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### 08/10/1981 - Revitalized Football Program

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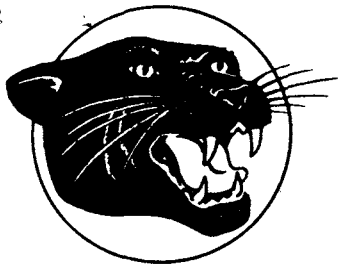
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# Panther Sports News

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY, Charleston, IL 61920

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Aug. 10, 1981  
LS-AS-Football

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Eastern Illinois University's revitalized football program, solidly entrenched under the leadership of Darrell Mudra, seeks a fourth straight winning season with the opening of fall practice earlier this week (August 11).

The Panthers, 30-9 over the past three years, will step up a notch by competing for a tournament spot in NCAA Division I-AA.

The season opens at the University of South Dakota on September 5. The first home game is against new Mid-Continent Conference member Southwest Missouri State on September 12.

Although 27 lettermen answered the first call this week the Panthers will be minus a batch of starters including three All-Americans who contributed heavily to EIU's recent success, defensive linemen Pete Catan and Randy Melvin and wide receiver Scott McGhee.

The 1981 offense will be constructed around the arm of quarterback Jeff Christensen and a defense with veterans at linebacker and the secondary.

Christensen (Gibson City), just a junior, shared QB duties with Chuck Wright last year but appears to have the job to himself this fall. Although playing just half the time in '80, he still managed over 1300 yards, 13 TD passes and set single game records of 365 yards passing and 370 yards total offense against Northern Michigan.

"Jeff has worked very hard since the end of last season . . . he has a real knowledge of our system, is very bright therefore we can carry our offensive concepts into a little more detail with him," said Mudra.

Acquainting himself with new receivers in fall drills will be the main objective for Christensen plus the staff must piece together a new offensive line which has center Scott Gilleland as the only veteran.

EIU FOOTBALL  
ADD 1

Defensive coordinator Rick Schachner has four three-year lettermen, linebackers Tom Murray (Arlington Heights-St. Viator) and Ira Jefferson (Momence), backs Wilbert James (Washington, DC-Woodson) and Kevin Jones (Springfield-Lanphier) plus Associated Press Second Team All-American Kevin Gray at free safety.

Gray led the conference with seven pass interceptions for 150 yards and was also named the MCC 'Back of the Year'. "Kevin had a great year but he's complemented by such a fine group that it will be difficult to single out anyone this year. For instance, Wilbert James had a great spring practice . . . we expect him to really come into his own this fall."

The major fall camp concern will be finding three new defensive linemen to play alongside the only returning starter, Keith Wojnowski (St. Anne-Kankakee Bishop McNamara).