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C-ville Tigers Too Much To Handle

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*Article Provide By
The SMT Sport Department*

Last night's game could be coined "the contest between the walking wounded". Both the Dexter Bearcats and the Caruthersville Tigers have lost key players to injury early in the season, and several others from both squads would succumb to injury before the end of the contest.

The Dexter Bearcats wasted no time jumping out to the early lead Friday night at Hopke Field, but 35 unanswered points from the Tigers ruined Dexter's hopes of knocking off the Class 2 State-Ranked Caruthersville Tigers. Even without the services of Darrell Monroe, the leading rusher in Southeast Missouri, the Tigers were able to amass an impressive 331 yards rushing and compiled 390 yards of total offense in route to a resounding 35-7 victory over the visiting Dexter Bearcats.

With the loss, the Bearcats fall to 0-4 on the season. However, there is still great hope that the Bearcats will find success in the remaining portion of this year's campaign.

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"I have been 0-4 before," stated Head Coach Aaron Pixley. "and we have come out and found success later in the season," continued Pixley.

For Pixley, the winningest coach in Bearcat history, this is only the 3rd time in 13 seasons that one of his teams has entered the fifth week of play without a win. In 2008, his Bearcat team bounced back to win 4 of their 5 final games. The following year, after four straight losses, the 2009 Bearcats won 5 of the final 6 games and advanced to a first round playoff game against Potosi. With the this year's toughest opponents in the rear-view mirror, coupled with the new changes in the playoff point system, the 2012 Bearcats remain solidly in the hunt for a coveted post-season playoff berth.

Facing a state ranked team for the third time this season, the Bearcats began the contest with a bang. Senior Chase Young took the opening kickoff for a 64 yard return deep into Tigers territory, showcasing his agility and phenomenal open field speed. Three plays later, and less than two minutes into the game, Ryan Joyner found the end zone from four yards out. After the successful PAT from Brad Wick, the Bearcats took the lead by the score of 7-0.

Feeding off the success of the offense, the Bearcat defense took the field with enthusiasm and an aggressive style of play. The Dexter defense came up huge on the first two Caruthersville possessions making back to back stops on 4th and short, forcing the Tigers to turn the ball over on downs.

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However, despite the excellent field position, the Dexter offense was unable to extend their early lead. Coach Pixley explained that, "After that first drive, we just couldn't find any rhythm on offense." He continued to say that, "This was a very physical game. Caruthersville is big up front and with their aggressive style of play, they really got after us." The Tiger defense forced an interception and a fumble in the opening quarter.

In the final minutes of the opening quarter, Caruthersville used a variety of running personnel to march down the field. A 24 yard run by Myron Woods place the Tigers in the Red Zone. On the following play, the Tigers QB, Tyler Grissom, found the endzone on a 4 yard TD run. The Tigers PAT went wide left, and the Bearcats closed out the first quarter with a lead of 7-6.

Midway through the 2nd quarter, a holding penalty and a sack of DJ Dowdy forced the Bearcats to punt from deep within their own territory. But things went from bad to worse when Hunter Dicky burst through the Dexter line and blocked the Hunter Hayes punt. This resulted in the Tigers tacking the ball over at the Dexter 29 yard line. Capitalizing on this excellent field position, Grissom found Wyron Woods in the corner of the end

zone resulting in a 27 yard touchdown pass. Following a failed two point conversion, the halftime score found the home team with a 12-7 lead.

Pixley explained that "We gave up some big plays late in the first half, and they were able to get back in the game. We went into halftime down 5, but still very much in the game."

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The Tigers were slated to receive the kickoff to start the second half. The Bearcat defense came out strong on the opening Tigers drive, forcing the Tigers to punt. The Hunter Dicky punt however, was a dandy, pinning the Bearcat offense back to their own 4 yard line.

The Bearcat game plan of keeping the ball on the ground was disrupted by injury in the second half of play. Injuries to Dowdy, Joyner and Wick forced the Bearcat coaching staff to rotate in some lesser experienced personnel. The Bearcat drive ended with a fumble recovery by the Tigers, and placed them once again in excellent scoring position to start the drive. On the third play from scrimmage, Jeremy Grant skirted around the left side and found the end zone from 6 yards out. The successful two point conversion by Grissom extended the Tigers lead to 20-7.

"In the second half we go down to one running back," stated Pixley. "It changes your whole outlook on what you would like to do, and it limited what we actually could do." Pixley did however go on to say that "we are getting some benefit from the younger players getting this experience. We have had a freshman and several sophmores that have had to fill in postions, and they have do an nice job."

Caruthersville went on to find the end zone two more times in the third quarter, bringing the score to 35-7. This would ultimately become the final score of the game.

Next week, the Bearcats return home to Charles Bland Stadium to face-off against the struggling Kennett Indians (0-4). Coach Pixley had this to say about next week's game, "We have to stay together, never give up, and move on to our next opponent. It is another conference game, and we are definitely going to go out there to win." Injuries remain a concern for the coaching staff as they look towards the next several games. "We really need to get healthy," said Pixley. "We need to get everybody back practicing, everyday."

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