

Redbirds Reclaim Title

The Metamora Redbirds laid claim to the Mid-Illini Conference title last Friday night. The Birds defeated the Washington Panthers by a score of 36-30 in a game that's already been declared "a classic".

Uncharacteristically, Metamora started fast, real fast. It took the Redbirds just 44 seconds to show the huge crowd at Malone Field they can strike quickly. Quarterback Michael Fay (#15) found a wide open Brett McKinney (#21) for a 71 yard touchdown pass. The Panthers committed an off-sides penalty on the extra point attempt and Metamora made them pay with a 2 point conversion. The Birds had the early lead 8-0. On Washington's second play from scrimmage, Metamora senior David Tracy (#46) stripped the ball from the Panther running back giving the Birds the ball with excellent field position. Fay then directed the Redbirds offense into the end zone from 22 yards out. The drive culminated with a 1 yard run by Fay and Brennen VanMiegham's (#26) extra point. The Birds were up 15-0 with 8:50 left in the first quarter.

Both teams traded possessions until 3:29 seconds left in the first half when Fay found the end zone for 3 yards out giving Metamora a commanding 22-0. But, the Panthers proved they can also strike quickly. Washington scored with just 35 seconds left in the half. The Redbirds took a 22-8 lead into the break but the Panther's clearly had captured the momentum of the game.

Washington rode that momentum with two quick scoring drives in the third quarter. The Panthers tied the game at 22 in the first four minutes of the period shocking the Metamora faithful. The game would remain tied until midway through the fourth when the ball bounce Metamora's way. Fay again though a long pass downfield to a well covered McKinney. Panther defender Kyle Donarski got a hand on the ball but tipped it up into the air. McKinney captured the tipped ball and ran 50 yards for the touchdown. Officially, the Redbird had completed an 81 yard pass and a 29-22 lead.

The crowd of over 6000 had just caught their breath before Metamora's Tracy intercepted Washington quarterback Isaac Fisher on their second play of their ensuing possession. Tracy raced to the end zone from 23 yards out. In a matter of 13 game clock seconds, the Redbirds were up 39-22.

Washington again fought back with a three minute scoring drive. A successful 2 point conversion after the touchdown, put the game within reach for the Panthers at 36-30. But Metamora would use the offensive line strength of Lane Mitzelfelt (#71), Devin Taseff (#54), Preston Butner (#53), Tyler Burch (#57), Dan Murphy (#69) and a rotation of tight ends Ethan Volz (#4), Andrew Jones (#45) and Brandon White (#98) to control the remaining 4 minutes of the game. The Birds powered their way to several clock consuming first downs and an exciting 36-30 victory.

Quarterback Fay lead the Metamora offensive statistics with 102 yards rushing and 181 yards through the air. All the passing yards were to receiver McKinney on the evening as the Redbirds totaled 326 yards of offense. Defensively Metamora gave up a concerning 341 passing yards as the Birds struggled to contain the Panthers receivers. Washington's Fisher was pressured but rarely sacked most of the evening by defensive linemen Dan Kurtz (#55), Drew Cullet (#36), Jones, Butner and linebackers Tom Bieneman (#11), Blake Mason (#44) and Tracy. The Bird gave up a total of 389 yards to the Panthers on the night. Only 48 of those yards were on the ground as Metamora defense stifled Washington's rushing game.

With the victory, Metamora has won 20 of last 21 contests against the Panthers. The Birds successfully avenged last year's defeat at Washington and have taken the Mid-Illini crown 13 of the last 15 seasons. Congratulations Redbirds!

The Redbirds take on the Limestone Rockets this Friday night at Malone Field. Metamora celebrates senior night as the class of 2011 plays their last regular season home game. Come out and show your appreciation to these dedicated seniors. Varsity game time is at 7:30pm.

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