

Redbirds Open “The Gap” on Dunlap

The football community has been abuzz the last couple of weeks over Dunlap coach Brett Cazalet comment that Dunlap was “closing the gap” on the Mid-Illini leaders Washington and Metamora. With Dunlap starting the season 3-0, Cazalet’s comments generated a storm of discussion before the game last Friday night. It seems as though his comments may have been premature, as the Redbirds handed the Eagle’s their second defeat of the season, 49-21.

Indeed the gap appeared to be closing in the first half of the game as Dunlap took the opening drive 59 yards for a touchdown and a 7-0 lead. Metamora’s quarterback Michael Fay (#15) responded on the Bird’s ensuing possession with a 50 yard touchdown pass to Brett McKinney (#21). Then the Redbirds, as usual, lined up all-state kicker Brennen VanMieghem (#26) for the extra point attempt. With senior Beau Geier (#12) doing the holding, Metamora uncharacteristically faked the attempt as Geier ran for the corner of the end zone to complete the 2 point conversion. Metamora had responded with an 8-7 lead.

Later in the half, Metamora made a critical mistake by mishandling an Eagle punt. The miscue turned the ball over to Dunlap with excellent field position. The Eagles quickly made the Birds pay by taking 13-8 lead. Metamora answered just before halftime with an 8 yard TD run by Fay. The Redbird’s 2 point conversion attempt failed as Metamora took a 14-13 lead going into the half.

The second half was all Metamora as the offense ran nearly unchecked and the Redbird’s defense held. The Birds outscored Dunlap 35-7 in the half. Fay collected four touchdowns on the evening on 231 yards rushing. Junior fullback Charlie Nowotnik (#34) added an eye-opening 126 yard to the Metamora rushing total as Birds easily dominated the second half. The Birds ended the evening with 524 yards of offense; 438 yard rushing and 86 though the air.

Defensively Metamora made some adjustments after Dunlap’s opening touchdown to hold the Eagles to no first downs in the 2nd and 3rd quarters. Dunlap ended the day with 231 yards of total offense. Over 100 of those yards were in the final minutes of the game as Metamora reserves took over and Dunlap continued playing their starters. Linebacker Tom Bieneman (#11) led the Redbirds with 11 tackles as the Metamora defense held the league leading passer, Dunlap’s Logan Schrader, to just 42 passing yards.

The Redbirds improved their record to 4-1 and are undefeated in conference play. Metamora takes on Pekin at Malone field this Friday night. Pekin comes in winless this season but played Washington tough in the first half last week.

The Redbirds are on the mend as captain Tyler Burch (#57) returned from a knee injury suffered before the season started. Burch rotated at right guard as the coaches’ ease him back into game shape. Captain Bryan Love (#41) is scheduled to begin light workouts

this week as he recovers from a serious ankle sprain and Birds attempt to return to near full strength.

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