

Metamora fights off Bulldogs

The Streator Bulldogs brought their best team in school's history to Malone field on Saturday in a round 2 playoff game against the Metamora Redbirds. Bulldogs proved to be the best opponent the Birds had face all year but the Bulldogs didn't quite have enough against the #1 ranked team in the state as Metamora advanced with a 35-20 victory.

Metamora appeared to have things in control as they took a 14-0 lead with 5:58 left in the 2nd quarter. Running back Aaron Peters (#47) rushed in from 1 yard out in the 1st quarter while quarterback Michael Fay (#15) rushed in from the 5 yard line in the 2nd quarter for the Metamora TDs. Streator assembled a touchdown drive midway through the 2nd quarter on some key pass plays to bring to score to 14-7. Metamora had to fight off a late first half drive from Streator as junior Jesse Mischler (#43) intercepted a pass on the Metamora 1 yard line. Metamora ran out the halftime clock maintaining its 14-7 lead.

Bennen VanMieghem's (#26) kickoff to start the second half proved to be a key play for the Redbirds as junior Josh Cockrell (#62) put a hard hit on the Bulldog receiver to cause a fumble. Senior linebacker Matt Brunton (#40) recovered the ball in Bulldog territory as Metamora started the half out right. The Redbirds made Streator pay for the mistake as Fay rushed in from 8 yards out for the TD to put Metamora up 21-7.

The Bulldogs proved their resiliency in the 4th quarter by holding the Redbirds on 4th down and 1 at the Streator 4 yard line preventing a three touchdown Metamora lead. On the very next play from scrimmage, Streator rushed 96 yards for a touchdown to again narrow the Redbirds lead to a single TD. The "gut check" was on for the Metamora Redbirds as momentum had clearly swung in favor of the Bulldogs. The Birds responded with two unanswered touchdowns and hardnosed defense to put the game away with a 35-14 lead at 3:02 left on the game clock. Streator scored a touchdown late in the game but failed to convert the extra point to bring the score to 35-20. The game ended with the Redbirds chewing up the game clock and completing the round 2 playoff victory.

Kicker Brennen VanMieghem added 5 more PATs in the game to bring his season total to 70. VanMieghem needs just 11 more extra points to set the state record in a single season.

Metamora will take it on the road for round 3 of the playoffs against a familiar foe in the Washington Panthers this weekend. The Panthers are much improved since the 35-0 defeat by Redbirds in week 2 of the regular season. Emotions will be running high this week as both teams anticipate a close game at Panther Stadium. Please check the Metamora High School web site or <http://LakeVermilionRetreat.com/Football> for the game schedule this weekend.