



# SPORTS

## Defensive struggles plague SLUH in season opener loss to MICDS

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CORE STAFF

Despite a dominant first quarter, the Jr. Bills ultimately fell to the MICDS Rams by a score of 42-28. The offense made major plays in the first half, but couldn't keep the momentum going in the second half, as the defense missed several tackles and began to fall behind.

MICDS deferred the opening kick off and the Jr. Bills' offense looked scalding hot right out of the gates.

Senior halfback Derrick Baker ran the ball on the first six plays of the game, and was able to flip the field. Senior quarterback Luke Johnston completed his first pass across the middle to senior wideout Chris Brooks for 27 yards which put the Jr. Bills at the goal line.

Baker finished the drive

off with a one-yard touchdown run for his and the team's first touchdown of the year with 7:15 remaining in the first quarter.

The Jr. Bills' defense got off the field in just six plays on the Rams' opening drive.

The offense opened their second drive on their own 17-yard line, and it took them only five plays to march 83 yards down the field for their second touchdown of the game. This quick hitting drive was capped off with a 38-yard touchdown to senior Isaac Thompson which put the Jr. Billikens up 14-0 with 3:19 left in the first quarter.

The Jr. Bills' defense forced their first three and out of the season which, again, put the ball right back into the hands of Johnston on the opposing 29-yard line.

On the first play of the second quarter, Johnston

connected with his big tight end, junior Zach Ortwerth, for a five-yard score to put the Jr. Bills up 21-0.

It seemed as if this may be a cakewalk of a game, but MICDS never waved the white flag.

"You look at their sideline when it was 21-0 and you'd think they were up 21-0. They were calm, they were cool, there was no sense of panic, and that's what good teams do," said coach Adam Cruz.

MICDS punched back on a drive highlighted by five runs of 12 or more yards which was capped off by a 21-yard rushing touchdown by their halfback, Steven Hall.

The Jr. Bills put together a lengthy drive, but were forced to settle for a 33-yard field goal after it stalled. Placekicker Connor

Greninger, however, missed his first attempt of the year which gave MICDS another chance to score in the waning moments of the first half.

On the final play of the half, MICDS wide receiver Oliver Rohan gained a step on the secondary and corralled a 77-yard touchdown reception which put the Rams only down a score going into the locker room.

After deferring to begin the game, the Rams received the second half kick off and proceeded to run the ball down the throat of the Jr. Bills defense.

After running the ball on nine consecutive plays, the Rams knotted the game at 21 on a 10-yard touchdown pass to Tyler Schutie with 6:34 remaining in the third quarter.

The Jr. Bills found some much-needed life and were able to take their lone drive

of the third quarter the length of the field to regain the lead 28-21. The drive, highlighted by a 20-yard run by Johnston and a 33-yard completion to Thompson, was capped off by a 9-yard touchdown pass to sophomore Joe Harris with 55.9 seconds left in the quarter on a crucial third and 9 play.

Despite this burst of momentum, the Jr. Bills offense was shut out the remainder of the game, unable to add any insurance to their lead.

Johnston believed the Bills hurt themselves more than anything.

"We had too many penalties," he admitted.

With 11:00 remaining in the game, the Rams tied the game at 28 with a 33-yard touchdown pass over the middle to PJ Behan. The throw was quarterback Reagan Andrews' third passing touchdown on only his sixth completion.

MICDS continued to run circles around the Jr. Bills in the remaining time, easily scoring the go ahead touchdown on a 7-yard quarterback scramble with 5:22 remaining in the game.

"Defensively we got kind of tired in the second half and started missing a lot of tackles," said Thompson. "We started to make mistakes and play kind of sloppy and MICDS kept playing hard."

Back on offense, the Jr. Bills were backed up in their own territory for a second and 16. Johnston fired a strike on a deep ball to sophomore Ryan Wingo, but the pass was broken up on an early hit from the MICDS defender which caused Wingo's helmet to fly off. The Jr. Bills thought

they had caught a break, but the referee never threw a flag.

In the ensuing days, the referees actually reached out to the SLUH coaching staff and admitted that they missed this pivotal call.

SLUH was forced to punt and MICDS drove down the field and scored once more on a 1-yard touchdown run which cemented the win for the Rams by a score of 42-28.

The defense did not force any turnovers, but they were led by senior Dontavion Sullivan with 11 tackles, followed by fellow senior captain Philip Bone, who contributed 8 tackles.

On the offensive side of the ball, Johnston finished the game with three touchdowns, no turnovers and 293 yards on 16-for-27 passing.

Baker made the most of his opening game opportunities with 136 yards on the ground and an impressive 6.5 ypc.

Brooks and Thompson each rattled off a couple big plays which gave Thompson 114 all purpose yards and Brooks 84 yards on three catches, yet Harris, a name to look for in the coming weeks, led the team in receptions with five for 46 yards.

The football game scheduled for tonight against Roosevelt has been cancelled due to Covid quarantines at Roosevelt.

The Jr. Bills will shift their attention to next Friday for their MCC opener against Chaminade at SLUH at 6 p.m.

Looking back on Friday's opening loss, Thompson believes that, despite this team's opening loss, the Jr. Bills will still be a dangerous team to play in the coming weeks of the season.



Derrick Baker rumbles through MICDS defenders

photo | courtesy of viclewchenko

## XC underclassmen impress at O'Fallon, Varsity gears up for Granite City

BY JACKSON COOPER AND PETER JAMES  
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After months of summer running and four weeks of practice, St. Louis U. High's cross country program finally starts its season this week with two meets on the other side of the river.

All freshmen and sophomores began their seasons on Wednesday, Sept. 1, at the O'Fallon Futures Meet, which was held at O'Fallon High School's Milburn Campus. The course, which features a straightaway-laden 2-mile loop that runners complete one and a half times, was turned muddy in some places by Tuesday night's rains. This obstacle was not enough to stop some of SLUH's underclassmen from having excel-

lent races to begin their season.

SLUH's highest finisher in the freshman classification was Gus Talleur, who finished in third place with an outstanding three-mile time of 18:03, which already earns him a JV letter. Talleur was followed by Logan Phillips, who earned a top-10 finish with a time of 19:17.

For head coach Joe Porter, the freshman race offered a good starting point for what he hopes to be a successful year for the freshmen.

"It doesn't matter if you were Gus and you were the top freshman or if you were further back in the pack," said Porter, "There was a point for us to get better, and we finally got to get out there and race. It's important to remember that we're a long way from the

races where we want to run our fastest, so this is a great starting point for us to kind of work forward and keep continuing to get better."

However, the biggest success for the Jr. Bills came later on in the sophomore race, with first-year transfer Mason Scargall coming away with the victory and nearly claiming a course record in the process. Scargall was followed closely by his classmates Anthony Zangara and Charlie Murray, who finished second and third, respectively.

"We were able to get the top three overall in the sophomore race," said Porter, "Mason, who just transferred from Maplewood, and then Anthony and Charlie went 1-2-3, so that was a great race for them. Mason, based on the 5K conversion that we got, ended

up with a 1:06 PR, which was great as well."

Tomorrow, the entire team runs at the Granite City Invitational at Wilson Park in Granite City, Ill. Like O'Fallon, Granite City is a 3-mile race as opposed to the more common 5 kilometer race, which features virtually no significant elevation change, often results in fast times. The meet also typically features very few, if any, Missouri teams, giving SLUH runners what is often their only chance to race against teams from around Illinois.

"We're just trying to kick the tires and see where we're at (for Granite City)," said Porter. "Edwardsville has a really good team, they're ranked fourth in the state of Illinois right now, so I definitely feel like it'll be a

good opportunity to compete and try to stick with them."

The top seven varsity runners will compete in the Varsity race at 9:10 a.m., which will be followed by the freshman/sophomore race, which will feature SLUH's top seven finishers from O'Fallon. All remaining runners will race in the Open Race at 11 a.m.

SLUH will look to continue a recent pattern of success at Granite City, and hopes to take home the team title in the Varsity race for a third consecutive year.

Further on the horizon is the return of the SLUH-hosted Forest Park XC Festival on Sept. 11, which typically features elite teams from as far away as Chicago and Kansas City, and was cancelled last year due to Covid-19 concerns.



Art | Alex Deiters