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04/20/1981 - Spring Football Workouts

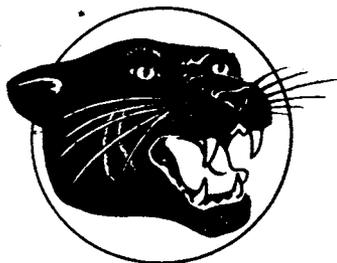
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Panther Sports News

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April 20, 1981

LS-AS-FB-HTS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--The best news coming out of Eastern Illinois University's spring football workouts is that the veterans are playing better than ever. Plus there have been no serious injuries.

That's the report at the halfway point in spring practice, which will include an alumni-varsity spring game at Paris High School on Saturday, May 2.

Game time is 5:30 p.m. There will be a \$1.50 admission charge with proceeds going to the Paris High School Booster Club and Paris Saints Youth Football Program.

Several of Eastern's talented alums will be testing the varsity's progress in that intrasquad matchup. Most of the alums are from the Panther teams which were 30-9 the past three years including an NCAA II national championship and a runner-up finish last fall.

The most experienced part of EIU's game, the linebackers, has also been the best this spring. Tom Murray (Arlington Heights-St. Viator), Bill Mines (Washington, D.C.-Woodson) and Ira Jefferson (Momence) "have been phenomenal," says defensive coordinator Rick Schachner, "but that's not unexpected."

Up front, two players, Mike Angland (Westchester) and Steve Martin (Schaumburg), have emerged as legitimate candidates to fill some vacancies. "Both of these players have been pleasant surprises," said Schachner.

In the secondary Kevin Jones (Springfield-Lanphier) has been competing in track and All-American Kevin Gray (Chicago-Hyde Park) has a class conflict which has prevented his participation for much of the time.

"Therefore with these two out it's been hard to evaluate our progress but Wilbert James (Washington, D.C.-Woodson) has played exceptionally well."

First year offensive back coach Mike Williams cited three skill people, QB Jeff Christensen (Gibson City), RB Kevin Staple (Markham-Thornwood) and TE Rob Mehalic (Streator-Woodland), as critical to next fall's success.

"We've been pretty solid but these three are the keys," says Williams. "We're happy with what we've seen from our receivers . . . Roger Holoman (Alton) is a great athlete . . . Tom Park (Akron, OH-Kenmore-Eastern Arizona CC) has looked good the last couple days . . . Greg Lawson (Chicago-Simeon) has come out of nowhere this spring."

Williams said the offensive line's pass protection has been "pretty salty so far . . . but we need some work on execution."

Veteran center Scott Gilleland and sophomores Alvin McMurray (Chicago-Dunbar) and Brad Mars (Marshall) have been the most consistent.