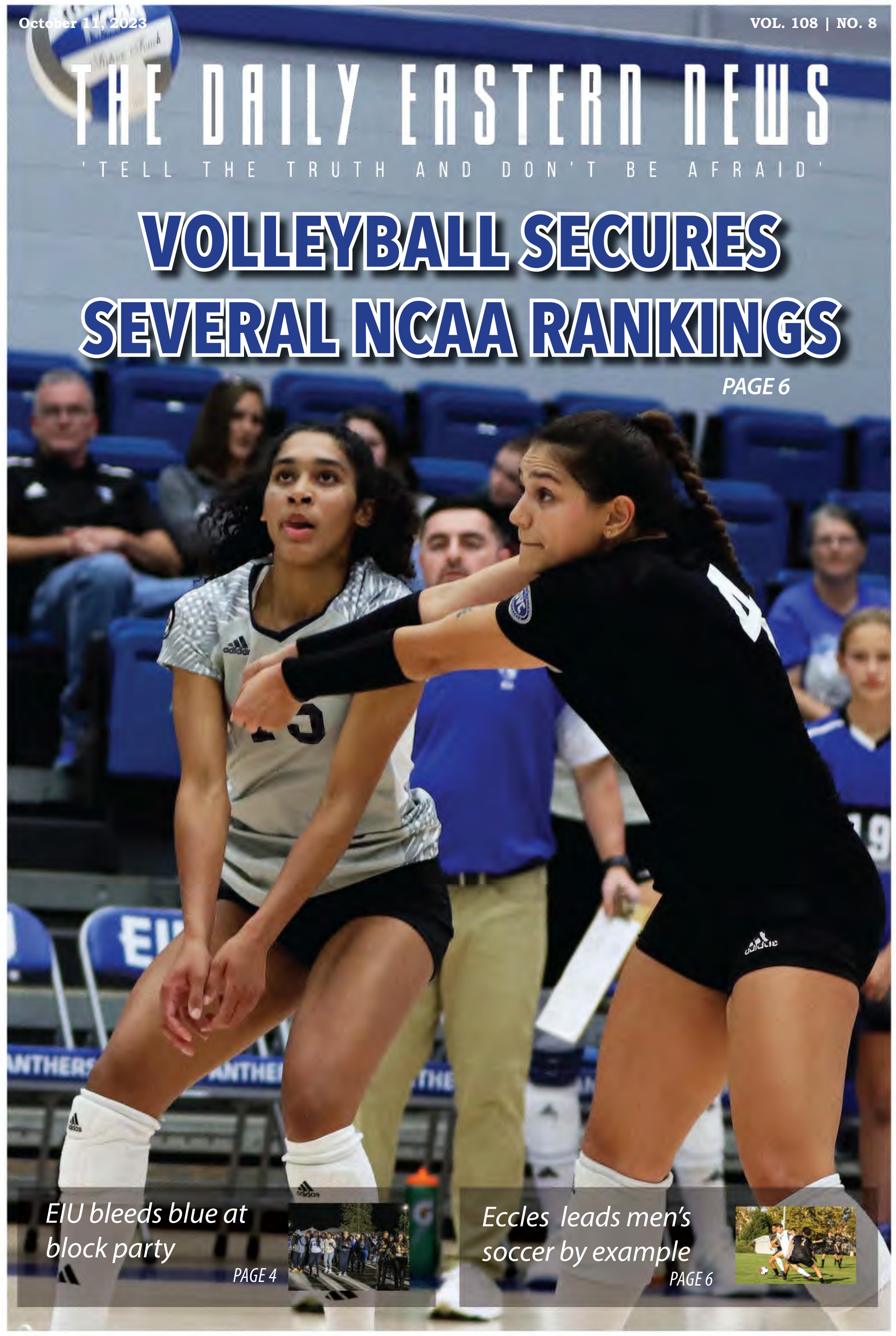


# THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

'TELL THE TRUTH AND DON'T BE AFRAID'

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# Homecoming event connects families

By Jacob Adcock  
Reporter | @DEN\_news

Creating an environment for children in the Charleston community at Eastern is essential. Eastern tries to include them in special events.

On Tuesday, the homecoming committee hosted the traditional family fun night event. The fun night was held at the Martin Luther King University Union in the University Ballroom from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m. Many families joined together to play games, eat snacks and sit at one of the many arts and crafts tables.

The games included Twister, Tic-Tac-Toe, Connect 4, checkers and bingo. Bingo started at 5:30 p.m. and gave kids the opportunity to win many different toys and stuffed animals. There were multiple rounds of bingo, and they switched the style of how the game was played every three rounds.

No child was left empty-handed. A snack table included drinks, chips, cookies and even stuffed animals that the children could take and keep.

There was also a table with a large variety of board games. Each child could pick out a board game before leaving the event as a way to have memorabilia of the event.

Children's music played in the background, along with a backdrop for pictures and on-theme items like inflatable dice that the kids could play with.

Kristal Munoz, a senior majoring in criminology, led the event. Munoz is the University Board Homecoming Co-Coordinator and she addressed why the event is successful at spreading panther pride through all demographics.

"Family Fun Night is a tradition that helps highlight the EIU community and the fami-



ASHANTI THOMAS | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Billy the Panther high-fives kids who came to homecoming fun night on Tuesday.

lies, faculty, and students who have children," Munoz said. "The kids are able to be involved in a space designated for them."

During homecoming week, students on campus have their events, and the faculty has their events, but this provides a space for kids to have their events. Children who could connect with the campus at a young age could possibly be a future panther.

Last year, Munoz got to experience the behind the scenes of how the board runs the events, but now she is fully running some events by herself. There are some goals that she hopes to come out of this event.

"I really hope the children feel like they are

a part of it, and they know we are a campus that welcomes them as well," Munoz said. "Also, allowing the parents to know that there is a space provided for their kids."

Each year, Eastern's homecoming steering committee hosts an annual student night on Thursday. This year, the event is Casino Night from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

There will be lots of prizes and chances for students to win. Along with that, there will be a block party pep rally at 7 p.m. on Friday night.

**Jacob Adcock can be reached at 581-2812 or at [jadcock@eiu.edu](mailto:jadcock@eiu.edu).**

FRONT PAGE BY HARPER HANCOCK & ASHANTI THOMAS

## What's Happening October 11 - 18

### Wednesday

**Breast Cancer Fundraiser**

9 a.m. - 4 p.m. - Taylor Dining Center

**Best Buddies: Basketball and Bags**

4 p.m. - 5 p.m. - McAfee Gym

### Thursday

**Safe Zone Training**

2 p.m. - 4 p.m. - Stevenson Hall

### Friday

**The Underground Line Dancing**

7 p.m. - 8 p.m. - McAfee Gym 1140

### Saturday

**Abilene featuring Chloë Agnew**

7:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. - Recital Hall, Doudna Fine Arts Center

### Sunday

**YOUR EVENT  
COULD  
GO HERE!**

### Monday

**Mindfulness Class**

4 p.m. - 5 p.m. - Effingham, MLK Jr. Union

### Tuesday

**Fall KSR Job & Internship Fair**

9 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. - Lantz Arena

### Wednesday

**Graduate School Fair**

1 p.m. - 3 p.m. - University Ballroom, MLK Jr. Union

Send your event information to [dennewsdesk@gmail.com](mailto:dennewsdesk@gmail.com) to be added to our online and print calendars!



# Parade unites students, community members

By Drew Coffey  
Reporter | @DEN\_News

Eastern Illinois students and families in the local community gathered for the annual Homecoming Parade Saturday morning at 9:30 a.m.

The EIU Homecoming Week consisted of student events such as casino night, a block party and a family fun night. The Parade kicked off the weekend having many people involved such as the Panther Marching Band, Homecoming royalty and even Eastern's President Jay Gatrell walking the streets and throwing candy.

With that, the homecoming week festivities are not just felt by the Eastern Illinois students.

Courtney Jarmon and her family have lived in Charleston for only a year, but she said it is a new tradition that they enjoy.

"I love homecoming," Jarmon said. "But just the whole day in general is really fun and it's great to just be hanging out with all your friends and family."

According to Jarmon, the excitement of homecoming week has been something her family has noticed.

"We got to campus a lot and we live pretty close," Jarmon said. "It's fun to hear everything that happens. We can hear the games, we could hear the block party last night, so I think it's fun that there's things for them to do and then things for us and kids to do as well."

Eastern Illinois police officer Joel



PRINCE PAPPOE | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Eastern Illinois University's president Jay Gatrell and the city of Charleston's mayor, Brandon Combs, throw candy for people during EIU's homecoming parade.

Stewart, who helped with directing traffic during the parade, said seeing familiar faces is one of his favorite moments from the event.

"I'm from Charleston, so I know a lot of people that are in the parade," Stewart said. "So, I see people in the parade, you know, wave at them when they holler out at me and things like that, so I enjoy that."

Stewart also said events like the pa-

rade are great for building relationships between campus and the community.

"It needs to happen more because I feel like we got a disconnect between the community and university," Stewart said. "There's just not a whole lot of support so if we can do this, you know, when relations are good, obviously it's better for the community as a whole."

The parade started at the main square, crossing Lincoln Avenue to end

near the parking lot at O'Brien Stadium.

The parade was followed by a tailgate where everyone students, staff, and alumni were welcomed to celebrate.

The tailgate offered food, games, and music before the Eastern Football Team took on UT Martin at 2 p.m., marking the end of homecoming week.

**Drew Coffey can be reached at 581-2812 or at [akcoffey@eiu.edu](mailto:akcoffey@eiu.edu).**



EMMIE GERMAN | THE WARBLER

The Panther Marching Band prepares for their performance during EIU's homecoming parade on Saturday morning.





BY PRINCE PAPPOE | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Delta Sigma Theta members performs for Eastern's Block Party Pep Rally event at O'Brien Stadium Friday night.

# EIU bleeds blue at the block party pep rally

**By Alexis-Moore Jones**  
Feature Reporter | @DEN\_News

The loud music echoing from behind O'Brien Stadium drew in party growers as they made their way down the path to the O'Brien field parking lot.

The closer they got, the louder the music became.

The sounds of singing, laughter and chatter grew louder once the attendees made their way inside the block party.

The smiling faces, colorful food trucks and the live DJ were all on display as the bright white LED lights shined down on the event.

To close homecoming week at Eastern, the University's Board, UB, threw a Block Party Pep Rally in the O'Brien Field parking lot Friday from 7 p.m. to 10 p.m.

Sitting front and center in front of the bright LED lights were everyone's favorite selfie spot, the big EIU letters.

Students, staff and community members gathered around the letters to have their pictures taken and capture memories of the night.

The Block Party was catered for by six food trucks including Sweet Tea's Bubble Tea, Gate to Plate and the House of Brisket to name a few.

To sweeten the deal, the event organizers had a plethora of coupons for each food truck offering discounted

prices on many food items.

Champaign's very own DJ Silkee brought the entertainment for the night. She kept the vibe alive all night playing a little something for everyone. She even began to take requests near the end of the night to really connect with the crowd.

The UB also put on a raffle. To enter, attendees were given a piece of paper to write down their name and email to be notified of the winner being picked the next day.

Eastern's main goal for the block party was to bring the community together and give them a safe place to have fun and connect on a Friday night.

"... [The] Homecoming block party brings together Eastern's alumni, students, staff, faculty and the Charleston Community to showcase EIU pride. The event is designed to build community spirit and will feature food trucks, tasty food, beer and seltzer tent, giveaways, live DJ, and a special performance from EIU's Panther Marching Band" read the event description.

The Panther Marching Band did not perform, but the Eastern dance team did.

Their electric performance caught the attention of many onlookers and brought in a big crowd.

Once they finished, and got their well-deserved round of applause, the

sea of people who came to watch them stayed on the dance floor, which became their home for the rest of the night.

Junior TV and radio production major Ryan Bevers came out for two things, the good food and the good vibes.

"I came out here to vibe, you know, it's a really nice vibe out here tonight, good music, good people hanging around, really nice people, and all the food trucks, I've seen some really good food," he said.

Although he left a bit early, he was still able to see some smiling faces on his way out.

"I think it's really cool to kind of get here early because we get to see a lot of people are flowing in," said Bevers. "We got to see a lot of smiling faces out there tonight. Everyone looks really happy, you know, loud music, good vibe, good food, and it seems like it's, everyone's really happy."

EIU graduate Austin Corley shared his thoughts on the event now being an alumni student.

"I came in during covid, so I didn't get the very traditional college experience you know so sometimes I regret that I didn't get this kind of stuff, but it is nice, you know, being a local, you are still welcome," Corley said.

EIU graduate Taylor Comer, who works for the College Student Affairs Program, expressed what EIU means to

her.

"[It's] definitely like community," Comer said. "I did my undergrad here, so I've been here for about six years now and I love it here. Everyone here is very supportive of one another. You always see a familiar face on campus and people who graduated a hot minute ago are always excited to come back."

Senior homecoming coordinator Kristal Munov was excited to see all her hard work pay off during the event.

"Planning it has been a little stressful, but it all becomes worth it when it's time for the events to happen and I see all the faces of everybody enjoying themselves and seeing this turnout here today, even with the weather, it's really fulfilling," Munov said.

"When we say we bleed blue, it's not a joke, I think we really do," said Bevers, "...I mean, it's pretty cool out here and there's still a lot of people coming in. We're still bleeding blue, even in the cold like this."

The last day of homecoming festivities is Saturday with the parade starting at 9:30 a.m. and followed by the tailgate starting at 11. The EIU Panthers will be taking on the UT Martin Skyhawks at 2 p.m. at O'Brien stadium.

**Alexis Moore-Jones can be reached at 581-2812 or at [admoorejones@ei.edu](mailto:admoorejones@ei.edu).**



EDITORIAL

# “Plan 2028” is promising

President Jay Gatrell gave his input on how he hopes to lead Eastern with the “Plan 2028” at his first Fall Update as president on Sept. 27. This plan spans the next five years and is a “blueprint for sustained success.”

One of the main two themes were “achieve.” One topic discussed in that theme was the multiple hubs on campus. Eastern received a one time payment of \$500,000 from the state of Illinois to help achieve activities and part of that will go to these academic hubs.

There were three hubs created last year that include supports for Latinx, African American, and Asian American students. Eastern is now planning to launch a family academic hub in Booth Library for support student parents.

We at The News think is a definite positive. We appreciate the step forward in inclusion and providing spaces for students no matter their backgrounds. We hope they will be marketed to students so they utilize the resources available to them.

The second theme is “create.” Gatrell stated there will be investments made in the relaunch senior diversity and inclusion officer search. This is a position we believe is necessary for the success of Eastern.

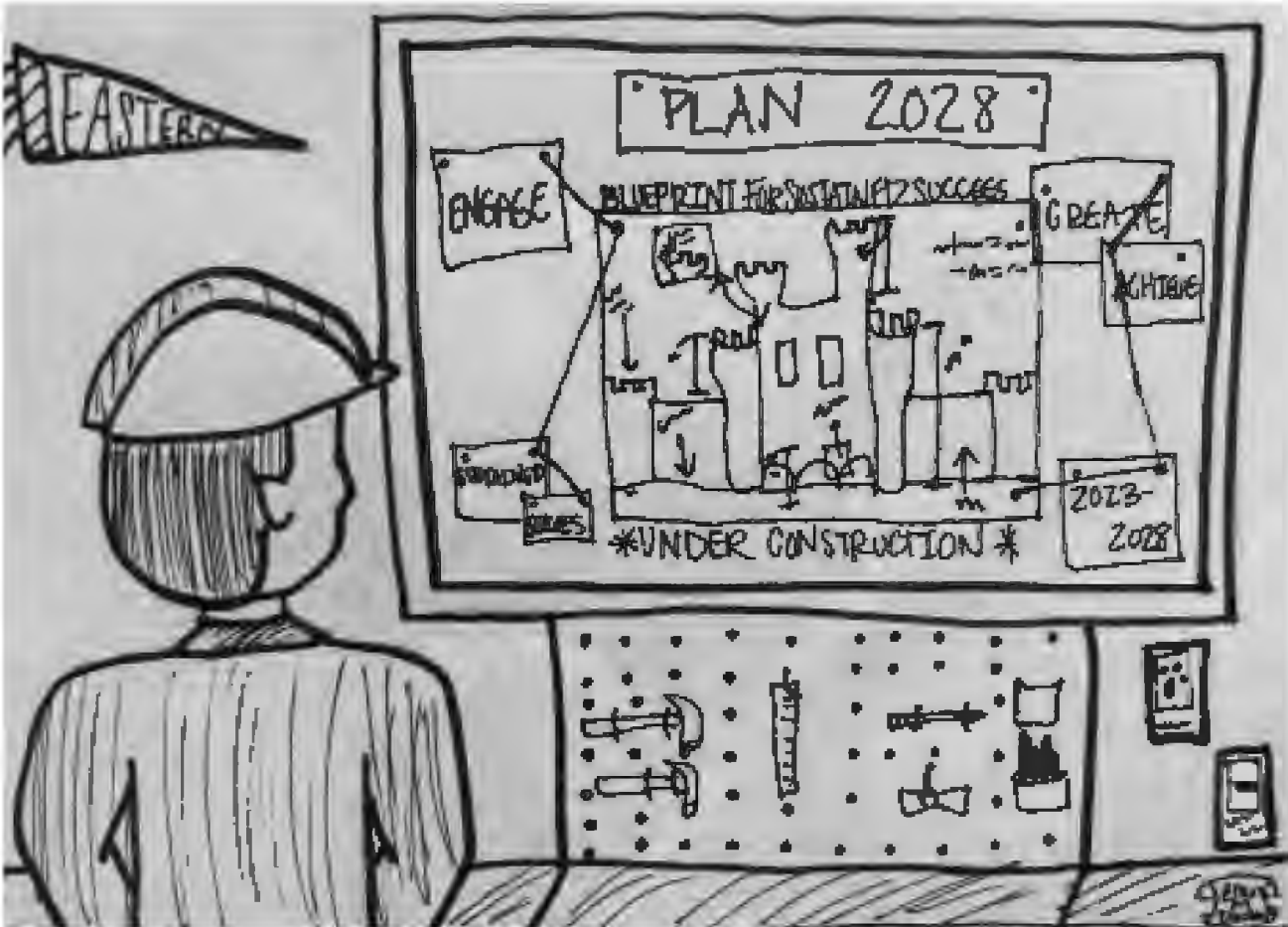
Having someone dedicated to thinking about equity and inclusion on campus should only benefit campus so everyone feels validated and heard.

In addition to this position, there is a one-time fund of \$20,000 for faculty professional development and for the faculty development and innovation center.

Gatrell is also paying close attention to UPI partners and increasing funding in the research and study abroad opportunities.

After last semester, it is nice to see our faculty being thought of and advancing their own knowledge and skills to better educate students like us.

As an overall reflection of President Gatrell so far, we are very happy to see him active on campus in



COMIC BY ELLEN DOOLEY | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

many different outlets.

He has held dinners for student leaders, getting to know organizations, being active at sporting games and other student events and most importantly getting to know the student body.

Another positive is seeing how he doesn't focus on just student involvement. Over the weekend, he spent a good portion of the tailgate going around and talking

to current and former students.

Lastly positive for us, he is very supportive of student media, no matter what we publish.

At The News, we hope that President Gatrell will stick to his word and this blueprint.

**The Editorial Board can be reached at 581-2812.**

COLUMN

## Fans should not give up on Panther football

By Zaria Flippin  
Sports Editor

Hearing how quickly people have switched on this team made me want to address that Panther fans shouldn't give up on this team because we lost to a really good UT Martin Skyhawks team.



Heading into Saturday's game, the Panthers and the Skyhawks were the only teams in the Big South-Ohio Valley Conference that were 4-1.

The University of Georgia Bulldogs were the only team to beat UT Martin this season, and the Skyhawks even scored on the Bulldogs in that game.

Saturday's game showed how much grit this Panther team has even when the odds are stacked against them.

The UT Martin Skyhawks came into Saturday's game with redshirt sophomore running back Sam Franklin, who led in rushing yards in the Big South-OVC with 785 rushing yards.

Based on Saturday's game, it was clear the Panthers' defense did a great job at limiting Franklin's rushing ability as he only rushed for 54 yards. That is only seven more yards Eastern's defense allowed Franklin to rush compared to the University of Georgia's defense.

Eastern's offense also looked pretty good for most of the game.

Redshirt junior quarterback Pierce Holley had his best statistical game with the Panthers. Holley went 29 of 48 for 359 yards and four touchdowns, which is the most touchdowns Holley has

thrown in a single game with the Panthers.

There is a sense that this team has better chemistry than they had in previous years.

The tight connections between Holley and junior wide receiver Eli Mirza and sophomore Justin Bowick made it clear that even though Holley is in his first year with the Panthers, his targets still trust him to make plays.

Besides a couple of comments about the offense and the defensive, the main player I saw people commenting on was senior kicker Stone Galloway.

An anonymous post on YikYak said, "The kicker missed 3/5 kicks that's why we lost."

Galloway missed a 24-yard field goal in the first quarter, a 51-yard field goal in the second quarter and missed the game-winning 40-yard field goal due to the ball being blocked.

I don't feel like anyone should be talking negatively about a kicker unless you can successfully kick a field goal.

Most people know that Galloway kicked a 56-yard field goal to secure a win for the Panthers against the McNeese Cowboys. That field goal was the second longest-made field goal in program history.

It's important to address that everyone has an off day, but that shouldn't pertain to Galloway's past success with the Panthers.

This is the best team Eastern has had in multiple years, and they are on a good path to do well for the rest of the season.

Don't negatively talk about Panther football because this was one of the best games the offense and defense had.

**Zaria Flippin can be reached at 581-2812 or zhflippin@eiu.edu.**

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# Four Panthers receive top 75 national volleyball rankings

*Martinez Mundo, Rochaix, Larregui López, Mitchem take home NCAA, OVC rankings*

By Sports Staff  
Reporter | @DEN\_News

Over the weekend Eastern volleyball was able to sweep Morehead State University, which puts them at 16-1 on the season which is the best start in program history.

The Panthers are 6-0 in Ohio Valley Conference play which is their best start since 2005 when they won nine straight game to begin conference play.

Four players on the team are in the top 75 in nation in four different categories.

Senior outside hitter Giovana Larregui Lopez is tied for sixth in the nation in aces per set with 0.62, 47th in points per set with 4.47, and is tied for 74th with graduate outside hitter Natalie Mitchem in kills per set with 3.67.

Senior defensive specialist Christiana Martinez Mundo is fifth in the nation in digs per set with 5.69. S

Sophomore setter Catalina Rochaix is 21st in the nation in assists per set with 10.57.

In the OVC Larregui Lopez and Mitchem both lead in kills per set.

Mitchem is also third in the OVC in points per set with 4.12. Larregui Lopez also leads the OVC in aces per set and in points per set.

Rochaix leads the OVC in assists per set, and freshman middle blocker Julia Stanev leads the OVC in blocks per set with 1.16. Martinez Mundo is second in the OVC in digs per set.

The Panthers as a team are second in the nation in aces per set with 2.39, 17th in opponent hitting percentage with 15.6%, 18th in hitting percentage with 27.6%, 30th in assists per set with 12.62, and 37th in kills per set with 13.49.

In the OVC the Panthers are first in assists per set, kills per set, aces per set, points per set (17.80), hitting percentage, opponent hitting percentage, opponent assists per set (9.59), opponent kills per set (10.43), opponent blocks per set (1.80), and opponent digs per set (12.25).

Eastern and Morehead State have quite a bit of competitive history.

Coming into Thursdays match, the Panthers had lost seven straight games to the Eagles.

Head Coach Sara Thomas spoke on how it felt finally getting a win on Morehead State.

“You never take any win for granted, it is a remarkable feeling that our players are getting better and better, year after year,” Thomas said.

These wins chipped away at the all-time series, now set at 21-23 Morehead.



PHOTO BY CHANDLER SMITH | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

From left, sophomore setter Catalina Rochaix and senior outside hitter Giovana Larregui López celebrate after scoring a point during the volleyball against Morehead State. The Panthers shutout Morehead 3-0 both Thursday and Friday improving their season score to 16-1.



PHOTO BY ROB LE CATES | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Senior libero Christina Martinez Mundo celebrates after a set with teammates during the volleyball game against Morehead State at Lantz Arena. Mundo led the Panthers with 17 digs and three service aces.

The win on Friday tied the Panthers with their win total of last season, which is tied for the fourth most wins since 2000.

If the Panthers get one more win, they will be their most wins since 2013.

Thomas said that a large part of the success comes from emphasis on teamwork for passes and serves.

“Because I’m learning systems that’s just going to help Cati or Sylvie, our at-

tackers, so that’s always been our answer,” Thomas said.

Stanev had 11 blocks combined Thursday and Friday including a season-high blocks in a single game of seven on Friday, which brings her season total to 59.

Stanev said that playing for Eastern is very different for her because she used to play in Europe.

“The American conference is very dif-

ficult because we play like two matches in a row, like two games,” said Stanev. “But I’m getting used to it, I love it. I love the atmosphere in the team.”

One important set for Eastern was the third set of the Friday match.

The set was tied five times before a Morehead State timeout gave the Panthers time to adjust.

After this timeout, Eastern put up four unanswered points, pulling away from Morehead State.

The Panthers completed the sweep with a final score of 25-20 in the last set.

Eastern’s players talked about locking in and focusing on the moment during that third set timeout.

“We talked about winning every moment and focusing on the present,” sophomore middle blocker Kate Dean said. “It was a good time out to lock in and figure ourselves out.”

Eastern was also able to make some very important challenge calls in both games.

Stanev said that Thomas trusts the team to tell her when she needs to throw down the challenge card.

“We usually make eye contact with her, like if we know that there’s a touch we tell her, and she trusts us,” Stanev said.

Aidan Cusack, Autumn Schulz, Cameron Thomas and Luther Yoder contributed to this article.

The sports staff can be reached at 581-2812 or at densportsdesk@gmail.com.



# From Sheffield, England, to New York, to Eastern

By **Luther Yoder**  
Assistant Sports Editor | @DEN\_News

Sam Eccles, a senior forward for Eastern’s men’s soccer team, grew up in Sheffield, England.

He said by the time he was 11 he selected soccer as his main sport.

“I didn’t even consider coming to the U.S.,” Eccles said. “I was playing for my region of England and a coach from the U.S. came and watched me and at that time I had already committed to go to a university in England to do chemistry and he basically came and said ‘do you fancy coming over playing on a soccer scholarship’ and I turned my head and I was like why not, I haven’t visited, I don’t know anything about the school, I’ll come over here.”

Eccles’ first stop in the United States was at Hofstra University in New York. In his freshman season, he had 126 minutes in nine games played, and in his sophomore season he had 35 minutes in four games played.

“I wasn’t getting that many minutes and the whole reason I came over [to the U.S.] was to play, and I was getting like five to 10 minutes at the end of halves,” Eccles said. “Even though it was a good program, and we were doing well, I just wanted that college experience of playing every game.”

When Eccles decided to transfer, he was recruited by Eastern’s then coach Ronnie Bouemboue.

Before Eccles was able to get to Eastern, Bouemboue stepped down as the head coach for the Panthers.

“I would give anything to play, so I jumped in the portal. Ronnie picked me up and then he left as I was supposed to join so it was kind of that, ‘Oh, I don’t know what’s going to happen here, maybe I won’t end up coming to EIU,’” Eccles said. “And then about four weeks before the semester started in the Fall of ’22 Coach Oakley was appointed and then reached out to me, and we sorted everything out and here I am.”

Eccles said that one of the things that Head Coach Josh Oakley said to him was “Would you rather lose playing well or win playing poorly?”

“I was definitely a ‘win playing poorly’ and me and him saw eye-to-eye on that and that’s what he’s trying to build here,” Eccles said. “If we don’t play well, we can still grind out results like we did at Lindenwood, and it’s starting to show through I think.”

In Eccles’ first season at Eastern he led the team in points (11), goals (five), shots (40), and shots-on-goal (17).

This year he is the team captain and is doing the same, leading the team with eight points, three goals, 19 shots, and 13 shots-on-goal.

“Sam has been able to really take kind of what I’m selling as a coach and plug that into the rest of the team,” Oakley said. “His attitude after big wins and really, really close losses doesn’t seem to change much which is awesome, so we have somebody that’s a great player that the team looks up

to for a lot of reasons, that’s even another reason that you can add on that, he doesn’t let the emotions get control of him, he stays focused, he’s very, very cool under pressure, and that’s what you got to have from your leadership, from your goal scorer.”

Eccles said that it’s unusual for the captain to be the team’s striker, saying that it is harder for him to see what’s happening on the field.

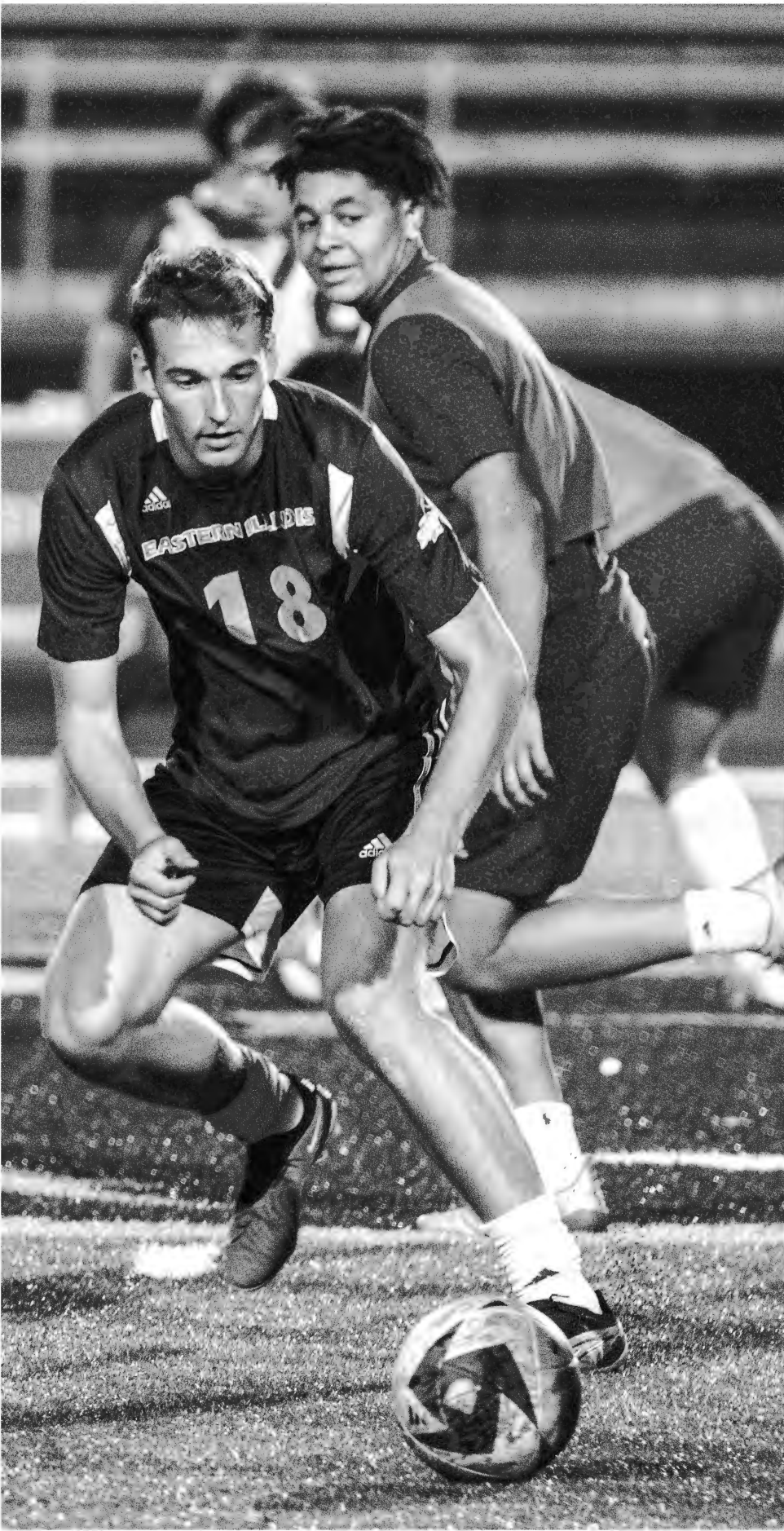
“I’m concentrating on trying to get in the right spots going forward whereas the defenders might be able to shout

to people, put them in positions, communicate a bit more than I can,” Eccles said. “So, it’s been a tough adaptation from going to [focusing] on just scoring goals and creating chances to trying to lead the entire team. I’m just trying to lead with actions rather than words and it’s been a good learning experience for me.”

**Luther Yoder can be reached at 581-2812 or at [lyoder@eiu.edu](mailto:lyoder@eiu.edu).**

*“I’m just trying to lead with actions rather than words and it’s been a good learning experience for me.”*

-Sam Eccles



LUTHER YODER | THE DAILY EASTERN NEWS

Sam Eccles (18), transferred from Hofstra University to play his senior year at Eastern. While playing here, he has developed a role as a role model for the team.

## Athletes of the Issue

### CATALINA ROCHAIX



Sophomore setter Catalina Rochaix ranks 21st in the nation with a total of 647 assists for the season per set at 10.57.

In addition to the national rank, Rochaix also leads the OVC in assists per set.

She recorded 71 assists during the Morehead State games last week and had 34 assists on Thursday and 37 on Friday.



### JULIA STANEV

Freshman blocker Julia Stanev leads in blocks for the OVC at 59 with a 1.16 blocks per set.

She recorded 11 blocks during the Morehead State games last week with four on Thursday and an additional seven on Friday.

Stanev also recorded seven kills against the Eagles with two on Thursday and five on Friday.



# Panthers lose by one point in OT during homecoming game

By Zaria Flippin  
Sports Editor | @zariaflippin

“That was a heartbreaking loss,” Eastern’s redshirt junior quarterback Pierce Holley said.

In an eight-play drive, senior kicker Stone Galloway missed a 40-yard field goal attempt as the end of regulation forced the game into overtime.

The Panthers won the coin toss at the start of overtime and chose to start on defense to attempt to stop the Skyhawks from scoring from the 25-yard line.

Skyhawks’ graduate quarterback Kinkead Dent threw a seven-yard touchdown pass to redshirt freshman tight end Max Dowling near the right corner of the endzone, and redshirt sophomore kicker Aidan Laros made the extra point to put UT Martin ahead by seven points.

Within two plays on the 25-yard line, redshirt junior quarterback Pierce Holley threw a 21-yard touchdown pass to graduate wide receiver Justin Thomas to make the score 28-27.

The Panthers decided to go for a two-point conversion but came up fingertips short when Holley looked for sophomore wide receiver Justin Bowick Jr. in the end zone.

Eastern lost its fourth straight homecoming game at O’Brien Field against UT Martin 28-27 on Saturday afternoon.

“We had our chances, but we just couldn’t quite finish,” Eastern’s Head Coach Chris Wilkerson said.

Before Saturday’s game, the Panthers held a 15-13 series lead over the Skyhawks.

This is only the second time that both teams competed when both teams when nationally ranked with the last time being in 2006 with a UT Martin win over Eastern 15-9.

During that season, the two teams split the OVC regular-season title as both teams advanced to the FCS playoffs.

Eastern had an eventful second quarter within the last 30 seconds of the first half.

Redshirt sophomore safety Blake Ruffin forced a fumble and recovered the ball to give it back to the Panthers.

*“We had our chances, but we just couldn’t quite finish.”*  
-Chris Wilkerson

Eastern’s defense forced four turnovers from the Skyhawks: one from Ruffin, junior linebacker Elijahah Tolbert, redshirt sophomore Phoenix Porter and an interception from redshirt sophomore safety NiJhay Burt.

“We did a much better job tackling,”



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Junior linebacker Elijahah Tolbert (1), looks around the field after the last play of the game at Lantz Arena Saturday afternoon.

Ruffin said after the game. “I feel like this was one of our best tackling games so far.”

Tolbert and fifth-year defensive back Russell Dandy led the Panthers’ defense with seven tackles. Redshirt junior defensive lineman Joel Barrows had five tackles and one sack to end the game.

Within the next 27 seconds in the first half, the Panthers went on a five-play drive. The last play ended with a 10-yard throw from Holley to junior wide receiver Eli Mirza.

Galloway secured the extra point before the first half came to an end.

Mirza was a favorite target for Holley throughout the first half as well as sophomore wide receiver Justin Bowick Jr.

Bowick Jr had two touchdowns for the Panthers: one in the first quarter off of a 13-yard pass from Holley and the other in the fourth quarter from a 14-yard pass from Holley.

Holley ended the day 29 of 48 for 359 yards with four touchdowns and one interception.

“This [game] should build us into a stronger team,” Holley said.

With the loss, the Panthers are now 4-2 overall and 0-1 in Big South-OVC play.

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Justin Thomas, a graduate wide receiver, runs the ball pass UT Martin players during their homecoming game at O’Brien Field Saturday afternoon.