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### 1987 - Offensive Line

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# Panther Sports News

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY - Charleston, IL 61920  
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LS-AS

## OFFENSIVE LINE (Third in a Series)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL.--Eastern Illinois University's offensive linemen will probably be posting a 'No Vacancy' sign in their corner of the Panther practice fields this fall.

While question marks surround personnel in nearly every segment, the lone exception appears to be the offensive line where five players are all but rock solid to start at San Jose State on September 5.

The names are familiar. SEAN O'BRIEN (JOLIET-CATHOLIC) is the center, MARK PETERSEN (MOMENCE) and JIM MITEFF (LIBERTYVILLE) are the guards with DAVE POPP (LIBERTYVILLE) and SHON MCCRAY (CHARLESTON) at the tackles.

These five average over 6-2 and 263 pounds. Collectively they have earned 11 letters. The three inside players, O'BRIEN, PETERSEN AND MITEFF have seven years starting experience. POPP has started occasionally the past two years while MCCRAY is a veteran squad member who switched from tight end in the spring.

These five made a favorable impression on new line coach MIKE DEBORD in the spring but he hasn't seen them under fire. "We have talent but we have no experience once past the returning starters so fall practice will allow plenty of reps to develop some depth," says DEBORD.

"We're asking them to do more with the run. Obviously they're good pass protectors but they didn't do much with the run so it's something we're going to work hard on again during the fall."

With no proven passing quarterback and a determination to stay on the

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ground, the linemen will find themselves firing off the ball more than backpedaling this season.

Based on honors, O'BRIEN, 6-1, 275, junior, and MITEFF, 6-0, 230, senior, lead the pack as they earned Honorable Mention All-Gateway in '86, and are two year starters.

"Sean has good feet which enables him to be a good pass protector, and he improved his run blocking during the spring," says DEBORD. "Instead of blocking high, he worked hard on blocking better in the hip area which improved his leverage but he still made some mental mistakes that will be corrected with improved conditioning in the fall."

DEBORD says MITEFF understands line play better than anyone he's coached. "He has great feet and great intensity but doesn't play because of his height and weight but rather because of his mental approach. . . plus he's versatile enough to play center, if needed."

PETERSEN, a three year starter who enters his final year, has bulked up to 6-3, 275. He also carries the title as the team's 'strongest player' and only member of the 'One Ton' weightlifting club.

"Mark is strong in pass protection but he needs to improve his lateral movement. He did make progress in that area near the end of spring but we're going to continue to emphasize that this fall," says DEBORD.

Although neither are rookies, McCRAY, a 6-2, 265 senior, and POPP, a 6-6, 275 junior, are the least experienced linemen. "Shon approached the coaches about making this move, and then proceeded to make the difficult transition from tight end to tackle.

"He has great feet and is a good pass protector but needs to learn how to handle his body as far as overall line play is concerned," says DeBord.

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POPP has been the backup the past two years but "started to come into his own the last two weeks of spring ball," according to DEBORD.

"He continues to get stronger but considering his height (6-6) he's still not at his maximum."

Two backups are BUTCH BRZESKI (CHICAGO-LANE TECH/TRITON CC) and JOE FOSTER (CHICAGO HEIGHTS-BLOOM TRAIL).

BRZESKI, a 6-3, 250, senior, lettered last year as the long snapper and is the second strongest player on the team. "He has good knowledge of our blocking schemes and is invaluable to us because he can play any of the positions," says DEBORD.

FOSTER, a 6-2, 215, redshirt freshman, walked on last year but has worked his way up to a backup tackle. "Joe is a good run blocker who improved quite a bit in the spring," says DEBORD, "but he's still young so needs to improve his strength and pass blocking."

There are 11 other offensive linemen in camp, five of which are incoming prep recruits, and any or all could see the field this fall.