

Birds Win Game 1, Coach Ryan Collects 200th

It was an evening of an exciting win, hard fought comeback, state record and major milestone at Malone Field last Friday night. In the end, it was all good for the Metamora Redbirds as they defeated the Bloomington Central Catholic Saints.

Fans that arrived early for the varsity game were treated to an exciting comeback victory by the freshmen Birds. In a hard fought close game, Central Catholic took the lead 17-15 on a 40 yard field goal with 21 seconds left in the game. The freshmen Birds then drove down to the Saint's 21 yard line with 5 seconds remaining the game. Kicker Prestin VanMiegham (#25), younger brother of the varsity kicker Brennen VanMiegham, then kicked a 29 yard field goal through the uprights as time expired. The freshmen Redbirds came away with an amazing 18-17 victory and the younger VanMiegham starts his own legacy.

After the excitement of the freshmen game, came the opening minutes shock of the varsity game. The Central Catholics Saints appeared to be doing some serious bird hunting for the Redbirds. Metamora took the opening kickoff and saw their first offensive possession quickly stall out. The Redbirds had to punt deep into their own territory. The Saints returned the punt 45 yards to the end zone taking a 7-0 lead with just 1:49 ran off the game clock. Metamora then fumbled away the ensuing kickoff giving possession back to the Saints on the Redbirds 20 yard. In an important early game defensive stand, the Birds held the Saints to a field goal. Central Catholic was up 10-0 with 7:30 left in the first quarter.

The Birds then took the next possession 80 yards for a touchdown. It was a typical Metamora drive as quarterback Michael Fay (#15) and running back Bryan Love (#41) carried the majority of the load. The drive ended with Love crossing the goal line from 2 yards out and 20 seconds left in the quarter. The Birds wows were not over. The snap on the extra point attempt failed keeping the score at 10-6 in favor of the Saints.

The Redbirds appeared to be getting over their first game jitters in the second quarter. The Birds and Saints exchanged a couple of possessions before Fay scored from 6 yards out to give Metamora a 13-10 closing out the half. Metamora would not relinquish the lead the rest of the game.

Central Catholic then took the opening drive of the third quarter deep into Metamora territory. For the Birds, two key defensive plays would follow. Defensive linemen Andrew Jones (#45) sacked the Saints quarterback forcing them back to the Metamora 40 yard line. On the next play, defensive back Mark McDaniel (#22) made an athletic interception and returned the ball out to the Metamora 30 yard line.

On Metamora's first play of this possession, Fay carried the ball down to the Saint's 15 yard line. A few plays later, Fay called his own number for a 6 yard rush to the end zone. The Birds took a 20-10 lead with 6:30 left in the third quarter.

Metamora's defense would regain possession for the Birds as linebacker David Tracy (#46) picked off another Saint's pass. Tracy returned the ball to the Saints 23 yard line but Metamora could not capitalize on Central Catholic's mistake.

The Saints were not done marching as they scored early in the fourth quarter on a 64 yard touchdown pass to bring the score to 20-17. This was the Saints first and only touchdown on the Metamora's starting defense. Metamora responded quickly with a heavy dose of Fay and Love. With 9:44 left in the game, Love sprinted in from 27 yards giving the Birds a 27-17 lead.

The Metamora defense would again respond as nose guard Drew Cullett (#36) sacked the quarterback forcing Saints into a 3rd down and long situation. On the next play, Metamora's Jones would have a defensive lineman's dream come true. Jones made an interception on a Saint's screen play and headed for the end zone from 37 yards out. Metamora took a 34-17 lead with 7:05 seconds left in the game.

On Bird's next possession, Fay found receiver Brett McKinney (#21) for a 60 yard touchdown pass. With a 41-17 lead, the Redbirds weren't done as running back Jake Ferguson (#32) found the end zone with a 3 yard power run to up the score to 48. Central Catholic would go on to score another touchdown late in the game to complete the scoring at 48-24 as Metamora collected the opening game come from behind victory.

This game brought with it two key milestones for the Metamora football program. Kicker Brennen VanMiegham (#26) collected 6 more extra points to take over the state record. VanMiegham has 218 extra point kicks in his high school career and owns the record by five. With this being game one, #26 should have plenty of attempts to pad his record. Congratulations Brennen!

It's all about the players for Metamora's head coach Pat Ryan. He'll be the first one to shine the spotlight of achievements on his team and off himself. But last Friday night, Coach Ryan recorded a major milestone in Illinois football history. The victory over the Central Catholic Saints also brought with it Coach Ryan's 200th career victory as a high school head coach. Congratulations Coach, your commitment and dedication to these young men is evident everyday and not just on the football field. Metamora and football fans throughout the state appreciate it.

Metamora takes it on the road Saturday, September 4th. The Birds travel to Streamwood High School to take on South Elgin. Varsity game time is 4:00pm. Freshmen play at 11:00am and sophomores are on at 1:30pm.

Follow all the Metamora varsity games in the Woodford Courier or online at <http://LakeVermilionRetreat.com/Football> .