

Eastern Illinois University

## The Keep

---

1987

Press Releases

---

1987

### 1987 - Linebackers

University Marketing and Communications

Follow this and additional works at: [https://thekeep.eiu.edu/press\\_releases\\_1987](https://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_1987)

---

#### Recommended Citation

University Marketing and Communications, "1987 - Linebackers" (1987). 1987. 506.  
[https://thekeep.eiu.edu/press\\_releases\\_1987/506](https://thekeep.eiu.edu/press_releases_1987/506)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Press Releases at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in 1987 by an authorized administrator of The Keep. For more information, please contact [tabruns@eiu.edu](mailto:tabruns@eiu.edu).



# Panther Sports News

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY - Charleston, IL 61920  
217 / 581-5981

LS-AS-FB-FB OPP

## LINEBACKERS

(Fifth in a Series)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL.--JEFF MILLS (WINNETKA-NEW TRIER), Eastern Illinois University's '86 defensive MVP, was overshadowed last year by record breaking offensive stars.

With their departure, MILLS may now receive some deserved credit as one of the Gateway Conference's best linebackers.

There is a qualifying statement, though. A few weeks ago, MILLS underwent arthroscopic surgery on his knee. "It's questionable as to how soon he can participate," says head coach BOB SPOO.

It's certain he'll miss the opener at San Jose and maybe even the second game at Northeast Missouri. When he returns, though, it's almost just as certain he'll quickly become the pivotal player in a segment that will have two inside 'backers plus a nickel back rather than four linebackers as in previous years.

Although there is little familiarity with the new alignment, there is stability in this segment as coach SHELDON HERD is the lone holdover on the new staff.

MILLS is only a junior but has lettered two years leading the '86 team with 127 tackles (39 solos/88 assisted) and starting every game inside.

He had seven games of 10 tackles or more with highs of 19 vs. Western Illinois and 17 vs. Northern Iowa. "Jeff is a very heady, instinctive player," says HERD, who starts his fifth year on the staff.

"He also missed most of the spring with the injury and will still be behind with the new system so will need a lot of reps when he returns but

more

page 2

he has gained some from the film work he did this spring."

Veteran BILL COCHRANE (LAKE ZURICH), who came out of spring ball a starter, has decided not to play his senior year. So what appeared to be a segment with depth now has freshmen penciled in as backups.

The two starters going into the San Jose game figure to be MIKE BRISCOE (MINOOKA-JOLIET JC) and GEORGE BOYKIN (CHICAGO-VOCATIONAL).

BRISCOE, a 6-1, 210 senior, was the team's 'Rookie of the Year' in '86, and is now making the adjustment from outside 'backer to an inside spot.

"Mike did a good job in the spring with the new position. His experience really gives us a boost," says HERD. He had five QB sacks and 38 tackles last season.

BOYKIN, a 6-1, 215 sophomore, lettered last year also but played mostly on special teams. "George is coming along but he needs to play with great intensity on each and every snap," said HERD.

Since the Gateway is predominantly a passing league, defensive coordinator John Smith doesn't bother to bring a nickel back off the bench. He simply inserts him into the starting lineup.

The two players competing for that starting position are BEN STEVENSON (OAK PARK-RIVER FOREST) and TIM LANCE (CANTON-CUBA), who is a first year freshman.

STEVENSON switched to defense from running back where he saw limited playing time. "He has a lot of raw talent, speed, quickness and great balance," says segment coach SCOTT NOBLE.

LANCE has been slowed by a groin injury but during the first few double day sessions made a quick and positive impression on the staff.

more

page 3

"Tim is very intelligent and can run . . . he's just a good all-around athlete and because of that has made his presence known quickly," says NOBLE.

EUGENE HUMPHREY (CHICAGO-JULIAN) earned the starting job after spring ball but has missed the fall workouts due to an injury so has fallen behind in the hunt.

Five incoming and one redshirt freshmen will provide support at linebacker, HERD says.

The redshirt freshman is DIMITRI STEWART (DETROIT-CHADSEY). First year frosh are TOD SCHWAGER (CHICAGO-LANE TECH), KAI REDMON (COLLINSVILLE), DAN WEGRZYN (ELK GROVE VILLAGE-HOFFMAN ESTATES CONANT), MIKE BLOOMFIELD (LAGRANGE LYONS) and JOHN NOLL (LISLE-NAPERVILLE NORTH).

"All six are adjusting well to college ball. I've definitely seen progress so I'm not displeased at all," says HERD.