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Bearcats Put On Clinic At Charleston

OCTOBER 01ST 2011 BY UNKNOWN

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By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor

CHARLESTON, Mo. -- The Dexter Bearcats opened up conference play with a bang on Friday night. The ‘Cats racked up over 500 yards of total offense on their way to a 47-0 blowout of the Charleston Blue Jays.

The ‘Cats’ defense put on a clinic during the contest, holding Charleston to just 131 yards of total offense, while forcing five turnovers - 3 fumbles, 2 INT’s - in the squad’s first shutout of the season. Head coach Aaron Pixley was very pleased with the team’s performance in the contest.

“We were pretty loose before the game, but this team seems to go a little better if they can be loose before a game, talk to each other, but they came out with good energy, and we executed from the get-go,” Pixley said. “The running game and passing game on offense were clicking very well, our defense was clicking well, I’m just proud of all of our guys. I feel like it was a complete team win for all of us, and we played hard.”

“Coach Schwab preaches reading keys - that’s what we try to do defensively. I felt like the defense read their keys very well, and even when we gave up four to six yard runs there, there wasn’t a whole lot of room for them to run in - we were getting there, but sometimes we were just a bit late,” Pixley said of his defense. “We tackled well tonight, which is very, very important, and we swarmed to the ball and were physical all night

long.”

The defensive unit was led by senior linebacker Alex Cliff (11 tackles, 1 sack, 1 INT, 1 pass breakup), who really stepped up in Nick Summers’ absence. Defensive tackles Zach Watson and Chase Noe tagged on 10 and 7 tackles, respectively.

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One of the biggest defensive plays in the ballgame was made by sophomore Cody Neldon - with Charleston threatening to score late in the second quarter, Neldon snagged a bobbled pass on the one yard line to kill the drive.

“That pick was a big play for us - they had been hitting a fullback or a wing out in the flat, and it was a very good play for them. They run the naked bootleg so well that it got our outside backers drawn up, and he was wide open out there,” Pixley continued. “We started doing a better job covering it, and we forced a tip on it, and Cody Neldon came in and picked it off.”

On the Bearcats’ next play from scrimmage - a play that was simply intended to get the team’s heels out of their own end zone - senior Josh Overall broke a huge 92 yard run behind some great blocking from his offensive line.

“When I broke that run, I thought ‘I better go, they’re fast’ and when I looked back, they just kept catching up,” Overall said of the play. “I tried my hardest to get [in the end zone], but it was still a big run, and I was happy with it.”

“We came right back out in a Power-I set, and ran an off-tackle play,” Pixley added. “He busted through untouched - the offensive line and lead backs did a great job of blocking for him there - and he had a good game.”

Despite being without seniors Summers and Tyler Miller, the Bearcats’ offensive attack was as potent as ever during the contest, with 524 total yards. Overall led the ‘Cats on the ground, with 158 yards on six carries rushing - he also caught 2 passes for 61 yards and 2 TD’s in the contest. Neldon led the ‘Cats through the air with 84 yards on 2 catches. Dexter signal-caller Cody Stevens had another solid performance, completing 6 of 9 passes for 193 yards and 2 TD’s, and rushing 9 times for 127 yards and 3 TD’s.

“We had a good game tonight, everybody played hard. We dominated on both offense and defense,” Stevens said after the game. “We did what we wanted tonight. It’s always good

to get a shutout on D, Coach Schwab always wants one, and we got him one tonight.”

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Pixley also noted the outstanding performance of the “Big Nasty’s” up front - the Bearcat Offensive Line.

”I think the offensive line blocked extremely well tonight, and they’ve been doing that lately. I don’t think anyone on this football team is without mistakes, but it seems like whenever we do make a mistake, we do a pretty good job of bouncing back and making a positive play,” he said. “Tonight, I think we blocked extremely well up front, and those are kids that don’t get talked about a whole lot, but they are playing well right now.”

With the win, the Bearcats move to 5-1 on the season, and look ahead to one of the toughest teams on their schedule: the Caruthersville Tigers.

“Very, very tough game, quite possibly the toughest team on our schedule. Excellent team, they are well coached. They’ve got some veterans that have been around on that team, and they know how to win,” Pixley said. “Super athletes. We’ll have to have a great week of practice and play our best game of the year.”

The ‘Cats will play host to Caruthersville - now a perfect 6-0 on the season after Friday night’s 38-12 win over Herculaneum - for the culmination of next week’s Homecoming festivities. Kickoff for the contest is scheduled for 7:00 p.m.

For a full breakdown of the game’s stats, [click here](#).

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