

Shells Storm Past Oilers In Inaugural "Refinery Bowl"

by Nathan Tucker, Sports Reporter
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ROXANA - It's not the first matchup between the Oilers of East Alton-Wood River and the Shells of Roxana on the football field, but Friday's edition of the Riverbend rivalry game was the first with its new name: The Refinery Bowl, complete with a big new trophy that will mark each year's winner.

The inaugural installment of the Refinery Bowl, on Roxana's Senior Night, saw the Shells run, run, and run some more en route to a big 45-0 win.

The Oilers won the toss and elected to receive the opening kick, but couldn't break through the stingy Shells defense. Evan Wells opened the scoring for Roxana on their first drive of the ballgame.

Terrel Graves added a rushing score of his own in the first quarter. Roxana's rushing attack was about as rampant as the pouring rain that came through towards the end of the first quarter.

The rain sent many fans scrambling for cover, and the more-prepared braved the rain with an umbrella or a rain jacket.

"Very wet," confirmed EAWR head coach Gary Herron after the game. If the rain wasn't dampening the EAWR sideline enough, Roxana put up three more TDs in the second quarter.

Two more Evan Wells rushing touchdowns saw the Shells running back break the school single-season record in that category.

Chris Walleck scampered for a QB keeper to get on the scoreboard himself, making it a 35-0 game before half.

In the last meeting between these two teams at Charles Raich Field in Roxana, in 2021, the Oilers shut out the Shells 34-0. The Shells had bested that scoreline in just two quarters.

“We knew they were a good team, obviously, everybody knows that they’re a good team,” said Gary Herron on his cross-town opponents Friday night. “We really focused on stopping their outside runs, their jet sweeps. I think a couple of times, we were there. But a couple of times we line up wrong, its fundamental stuff and (Roxana) took advantage of it.”

Roxana took their time on their first drive of the second half, slowing down their usually up-tempo offense with a big lead. Chris Walleck once again rushed for a score to start the third quarter. Seniors were responsible for every touchdown scored by the Shells on Friday night.

“It’s hard to put into words what all of those seniors have meant for our program,” said Roxana head coach Wade DeVries, on how his seniors have impacted the team. “We’ve got 18 (seniors) with us, and they started during the COVID year. They’ve seen the lowest of lows, they were a part of the inaugural year in (the Cahokia) conference, they were part of being middle of the road in conference, and now because of their hard work, they’re part of being at the top of the conference.

“That’s a testament to the hard work they’ve put in... (Seniors) could have came off a 7-4 year with a playoff victory and been complacent, that was one of my concerns following last year. But I went in that weight room in the dog days of winter and I saw guys putting in the work, just like they had the previous years.”

With the Shells cruising with a 42-0 lead, the running clock started. Roxana was able to play a bit of keep away, and took that lead to the fourth and final quarter.

A long Shells drive that took a good chunk of the third quarter going into the fourth ended in a Joe Newton field goal. The Oilers took over again with 10 minutes to go and a running clock, but failed to move the ball.

A late Roxana mishandled snap resulted in a fumble, one that the Oilers pounced on for one last series before the running clock ran out. The final horn blew, Roxana had won 45-0, and claimed the Refinery Bowl trophy.

It's another win in a perfect season so far for Wade DeVries's football team in Roxana, who has overseen the turnaround of Roxana's football fortunes. As mentioned, the last time this game was played at Roxana High School, it was the Oilers running away with a shutout win.

"The job's not done yet," said DeVries postgame. "We've got Marquette in their place next week, and we've got to strap it up and be ready to go again."

As DeVries alludes to there, the 8-0 Shells turn their attention to their final regular season contest, a trip to Public School Stadium to take on Marquette Catholic next Friday night.

With high hopes and big expectations starting to circle around this Roxana football team, DeVries noted that his team isn't looking ahead to postseason play just yet.

"The emphasis we had this week was to focus on us," said DeVries. "Focus on what we do and focus to playing to the best of our ability. We can't really look forward because we're not going to know who we play (in the postseason) until next Saturday."

On the other side of the ball, EAWR falls to 0-8, with a Senior Night of their own next Friday when they host Red Bud.

"Our Senior Night, and Red Bud's a good team," said Gary Herron following Friday's game. "(Red Bud) gets after it, they're aggressive. I'll see if we learn our lesson and be more aggressive next week, and hopefully, we put some points on the board and maybe get a win."

