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Football 'Cats Set To Battle For District Title

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Football 'Cats Set To Battle For District Title

By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor

It's been a historical season for the Bearcats in 2011 - the squad has already broken the single-season rushing record, and is rapidly approaching the 3,000 yard mark. They've already broken the season scoring record. Cody Stevens has become the first Bearcat to rush and pass for over 1,000 yards in a season. Josh Overall could easily surpass the 1,000 yard rushing mark. Tyler Miller tied a MSHSAA record with 4 picks against New Madrid.

The Bearcats (8-1, 2-0 District) face off against the Fredericktown Black Cats on Thursday night for the Class 3, District 1 Title. Both teams are set to make the playoffs. All that's on the line Thursday night is home-field advantage in the first round of the postseason, but the Bearcats have an opportunity to make more history with a win against the Black Cats: it would be the first time a Bearcat Football team has won back-to-back District Titles since 1986-87, coach Pixley's junior and senior years of high school.

"What it means to me is my kids will have won back-to-back, that's it," Pixley said. "It means they have an opportunity to win a District Title, and it'll be very special to them if they can get it done tomorrow night."

"It's been a good week of practice," Pixley added. "We know that we're in store for a very, very difficult football game; hopefully we'll come out and respond."

The Black Cats run a defense very similar to what the Bearcats faced last week against NMCC - a very active, 'disruption' oriented defense, with a lot of blitz packages to try to cover.

"We expect them to be very active up front on defense; they try to ruin your play before you really get going," he said. "We're going to have to execute better than we have in the past few weeks; this is a good football team."

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The Black Cats are led by junior quarterback Jeremy Gremminger, who is quite similar to Stevens - he's just as likely to run as he is to throw, and has 'big play' capability every time the ball is in his hands.

Pixley noted the skill of the Black Cat running back, James Royer, as well as their offensive line.

"[Gremminger] is basically in the shotgun most of the time. They run a lot of counter-trey with him, and their running backs as well. Their whole running game is very good," Pixley said. "They throw the ball very well. They mix up their play selection - it's not just 80% run, 20% pass - they mix it up well, and that makes it tough on defense. We're going to have to play well up front, in the secondary, and at linebacker - everywhere on defense. We have to be alert, because they'll throw it on a running down and run it on a throwing down. We're going to have to be prepared and alert at all times against this football team."

"They get after you up front on both sides of the ball; probably one of the best offensive lines we've seen all year," Pixley added. "We're going to have to play very well up front."

Both squads are undefeated in District 1 play heading into the contest. Fredericktown notched a blowout win (63-14) against Kennett on Friday night, while keeping things a little closer with NMCC (36-14) in week eight. Both teams also downed Park Hills Central with similar scores - 35-23 (Fredericktown), 37-27 (Dexter) - but the Ste. Genevieve Dragons were able to knock off Fredericktown 46-20 in week three.

The District Championship game is set to get underway with a 7:00 kickoff, with DHS Senior Night festivities at 6:30.

Editor's Note: Dalton Putnam is expected to be out again for the 'Cats; Chase Young and Garrett Wray will be filling in on defense and offense, respectively.

As always, if you can't make it to the game, I'll be Tweeting the scores and big plays of the contest from the sidelines - just keep checking back with our Facebook or Twitter page for updates!

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