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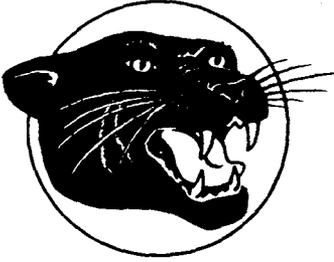
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Recommended Citation

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Panther Sports News

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Aug. 11, 1982
LS-AS-FB STATE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Heavily favored to win the Mid-Continent Conference football championship, Eastern Illinois University opened its 1982 preseason training camp Wednesday (August 11) with over 100 players reporting for workouts.

The Panthers host Illinois State in the opener Saturday, September 4 as they go for an unprecedented fifth straight winning season under a revitalized program headed by Darrell Mudra.

Eastern is 36-14 the past four years, the best won-lost record among Illinois state universities during this period.

EIU, champs of the MCC in 1980 and tri-champs last year, was selected to win a third straight title on eight of the 11 ballots in the annual survey of conference athletic directors, coaches and sports information directors.

Mudra does not shy away from the favorites role. "I would rather be picked first . . . I appreciate that our opponents have confidence in us," he says.

Admittedly disappointed with last year's 6-5 season, Mudra says, "The adversity of last year I think will make a difference this season . . . I believe we have a committed group of young players."

The Panthers also have four returning AP honorable mention All-Americans in DE Keith Wojnowski (St. Anne-Kankakee Bishop McNamara), WR Roger Holoman (Alton), punter Don Manzke (Normal-University) and OG Bob Norris (Pittsfield).

Still the success may depend on the accuracy of quarterback Jeff Christensen's (Gibson City) right arm. "He's the key to the offense . . . a talented individual . . . we feel secure with his play," Mudra said.

Christensen will hold virtually every EIU passing record when he graduates. He was third in the nation in total offense with 238.7 yards per game, and set a conference record 71 straight passes without an interception.

Holoman, a flanker, caught 40 balls for 621 yards and accounted for eight TDs, one for every five pass receptions.

For the third straight year halfback Kevin Staple (Markham-Thornwood) should be the No. 1 running back. He has 1276 career yards and is much stronger than last year when a separated shoulder slowed his entire year.

His overall value is best measured by his 8th place ranking in NCAA I-AA all-purpose running. He picked up 133 yards per game in rushing, receiving, punt and kickoff returns.

Even with these skill people, Mudra says, "our best part of the offense is up front and it's a matter of coaching as much as anything."

Chuck Dickerson, who moves to offensive coordinator from defense, has a talented group of veterans that has been molded into a strong unit.

The guards are 6-0, 230 Kent Lawrence (Coal Valley-Moline) and Norris, tackles 6-2, 280 Brad Mars (Marshall) and 6-2, 260 Alvin McMurray (Chicago-Dunbar) and 6-3, 230 center George Tuzil (Schaumburg). They give the Panthers an average of 6-2, 250.

Although the offense is a bit more experienced, the "defense dominated the spring with their enthusiasm," Mudra says, crediting in part the arrival of new coordinator Cal Jones.

Wojnowski, who moves back outside to left end after playing tackle last year, is the best player on that unit. Bill Mines (Washington, D.C.-Woodson) and Robert Williams (Chicago-Dunbar) are the only full time returning starters at linebacker and corner, respectively.

Arizona Western CC transfers Reggie Taylor (Apopka, FL) and Gary Bridges (South Belmar, NJ-Manasquan) both "played on an excellent juco team and will definitely help," Mudra says. Taylor's an outside linebacker while Bridges is a free safety/cornerback.