

Williams breaks record, Illini beat Eastern 47-21

Juice's feet key in win; Zook says tackling still needs attention

BY LAURA HETTIGER
STAFF WRITER

Nearly 10 months had passed since the Fighting Illini football team last tasted victory.

After a lopsided 47-21 win against Eastern Illinois on Saturday, Illini coaches and players are doing all they can to make sure the taste lingers.

"Football games are hard to win," said head coach Ron Zook. "Obviously, you want to play and you want everything to be perfect, and it wasn't perfect and

I think that's probably a good thing ... once again like I said last week in St. Louis, all things are correctable."

After the loss to Missouri, Zook felt the running game and the defense — namely tackling — both needed to be improved. Now, a week later and with a win under his belt, Zook emphasized that the running game improved, but the number of turnovers and again, the lack of tackling, need to change.

On the ground, No. 24 Illinois accumulated 399 yards with a bulk of the yardage coming from quarterback Juice Williams. Totaling 174 running yards and two rushing touchdowns, Williams exhibited a more balanced offensive attack against the Panthers than he did when facing

More inside: For more on Illinois' tackling woes and a former Illini great's criticism of a current player, see the football notebook. **Page 2B**

No. 6 Missouri.

"You establish a running game early that opens up everything else," Williams said. "That was something we were able to do out there today and it felt good."

Williams was so effective carrying the ball in the home opener that the signal caller broke Illinois' single-game rushing record by a quarterback, a record he had previously set in 2006 against Purdue. The 6-foot-2 junior gained 100 yards in the first half alone. He added another 124 yards through the air to his receiving unit by



ADAM BABCOCK THE DAILY ILLINI

Illinois' Chris Duvalt catches a touchdown pass with Eastern's Seymour Loftman trying to knock the ball loose. Illinois beat Eastern, 47-21, on Saturday at newly renovated Memorial Stadium.

game's end.

Completing 16 of 25 passes, Williams still gave up two costly interceptions compared to Eastern's one interception.

"We had a couple balls on the

ground, I had two interceptions," Williams said. "That's something that we cannot do if we want to be successful."

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New and improved Juice leads victory over Panthers



KYLE BETTS

Football columnist

There was no doubt people were excited for the 2008 Illini football home opener. Whether you were a student "preparing" all morning, an alumnus who drove through hours of cornfields or a last-minute construction worker who tracked the number of hours until game time on the wooden walls of the unfinished press box elevator with a pencil, you had to be excited.

And why not? The Illini offense put up huge numbers through the air the previous week against Mizzou and now they were going to unveil their newly renovated stadium in a match-up with sprinkle-covered cupcake, Eastern Illinois. Tasty.

Personally, I was most excited to see the continued development of quarterback Juice Williams as a passer. In fact, I was so excited I even wrote a column about the new and improved, passing Juice. You know, the Juice who could do more with his arm than ever before and who finally looked like the passer we all hoped for.

But then Juice had to go on and break his own single-game quarterback rushing record by running for 174 yards against Eastern. Don't I look like a smart guy?

Of course on a day with so many great players from Illini football's history being in the stadium and the team wearing throwback uniforms, it seemed only fitting for us to get a performance from the vintage Juice of 2007.

"I love to run the ball. It's what I grew up doing," Juice said after the game. "I was blessed with the ability to be able to make plays with my legs, but as a quarterback you have to sit back in the pocket and try to make throws down the field."

... Just not this game.

Juice's 174 yards running was only a cog in the Illini rushing machine that manufactured 399 total yards on the ground en route to a 47-21 victory against the Panthers. Contributors of all shapes, sizes and positions got in on the action and spread the wealth around.

Junior running back Daniel Dufrene slashed around for 99 yards rushing and wide receiver Arrelious Benn used the option to add two rushing touchdowns to his 48 yards on the ground.

"We have different types

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New stadium earns praise from Illini legends



WESLEY FANE THE DAILY ILLINI

Former Illinois linebacker J Leman watches the game against Eastern Illinois from the sidelines Saturday. Leman, who signed as a free agent with the Minnesota Vikings after graduation in 2008, was back at Memorial Stadium with numerous other team alumni for the Renaissance Celebration Game home opener. The Illini defeated the Panthers 47-21. For an audio slideshow of returning Illini greats, check out www.dailyillini.com

Former Illinois players reminisce, pay respect to Illini football traditions

BY WES ANDERSON
STAFF WRITER

While the Illini cruised to a 47-21 victory over the Panthers on Saturday, Illinois football standouts from years past spent game day taking in the changes the program has undergone and reminiscing about their play-

ing days.

The brand new facilities that made their debut on Saturday — particularly the press box and cavernous strength training facility — were received warmly, if perhaps with a hint of envy.

Brad Hopkins, a left tackle for Illinois from 1989-92, blocked

for the likes of Jeff George and was a member of the 1990 team that shared the Big Ten title with Michigan. If he had had access to the amenities the Illini enjoy today, things might have been very different.

"We might have had a couple of Big Ten championships if they had all this when we were playing," Hopkins said.

With the new structures in place, the Memorial Stadium of the early '90s bore little resem-

blance to the newly-renovated stadium that made its debut on Saturday, Hopkins said.

"That scoreboard there (on the south horseshoe) was on the north side, a big old scoreboard, you could see IMPE on the other side of it," Hopkins said, pointing to what is now the student section. "We used to stand out there on that cold field, and the wind would be coming right through there. Now, it's not even IMPE anymore — what

is that?"

Hopkins, who went on to play 13 years in the NFL for the Oilers and Titans and lives in Nashville, Tenn., also has not-so-fond memories of "The Bubble," an inflated dome placed over the field for winter practices. In 2001, the Bubble was finally retired and replaced by the Irwin Indoor Practice Facility.

"The Bubble was horrible,

Tennis alumni revisit their Illinois careers

BY BRET GREENBERG
STAFF WRITER

Nobody told 1966 Illinois alumna Lois Diller there was an age limit for the 2008 Alumni Weekend round-robin tennis tournament. So at 63 years young, the Chicago native laced up one more time Friday at the Atkins Tennis Center for the Alumni Reunion Weekend.

"I never got tired of tennis," Diller said. "They never burned us out like they do these days. I still have lots of friends that play with me."

Geared up in an orange top and a blue tennis skirt down to her knees, Diller started the night hitting with sophomore Annie McCarthy on the outdoor courts.

"She made me run a lot, and now I'm tired," McCarthy said with a smile. "She has a shorter compact stroke and a crazy slice."

Diller keeps herself busy working five days a week at McFetridge Sports Center in Chicago, teaching tennis lessons for up to six hours a day.

"I teach anyone from 4-year-olds to seniors," Diller said. "The only real break I get from tennis is in August when there aren't any lessons."

Outside of teaching lessons, Diller participates in a doubles league on weekends and a Chicago summer league during her time off.



DONALD EGGERT THE DAILY ILLINI

Past and present Illinois tennis players high-five after doubles match at the Alumni Reunion, Friday at Atkins Tennis Center.

When round two of the event rolled around, tournament coordinator and former men's player Brandon Davis asked Diller if she was open to playing in a six-game doubles match.

With a nod, she was paired with junior Megan Fudge and was set to play against McCarthy and 2007 alumna Emily Wang. It was an up and down match, with both Diller and Fudge spending time up at the net, but in the end, Wang and McCarthy were too much for them, winning 4-2.

"She is still so fit," Fudge said. "I hon-

estly think we lost because of me."

After her match, Diller noted some of the evolving nuances of the game since she left it officially 42 years ago.

"People hit the ball so much harder these days," Diller said. "Luckily the new rackets can help the elderly keep up. I also enjoy learning the new shots that are out there. I need to keep up with my students who are in their twenties."

When asked about her fondest memory

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Illini fall to Stanford at weekend invitational

Bangert's 9 kills not enough to hold off No. 3 rank Cardinals

BY KATE MUNSON
STAFF WRITER

The No. 19 Illinois volleyball squad had what might have been its toughest competition of the season last weekend. The team played in the Billiken Invitational in St. Louis, Mo., where No. 3 Stanford highlighted its tournament schedule.

The Fighting Illini began the weekend strong, defeating the host team, Saint Louis, in front of a crowd of 1,016 in the Billikens' new Chaifetz Arena.

After dropping the first set 21-25, Illinois fought back to take the final three sets 25-20, 25-18 and 25-18.

Sophomore outside hitter and reigning National Player of the Week Laura DeBruiler had only one kill in six attacks in the first set before tallying 13 kills in the final three sets. She hit .345 to finish with a match-high 14 kills.

Defensively, the Illini had a 13-4 advantage on the block, thanks in large part to sophomore middle blocker Abby Nelson, who had eight block assists

to go along with seven kills.

Saint Louis may not have been a ranked opponent, but Hardin saw the match as a high-pressure situation with Saint Louis playing good volleyball in front of a large home crowd.

"Saint Louis is a really great team. And (Anne) Kordes, my former assistant coach, she has done a great job there. She's really got them playing good volleyball and believing in themselves," Hardin said. "So, it's our chance to see how our younger players would respond on the road and how our team was going to be on the road and they handled the pressure really well."

The ranked opponent came on Saturday, as Illinois faced one of the best in the nation in No. 3 Stanford.

Sophomore middle blocker Johannah Bangert hit .571 with nine kills for the Illini in her return home to Missouri. But the Fighting Illini fell to the Cardinal in three sets 25-15, 25-22, 25-22.

"One of the big things we have to take away from that is just the fact that just because they're ranked so high, we still

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