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11/03/1980 - Offensive And Defensive Players Of The Week

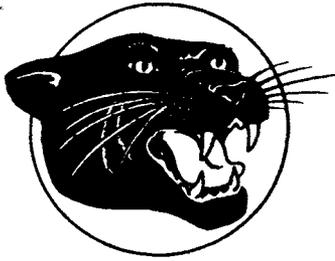
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Panther Sports News

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230
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Two Eastern Illinois University record breakers, quarterback Jeff Christensen (Gibson City) and cornerback Rich Brown (Akron, OH-Buchtel), have been chosen the Panthers' Offensive and Defensive 'Players of the Week'.

Christensen, a 6-3 junior, came off the bench in the second quarter to lead the NCAA II No. 2 ranked Panthers to a 35-28 win over top ranked Northern Michigan by throwing three TD passes for a record 370 yards.

Christensen also set a total offense record of 365 yards as he completed 18 of 31 passes, most out of the shotgun formation to erase a 21-0 first quarter deficit.

"We brought Jeff in because he's a little more adept out of the shotgun than Chuck (Wright)," said offensive coordinator Dennis Shaw. "He did a great job picking them apart."

Brown set an EIU career with two interceptions giving him 15 during a four year career. His first interception set up EIU's game tying TD near the end of the first half, and his last one stopped NMU's last scoring drive at the EIU 21 yard line.

"Everyone played well but those two interceptions both came at critical times," said secondary coach Rick Schachner. "Plus he made a couple fine open field tackles and did a consistent job of disguising coverages."

Three receivers gathered the rest of the offensive segment 'player of the week' awards, tight end Rob Mehalic (Streator-Woodland) on the offensive line and wide receivers Scott McGhee (Palos Heights-Sandburg) and Otis Grant (Des Plaines-Maine North/Wright JC).

Mehalic caught seven passes for 158 yards, including an 11 yarder which proved to be the game winner. He also caught a 61 yarder in the first quarter that got EIU out of a hole at the two yard line and set up the first score.

His 158 yards was also the fifth best single game effort in school history.

McGhee raked in six pass receptions for 147 yards, including two touchdowns which tied him with James Warring for most touchdown pass receptions (14) in a single season.

Grant had four receptions for 71 yards.

All-American Pete Catan (Penfield, NY) was the defensive line 'Player of the Week'.
"Pete played his best game of the season," said defensive coordinator Chuck Dickerson.

"He had one pure sack and hurried Kessel half dozen other times . . .he really kept the pressure on all day. Plus he was double teamed by a tackle and back throughout."

Ira Jefferson (Momence) earned linebacker honors by getting a team high 10 tackles and a quarterback sack, according to assistant coach Jeff Gardner.

Rick Shipbaugh (Burbank-Reavis) was the specialty team 'Player of the Week' with a nod towards Christensen and punter Don Manzke (Normal), says assistant Chuck Budde.

"Shipbaugh recovered an onside kick which was very important. It was 21-0 when they went for it and would have really given them great field position if Rick hadn't grabbed it," Budde said.

"Manzke did a fine job of punting all day (40 yard average) under a lot of pressure and Christensen booted one out of bounds on the six inch line that had them backed to the wall."