

Friday night was a unique one in Independence, as the 2025 season kicked off against Dixie Heights. Throughout a scoreless first quarter, it seemed as if the Pioneer defense couldn't get off the field. Short drives with multiple holding and false start penalties held the offense back, and the defense had trouble stopping the run. However, as the game went on, Senior RB Landon Brown proved to be a much-needed swing of momentum for this offense, scoring the season's first points with a long touchdown run. I spoke with Brown postgame, and he was quick to the point about his team's progression as the game developed.

"We started out slow, but we really got it going in the second half. We've got some new quarterbacks in, so it was something different."

Despite a strong performance in the running game, it proved to be a struggle for both QBs Friday, as Senior Caleb French and Sophomore Grant Webb each threw an interception. Webb started the game, and continued to share snaps with French as the game went on. The strongest example of the struggles for both QBs came at the halfway point of the first quarter, when Senior Caleb French's first pass was intercepted by the Dixie defense. However, once the second half began, it seemed a switch was flipped for the two quarterbacks. French had multiple runs for over 10 yards each, and Webb threw for a touchdown to Sophomore WR Forest Hughes that seemingly put any hope of a Dixie comeback to bed. When asked about starting the season on such a high note, Hughes was very optimistic as to what a big first game could spell for his Sophomore campaign.

"It's great, honestly. Great coaching, great plays we ran, and getting open as a Sophomore is a crazy experience. [...] It just shows how we're going to develop."

Despite the slow start, the Pioneers went into the half up 6-3, and never looked back. In addition to Hughes' receiving touchdown, a Jordan Pendleton rushing touchdown kept the momentum swinging Simon Kenton's way, leading to a 20-10 victory. The Pioneers will have their first road test this Friday, August 29th, when they take on Western Brown (OH).