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Panther Sports News

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CHARLESTON, IL--Sean Payton (Naperville-Central), Eastern Illinois University's No. 2 quarterback, has been selected the Mid-Continent Conference Offensive 'Player of the Week'.

Payton, who had taken very few center snaps this fall, came off the bench early in the first quarter replacing injured starter John Rafferty, and engineered the Panthers 34-14 win over Western Kentucky.

A 6-0, 175 sophomore, Payton completed seven of 15 passes with one interception for 150 yards. He threw a 57 yard touchdown pass to Jerry Wright on the second series he was in the game, and later ran for touchdowns on runs of two and 13 yards.

"Sean has looked very good in practice lately and we have been trying to find a spot to insert him in the game but they had been so close lately that we've had to stay with John throughout," said Coach Al Molde.

"However I wasn't hesitant to turn to Payton when Rafferty got hurt, although we would have preferred to get him in a game when the pressure wasn't quite so great. But he responded with a solid performance, kept his composure and did a nice job executing our game plan.

"I think the big play was the touchdown pass to Wright. That was only his second series in the game, and to connect on a big play like that so quickly really boosted his confidence," Molde said.

The Panthers finished the regular season with a 9-2 record and will find out Sunday (Nov. 20) if they have received a second straight bid to the NCAA I-AA tournament.