

WEEK TWO  
**WESTERN ILLINOIS AT ILLINOIS**

CHAMPAIGN – The Illinois backup quarterback question was answered – with authority.

Freshman MJ Rivers II replaced an injured AJ Bush Jr. to start the second quarter and sparked the Illini offense in a 34-14 victory over Western Illinois in front of an announced crowd of 39,252 at Memorial Stadium.

Rivers, a 3-star Texas prospect, rose up the depth chart during training camp, beating out fellow freshman Matt Robinson. Sophomore quarterback Cam Thomas, who was the lone scholarship quarterback on the roster, left the team this week for “personal reasons.”  
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Bush suffered an injury on the penultimate play of the first quarter, an improvised 14-yard pass to Reggie Corbin. Rivers and Robinson both warmed up, but Rivers got the call and made the most of it.

Rivers (9-for-16 for 105 passing yards; 36 rushing yards) threw two second-quarter touchdown passes to Edwin Carter, who left the game with a right leg injury on the second one.

Mike Epstein led Illinois with 105 yards rushing.

The Illinois defense struggled early, allowing WIU to rack up 128 yards and earn a 7-0 lead in the first quarter. But the Illini then buckled down, limiting WIU to minus-2 yards on just nine total plays in the second quarter. The defense produced five straight 3-and-outs and scored when Stanley Green return Dawson DeGroot’s blocked punt for a touchdown to give Illinois a 24-7 lead midway through the third quarter.

Western responded with a 49-yard touchdown pass from Sean McGuire to Tony Tate to trim the lead to 24-14. On its next drive, WIU then drove into the Illini red zone, but Kendall Smith forced a fumble to negate the threat. On the ensuing drive, Illinois made a field goal to stretch its lead to 27-14.

The defense then sealed it as Michael Marchese picked off McGuire (24-for-36 for 276 yards, 2 TDs, 2 INTs) for his first career interception and returned it to the WIU 4-yard line. Two plays later, Reggie Corbin (77 total yards) plunged in for a 3-yard touchdown to seal it.

Robinson entered at quarterback late in the game, rushing for 10 yards.

Illinois improved to 17-0 all-time against FCS opponents and is 3-0 all-time against Western Illinois.

Final	1	2	3	4	T
WIU	7	0	7	0	14
ILL	0	14	10	10	34

**Scoring Summary** -----

	WIU	ILL
<b>FIRST QUARTER</b>		
WIU TD 12:07		
S. McGuire pass,to G. Wahee for 20 yds for a TD, (S. Crosa KICK)	7	0
6 plays, 75 yards, 2:53		
<b>SECOND QUARTER</b>		
ILL TD 7:14		
M. Rivers pass,to E. Carter for 18 yds for a TD, (C. McLaughlin KICK)	7	7
5 plays, 45 yards, 1:55		
ILL TD 2:16		
M. Rivers pass,to E. Carter for 16 yds for a TD, (C. McLaughlin KICK)	7	14
6 plays, 69 yards, 2:58		
<b>THIRD QUARTER</b>		
ILL FG 12:16		
C. McLaughlin 54 yd FG GOOD		17
9 plays, 36 yards, 2:44		
ILL TD 7:22		
A. Fellner punt blocked by,blocked by,S. Green return for 2 yds for a TD, (C. McLaughlin KICK)	7	24
3 plays, 8 yards, 1:34		
WIU TD 6:23		
S. McGuire pass,to T. Tate for 49 yds for a TD, (S. Crosa KICK),ILLINOIS penalty, roughing the kicker ( Yards) declined	14	24
3 plays, 75 yards, 0:59		
<b>FOURTH QUARTER</b>		
ILL FG 12:20		
C. McLaughlin 46 yd FG GOOD		27
5 plays, 44 yards, 2:30		
ILL TD 11:22		
R. Corbin run for 3 yds for a TD, (C. McLaughlin KICK)	14	34
2 plays, 3 yards, 0:37		

Team Stats	WIU	ILL
First Downs	18	20
Total Yards	361	376
Total Plays	63	70
Avg Gain Per Play	5.7	5.4
Net Yards Rushing	66	238
Rushes	21	47
Yards Per Rush	3.1	5.1
Net Yards Passing	295	138
Comp-Att	26-42	14-23
Yards Per Pass	7.0	6.0
Times Sacked	1	3
Yds Lost To Sacks	-8	-17
Interceptions	2	0
Punts	6	8
Punt Average	0.0	0.0
Penalties	6	14
Penalty Yards	52	149
Fumbles	1	0
Fumbles Lost	1	0
Possession	26:43	33:17

**Individual Stats**

**RUSHING**

	Rush	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
WIU					
Tony Tate	3	41	13.7	0	18
Steve McShane	7	28	4.0	0	11
Max Norris	5	10	2.0	0	5
Larry Harleston	1	3	3.0	0	3
Clint Ratkovich	1	-2	-2.0	0	0
Sean McGuire	4	-14	-3.5	0	3
ILL					
Mike Epstein	8	105	13.1	0	38
Reggie Corbin	15	63	4.2	1	26
M.J. Rivers	9	36	4.0	0	10
Ra'Von Bonner	7	22	3.1	0	12
Matt Robinson	2	10	5.0	0	5
Nate Hobbs	1	4	4.0	0	4
AJ Bush	5	3	0.6	0	5
Jakari Norwood	1	-1	-1.0	0	0

**PASSING**

	Comp	Att	Yds	Y/A	TD	Int	QBRat
WIU							
Sean McGuire	24	36	276	7.7	2	2	140.9
Connor Sampson	2	6	19	3.2	0	0	25.0
ILL							
M.J. Rivers	9	16	105	6.6	2	0	152.6
AJ Bush	5	7	33	4.7	0	0	111.0

**RECEIVING**

	Rec	Yds	Avg	TD	Long
WIU					
George Wahee	6	104	17.3	1	31
Tony Tate	3	68	22.7	1	49
John Brunner	4	47	11.8	0	17
Isaiah LeSure	2	26	13.0	0	17
Steve McShane	6	26	4.3	0	17
Clint Ratkovich	4	21	5.3	0	14
Victavious Johnson	1	3	3.0	0	3
ILL					
Sam Mays	4	42	10.5	0	16
Edwin Carter	2	34	17.0	2	18
Trenard Davis	4	28	7.0	0	15
Reggie Corbin	1	14	14.0	0	14
Jordan Holmes	1	14	14.0	0	14
- ld	1	8	8.0	0	8
Mike Epstein	1	5	5.0	0	5
Dominic Stampley	1	1	1.0	0	1