

Thunderbirds open season against Otters; Brendan Burns put T-birds on the board with late-game touchdown

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SWANTON - The MVU Thunderbirds hosted the Otter Valley Otters in the first varsity football game held at MVU in two years. The game itself was a testament to the dedication and perseverance of the players, coaches, and families at MVU.

The Otters scored early in the first quarter, leaving the quarter with a 20-0 lead. MVU limited the Otters to 6 points in the second quarter, leaving the first half down 26-0.

MVU recovered a fumbled punt return, and on the possession, Brendan Burns took a 25-yard run into Otters' territory. Shortly after, Harley Vorse broke another run for a first down as time ran out in the third quarter.

Unable to capitalize on the drive, the Thunderbirds punted, returning the ball to the Otters, who ran the ball for a touchdown with seven minutes in the final quarter.

As the fourth quarter waned, Burns ran a sweep on the left side of the field, breaking into a long run for the first down. A quarter back keeper from Avery Morris also resulted in a first down; shortly after, Burns raced down the line, ball in hand, to score the Thunderbirds' first touchdown.

The Otters secured the 34-6 victory.

"It's amazing to be back out playing football. We had a great game, and we can come out better and stronger next week," said Burns.

"We're here to focus on what's in front of us and the bigger picture. We have amazing coaches who brought us together like a family. Win or lose--what matters is that we're together at the end."

MVU coach Chad Cioffi was glad to see the team playing tackle football after last year's Covid-19 break.

"It's been three years since we've been at the varsity level and two years since we played tackle, so it felt good to be back here on a Saturday afternoon playing football like we used to," said Cioffi.

"Brendan definitely had a good game, and so did Harley Vorse; he made plays and stepped up in areas, knowing he didn't have a sub on either side of the ball. He showed his four quarters of stamina and endurance.

"Cole Tipper is another guy (who played a good game), and Owen Kane played his first football game at the varsity level and looked like a natural out there.

"We had a lot of bright spots, and the things we weren't doing that we'd like to are very correctable. We need to finish our tackles with our legs, not leaving our feet, and not making arm tackles, but that's part of not tackling for two years.

"As a team, we've preached that we've got three things we can control: our effort, our attitude, and our gratitude. We saw a lot of that out of the team. When the going gets tough, they showed their true colors as a team. No one was pointing the blame; they were coaching the younger guys up, showing gratitude to the guys who were making plays, controlling their attitude in a positive way, and giving full effort.

"We had great sportsmanship on both sides, and that's what I like to see as a coach. We're here to shape these athletes into good people on and off the field; football is three months, but life is forever."

MVU travels to BFA Fairfax on Saturday, September 11 for a 1 pm game.