

The Times-Reporter

Football Preview Section • Wednesday, Aug. 26, 2015 • FridayNightOhio.com

NEW FRIDAY NIGHT LIGHTS

Future looks bright as Woody Hayes Quaker Stadium gets upgrade.

SEE PAGE 20



■ (From left) Kyle Cunningham, Bret Ricklic, Logan Ford and Tyler "T" Carter will be playing under new lights at Woody Hayes Quaker Stadium in New Philadelphia this season.

TIMES-REPORTER JIM CUMMINGS

Every area team featured inside

Dover has some holes to fill. PAGE 3

Garaway sets bar high again. PAGE 6

Bonus college, NFL coverage.

Key pieces back for Quakers

BY DARRIN LAUTENSCHLEGER

Times-Reporter sports correspondent

NEW PHILADELPHIA

A year ago, the New Philadelphia Quakers played with an inner rage that came from some in the community and around the region who said it would be a “down year” for the football program.

The Quakers responded with a fighting attitude that carried them to a solid 7-4 season and had them going toe to toe with highly touted Tri-Valley in a first-round playoff game before running out of gas in the fourth quarter.

The best news about all of that for the fall of 2015?

Many of the key players on last season's team are back, and they are a year older, a little bigger and stronger, and excited and ready to take on a challenging nonleague schedule before jumping into play in what appears to be a rugged East Central Ohio League.

Eight starters return, several others played key backup roles and a total of 23 lettermen are back for New Philadelphia.

“This is a real fun group to coach because they are such an energetic and focused group of players,” said New Philadelphia head coach Matt Dennison, who is entering his 13th season leading the Quakers, including seven of the school's eight appearances in the post-season. “The thing I like about them is that they strive to get better and are concerned about their fundamentals and doing the little things correctly.”

There is plenty to be excited about on offense and defense, as the Quakers have their leading passer and tackler back — and both of them are just juniors.

Quarterback Logan Bitikofer (6-foot-3, 185 pounds) put up the fifth-best passing performance in school history last fall with 1,507 yards and 18 touchdowns — the most ever by a New Phila sophomore.

“The nice thing now is the progress he made in the offseason, which should make him exponentially better this season,” Dennison said.

The offense's other two returning starters are senior wideout Braden Young (6-2, 160) and center Joe Delatore (5-11, 225), also a senior.

Expected to be joining Bitikofer in the backfield in the team's shotgun set are senior H-back Bret Ricklic (5-10, 170),



DENNISON



BITIKOFER



BOLLON



DELATORE



CROWTHERS

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH Matt Dennison (13th year, 92-35).

2014 RECORD 7-4 overall, Regional quarterfinalist, 4-1 for second place in the Scarlet Division of the East Central Ohio League.

DIVISION III Region 7.

RETURNING LETTERMEN WR/DB Cade Bates (6-1, 155, Sr.); OL/DL Saimasina Burgess (6-3, 225 Sr.); RB/DB Tyler Carter (5-6, 145, Sr.); WR/DB Micah Crowthers (6-0, 160, Sr.); WR/LB Kyle Cunningham (5-10, 180, Sr.); C/DL Joe Delatore (5-11, 225, Sr.); RB/DE Logan Ford (5-11, 205, Sr.); RB/DB Jordan Griffin (5-10, 165, Sr.); TE/DE Tucker Hill (5-11, 205, Sr.); FB/LB Kaden Hurst (6-0, 200, Sr.); TE/DL Kurt Pallotto (5-10, 205, Sr.) OL/DL Zach Rhine (5-11, 200, Sr.); H-Back/DB Bret Ricklic (5-10, 170, Sr.); OL/DL Kyle Swinderman (6-0, 260, Sr.); WR/DB Christian Taylor (5-8, 145, Sr.); WR/DB Braden Young (6-2, 160, Sr.); QB/DB Logan Bitikofer (6-3, 185, Jr.); RB/LB Blake Bollon (6-1, 180, Jr.); TE/LB Lukas Kimble (6-0, 185, Jr.); OL/DL Seth Parker (6-3, 210, Jr.); WR/DB Kyle Perkins (5-8, 135, Jr.); WR/DB Peyton Speicher (5-11, 150, Jr.); QB/DB Cameron Alberts (5-8, 180, Soph.).

THE BOTTOM LINE Unlike last season, the Quakers have plenty of experience in numerous spots on the field returning for the start of this season and should be able to present opponents with plenty of varying looks and strategies on offense and defense. A tough nonconference schedule awaits to open the season and a bundle of computer playoff points will be available through the season's first five weeks. That said, the Quakers will need to leave the predictions and prognostications to fans and coaches, and keep their focus solely on the game at hand, because each week will present its own challenges.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, at Canton Cent. Catholic, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, West Holmes, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, at Perry, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, at Tallmadge, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, Northwest, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, Claymont, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, Zanesville, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, at Marietta, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, Cambridge, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, at Dover, 7

senior fullback Kaden Hurst (6-0, 200) and senior running back Tyler “T” Carter (5-6, 145). The wideouts with Young will be junior Peyton Speicher (5-11, 150) and senior Micah Crowthers (6-0, 160), with seniors Kurt Pallotto (5-10, 205) and Tucker Hill (5-11, 205) at tight end.

Up front, Delatore will be surrounded by seniors Zach Rhine (5-11, 200) and Kyle Swinderman (6-0, 260) at the guards, and juniors Ryan Daberko (6-3, 275) and Seth Parker (6-3, 210) at the tackles. Colton McAfee (5-10, 160), a junior, also figures to be in the mix along the line. Despite having only one starter back on the line, Dennison said the group has excellent quickness and

footwork, and is coming together nicely.

“We can be very diverse this year with the returning players we have and the mix of skills they bring,” Dennison said. “It is easier to present multiple formations and especially motion action with this group. I like our depth, too, because we have up to four running backs that can carry the ball effectively, and a lot of kids who can play as receivers and block, too.”

On defense, five starters are back, including junior linebacker Blake Bollon (6-1, 180), who led New Phila in tackles last season. The other returning starters are senior defensive end Logan Ford (5-11, 205), senior linebacker Kyle Cunningham (5-10, 180), and Carter and Crowthers in

the defensive backfield.

Seeing plenty of time on defense will be defensive linemen Ford, Delatore and Hill, junior Skyler Postel (6-2, 225), and senior Saimasina Burgess (6-3, 225), a transfer from Hawaii. The linebackers with Bollon and Cunningham will include juniors Lukas Kimble (6-0, 185) and Linkon Sealock (5-10, 155). Seniors Cade Bates (6-1, 155) and Christian Taylor (5-8, 145) will play at defensive back with Carter and Crowthers.

“We are deep at defensive line with about seven guys who can play, and we have two of our four linebackers back, so that is another strong point,” Dennison said. “We're very fortunate at defensive back because it's very beneficial to have that group and their experience. They are a physically aggressive group by nature and can take charge of the defense.”

The Quakers open the season with three of their first four games on the road in Stark and Summit counties, and the first five weeks overall will test them.

New Phila opens the season Friday at Canton Central Catholic (which reached the Division V state title game last season), hosts defending Ohio Cardinal Conference champ West Holmes in Week 2 and then heads to playoff teams Perry and Tallmadge the next two weeks, before hosting Northwest in the fifth game.

“We've got a meat grinder to work through, and it's a great schedule,” said Dennison, who earned his 100th career coaching victory last season, is 92-35 at New Phila overall and the school's all-time winningest coach. “We think this is as tough a schedule as is out there for Division III teams to be playing.”

The ECOL also is becoming a deeper, more competitive conference, he said, adding that the Scarlet Division is strong.

“Our league is as good as any, and we have turned ourselves into a very good football league,” he said. “You have to start with the defending champ in Dover — they're always going to be there. And then you look at Zanesville and the job they have done with their program, along with Cambridge, which has a lot of kids back, and Marietta is building things the right way, and you can see why the league should be tough.”

“Our job will be to maintain our focus on what is directly in front of us because that will be challenging enough.”

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Tornadoes have holes to fill

BY ROGER METZGER

Times-Reporter sports editor

DOVER

For the past 20 seasons, the mantra from Dover head football coach Dan Ifft has been the same.

“Like every year, I’m cautiously optimistic,” Ifft said as he talked about the 2015 edition of the Tornadoes. “We have a lot of kids who have played some, but they are in different roles this year so it’s kind of fun to see kids grow and develop.”

Gone are the likes of Cory Contini, Merrick Mamarella, Jake Armstrong and Corey Bambeck, who have long since graduated from a team that went 8-3, nailed down a 17th postseason appearance and won the East Central Ohio League Scarlet Division title in 2014.

“Everyone has to be better this year,” said Ifft, who is 178-52 going into his 21 season at the Dover helm. “If you lettered a year ago, you have to be better this year.”

“We have a lot of questions, but not many answers,” added Ifft. “Hopefully, the answers are good ones. It’s all about the process of developing a team.”

Returning lettermen for the Tornadoes include free safety Austin Evans, wide receiver/defensive back DeAndre Clark, outside linebacker Jaylin Woods, outside linebacker Drew Moore, outside linebacker Jared Torch, running back/defensive lineman Lucas Sherwood, running back/inside linebacker Andrué Nolen, running back/defensive back Peyton Coyne, inside linebacker Joseph House, inside linebacker Gage Abel, two-way lineman Zack Yackey, offensive lineman Talor Hidey, two-way lineman Parker Zumbar, offensive lineman Ben Hammonds and defensive lineman Sekou Imani.

Senior Braeden Uebel, who lettered at linebacker last season, is vying to be the Tornadoes’ starting quarterback along with Lucas Chaudrue, Charlie Hamm and Kooper Smith.

“He’s a senior and he’s trying to stake his claim,” Ifft said of Uebel. “They all have different skill sets.”

Regardless of who wins that job, the others will find playing time at other positions.

Junior Maguire Morris will be other of the top wide receiving threats and will also return punts and kickoffs for the Tornadoes.

Senior Daniel Van Gilder will assume the kicking and punting jobs for Dover.

“We’ll still throw the ball around alot, but you might see some one-back sets and take advantage of our skill set,” Ifft



TIMES-REPORTER FILE

■ Dover head coach Dan Ifft said senior running back/defensive back Peyton Coyne has had a great camp for the Tornadoes.

said. “Peytin Coyne has had a great camp, and Andrué Nolen is just a good football player.”

Defensively, three-year letterman Jayin Woods will play inside linebacker and will be one of the leaders.

“We lost some good kids, but we have other kids who have been waiting in the wings to show their stuff,” Ifft said of his 72-man roster. “We’re excited to get started.”

The Tornadoes will once again face a pretty formidable schedule with the likes of Lake and Steubenville at home and Nordononia on the road.

“We play who we play,” Ifft said. “Regardless of the wins or losses, it’s going to make us a better team down the road. It’s a challenge to our players as well as coaches.”

In addition to the nonconference toughies, Dover will travel to Zanesville and Coshocton in East Central Ohio League action and end up with New Philadelphia at Crater Stadium on Oct. 30.

“It’s a tough, demanding schedule and it will require a tough-minded group of young men,” Ifft said. “I can’t wait to see how we take on this great opportunity.”

Dover kicks off the 2015 campaign Friday night when Cleveland Central Catholic comes to The Brickhouse.

Reach Roger at 330-364-8427
or roger.metzger@timesreporter.com
On Twitter: @TRSportsGuy



IFFT



UEBEL



WOODS



COYNE



YACKEY

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH Dan Ifft (21st year, 178-52).

2014 RECORD 8-3, Regional quarterfinalist, 5-0 and champions of the East Central Ohio League Scarlet Division.

DIVISION III Region 7.

RETURNING LETTERMEN FS Austin Evans (5-11, 175, Sr.); WR/DB DeAndre Clark (6-0, 175, Jr.); QB Braeden Uebel (5-11, 170, Sr.); OLB Jaylin Woods (6-2, 235, Sr.); OLB Drew Moore (6-1, 165, Sr.); OLB Jared Torch (5-10, 170, Sr.); RB/DL Lucas Sherwood (5-5, 185, Sr.); RB/ILB Andrué Nolen (5-7, 180, Jr.); RB/DB Peyton Coyne (5-9, 175, Sr.); ILB Joseph House (6-3, 180, Sr.); ILB Gage Abel (6-1, 180, Sr.); OL/DL Zack Yackey (6-2, 270, Jr.); Talor Hidey (6-1, 240, Jr.); OL/DL Parker Zumbar (6-2, 245, Jr.); OL Ben Hammonds (6-2, 245, Sr.); DL Sekou Imani (6-4, 210, Sr.).

THE BOTTOM LINE The Tornadoes lose a lot of talent from last season’s team that went 8-3 and won East Central Ohio League Scarlet Division crown, but they always reload. New faces in different places return to put their stamp on Dover football. Dover faces a difficult early-season schedule with the likes of Nordononia, Lake and Steubenville. How the Tornadoes fare against those programs will go a long way in determining the success of their season.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, Cle. Cent.Catholic, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, Lake, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, at Nordononia, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, Southeast, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, Steubenville, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, at Zanesville, 7

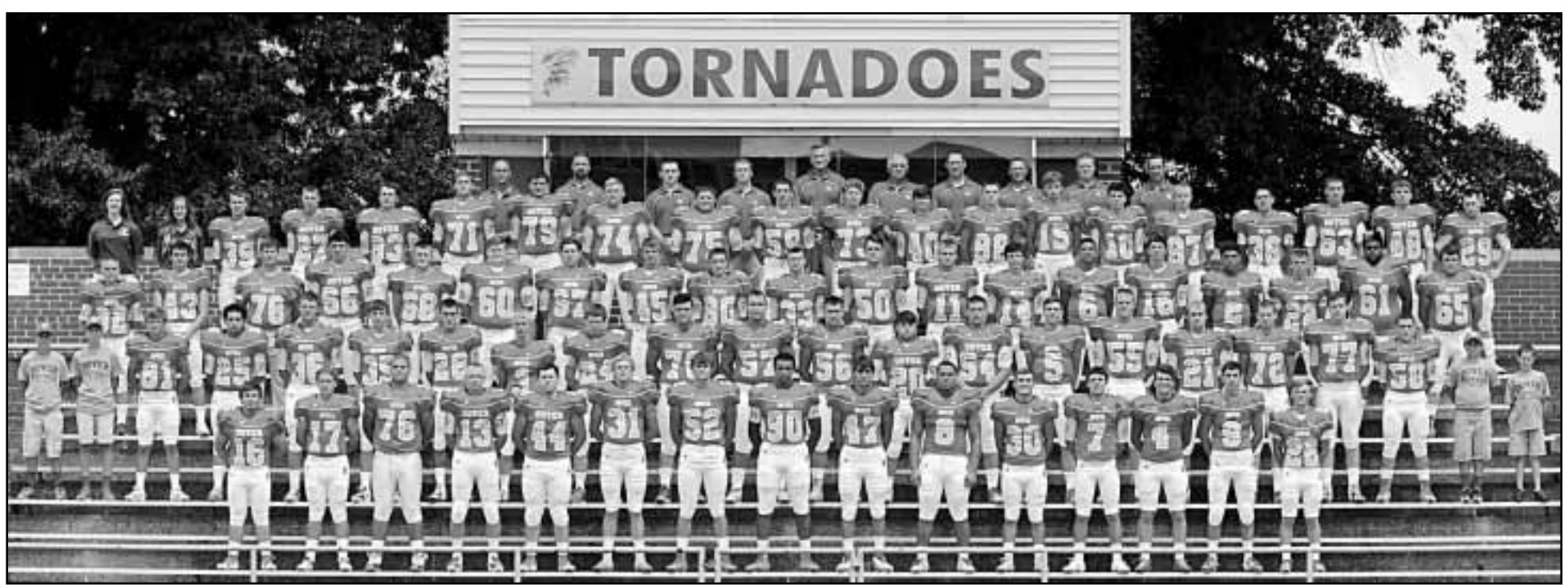
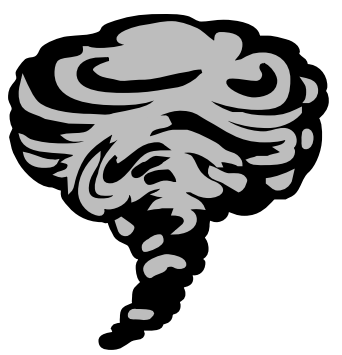
Week 7: Oct. 9, Cambridge, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, at Coshocton, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, at Marietta, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, New Philadelphia, 7

DOVER TORNADOES



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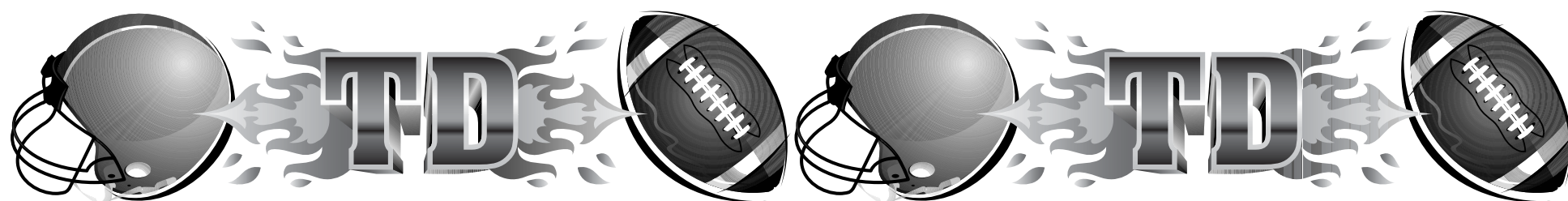
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Pirates keeping the bar high

BY JIM HAYNES

Times-Reporter sports writer

SUGARCREEK

Last year's Garaway Pirates were the cream of the crop among area football teams. The Pirates completed a perfect 10-0 regular season and picked up a playoff win against Cleveland Villa Angela-St. Joseph before falling to post-season nemesis Kirtland to finish the season 11-1.

While the pieces may not be the same as a year ago, expectations are just as high for a playoff run this year behind junior quarterback sensation RJ Jacobs.

Jacobs passed for more than 3,000 yards with 39 TDs versus only five interceptions a season ago.

The key this year will be finding replacement targets for Jacobs to throw to with the loss of receivers Connor Troyer, Ethan Slentz and Josh Werker to graduation.

This may be Jacobs' most difficult season in regards to familiarity with his receiving corps.

"We have two receivers that are coming back and are helping the new guys, so I feel things are coming around," Jacobs said. "It's going to be difficult for sure this season with new guys catching the ball, but I love them all. They are working hard and understand what we want to do."

"Timing is the biggest thing with new receivers, but I got the guys together in the offseason and we worked on routes and timing. It has really paid off in camp so far."

After losing 16 kids to graduation, Pirates head coach Jason Wallick is looking for someone to step up.

"We had a great group of seniors last year but they're moving on," Wallick said. "Now we need to see who will step up to



WALLICK



JACOBS



HONIGFORD



FOSTER



HAMSHER

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH Jason Wallick (15th year; 93-52)

2014 RECORD 11-1; Inter-Valley Conference champions; regional semifinalist.

DIVISION VI Region 19.

RETURNING LETTERMEN ILB Dallas Foster (Sr.); NG Josh Liggett (Sr.); Josh Billman (Sr.); Ian Shell (Sr.); QB RJ Jacobs (Jr.); WR Quinn Miller (Jr.); OL Joel Honigford; WR Ty Hamsher (Jr.); OLB Gunnar Angel (Jr.); Tanner Petite (Jr.); Ian Hershberger (Jr.); Dawson Deetz (Jr.); Grant Hershberger (Jr.).

THE BOTTOM LINE The Pirates are the odds-on favorites to win their second consecutive Inter-Valley Conference title after completing an undefeated regular season a year ago and finishing 11-1 overall. Behind the strong arm of Jacobs, Garaway will no doubt unleash its air attack each week. It will be imperative for the new receivers to be in sync with Jacobs if the Pirates hope to duplicate the ridiculous offensive numbers from a season ago. The defense should be stout again this season with four returning lettermen, including Foster as the anchor. The IVC looks to be a two- or three-team race with Ridgewood expected to be in the title hunt along with possibly Sandy Valley or Central Catholic.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, at Dalton, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, Fairless, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, at Indian Valley, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, at East Canton, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, Sandy Valley, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, Ridgewood, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, at Newcomerstown, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, at Malvern, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, Central Catholic, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, Strasburg, 7

replace those 16 kids we lost. We have a lot of kids that are capable of stepping in, and we hope to platoon as many as possible.

"We put the challenge out there for someone to take the bull by the horns and lead this team. We know what RJ can do, but he can't do it alone. I feel confident that we will have several leaders step forward this season, and I'm looking forward to that."

While Wallick feels the offense will still be potent, he hopes the defense will improve each week, much as it did a season ago.

The Pirates had one of the area's best defenses, in particular during the last six weeks of the regular season, allowing just 23 points during that span.

"We have our defensive leader back in Dallas Foster at middle linebacker," Wallick said. "He had preventive knee

"We put the challenge out there for someone to take the bull by the horns and lead this team. We know what RJ (Jacobs) can do, but he can't do it alone. I feel confident that we will have several leaders step forward this season, and I'm looking forward to that."

JASON WALLICK

surgery in the spring, but looks really good. We feel very confident in our line with both our inside and outside backers. Our secondary needs to step up, and we will platoon if we have to. I really don't want our receivers to play defensively, but if we have to, we will."

Returning starters on offense include Jacobs at quarterback, junior wideout Quinn Miller, junior wideout Ty Hamsher, junior offensive lineman Joel Honigford.

Defensively, the Pirates also return four starters: Miller, Foster, junior outside linebacker Gunnar Angel and senior nose guard Josh Liggett.

All in all, Jacobs feels this team is ready to return to the postseason.

"I think we're going to be tough to beat, but we have some big shoes to fill," Jacobs said. "If someone doesn't step up and fill those shoes, we may not have a good season. But I know my teammates, and we're going to keep moving forward because we're hungry to get back to the postseason."

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New coach ready to get going

BY ROGER METZGER

Times-Reporter sports editor

UHRICHSVILLE

Thom Lesiecki is just happy to be coaching — and it shows. “It’s been a lot of fun,” the rookie Claymont High School head football coach said of getting to know his new players, coaches, school and community. “It doesn’t matter where you are coaching football — once you get out on the field, it’s a blast.”

Lesiecki, who takes over for Eric Henry, spent the past four seasons as the head man at Brookside in Sheffield (Lorain County), where the Division IV Cardinals went 5-5 in 2014, the school’s best record since 2005.

Lesiecki, 51, has 33 years of coaching experience, including head coaching stints at New London (2003-06) and Lorain Catholic (1997-2002) prior to Brookside and now Claymont.

He also has been an assistant coach at Elyria Catholic (including the 1983-84 state champs), Trinity, Holy Name, Collins Western Reserve and Oberlin College.

Lesiecki said he is excited to lead the Mustangs into action.

“We have some really good returning seniors, and we have some young guys who want to show their stuff,” Lesiecki said. “We have a good mixture from all the classes.”

“We have a good group of guys who are blending well together,” he added.

On the offensive side, junior Thomas Edwards will be the first-year signal-caller for the Mustangs.

“He’s done really well picking up the offense,” Lesiecki said. “He’s throwing the ball well and he’s a leader.”

Joining Edwards in the backfield will be senior Justice Avery and sophomore Hunter Hershberger.



LESIECKI

EDWARDS

MILES

RUFFINI

AVERY

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH Thom Lesiecki (1st year).

2014 RECORD 4-6 overall, 3-2 in the East Central Ohio League.

DIVISION IV Region 13.

RETURNING LETTERMEN WR/DB Brian Ruffini (5-10, 150, Sr.); RB/LB Justice Avery (6-2, 168, Sr.); QB/DB Thomas Edwards (6-0, 195, Jr.); RB/LB Tarin Rauch (5-10, 186, Jr.); RB/DB Hunter Miles (5-9, 147, Sr.); RB/DL Cory Paisley (5-9, 225, Sr.); OL/DL Hunter Doane (6-0, 226, Sr.); OL/LB Ryan Peters (5-8, 185, Jr.); OL/DL Jaret Aubihl (5-10, 277, Sr.); TE/DL Lyle Clark (6-3, 214, Soph.)

THE BOTTOM LINE New coach Thom Lesiecki is excited about leading the Mustangs into battle. The veteran head coach will rely on some good returning seniors and some young players who are eager to show their stuff. Claymont’s coaching staff and players have a relaxed, but focused attitude heading into the 2015 season.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, Harrison Central, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, at Indian Valley, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, Carrollton, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, at Danville, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, Rosecrans, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, at New Philadelphia, 7

Week 7: Oct. 8, at River View, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, at Meadowbrook, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, Coshocton, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, Maysville, 7 30

The offensive line consists of seniors Holden Doane, Jaret Aubihl and Ryan Peters.

Senior Brian Ruffini and sophomore Marc Vermillion will be part of the Mustangs’ receiving corps.

On the defensive side of the football, senior Hunter Miles, senior Bob Smith and senior Cory Paisley, sophomore Quess Parrish have turned heads in camp.

“We have a really good staff,” Lesiecki said of his coaching comrades. “We have some guys who were around last year, and half of us are brand new. I think

we’re gelling really well. I couldn’t ask for more out of them.”

Claymont hosts Harrison Central on Friday night in the “Battle for Tappan Lake.”

“Right now, all our focus is on Harrison Central,” Lesiecki said. “It’s a old rivalry that’s coming back. They have a lot of guys back and guys who are big up front. We’ll deal with the other teams as we go.”

Reach Roger at 330-364-8427
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“We have some really good returning seniors, and we have some young guys who want to show their stuff.”

THOM LESIECKI



TIMES-REPORTER FILE

■ Junior running back-linebacker Tarin Rauch is one of the returning letterman for Claymont under first-year head coach Thom Lesiecki.

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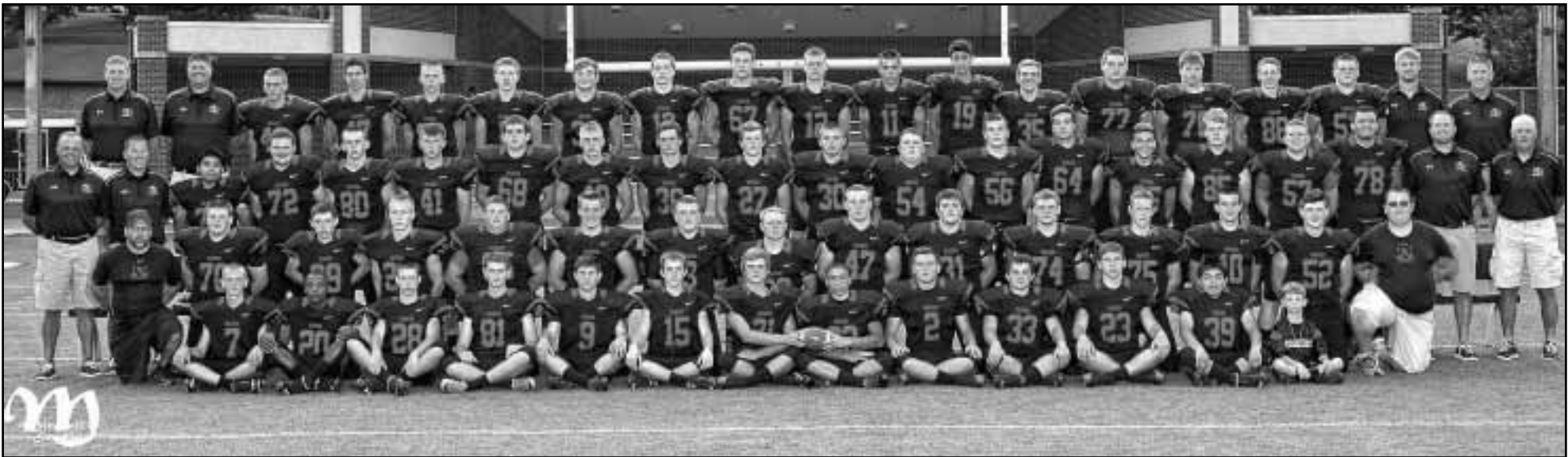
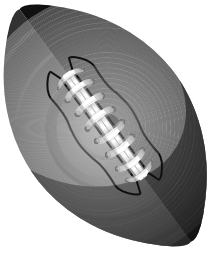


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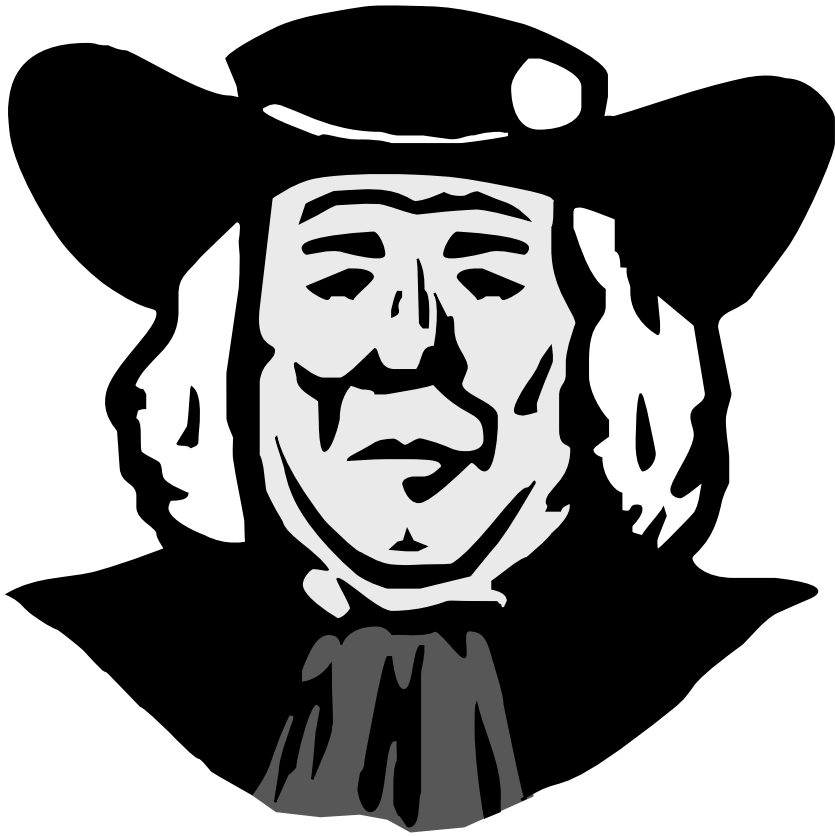
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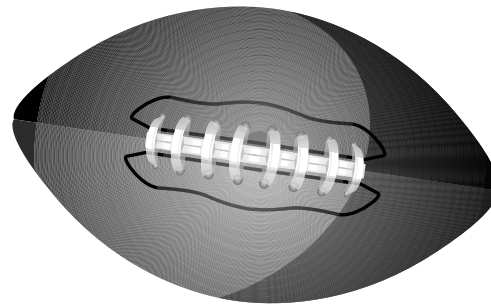

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Saints playing numbers game

BY HANK KEATHLEY
Times-Reporter local news editor

NEW PHILADELPHIA

Considering that they're dealing with an enrollment of 40 boys, the coaches at Tuscarawas Central Catholic can just look at the number 267.

That's the average weight of the five projected starters on the Saints' offensive line.

"TCC is the second smallest state school that has a football team," coach Casey Cummings pointed out. "We will not be deep with only 24 players on the roster, but if we can stay healthy, we are big enough up front and talented enough in the skill positions to be very dangerous."

While the Saints have run a wide-open offense under Cummings, the success of that offensive line will be a key this year.

Seniors Cole Liggett (275 pounds) and Nick Gonano (195) are the tackles, while senior Brook McMillen (300) and junior John Serafini (270) are the guards.

Throw Logan Addleman, a 270-pound senior who is moving from offensive line to tailback, and it's evident the Saints have size.

"We're big up front and we've got talent on the offensive side, but we've got no depth," Cummings said.

But barring a rash of season-ending miscues, the Saints have enough people to move around to cover most positions.

"We might only have 24, but we've got guys who can play," the TCC coach explained. "We've got seven kids that we can move around on the line, and we can

always shove Addleman up to play on the interior."

A lack of experience isn't a huge factor, either. Liggett is a three-year starter, and 14 of the 24 players on the roster are returning lettermen.

The offense will revolve around junior quarterback Nick Sciarretti.

Addleman and junior Austin Treherne will play in the backfield, while Dean Green, Beau Beamer, Nate Price, Austin Dick and Tate Papuga will all play wide receiver.

Gonano, Anthony Fredericks, Addleman and John Serafini will play on the defensive line, while Dick, Treherne and Justin Peltz will be the linebackers.

Playing in the defensive backfield will be Green, Price, Beamer, Papuga and Pat Gonano.

"We have to stay healthy and our depth will be limited," Cummings said. "Plus, we have to get better defensively. We lost eight starters on the defensive side of the ball, so we're going to be pretty young."

"Offensively, we just have to use our athleticism to score some points."

The Saints open the season with a Saturday night game (at Crater Stadium) against Lisbon Anderson and then play Weirton Madonna and Rosecrans before moving into Inter-Valley Conference play.

"We open with a powerful inside run team, and we'll go from there," Cummings said.

Contact Hank at 330-364-8425
or hank.keathley@timesreporter.com
On Twitter: @TRHank23



CUMMINGS



LIGGETT



McMILLEN



GONANO



HAUBER

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH Casey Cummings (4th year, 17-14).

2014 RECORD 8-3.

DIVISION VII Region 23.

RETURNING LETTERMEN RB/DL Logan Addleman (5-9, 270, Sr.); OL/DL Jerett Hauber (6-1, 290, Sr.); OL/DL Brook McMillen (5-11, 300, Sr.); OL/DL Cole Liggett (6-1, 250, Sr.); WR/DB Beau Beamer (5-10, 150, Jr.); WR/LB Austin Dick (6-1, 180, Jr.); QB Nick Sciarretti (6-2, 160, Jr.); OL/DL John Serafini (5-11, 265, Jr.); WR/DB Patrick Gonano (5-11, 150, So.); WR/DB Nathan Price (5-9, 150, So.); Robby Donohoe (5-7, 140, So.); Tate Paguga (6-1, 160, So).

THE BOTTOM LINE The Saints don't have a lot of depth, but if the offensive line holds up they could have a potent offense.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Saturday, David Anderson, 7 (Crater Stadium)

Week 2: Sept. 5, Weirton Madonna, 1:30

Week 3: Sept. 12, Rosecrans, 3

Week 4: Sept. 19, Strasburg, 1:30

Week 5: Sept. 25, at Newcomerstown, 7

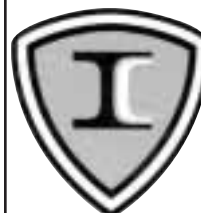
Week 6: Oct. 3, Malvern, 1:30

Week 7: Oct. 9, at Sandy Valley, 7

Week 8: Oct. 17, Ridgewood, 1:30

Week 9: Oct. 23, at Garaway, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, at East Canton, 7



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ATM



Braves' goal: Control destiny

BY JIM HAYNES

Times-Reporter sports writer

GNADENHUTTEN

'Mathematically eliminated." Reading those words at the end of the 2014 campaign signaled the end of a three-year run to the postseason for the Indian Valley Braves, who finished with an 8-2 record.

But now those words are the motivation to get them back to the playoffs this season.

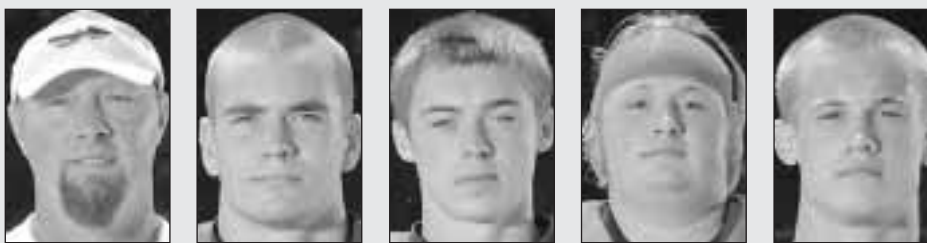
Both of Indian Valley's losses came at the hands of undefeated teams in Garaway and Triway by a combined eight points, but Braves' head coach Matt Lancaster said while the disappointment is still there, it's time to look ahead.

"It stung really bad being on the outside looking in after having made the postseason three years in a row," Lancaster said. "We were two plays away from being 10-0, but the chips didn't fall our way. We posted the words "mathematically eliminated" in our locker room, and we want to use that as motivation for this season. We want to control our own destiny.

"Our motto this year is 'get up, let's go.' We just need to take care of our own business and be in control when the end of the season rolls around and see where that takes us."

Part of controlling their own destiny will be finding players to fill the void of the likes of Eastern District Player of the Year Jake Davis, as well as Caden McGuire, Brandon Anderson, Will Love, Brock Weber and Kyle Contini.

"No doubt we have some big gaps to fill from last year's team," Lancaster said. "But we feel we have some depth to fill those spots that were left void, and we're looking forward to seeing how these



LANCASTER

COTSMIRE

LOVE

COOL

CARLISLE

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH Matt Lancaster (10th year, 44-41)

2014 RECORD 8-2.

DIVISION IV Region 13.

RETURNING LETTERMEN QB/S Brady Cotsmire (Sr., 6-0, 180); OL/DL Koby Cool (Sr., 6-0, 260); WR/RB/DB Ross Love (Sr., 5-10, 160); OL/DL Alec Love (Sr. 6-2, 210); WR/OLB Jayden Helter (Sr., 5-9, 160); TE/OLB Dalton Bolon (Sr., 6-4, 180); OL/DL Allija Lantzer (Sr., 5-10, 175); OL/ILB Justin Martinelli (Sr., 5-10, 200); RB/DB Cory Carlisle (Jr. 5-9, 160); WR/DB Wyatt Garabrandt (Jr., 6-0, 165); TE/RB/DL Brandon Ledbetter (Jr., 5-10, 225).

THE BOTTOM LINE Replacing key parts to a team that went 8-2 a season ago will be the task at hand for Indian Valley this season, but Lancaster has faith his squad won't miss a beat. Carlisle will be called upon to handle the bulk of the running duties, while versatile quarterback and safety Cotsmire will be a key factor in the Braves' success this year. Indian Valley is hungry to get back to the postseason after narrowly missing it last year after a three-year run. That motivation could very well key the Braves to a Principals Athletic Conference title and a lengthy stay in the playoffs.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, at Sandy Valley, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, Claymont, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, Garaway, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, Fairless, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, at Tuslaw, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, Beaver, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, CVCA, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, at Manchester, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, at Triway, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, at Tusky Valley, 7

players respond."

One of those players who may have the biggest shoes to fill is running back Cory Carlisle in replacing Davis.

Carlisle was well on his way to a 1,000-yard rushing season before a knee injury ended his season.

"Our offense will definitely be centered around Cory, and he will get the bulk of the carries. But we have other

talented guys that can spell Cory and get the job done as well," Lancaster said.

Lancaster also is looking at senior quarterback Brady Cotsmire to play a vital role this season on both sides of the ball.

Cotsmire split time at quarterback last year with McGuire, but will assume the play-calling duties exclusively this season, as well as return to the Braves' secondary, where he amassed 71 tackles

"We were two plays away from being 10-0, but the chips didn't fall our way. ... Our motto this year is 'get up, let's go.' We just need to take care of our own business and be in control when the end of the season rolls around and see where that takes us."

MATT LANCASTER

and three interceptions a year ago as a safety.

"We feel our defense will be the strength of this team with seven returning starters, and it begins with Brady," Lancaster said. "He'll be starting his fourth season at safety, with (two) years of playoff experience, and his leadership will be key to the success of our defense."

In addition, senior Ross Love is being looked at to provide a spark for the Braves.

"We're expecting Ross to do great things this year. He broke the school record in receiving last year, and he's going to run the ball a little bit more as well as do everything on special teams," Lancaster said.

Other returning starters include Koby Cool (Sr., OL/DL), Alec Love (Sr., OL/DL), Jayden Helter (Sr., WR/OLB), Dalton Bolon (Sr., TE/OLB), Allija Lantzer (Sr., OL/DL), Justin Martinelli (Sr., OL/LB), Wyatt Garabrandt (Jr., WR/DB) and Brandon Ledbetter (Jr., TE/RB/DL).

Reach Jim at 330-364-8434 or jim.haynes@timesreporter.com
On Twitter: @TRJames_Haynes

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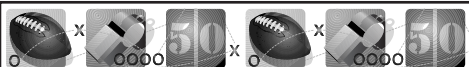


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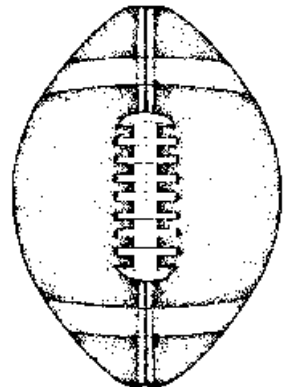
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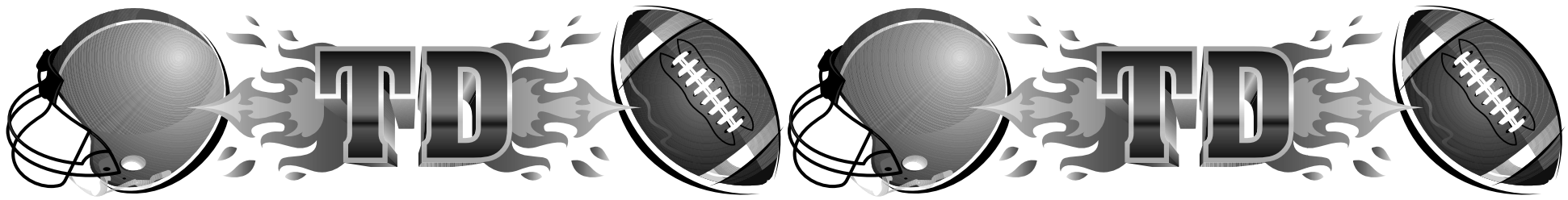
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Coach: Cards' time has come

BY JIM HAYNES

Times-Reporter sports writer

MAGNOLIA

For the Sandy Valley Cardinals, there's no better time than the present. Not since 2002 have the Cardinals produced an above .500 record, and not since 1956 have the Cardinals won a league title.

Nor have they ever made a playoff appearance.

Head coach Zach Gardner says, "It's time."

"We've been on the brink of achieving some special things the last two seasons, and it's time for us to see the results on the field," Gardner said. "We were one quarter away from a league title in 2013, and two plays away from the playoffs last year."

"We gave up a fourth-and-13 conversion versus Central Catholic and a last-play touchdown and two-point conversion against Newcomerstown that forced overtime in games that we lost. We make those plays, we're in the playoffs."

Sandy Valley finished 5-5 on the season, but injuries also played a factor in the break-even season.

Gardner feels this might be his most balanced team with 18 returning letterman.

Among them are senior captains Jaret Oliver (LB/RB), Jacob Wagner (WR/DB/K), Brandon Murphy (LB/RB) and Zach Ruegg (OL/DL).

Heading up the offense this season will be junior quarterback Nelson Mozden who started the last three games a year ago when Lucas Dieffenbaugher, the school's all-time leading rusher, went down with an injury.

Mozden put up modest numbers by throwing for 351 yards with three TDs and three interceptions.



GARDNER

MOZDEN

WAGNER

OLIVER

FINN

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH Zach Gardner (3rd year; 10-10)

2014 RECORD 5-5 overall, 3-4 in the Inter-Valley Conference.

DIVISION V Region 15.

RETURNING LETTERMEN LB/RB Jaret Oliver (7-1, 185, Sr.); WR/K/DB Jacob Wagner (6-1, 185, Sr.); LB/RB Brandon Murphy (6-0, 180, Sr.); OL/DL Zach Ruegg (6-0, 200, Sr.); RB/LB Billy Kesling (5-7, 150, Sr.); WR/DB Austin May (5-11, 150, Sr.); WR/DB Darren Finn (6-2, 190, Jr.); QB/DB Nelson Mozden (6-0, 175, Jr.); TE/DL Chad Neisel (6-3, 220, Jr.); OL/DL Francesco Borsellino (6-2, 260, Jr.); OL/DL Donnie Slack (6-0, 250, Jr.); OL/DL/Long Snapper Connor Finnicum (6-1, 210, Jr.); WR/DB Xavier Sarver (5-11, 156, Jr.); WR/OLB Evan Keck (5-7, 155, Jr.); OL/DL Cameron Brown (5-8, 190, Jr.); OL/DL Blake Offenberger (5-7, 195, Jr.); RB/OLB Dray Bracken (6-1, 170, Soph.); OL/LB Austin Dierick (5-9, 160, Soph.).

THE BOTTOM LINE Sandy Valley might feature one of its most balanced teams in recent years. With 18 returning starters, Gardner is expecting his team to improve on back-to-back 5-5 seasons. Special teams will be a big factor in Sandy Valley's season with All-Ohioan kicker Wagner booting the ball. Defensively, the Cardinals recorded five shutouts a year ago and return eight starters on that side of the ball. Offensively, look for the Cardinals to be explosive both on the ground and through the air.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, Indian Valley, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, Mapleton, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, at Tusky Valley, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, Ridgewood, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, at Garaway, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, at East Canton, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, Central Catholic, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, at Newcomerstown, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, at Strasburg, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, Malvern, 7

His favorite targets likely will be Wagner (19 catches, 331 yards) and junior Darren Finn (11 catches, 207 yards, 3 TDs).

Gardner is most excited to see the performance of his offense.

"If you look at the successful programs in our area, the Dover's and Indian Valley's, they have an offensive identity

that their kids believe in," Gardner said. "We are excited because we feel we have found ours, and it's exciting to see our kids grow in the positions they are being put in."

Defensively, the Cardinals could be one of the best in the area with eight returning starters.

Last season's defense set a school

"We've been on the brink of achieving some special things the last two seasons, and it's time for us to see the results on the field. We were one quarter away from a league title in 2013, and two plays away from the playoffs last year."

ZACH GARDNER

record with five shutouts and was led by junior Francesco Borsellino, who recorded 69 tackles, 16 for loss, to go along with two sacks.

"Our defense played well at times, but we had back-to-back games last season where we needed one play from them to win and we didn't get it," Gardner said. "We have challenged them all offseason to achieve our goals and to start making those critical plays."

The X-factor to this year's team will be the special-teams play, led by second-team All-Ohioan kicker Wagner.

Wagner connected on 25-of-27 extra point tries and was 5-of-7 in field goals, including a school record 49-yarder.

"Our kids take pride in this phase of the game, and we are so fortunate to have such a talented, dedicated young man at kicker," Gardner said. "I'll put our special teams up against any in the area."

"They play hard and understand the importance that their roles play each and every week."

Reach Jim at 330-364-8434 or jim.haynes@timesreporter.com
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New home; same ol' Generals

BY HANK KEATHLEY

Times-Reporter local news editor

WEST LAFAYETTE

Ridgewood's stadium has a brand-new look, but the Generals will look mighty familiar on the field.

Especially on the defensive side.

The Generals return a number of players defensively from a unit that gave up an average of 13 points a game during the season.

"We really don't have any new guys back there ... they all played," said veteran assistant coach and offensive coordinator Chris Cabot.

"I think we'll be pretty good defensively."

The front four of the defensive unit will be manned by one senior and three juniors.

Defensive end Tanner Shaw is the only senior in the group. Junior Kasey Bethel is the other end, while juniors Keith Leindecker and Nathaniel Thompson will man the tackle spots.

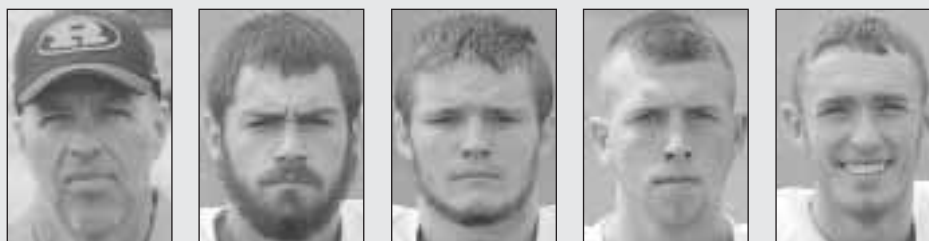
Senior Brice Hammond, a three-year starter, is back to lead the linebackers. The group includes Rayven Davidson, Kyle Bethel and Kolton Alexander.

Playing in the defensive backfield will be Trent Harrison, Cole Lillibridge and Braeden Smith, along with Jhett Slusser.

"We really need to stay healthy," veteran coach John Slusser said. "That's a big key."

"But we also need to be mentally tough, and we're not there yet. We don't have many seniors and they're doing a good job at being tough — they're good football players — but we've got to be tough overall."

Offensively, Jhett Slusser will take over at quarterback for Caleb Tingle,



JO. SLUSSER

HAMMOND

BAILEY

SHAW

JH. SLUSSER

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH John Slusser (11th year, 87-24).

2014 RECORD 9-1 overall, 6-1 in the Inter-Valley Conference.

DIVISION V Region 17.

RETURNING LETTERMEN QB/CB Jhett Slusser (6-0, 161, Jr.); WR/LB Javon Merrill (5-10, 163, So.); WR/LB Rayven Davidson (6-1, 189, Jr.); RB/CB Cole Lillibridge (5-10, 154, Sr.); WR/LB Kyle Bethel (5-8, 161, Jr.); WR/LB Brice Hammond (5-11, 173, Sr.); RB/LB Billy Bailey (5-10, 159, Sr.); RB/S Trent Harrison (5-11, 182, Jr.); WR/DL Tanner Shaw (6-5, 243, Sr.); RB/LB Kevin Bethel (5-8, 168, Jr.); OL/DL Nathaniel Thompson (6-2, 204, Jr.); OL/DL Bryce Hains (6-0, 152, Jr.); OL/DL Kasey Bethel (5-9, 181, Jr.); Abram Buckler (5-6, 156, Jr.); OL/DL Keith Leindecker (6-3, 217, Jr.).

THE BOTTOM LINE The Generals are looking for another winning season and playoff run, but need to solidify the offensive line to do it. A new-look stadium will provide momentum and a crafty, veteran coaching staff knows how to keep the team going.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Saturday, Bellaire, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, at Waynedale, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, River View, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, at Sandy Valley, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, East Canton, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, at Garaway, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, Strasburg, 7

Week 8: Oct. 17, at Central Catholic, 1:30

Week 9: Oct. 23, Malvern, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, at Newcomerstown, 7

who guided the Generals to a 9-1 record and a playoff berth last year.

Billy Bailey and Harrison will split time at running back, while Kyle Bethel, Davidson, Shaw and Smith are possibilities at receiver.

The questions come on the offensive line.

Leindecker will start at center or tackle, while Thompson and Kasey Bethel will play guard.

Dustin Carr is being looked at for one tackle spot, and as many as five players are competing for time at the other.

"We're still going to spread it out," Cabot said. "We're going to build on what we did last year."

The Generals will host Bellaire in their opener Saturday and then face Waynedale at Apple Creek and host River View before opening play in the Inter-Valley Conference.

"We really need to stay healthy. That's a big key. But we also need to be mentally tough, and we're not there yet. We don't have many seniors and they're doing a good job at being tough — they're good football players — but we've got to be tough overall."

JOHN SLUSSER

"I think there's balance in the league," Cabot said. "Garaway is the strongest, but we can be in the mix. Central will be pretty good, (Dave) Tucci is back at Malvern and Sandy Valley will be right there, too."

"It's going to be tough."

What won't be tough is looking at the field at Ridgewood.

More than \$700,000 in upgrades include new bleachers on the homestead of the field. The middle of the new bleachers features fold-down seats for season-ticket holders that sold out in hours.

"The home side will seat 1,400 and the visiting side seats 1,000," Slusser said. "There are 2,200 people in this town. If everybody comes to our games, we can't fill it."

The improvements also include a new pressbox and a brick ticket gate.

"It's a beautiful place," Slusser said.

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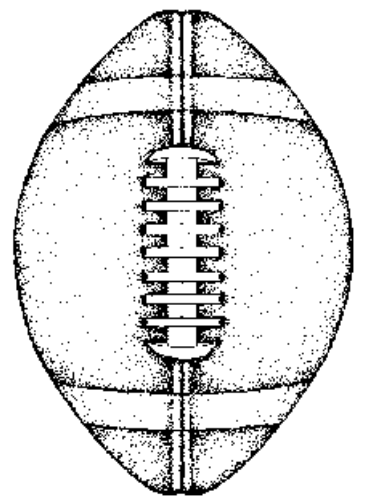
GARAWAY



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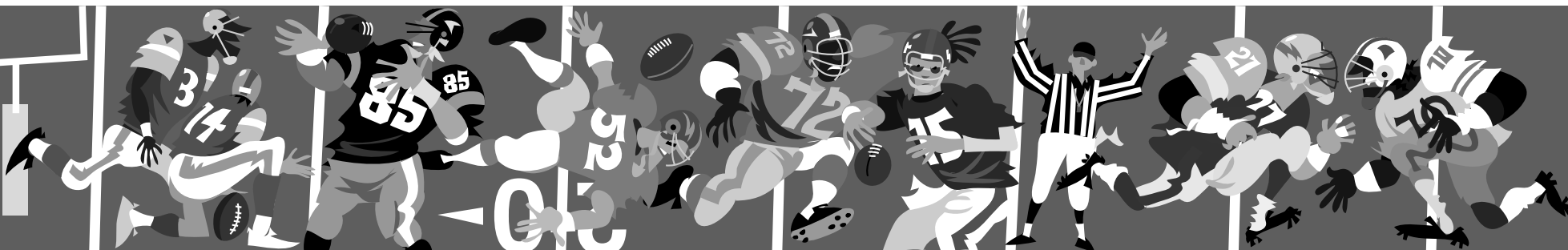
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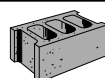
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Warriors look to build winner

BY ROGER METZGER

Times-Reporter sports editor

CARROLLTON

The Carrollton Warriors will head into the 2015 season with a workmanlike attitude.

“Our young men are punching the clock everyday,” Carrollton head coach Eric McCort said.

“They are committed to creating a culture here at Carrollton where winning is the expectation, not the exception.”

Eighteen returning lettermen, including 12 starters, will try to improve upon last season’s 5-5 overall mark and 2-5 showing in the Northeastern Buckeye Conference.

The Warriors hope to be strong up on both sides with returning starters senior Brody Robinson (offensive lineman/linebacker) and senior Jakob Green (offensive/defensive lineman) leading the way.

McCort also will count on junior running back Brenton Miller, junior wide receiver Jacob Knipp and junior wide receiver Adam Shaw to be playmakers at the skill positions.

Senior Drake Anderson (wide receiver/defensive back), junior Jacob Grubbs (offensive/defensive lineman), junior Dawson Kugler (offensive/defensive lineman), senior Teague Malone (offensive/defensive lineman), senior Tomas Malone (offensive/defensive lineman), senior Trevor Renz (offensive lineman/linebacker) and junior Ryan Shepherd (wide receiver/linebacker) also started a season ago.

After a 4-0 start in 2014, things unraveled for the Warriors as they went 1-5 the rest of the way.

They look to turn things around this year with those returning lettermen — nine starters back on offense and five on



McCORT

ROBINSON

GREEN

MILLER

SHAW

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH Eric McCort (4th year, 16-14).

2014 RECORD 5-5 overall, 2-5 in the Northeastern Buckeye Conference.

DIVISION III Region 7.

RETURNING STARTERS WR/DB Drake Anderson (6-1, 160, Sr.); OL/DL Jakob Green (6-0, 255, Sr.); OL/DL Jacob Grubbs (6-2, 225, Jr.); WR/DB Jacob Knipp (5-10, 160, Jr.); OL/DL Dawson Kugler (6-0, 265, Jr.); OL/DL Teague Malone (6-2, 265, Jr.); OL/DL Tomas Malone (6-2, 240, Sr.); RB/LB Brenton Miller (5-9, 160, Jr.); OL/LB Trevor Renz (5-10, 185, Sr.); OL/LB Brody Robinson (6-2, 240, Sr.); WR/DB Adam Shaw (5-8, 145, Jr.); WR/DB Ryan Shepherd (6-0, 165, Jr.).

THE BOTTOM LINE The Warriors look to turn things around this year with 18 returning lettermen which included nine starters back on offense and five on defense, giving them the type of experience that could help them reach the playoffs for the first time since 2004. Carrollton, though, must find players to replace the productive trio of quarterback Zade Deitz, running back Tyler Dodd and wide receiver Caleb Pasiuk.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, St. Clairsville, 7:30

Week 2: Sept. 4, at Edison, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, at Claymont, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, Marlington, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, at West Branch, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, Salem, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, Alliance, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, at Louisville, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, Canton South, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, at Minerva, 7

defense — giving them the type of experience that could help them reach the playoffs for the first time since 2004.

The Warriors, though, must find guys to replace the productive trio of quarterback Zade Deitz, running back Tyler Dodd and wide receiver Caleb Pasiuk.

McCort said he likes the attitude his team has shown through the preseason.

“The Ohio Valley is a focal point of football talent in the state of Ohio,”

McCort said. “It is amazing how much talent comes out of this conference each year. This year, I believe the Valley is as tough as it has ever been. Each team will have tough young men, and they will all be very well-coached. In order for us to compete, we will have to bring or ‘A’ game.”

Reach Roger at 330-364-8427
or roger.metzger@timesreporter.com
On Twitter: @TRSportsguy



GATEHOUSE OHIO MEDIA FILE

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LET THERE BE LIGHTS

Upgrade will bring new shine to Friday nights in New Phila

BY DARRIN LAUTENSCHLEGER

Times-Reporter sports correspondent

NEW PHILADELPHIA

The action on the field at New Philadelphia's Woody Hayes Quaker Stadium will be as exciting as usual this fall.

It also will be brighter — a lot brighter, in fact.

The lights at the stadium have been completely replaced and follow-up testing by lighting experts shows that in several locations around the playing surface, the lighting performance actually has doubled in terms of brightness. Overall, Woody Hayes Quaker Stadium now has one of the strongest measured lighting systems of any high school stadium in Ohio.

"We knew that the old lights had reached their useful life and that the new lights would provide a great improvement," said Tom Farbizo, former New Philadelphia athletic director and a member of the independent booster Quaker Club, which planned and paid for the lights that were installed this summer.

"I don't think any of us realized how much of an improvement this actually

would make, though. The old dark spots you noticed on the field during events in the past are gone."

The lights and installation cost slightly more than \$180,000 and were entirely paid for by the Quaker Club. No taxpayer funds were used for any costs related to the project.

"This is an outstanding improvement for our student athletes, band members, cheerleaders, QTs and everyone who attends any nighttime activities at the stadium," said Ed Leggett, New Philadelphia High athletic director. "We're really looking forward to showcasing the new lights this season."

The Quaker Club was able to save a significant amount in potential cost since the stadium light poles are in excellent condition and did not have to be replaced as part of the project. The lights were purchased from Musco Sports Lighting and installed through the expertise of Wood Electric Co. at New Philadelphia.

There are a total of 60 new individual lights on the eight poles around the sta-

SEE LIGHTS 21



TIMES-REPORTER JIM CUMMINGS

■ Employees from Wood Electric Co. in New Philadelphia prepare to install new lights at Woody Hayes Quaker Stadium in June. There are a total of 60 new individual lights on the eight poles around the stadium.

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LIGHTS

CONTINUED FROM 20

There are a total of 60 new individual lights on the eight poles around the stadium.

“Everyone who was involved in this project was just outstanding to work with and it really has generated a lot of interest,” Farbizo said. “We’ve only had the lights on a few times during the month of August and each time they have been turned on, several people have stopped by and told us they notice a big difference.”

Musco conducted a complete test of the system at Woody Hayes Quaker Stadium, which is measured in units called footcandles. The average light level at the stadium is now 79 footcandles – ranging from a low of 58 to a high of 98 footcandles depending on the location measured at field level – compared to an average of 45 footcandles with the old lighting system.

Most high school stadiums around the region also using the Musco lighting system have an average brightness range of 30 to 50 footcandles.

The Quaker Club is an independent New Philadelphia student and athletic booster organization that has funded in whole or in participation a wide range of projects in recent years.

The club oversaw major upgrades at the stadium several years ago, including installation of the artificial playing surface, pressbox and scoreboard system; purchased the former Schoenbrunn Racquet Club and converted it into the “Quaker Dome” that is used for multiple sports teams and functions all year around; and supports such student activities as the New Philadelphia High Academic Challenge team. Woody Hayes Quaker Stadium is operated by the school district through a lease agreement and strong partnership with the City of New Philadelphia.

The Quaker Club does not receive any funding from New Philadelphia City Schools and operates through various fundraisers and revenue-generating projects.

As a 501(c)3 charitable organization, it also can accept tax-deductible donations. Information is available from any club member.

“I’ve told people for years that we are fortunate in New Philadelphia because we have dedicated educators, dedicated coaches and advisers, student athletes who want to succeed, and the Quaker Club that is behind all of them in words and in action,” Leggett said. “The new lights at the stadium are yet another example of how the club takes care of a lot of little things and big things to make our students’ experiences the very best they can be.”



TIMES-REPORTER JIM CUMMINGS

■ (From left) New Philadelphia’s Kyle Cunningham, Bret Ricklic, Logan Ford and Tyler “T” Carter stretch under the new lights at Woody Hayes Quaker Stadium.

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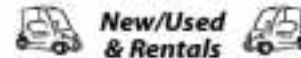
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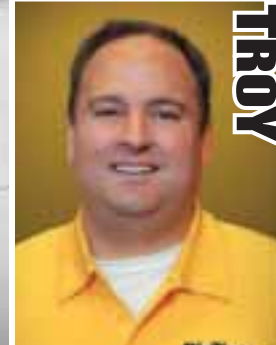
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8/27	McKinley @ Hoban	8/28 @ 4:00pm 8/29 @ 5:00pm	8/28 @ 4:00pm 8/29 @ 5:00pm
8/28	New Phila @ CCC	8/28 @ 10:30pm 8/29 @ 9:00am	8/29 @ 9:00am
9/3	Garaway @ TCC VB	9/3 @ 10:30pm 9/4 @ 2:00pm	9/4 @ 2:00pm
9/4	Lake @ Dover	9/4 @ 10:30pm 9/7 @ 4:00pm	9/7 @ 4:00pm
9/4	Perry @ CCC	9/5 @ 9:00am 9/6 @ 8:00pm	9/5 @ 9:00am 9/6 @ 8:00pm
9/10	Dover @ New Phila VB	9/10 @ 10:00pm 9/12 @ 5:00pm	9/10 @ 10:00pm 9/12 @ 5:00pm
9/11	Garaway @ Indian Valley	9/11 @ 10:30pm 9/13 @ 1:00pm	9/13 @ 1:00pm
9/11	New Phila @ Perry	9/12 @ 9:00am 9/13 @ 8:00pm	9/12 @ 9:00am 9/13 @ 8:00pm
9/18	Glen Oak @ Green	9/19 @ 9:00am 9/20 @ 8:00pm	9/19 @ 9:00am 9/20 @ 8:00pm
9/19	Strasburg @ TCC	9/19 @ 11:00pm 9/20 @ 1:00pm	9/19 @ 11:00pm 9/20 @ 1:00pm
9/25	Sandy Valley @ Garaway	9/25 @ 10:30pm 9/27 @ 1:00pm	9/27 @ 1:00pm
9/25	Northwest @ New Phila	9/26 @ 9:00am 9/27 @ 8:00pm	9/26 @ 9:00am 9/27 @ 8:00pm
9/28	Garaway @ Strasburg VB	9/28 @ 10:00pm	9/28 @ 10:00pm
10/2	Hoover @ Lake	10/3 @ 9:00am 10/4 @ 8:00pm	10/3 @ 9:00am 10/4 @ 8:00pm
10/3	Malvern @ TCC	10/3 @ 11:00pm 10/4 @ 1:00pm	10/3 @ 11:00pm 10/4 @ 1:00pm
10/6	New Phila @ Dover VB	10/6 @ 10:00pm 10/7 @ 4:00pm	10/6 @ 10:00pm 10/7 @ 4:00pm
10/9	Zanesville @ New Phila	10/9 @ 10:30pm 10/11 @ 6:30pm	10/11 @ 6:30pm
10/9	Canton South @ Marlinton	10/10 @ 9:00am 10/12 @ 8:00pm	10/10 @ 9:00am 10/12 @ 8:00pm
10/10	CCC @ TCC VB	10/10 @ 10:30pm	
10/16	Green @ Jackson	10/16 @ 10:30pm 10/17 @ 9:00am	10/17 @ 9:00am
10/23	Tuslaw @ Manchester	10/23 @ 10:30pm 10/24 @ 9:00am	10/24 @ 9:00am
10/30	New Phila @ Dover	10/30 @ 10:30pm 11/3 @ 3:00pm	11/3 @ 3:00pm
10/30	Jackson @ Hoover	10/31 @ 9:00am 11/2 @ 8:00pm	10/31 @ 9:00am 11/2 @ 8:00pm



Rocket spirits going skyward

BY JIM HAYNES

Times-Reporter sports writer

BOWERSTON

It was a season of change for the Conotton Valley Rockets in 2014, but second-year head coach Mark Morris isn't letting an 0-10 season zap his team's enthusiasm for this year.

"We have had a great offseason and we are stronger, faster and more athletic than the 2014 team," said Morris. "We are focusing on getting better each day and making an impact this season in the OVAC."

The Rockets also will have more players on this season's roster.

After finishing last year with just 12 players, the Rockets filled up this season's roster with 23 players.

"Our guys went out and recruited their buddies and guys who had played before," Morris said. "We have good leaders, and we're looking to compete and win some games."

The Rockets feature nine returning lettermen led by All-OVAC defensive player junior Bryden Adams and senior Brandon McCreary, who garnered an All-OVAC receiving nod.

McCreary will be among the Rockets to change positions this year as he will move from receiver to quarterback, while junior Garret Rice will move from tight end to fullback on offense and also switch from defensive end to linebacker.

Other returning starters include Bryson Bailey (Sr., OG/LB), Cameron Civiello (Sr., FB/DT), Jordan Masters (Sr., TB/OLB), John Adkins (Soph., OG/DE), Tanner Berg (Soph., OT/DT), and Dylan Booth (Soph., C/DT).

Morris is looking forward to seeing the improvement of his team and knows that his team must stay healthy to be competitive.

"We expect to be much more competitive this season and expect to surprise



MORRIS



McCREARY



ADAMS



BAILEY



MASTERS

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH Mark Morris (2nd year, 0-10).

2014 RECORD 0-10.

DIVISION VII Region 23.

RETURNING LETTERMEN OG/LB Bryson Bailey (Sr.); FB/DT Cameron Civiello (Sr.); TB/OLB Jordan Masters (Sr.); QB/S Brandon McCreary (Sr.); WR/OLB Bryden Adams (Sr.); FB/LB Garret Rice (Sr.); OG/DE John Adkins (Soph.); OT/DT Tanner Berg (Soph.); C/DT Dylan Booth (Soph.).

THE BOTTOM LINE After going winless in 2014, the Rockets are looking to get that winning taste in their mouth early in the season. Three of Conotton Valley's first four games are at home. Morris will have more versatility from his roster this season after ending last season with just 12 players. Keeping players injury-free will be the biggest challenge for the Rockets as they will play many players on both sides of the ball.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, Strasburg, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, at Southern, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, Sciotoville, 6

Week 4: Sept. 18, Rootstown, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, at Bridgeport, 7

Week 6: Oct. 3, at Bish. Donahue (W.Va.), 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, Cameron (W.Va.), 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, at Toronto, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, Bellaire St. John, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, Rosecrans, 7

some people," Morris said. "With a number of players playing both sides of the ball, we must stay healthy in order to

achieve our goals that we set this season. The players are excited and are looking forward to getting the season started."

CONOTTON VALLEY ROCKETS



Photo Courtesy of Photographs by Sarah

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Tigers looking to flex muscle

BY ROGER METZGER

Times-Reporter sports editor

STRASBURG

Strasburg head football coach John Cox is banking on offseason weight room workouts as key to more wins in 2015.

"Right after our loss to Garaway (to end the 2014 season), the kids were in the weight room four days a week trying to get stronger," said Cox, who begins his third season at the Tigers' helm. "We're noticeably bigger and stronger, and we hope that will pay off on the field."

Five returning lettermen are back to try to improve upon a 1-9 season and an 0-7 mark in the Inter-Valley Conference.

Dillon Mullins, Jay DiBacco, Jacob Fondriest, Austin Sims and Andrew Cregan lettered a year ago.

Cox views his senior tackles as important cogs in the Strasburg offense.

"We feel like we have two bookend tackles (Sims and Fondriest) that could be the best in the league," Cox said. "They're three-year starters, and they're the ones that are going to make our offense go."

Cregan will be the Strasburg quarter-

back, and DiBacco and junior Garnet Von Kaenel are set at tight end, while junior transfer Shevin Javersak is expected to help stretch the opponents' defense.

"He's a very talented player," Cox said of Javersak, who moved to Strasburg from Dover in the offseason. "He's going to fit in well here."

Senior Nate Bonar and junior Henry Malcuit will provide the Tigers with a running game, while Lucas Lab, Logan Ueltsch, Tristan Schupbach, Dalton Burlingame and Paul Thomas also are expected to contribute from the 27-player roster.

Defensively, the strength will be in the secondary with sophomore Justin Strop-sky and Mullins at safeties with Javersak and Malcuit at the corners.

Cox said the Inter-Valley Conference will be tough as usual.

"Garaway and Ridgewood are the two top dogs," Cox said. "I feel like there is a lot of parity with the rest of the league."

"We played a lot of young players my first two years here, and now they're battle-tested and tired of getting knocked around."



COX

MULLINS

FONDRIEST

SIMS

DiBACCO

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH John Cox (3rd year; 4-14).

2014 RECORD 1-9 overall, 0-7 in the Inter-Valley Conference.

DIVISION VII Region 23.

RETURNING LETTERMEN RB/DB Dillon Mullins (6-0, 174, Sr.); Henry Malcuit; QB/LB Andrew Cregan (6-4, 194, Soph.); WR/DB Jay DiBacco (6-0, 183, Jr.); OT/DT Jacob Fondriest (6-3, 275, Sr.); OT/NT Austin Sims (6-5, 275, Sr.).

THE BOTTOM LINE Coach Cox said the Tigers are noticeably bigger and stronger and believes that will translate into more wins. Cregan will be the Strasburg quarterback and juniors DiBacco and Garnet Von Kaenel are set at tight end, while junior transfer Shevin Javersak is expected to help stretch the opponents' defense.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, at Conotton Valley, 7

Week 2: Sept. 5, at Bellaire St. John, 12

Week 3: Sept. 11, East Knox, 7

Week 4: Sept. 19, at Central Catholic, 1:30

Week 5: Sept. 25, Malvern, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, Newcomerstown, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, at Ridgewood, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, East Canton, 7

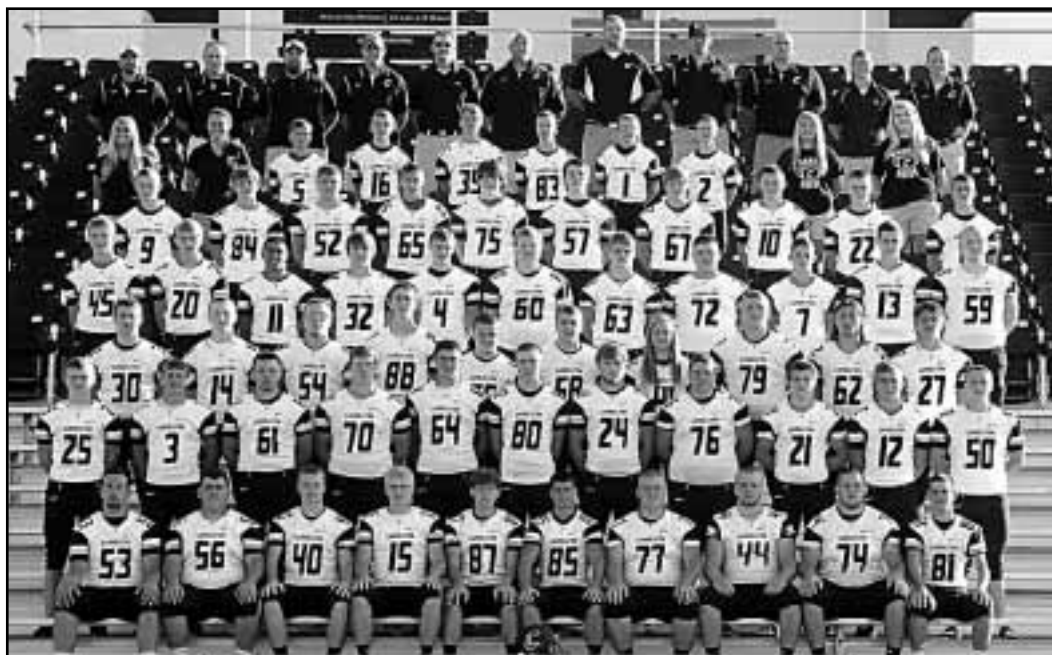
Week 9: Oct. 23, Sandy Valley, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, at Garaway, 7

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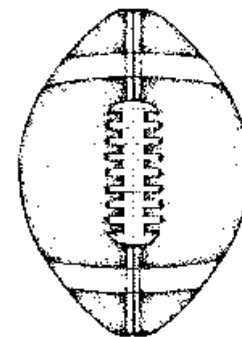
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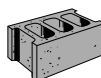
NEWCOMERSTOWN



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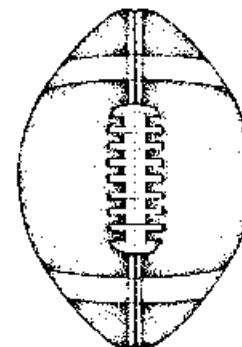
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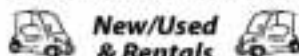
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Trojans to lean on veterans

BY JOE WRIGHT

Times-Reporter staff writer

NEWCOMERSTOWN

Coming off of a 5-5 season and 4-3 mark in the Inter-Valley Conference, Newcomerstown brings back 12 lettermen to battle in the 2015 campaign.

All but one of the lettermen are juniors or seniors.

Coach Josh Lahmers begins his fourth season as a varsity coach, having spent two seasons guiding River View High School before landing the job at Newcomerstown last season.

The Trojans have just 23 players on the varsity roster, so staying healthy will be a big key. Lahmers keeps a positive approach, and his players are taking the same road.

“We don’t have a lot of guys on the roster,” Lahmers said. “But a lot of schools are in the same situation. I know that when we play, we are going to have 11 good football players on the field.”

The Trojans’ offense last year featured a heavy dose of running back Jibril Dansby, who graduated. Also gone to graduation is quarterback Austin Zufelt.

The Trojans will run the wing-T offense, and junior quarterback George Brode will be engineering the attack.

“He’s the leader of the offense and has to coordinate and get people in the right places for us to be successful,” Lahmers said. “He’s shown he can pass the ball, so we should be more diverse on offense.”

Dylan Little, a senior and first-team All-Ohioan, will be moving from split end to running back this season.

“Last season, running our type of offense, he (Little) wanted the ball more,” Lahmers said. “We’ll be asking a lot from him this season.”

Senior Walker McMullen, juniors Michael Dillon and Joel Ebersbach, and sophomore Brandon Anderson also will get some time in the backfield. T’Anthony Birch, a freshman, also could get carries.

The Trojans have some experience back on the offensive line in senior Keleal Tarrance and juniors Ebersbach, Daniel Meeks and Dale Lyons. Newcomerstown also will be getting help on the line from senior Tanner Birch, sophomores Daniel Russell and Calvin Ringer, and juniors Brent Bryant and Dayton Starkey. Freshmen Rees Creager and Dakota Craig also are offensive linemen.

Seniors Devin Croft and Cordell Walker, along with juniors Brandon Septer, Brandon Moore and Sam Kirker make up the receiving corps. Junior Bryce Barbera is a tight end and at 6 feet, 277



TIMES-REPORTER FILE

■ Returning letterman Joel Ebersbach (60), seen here against Garaway last season, will play everything from guard to tight end to running back on offense — along with linebacker on defense — for Newcomerstown this season.

“We don’t have a lot of guys on the roster. But a lot of schools are in the same situation. I know that when we play, we are going to have 11 good players on the field.”

JOSH LAHMERS

pounds, provides a big target.

The Trojans begin their season Friday at home against Barnesville before hitting the road for three straight contests.

Fort Frye and Shenandoah will be two early nonconference road destinations. The Trojans open IVC play on the road against Malvern.

“Anytime you are on the road, you are out of your comfort zone,” Lahmers said. “But we’ll be playing more at home in the second half of the season during league play.”

Lahmers looks to Garaway and Ridgewood as the teams to beat in the IVC.

“Garaway has to be the favorite,” he said. “And Ridgewood is not far behind. They (Generals) have been up there at the top for a long time.”



LAHMERS

BRODE

LITTLE

BARBERA

EBERSBACH

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH Josh Lahmers (2nd year, 5-5).

2014 RECORD 5-5 overall, 4-3 in the Inter-Valley Conference.

DIVISION VI Region 21.

RETURNING LETTERMEN LB/RB Dylan Little (6-1, 148, Sr.); DE/TE Bryce Barbera (6-0, 227, Jr.); LB/G/TE/RB Joel Ebersbach (5-11, 196, Jr.); CB/QB George Brode (6-1, 167, Jr.); DB/WR Brandon Septer (5-6, 138, Jr.); DL/RB Walker McMullen (5-9, 176, Sr.); CB/RB Brandon Anderson (5-10, 155, Soph); LB/G Daniel Meeks (5-11, 178, Jr.); DT/OL Keleal Tarrance (5-8, 277, Sr.); DT/OL Dale Lyons (6-0, 276, Jr.); DB/OL Tanner Birch (5-11, 177, Sr.); RB/DL Michael Dillon (5-8, 145, Jr.).

THE BOTTOM LINE Newcomerstown will have a big challenge ahead this season as it must deal with small numbers and playing three of its first four games of the season on the road. Lahmers said his players are committed and the Trojans’ offense will be more diverse.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, Barnesville, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, at Fort Frye, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, at Shenandoah, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, at Malvern, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, Central Catholic, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, at Strasburg, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, Garaway, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, Sandy Valley, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, at East Canton, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, Ridgewood, 7

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Falcons want to start strong

GateHouse Ohio Media

BREWSTER

The Fairless High School football team was looking to the start the season as soon as two-a-days began earlier this month.

It has been like that ever since the team took the field for the first time, knowing the nonconference portion of the team's schedule would bring many challenges.

Because of that, the thoughts of Week 1 this Friday night — a difficult test against Coshocton — have loomed in the backs of the minds of fourth-year Falcons head coach Don Wilson and his team.

The opener against a team that finished 9-2 a year ago, including a trip to the Division V playoffs, has left Wilson knowing he needs to get his team up to speed quickly.

It has been a "sooner, the better" mentality heading into 2015.

"We aren't as fortunate as some Big Ten schools where we can afford to make some mistakes and still win," Wilson said. "We don't have that luxury. We have to come out of the gates strong because you can't get Week 1 back. For me, it's very, very important that we are ready for the first game."

For a team that still features players with previous playoff experience that went 5-2 in the Principals' Athletic Conference and posted a 5-5 overall mark in 2014, the Fairless coaching staff has held the Falcons to a higher standard in preparation for the season.

"We want to make sure that we take advantage of what we have," Wilson said. "Our guys have tasted some success. These seniors as sophomore went to the playoffs."

"I think that's what they want, but in order to get there, we have to be clicking on all cylinders because we have such a tough nonleague schedule."

On paper, the Falcons return 17 lettermen from last season's roster. After the rebuilding process of 2014, it appears Fairless is much more experienced for this fall.

Even with the sudden youth movement the Falcons had to endure last season, the team still won five games. This season is another opportunity for many players that have a year of performing on Friday nights under their belts to take the next step.

Fairless brings back senior Christian Simmons for his second season under center, which should be a great benefit to the offense.

The progression from the first year as



WILSON



SIMMONS



SUMMERS



NAPIER



KENNEDY

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH Don Wilson (4th year, 16-16).

2014 RECORD 5-5 overall, 5-2 in the Principals Athletic Conference.

DIVISION V Region 15.

RETURNING LETTERMEN OL/DL Gage Bezon (6-3, 250, Sr.); OL/DL Dustin Duff (5-9, 170, Jr.); RB/DB Kyle Eubanks (6-0, 170, Jr.); OL/DL JP Fisher (6-1, 250, Sr.); K Trent Garver (5-1, 155, Jr.); OL/DL Timmy Gregory (5-9, 240, Jr.); WR/DB Nathan Kennedy (5-10, 165, Sr.); OL/DL Joey Kornish (6-0, 210, Jr.); WR/LB Logan Loretto (5-7, 17-, Jr.); RB/LB Tristen Miknis (5-10, 195, Jr.); WR/DB Joey Nicolino (6-2, 160, Jr.); WR/DB Hunter Napier (5-10, 170, Sr.); OL/DL Robert Savage (5-11, 260, Soph.); RB/LB Logan Shepherd (5-8, 170, Jr.); QB/DB Christian Simmons (6-3, 180, Sr.); RB/LB Caleb Summers (5-10, 180, Sr.); WR/LB Brock Wenger (6-2, 185, Sr.); OL/DL Alec Zenk (5-10, 190, Sr.)

THE BOTTOM LINE The Falcons now have a winning attitude, and with 19 lettermen back led by QB Simmons, they could be winners. They plan to spread the wealth offensively, too, much like two years ago when the Falcons reached the playoffs. A tough first four games against three playoff teams from a year ago will test Fairless, which is in contention for its first PAC-7 title.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, Coshocton, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, at Garaway, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, at Smithville, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, at Indian Valley, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, Manchester, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, at Triway, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, Tusky Valley, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, at Northwest, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, CVCA, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, Tuslaw, 7

a starting quarterback to the second is major, Wilson said.

Despite Simmons' growth during the offseason, Fairless must be able to provide him weapons for the team's pass-heavy offense to be successful.

The Falcons lost their top three wide receivers to graduation last year. The top returner at the position for 2015 is Hunter Napier, who caught just 13 passes last season.

Guys like Joey Nicolino, Brock Wenger and Nathan Kennedy will now be expected to carry on the production that Fairless receivers have posted in the past.

On top of Coshocton, the Falcons will travel to Garaway, an 11-win team and playoff qualifier a year ago, in Week 2 before another road trip to Smithville the following week.

All of that comes before PAC play begins at Indian Valley, making it a necessity that the Falcons get rolling quickly.

"I think we have the potential to be very, very good," Wilson said.

"I am a demanding, grumpy old man

right now. We have to keep working and the kids have to keep fighting through this and see this, too. That's the biggest thing."

The Falcons know how important a fast start to the season will be, which is why the team already has eyed Week 1 as a group on a mission.



GATEHOUSE OHIO MEDIA FILE

Fairless head coach Don Wilson expects quarterback Christian Simmons to make a big leap in his second season under center for the Falcons.

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Tucci returns

BY ROGER METZGER
Times-Reporter sports editor

MALVERN

Dave Tucci is back in the saddle again. Tucci, who retired two seasons ago to become Malvern High School's athletic director, recently was pressed back into the Hornets head coaching role after former coach Todd Shadle accepted a late teaching and assistant coaching post at his alma mater of East Canton.

"I thought it might be difficult, but the guys I coach with have made it an easy transition," said Tucci, who posted a 107-49 record in his 14 previous seasons at the Hornets' helm. "They reminded me of the way we did some things in the past. It's been a case of so far, so good."

Tucci stressed that the Hornets want to do better than last season's 1-9 record.

"We definitely want to improve upon that," Tucci said. "We have good leadership, and we have a backfield full of potential and some quality receivers."

Senior offensive tackle/defensive end Adam Champer, senior tight end/nose guard Baylee Fitch, senior offensive

guard/defensive end Landon Monter, junior wide receiver/free safety Jaret Majestic, junior fullback/linebacker Thomas Baxter, junior offensive guard/defensive tackle Jerry Brown, junior offensive tackle Colton Brothers, sophomore quarterback/defensive back Drew Hutchison and sophomore running back/linebacker Austin Patterson are back as returning lettermen.

"I like our skill position players," Tucci said. "Drew did OK as a freshman, but now he's going to take a larger role this season."

"Jaret is our go-to receiver and I like our tailback/fullback combo, so we do have some potential," the veteran coach added.

Senior center/outside linebacker Xavier Mottice, junior wide receiver Hunter Williams, senior wide receiver/cornerback Ansley Williams, sophomore defensive back Gavyn Potts, sophomore wide receiver/defensive back Jake Moser and sophomore linebacker Jacob Andrews also are expected to contribute.

The Hornets should also benefit from an early-season schedule that sees them play three of their first games at home.

Malvern begins the season at United



TUCCI



CHAMPER



MAJESTIC



FITCH



HUTCHISON

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH Dave Tucci (15th year, 107-49).

2014 RECORD 1-9 overall, 1-6 in the Inter-Valley Conference.

DIVISION VII Region 23.

RETURNING LETTERMEN OT/DE Adam Champer (6-6, 200, Sr.); TE/NG Baylee Fitch (5-11, 190, Sr.); OG/DE Landon Monter (6-0, 190, Sr.); WR/FS Jaret Majestic (6-2, 160, Jr.); FB/LB Thomas Baxter (6-2, 200, Jr.); OG/DT Jerry Brown (6-0, 200, Jr.); OT Colton Brothers (6-0, 295, Jr.); QB/CB Drew Hutchison (5-10, 150, Soph.); RB/LB Austin Patterson (6-0, 175, Soph.).

THE BOTTOM LINE In the words of The Who, "Meet the new boss ... same as the old boss." Tucci, who retired from coaching to take the Malvern AD post, was pressed back into coaching when Todd Shadle left for East Canton. Tucci, who coached Malvern to numerous playoff appearances and league titles in his 14 previous seasons at the Hornets' helm, is taking the season one practice and game at a time.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, at United, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, Western Reserve, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, Southern, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, Newcomerstown, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, at Strasburg, 7

Week 6: Oct. 3 at Central Catholic, 1:30

Week 7: Oct. 9, East Canton, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, Garaway, 7

Week 9: Oct. 16, Garaway, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, at Sandy Valley, 7

Friday night followed by three straight home games.

Reach Roger at 330-364-8427
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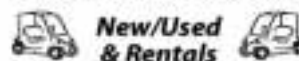
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A giddy coach

BY ROGER METZGER

Times-Reporter sports editor

ZOARVILLE

George Zagales is thrilled to be the head football coach at Tuscarawas Valley.

That's not lip service.

Zagales, who spent time at Tuscarawas Central Catholic and Dover before returning to his native Miami last season, looks to lift the Tusky Valley program from a winless 2014 campaign.

Zagales coached at Archbishop Carroll High School in Miami before moving north and taking over as the head coach at Tuscarawas Central Catholic in 2011. After one year with the Saints, Zagales became an assistant coach at Dover for two seasons before returning to Florida to coach.

However, the Zagales family was not happy living in Florida and when the Tusky Valley job opened up earlier this year, he interviewed and got the position.

"I applied, and I got it," Zagales said. "I'm ecstatic. I like the kids, the school and the administration. I'm excited to be here and see what happens."

Zagales said the Trojans will be a youthful bunch this season.

"We've got a really young team," Zagales said. "Three of our four linebackers will be sophomores; we have a sophomore defensive lineman, a freshman quarterback and a sophomore fullback.

"There are going to be some growing pains. We have to take baby steps."

There are a number of seniors who lettered a season ago, but lack experience.

Among them are nose guard Adam Kohler, cornerback/wide receiver Tyler Burrier, safety/wide receiver Gabe Shetler, defensive tackle/offensive lineman Tyler Johnson, offensive lineman/defensive tackle Tyler Ayers, offensive lineman/defensive tackle Charles McAllister, running back/linebacker Jake Arrendale and offensive lineman Jake Tritt.

"We have a big offensive line," Zagales said. "It all starts up front, so we have that going for us."

Freshman Ethan Love will be quarterback for the Trojans. Love's father, Curtis, was the head coach last season and is an assistant this season.

Juniors Kody Lewis and Peter Hop-



ZAGALES



KOHLER



BURRIER



SHETLER



JOHNSON

Inside the huddle

HEAD COACH George Zagales (1st year).

2014 RECORD 0-10 overall, 0-7 in the Principals' Athletic Conference.

DIVISION V Region 17.

RETURNING LETTERMEN NG Adam Kohler (Sr.); CB/WR Tyler Burrier (Sr.); S/WR Gabe Shetler (Sr.); DT/OL Tyler Johnson (Sr.); OL/DT Tyler Ayers (Sr.); OL/DT Charles McAllister (Sr.); RB/LB Jake Arrendale (Sr.); OL Jake Tritt (Sr.).

THE BOTTOM LINE Coach Zagales takes over a fairly young team and knows there will be growing pains. The Trojans return a number of seniors, but they lack in experience. However, there are a number of promising sophomores and freshmen ready to take field to improve upon last season's winless campaign.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, at Waynedale, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, at River View, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, Sandy Valley, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, at CVCA, 5

Week 5: Sept. 25, Triway, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, at Manchester, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, at Fairless, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, Tuslaw, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, Kenmore, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, Indian Valley, 7

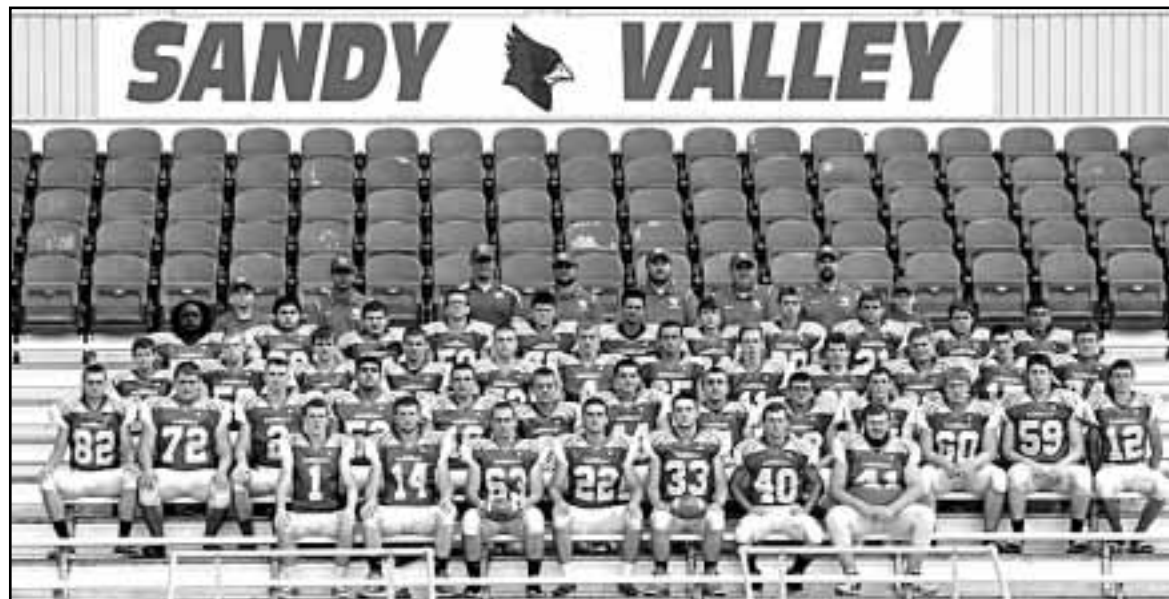
wood are expected to join Love in the backfield, while Zagales' sophomore son Joseph is a tight end/linebacker.

The Trojans kick off the season at Waynedale on Friday night with a trip to

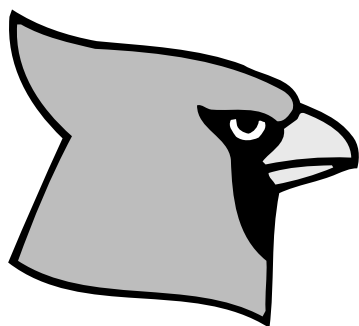
River View the ensuing week followed by the home opener Sept. 11 against neighboring Sandy Valley.

Reach Roger at 330-364-8427 or roger.metzger@timesreporter.com

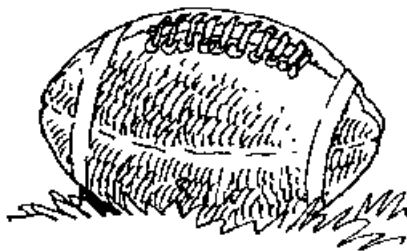
SANDY VALLEY CARDINALS



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Coshocton

HEAD COACH Jim Woodrum (6th year, 32-19).
2014 RECORD 9-2 overall, Regional quarterfinalist, 5-1 and Gray Division champs of the East Central Ohio League.
DIVISION V Region 17.

TOP RETURNING OFFENSIVE PLAYERS
 Junior QB Andrew Mason (6-2, 190); junior RB Zach Michael (5-8, 180); junior RB Spencer McCrea (5-10, 175).

TOP RETURNING DEFENSIVE PLAYERS
 Junior DL Jake Fortney (6-0, 210); senior DE Tanner Shaw (6-5, 235); junior DB Dallas Griffiths (6-1, 190).

THE BOTTOM LINE Despite moving up a division, expect Coshocton to compete and shoot for another postseason berth.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, at Fairless, 7

Week 2: Sept. 5, St. Clairsville, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, at West Holmes, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, Rosecrans, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, at Cambridge, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, New Lexington, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, Meadowbrook, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, Dover, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, at Claymont, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, at River View, 7

Harrison Central

HEAD COACH Justin Kropka (11th year, 53-46).

2014 RECORD 5-5 overall.

DIVISION V Region 17.

RETURNING OFFENSIVE PLAYERS

Junior C Logan Smith (5-10, 270); junior FB

Jesse Ball (6-1, 255); senior QB/WR Brandon Mitchell (6-2, 165); junior OL Lance Smith (5-10, 270); junior TE Grant Sproul (6-1, 235); junior OL Brenton Stull (5-11, 235); senior RB Travis Stenson (6-3, 195); junior OL Nevada Kuryn (6-0, 280); senior QB/WR Zach Arbogast (6-0, 165); senior WR Austyn Porter (6-3, 165).

RETURNING DEFENSIVE PLAYERS

Junior DL Brenton Stull (5-11, 235), junior LB Jesse Ball (6-1, 255); senior LB Antony Risley (5-10, 180); senior OLB Bryson Porter (5-8, 180); senior OLB Travis Stenson (6-3, 195); senior DB Austyn Porter (6-3, 165); senior DB Brandon Mitchell (6-2, 165); senior DB Tison Johnson (5-9, 155).

COACH'S COMMENT "We enter the season as an experienced group, though much of that experience came out of necessity due to a rash of injuries we've weathered the last two seasons," Kropka said. "If we can be fortunate enough to avoid the injury bug and put our entire focus on the task at hand, we have a chance to be very good in 2015."

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, at Claymont, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, at Weir (W.Va.), 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, Bellaire, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, Union Local, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, at Martins Ferry, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, at St. Clairsville, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, Edison, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, Oak Glen (W.Va.), 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, Indian Creek, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, at Buckeye Local, 7

West Holmes

HEAD COACH Kevin Maltarich (6th year, 29-24).

2014 RECORD 6-4 overall, Mohican Area Conference co-champions at 6-1.

DIVISION III Region 9.

RETURNING LETTERMEN Junior LB/RB Garrett Ervin (6-0, 205); junior DB/RB Trenton Bridenthal (5-11, 170); junior DB/QB Connor Roach (6-1, 180); junior DL/OL Josh Goudy (6-5, 180); senior DL/OL Trevor Kiner (6-3, 270); senior DL/OL Matt Eastep (5-11, 230); senior LB/RB Michael Kashuba (5-10, 190); soph. DB/RB Brayden Chaney (5-10, 150); senior DB/SE Cody Straits (6-0, 175); senior LB/OL Michael Workman (6-0, 210); junior DL/OL Jake Mullett (6-3, 195).

TOP NEWCOMERS Soph. TE/DE Brayden Vess (6-3, 220); soph. DB/RB Michael Taylor (6-1, 150); freshman DB/RB Grady Hay (5-10, 150); freshman DL/RB Cale Ogi (6-1, 185).

COACH'S COMMENT "We have a lot of returning lettermen, so we won't be as young as we were last year, but we are still rather young," Maltarch said.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, Triway, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, at New Philadelphia, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, Coshocton, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, at Mansfield Madison, 7

Week 5: Sept. 25, Ashland, 7

Week 6: Oct. 2, Orrville, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, at Mansfield Senior, 7

Week 8: Oct. 16, Lexington, 7

Week 9: Oct. 23, at Wooster, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, at Clear Fork, 7

River View

HEAD COACH Bob Forgrave (2nd year).

2014 RECORD 0-10 overall, 0-5 in Gray Division of the East Central Ohio League.

DIVISION IV Region 13.

RETURNING LETTERMEN Senior WR Bryar Cox (6-2, 195); senior RB Zac Carroll (6-0, 180); senior RB/DL Trevor Wine (6-0, 220); senior RB/S Casey Turnbull (6-2, 180); senior TE/FB Charles Fetzter (6-0, 170); senior OL/DL Tyler Watson (5-10, 195); senior OL/DL Sam Vickers (6-0, 195); senior WR Tyler Pinckard (5-10, 175); junior QB Caden Croft (5-11, 165); junior CB/WR Shawn Stewart (6-0, 185); junior C Lucas Lauvray (5-9 175); junior RB/LB Trace Lingo (5-9, 200); soph. DL/OL Kyle McClain (6-0, 210); soph. LB Michael Watson (5-9, 145); soph. Jarret Hardway (5-9, 185); soph. RB/S/K/P Jorn Hocter (6-0, 160).

TOP NEWCOMERS Senior OL Ricky St. Germaine (5-9, 195); junior OL Brett Shalosky (5-9, 270); soph. QB Keith Stewart (5-11, 175).

COACH'S COMMENT "We need to get off to a good start to gain confidence and momentum," Forgrave said.

SCHEDULE

Week 1: Friday, at Heath, 7

Week 2: Sept. 4, Tusky Valley, 7

Week 3: Sept. 11, at Ridgewood, 7

Week 4: Sept. 18, Philo, 7:30

Week 5: Sept. 25, at Maysville, 7:30

Week 6: Oct. 2, Meadowbrook, 7

Week 7: Oct. 9, Claymont, 7

Week 8: Oct. 17, at Rosecrans, 7

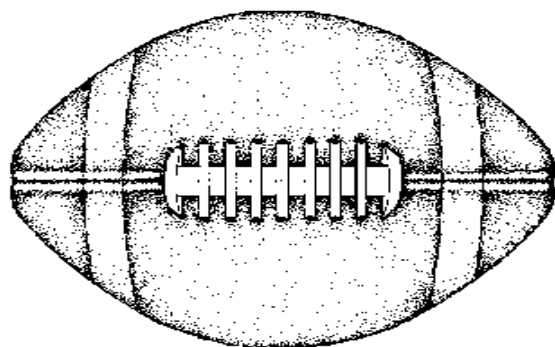
Week 9: Oct. 23, at Zanesville, 7

Week 10: Oct. 30, at Coshocton, 7

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WEEK 1**(all games at 7 p.m. unless noted)****Friday**

St. Clairsville at Carrollton
 Cle. Central Catholic at Dover
 New Philadelphia at Canton Central Catholic
 Harrison Central at Claymont
 Coshocton at Fairless
 Garaway at Dalton
 Strasburg at Conotton Valley
 Indian Valley at Sandy Valley
 Malvern at United
 Barnesville at Newcomerstown
 Tusky Valley at Waynedale
 River View at Heath
 Triway at West Holmes

Saturday

David Anderson at Central Catholic
 (Crater Stadium)

WEEK 2**Sept. 4**

Carrollton at Edison
 Lake at Dover
 West Holmes at New Philadelphia
 Claymont at Indian Valley
 Fairless at Garaway
 Harrison Central at Weir
 Conotton Valley at Southern
 Western Reserve at Malvern
 Newcomerstown at Fort Frye
 Ridgewood at Waynedale
 Mapleton at Sandy Valley
 Tusky Valley at River View

Sept. 5

Strasburg at Bellaire St. John, 12

Weirton Madonna at Central Catholic, 1:30
 St. Clairsville at Coshocton

WEEK 3**Sept. 11**

Scioto Community at Conotton Valley, 6
 Carrollton at Claymont
 Dover at Nordonia
 New Philadelphia at Perry
 Coshocton at West Holmes
 Fairless at Smithville
 Garaway at Indian Valley
 Bellaire at Harrison Central
 Southern at Malvern
 Newcomerstown at Shenandoah
 River View at Ridgewood
 Sandy Valley at Tusky Valley
 East Knox at Strasburg

Sept. 12

Rosecrans at Central Catholic, 3

WEEK 4**Sept. 18**

Marlington at Carrollton
 Southeast at Dover
 New Philadelphia at Tallmadge
 Claymont at Danville
 Rosecrans at Coshocton
 Fairless at Indian Valley
 Garaway at East Canton
 Union Local at Harrison Central
 Rootstown at Conotton Valley
 Newcomerstown at Malvern
 Ridgewood at Sandy Valley
 Tusky Valley at CVCA
 Philo at River View

West Holmes at Madison
Sept. 19
 Strasburg at Central Catholic, 1:30

WEEK 5**Sept. 25**

Carrollton at West Branch
 Central Catholic at Newcomerstown
 Steubenville at Dover
 Northwest at New Philadelphia
 Rosecrans at Claymont
 Manchester at Fairless
 Coshocton at Cambridge
 Sandy Valley at Garaway
 Harrison Central at Martins Ferry
 Conotton Valley at Bridgeport
 Indian Valley at Tuslaw
 Malvern at Strasburg
 East Canton at Ridgewood
 Triway at Tusky Valley
 River View at Maysville
 Ashland at West Holmes

WEEK 6**Oct. 2**

Salem at Carrollton
 Dover at Zanesville
 Claymont at New Philadelphia
 New Lexington at Coshocton
 Fairless at Triway
 Ridgewood at Garaway
 Harrison Central at St. Clairsville
 Beaver at Indian Valley
 Newcomerstown at Strasburg
 Sandy Valley at East Canton
 Tusky Valley at Manchester
 Meadowbrook at River View

Orrville at West Holmes
Oct. 3
 Malvern at Central Catholic, 1:30
 Conotton Valley at Bishop Donahue

WEEK 7**Oct. 9**

Alliance at Carrollton
 Zanesville at New Philadelphia
 Central Catholic at Sandy Valley
 Cambridge at Dover
 Claymont at River View
 Meadowbrook at Coshocton
 Tusky Valley at Fairless
 Garaway at Newcomerstown
 Edison at Harrison Central
 Cameron at Conotton Valley
 CVCA at Indian Valley
 East Canton at Malvern
 Strasburg at Ridgewood
 West Holmes at Mansfield Senior

WEEK 8**Oct. 16**

Carrollton at Louisville
 Dover at Coshocton
 New Philadelphia at Marietta
 Claymont at Meadowbrook
 Fairless at Northwest
 Garaway at Malvern
 Oak Glen at Harrison Central
 Conotton Valley at Toronto
 Indian Valley at Manchester
 Sandy Valley at Newcomerstown
 East Canton at Strasburg
 Tuslaw at Tusky Valley
 Lexington at West Holmes

Oct. 17
 Ridgewood at Central Catholic, 1:30
 River View at Rosecrans

WEEK 9**Oct. 23**

Canton South at Carrollton
 Central Catholic at Garaway
 Cambridge at New Philadelphia
 Dover at Marietta
 Coshocton at Claymont
 CVCA at Fairless
 Indian Creek at Harrison Central
 Bellaire St. John at Conotton Valley
 Indian Valley at Triway
 Malvern at Ridgewood
 Newcomerstown at East Canton
 Sandy Valley at Strasburg
 Kenmore at Tusky Valley
 River View at Zanesville
 West Holmes at Wooster

WEEK 10**Oct. 30**

New Philadelphia at Dover
 Carrollton at Minerva
 Central Catholic at East Canton
 Maysville at Claymont
 Coshocton at River View
 Tuslaw at Fairless
 Strasburg at Garaway
 Harrison Central at Buckeye Local
 Rosecrans at Conotton Valley
 Indian Valley at Tusky Valley
 Malvern at Sandy Valley
 Ridgewood at Newcomerstown
 West Holmes at Clear Fork

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OSU, Badgers may meet again

BY ERIC OLSON

The Associated Press

The Big Ten East's a beast. Ohio State is loaded with returning talent and is the popular pick to return to the College Football Playoff to defend its national title.

Michigan State has won 24 games the past two seasons and four straight bowls. Jim Harbaugh's arrival in Ann Arbor shows Michigan is serious about making a quick resurgence, and Penn State looks to be on the rise under James Franklin.

The West, meanwhile, is in catch-up mode after Ohio State hammered Wisconsin 59-0 in the Big Ten title game. Wisconsin and Nebraska each has a new coach, Minnesota is out to prove it's better than an eight-win program and Iowa is coming off losses in five of its last seven.

The Big Ten raised its profile last year. Ohio State won the conference's first national title since 2002 and the league had a 6-4 postseason record and three teams finish among the top 13.

"There is good energy," commissioner Jim Delany said, "and we're glad to be in the conversation."

Predicted order of finish

EAST 1. Ohio State, 2. Michigan State, 3. Penn State, 4. Michigan, 5. Maryland, 6. Rutgers, 7. Indiana.

WEST 1. Wisconsin, 2. Minnesota, 3. Nebraska, 4. Iowa, 5. Northwestern, 6. Illinois, 7. Purdue.

TITLE GAME WINNER Ohio State

The Buckeyes are 24-0 in Big Ten regular-season games in three years under Urban Meyer. Their only loss to a conference team came in the 2013 Big Ten title game, 34-24 to Michigan State.

The Spartans squandered their opportunity against the Buckeyes last year, with their defense having no answer for J.T. Barrett and Ezekiel Elliott while losing 49-37 at home.

"Even if there isn't a chip on our shoulder from people disrespecting us, there's a chip on our shoulder from realizing we can do better and being disappointed in ourselves for not making it as far as we could, knowing that we had the potential to make it that far," defensive

lineman Shilique Calhoun said.

Harbaugh's Wolverines likely are a recruiting cycle or two away from contending in the East. Penn State and Rutgers are coming off bowl wins, Maryland will have a new quarterback and defensive coordinator after a solid Big Ten debut season, and Indiana will be looking to move up with QB Nate Sudfeld's return following a shoulder injury.

In the West, Paul Chryst takes over at Wisconsin and Mike Riley at Nebraska. Both inherit winning programs.

The Badgers lost national rushing leader Melvin Gordon, but there won't be much drop off with Corey Clement.

At Nebraska, the Cornhuskers need to settle on a replacement for three-time 1,000-yard rusher Ameer Abdullah.

Minnesota has won eight games and beaten Nebraska two years in a row, and the Gophers could have one of the league's best defenses. Iowa is looking to bounce back from its 2014 collapse, and Illinois, Northwestern and Purdue all are aiming to improve.

Some things to watch in the Big Ten this season:

GOING FOR TWO IN A ROW Ohio State has everything it needs to repeat as national champion. QBs Cardale Jones and Barrett have been there, done that; RB Elliott is a Heisman Trophy hopeful; and DL Joey Bosa could be the best defensive player in the country.

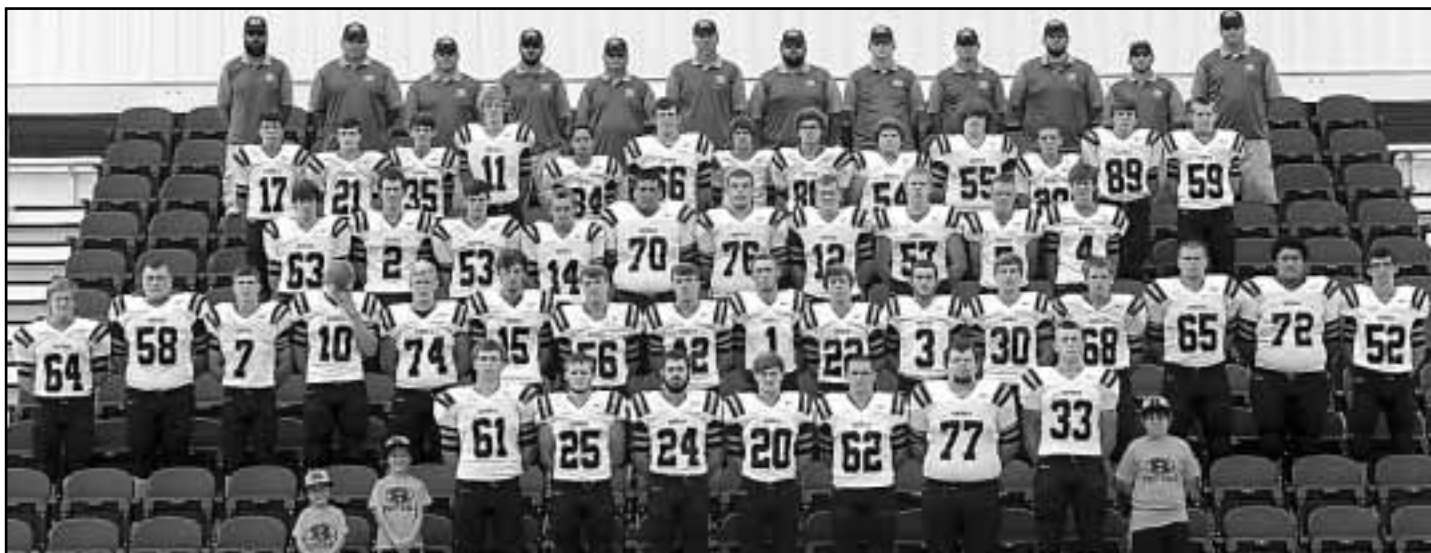
HARBAUGH HYPE Harbaugh's hiring should give Michigan a shot of confidence after it lost three home games for the second time in five years. The defense should be able to hold up its end, but the offense might lag.

TOP PASSERS Michigan State's Heisman candidate, Connor Cook, threw for 3,214 yards and 24 TDs last season and is 23-3 as a starter. Ohio State's Barrett passed for a league-high 34 touchdowns before he broke his ankle.

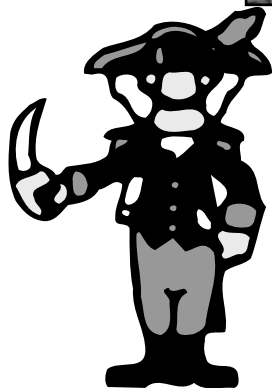
HOT SEATS Tim Beckman's Illinois program was dogged in the offseason by allegations of player abuse, and he has a three-year Big Ten record of 4-20.

Purdue's Darrell Hazell has won four games in two seasons, and there's nothing to suggest improvement. Iowa's Kirk Ferentz and Indiana's Kevin Wilson also are feeling pressure.

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More to Bucks than just QBs

BY RALPH D. RUSSO

The Associated Press

COLUMBUS

Ezekiel Elliott and the Ohio State offensive line could make most quarterbacks look good. For all the headlines generated by the Buckeyes' ability to replace a star quarterback with another star quarterback last season, the development of the running game was every bit as important to Ohio State's national championship season.

No matter if J.T. Barrett or Cardale Jones takes snaps for the Buckeyes this season, Elliott could be the focal point of Ohio State's offense.

The junior ran for 1,878 yards and 18 touchdowns last year and enters this season on pretty much every list of Heisman Trophy hopefuls.

At the start of last season, Elliott and an offensive line breaking in four new starters struggled to get rolling. In a September home loss to Virginia Tech, Elliott ran eight times for 32 yards. But when Ohio State turned it on down the stretch, Elliott and the offensive line were dominant.

"Zeke was the exact same player all year, but then the people around him just needed to play better in order for him to really show what he was capable of," tackle Taylor Decker said.

Elliott had 153 yards and two scores at Michigan State, then had three 200-yard games in the postseason. Against Wisconsin, Alabama and Oregon, Elliott ran for 698 yards and eight touchdowns.

"The key with Zeke is if you can get him to the second level, his skill set at the second level is unbelievable," offensive line coach and co-offensive coordinator Ed Warinner said.

The offensive line now returns four starters, including Decker, who considered entering the NFL Draft early before deciding to return to Columbus, and guard Pat Elflein. There might not be a better group of blockers in the country.

"I think we're definitely farther along than we were last year at this point, especially from a chemistry standpoint and an experience standpoint," Decker said. "But I think it would be dangerous to sit there and believe that we're the best."

Elliott does not shy away from praising the guys who make his life easier.

"I think they're going to be the best group on the team because after last year and the experience they gained and how tough they are and how hard they work. I don't see anyone outworking them or anyone being better than them," Elliott said.

Here are some things to know about the team that will try to give coach Urban Meyer his fourth national championship:

ABOUT THOSE QBs Barrett was the Big Ten player of the year last season, setting a conference record by accounting for 45 touchdowns.

Jones took over when Barrett broke his right ankle against Michigan, leading the Buckeyes to wins against Wisconsin, Alabama and Oregon. He passed for 742 yards and five touchdowns in that remarkable three-game run.

Meyer has said he won't reveal his starter until the Buckeyes take the field Labor Night at Virginia Tech, but it certainly seems as if he can't go wrong.

MEYER'S STREAKS Meyer is the only coach in major college history to have three winning streaks of at least 20 games. His Florida teams won 22 in one stretch. He won 20 straight from the end of his time in Utah to his first season at Florida. He added a 25-game streak that started his last season at Florida and ended during his second season at Ohio State. The Buckeyes enter this season on a 13-game winning streak.

SUSPENSIONS Ohio State will play Virginia Tech without All-American end Joey Bosa and three receivers: Jalin Marshall, Corey Smith and Dontre Wilson. All were suspended for a game for an unspecified violation of team rules, making one of the toughest games on a schedule that is light on marquee matchups even more difficult for the Buckeyes.

MILLER ON THE MOVE Former Big Ten player of the year Braxton Miller is moving from quarterback to receiver after two shoulder surgeries. Miller will be used as a an H-Back, a role that will have him lining up all over the field and getting the ball on all kinds of pitches, handoffs and passes.

"Just having fun out there," Miller said. "You catch the ball and you're already in the second or third level. All you got to do is make one guy miss and it's off to the races."



AP FILE

While all the attention has been on Ohio State's quarterbacks heading into this season, running back Ezekiel Elliott might be more important to the Buckeyes' hopes of repeating as national champions.

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Toledo looks to get over hump

BY NOAH TRISTER

The Associated Press

DETROIT

The Toledo Rockets have had five consecutive winning seasons and went to a bowl four times in that span.

There's really only one breakthrough that's eluded them.

For all of Toledo's success recently, the Rockets haven't won the Mid-American Conference since 2004. Instead, division rival Northern Illinois always seems a step ahead. The Huskies have played in five consecutive MAC championship games, winning three.

This may be Toledo's best chance to move past Northern Illinois. Kareem Hunt returns for the Rockets after rushing for 1,631 yards last season, and Toledo's defense lost only three starters.

Even the schedule is cooperating. Toledo, Northern Illinois and Western Michigan are expected to be the top teams in the West Division, and the Rockets get to play both those other teams at home.

"We know we have a chance to be very good this season but we also have a lot

Predicted order of finish

EAST 1. Bowling Green, 2. Massachusetts, **3. Ohio**, 4. Akron, 5. Kent State. 6. Buffalo, 7. Miami (OH).
WEST 1. Toledo, 2. Northern Illinois, 3. Western Michigan, 4. Central Michigan, 5. Ball State, 6. Eastern Michigan.
TITLE GAME WINNER Toledo

of work ahead of us," Toledo coach Matt Campbell said.

The Rockets were slight favorites to win the title in the league's preseason poll, but don't expect Northern Illinois to fade without a fight. The Huskies had to replace star quarterback Jordan Lynch last year, and they rolled through the conference slate with only one loss before routing Bowling Green 51-17 in the title game.

Bowling Green won the East for a second consecutive season, and coach Dino Babers is eager to unleash his fast-paced offensive system on the league again. The Falcons ran 113 offensive plays in a September win over Indiana — and that's the blueprint for what Babers is

trying to accomplish.

"I told the quarterbacks, I said, 'It's a racing car, and I want to hear the tires sing. When we go into a curve, they're supposed to sing — tires are supposed to make noise,'" Babers said. "That's not the time to get off the gas, that's the time to accelerate through the curve so we can come out and get going."

Quarterback Matt Johnson is back for Bowling Green after being limited to one game last season because of a broken hip.

Here are a few other things to watch in the MAC this year:

STABILITY? The MAC often has a lot of coaching turnover, with its top teams becoming targets for big-name programs looking to hire. But this year only two teams have new faces at the helm — Buffalo with Lance Leipold and Central Michigan with John Bonamego.

Ohio coach Frank Solich is sixth on the MAC's career list with 72 wins, and he can move all the way up to third if he has a big season in 2015. Gary Pinkel (73), Doyt Perry (77) and Bob Pruett (79) are within reach.

ON THE RISE Massachusetts has been

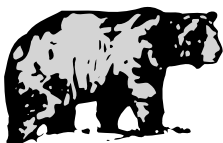
in the Football Bowl Subdivision for only three years, but after going 1-11 in 2012 and again in 2013, the Minutemen won three games last year — all in conference. UMass also led Colorado and Vanderbilt in the second half before losing both games by three points. Is there another step forward for QB Blake Frohnapfel and the Minutemen in 2015?

RUNNING WILD Hunt led the MAC in rushing last year, but Western Michigan's Jarvin Franklin wasn't far behind with 1,551 yards on 306 carries as a freshman. Buffalo's Anthonie Taylor also returns after running for 1,403 yards in 2014.

CHANCES TO SHINE Western Michigan will have an immediate chance to show it's a MAC title contender when it hosts Big Ten power Michigan State in the season opener. That same week, Central Michigan hosts Oklahoma State.

RECORD STREAK Northern Illinois has made seven consecutive bowl appearances, a MAC record. The Huskies haven't won their bowl since the 2011 season, however. The league went 2-3 in bowls last season, with Bowling Green and Toledo earning the victories.

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OHIO STATE

- Sept. 7: at Virginia Tech, 8
- Sept. 12: Hawaii, 3:30
- Sept. 19: Northern Illinois, 3:30
- Sept. 26: Western Michigan, TBA
- Oct. 3: at Indiana, TBA
- Oct. 10: Maryland, noon
- Oct. 17: Penn State, 8
- Oct. 24: at Rutgers, 8
- Nov. 7: Minnesota, TBA
- Nov. 14: at Illinois, TBA
- Nov. 21: Michigan State, TBA
- Nov. 28: at Michigan, TBA

AKRON

- Sept. 5: at Oklahoma, 7
- Sept. 12: Pittsburgh, 6
- Sept. 19: Savannah State, TBA
- Sept. 26: at Louisiana-Lafayette, TBA
- Oct. 3: Ohio, 2
- Oct. 10: at Eastern Michigan, 3
- Oct. 17: at Bowling Green, 3
- Oct. 31: Central Michigan, TBA
- Nov. 7: at UMass, TBA
- Nov. 14: at Miami (Ohio), TBA
- Nov. 21: Buffalo, TBA
- Nov. 27: Kent State, TBA

BOWLING GREEN

- Sept. 5: at Tennessee, 4
- Sept. 12: at Maryland, noon
- Sept. 19: Memphis, 3
- Sept. 26: at Purdue, TBA
- Oct. 3: at Buffalo, 3:30
- Oct. 10: UMass, TBA
- Oct. 17: Akron, 3
- Oct. 24: at Kent State, TBA
- Nov. 4: Ohio, 8
- Nov. 11: at Western Michigan, 8
- Nov. 17: Toledo, TBA
- Nov. 24: at Ball State, 7:30

CINCINNATI

- Sept. 5: Alabama A&M, 7
- Sept. 12: Temple, 8
- Sept. 19: at Miami (Ohio), 3:30
- Sept. 24: at Memphis, 7:30
- Oct. 1: Miami, 7:30
- Oct. 16: at BYU, 8
- Oct. 24: UConn, TBA
- Oct. 31: UCF, TBA
- Nov. 7: at Houston, TBA
- Nov. 14: Tulsa, TBA
- Nov. 20: at South Florida, 8
- Nov. 28: at East Carolina, TBA

DAYTON

- Sept. 5: at Robert Morris, noon
- Sept. 19: Duquesne, 1
- Sept. 26: Kennesaw State, 6
- Oct. 3: at Stetson, 1
- Oct. 10: San Diego, 1
- Oct. 17: at Valparaiso, 2
- Oct. 24: Butler, 6
- Oct. 31: Jacksonville, 1
- Nov. 7: at Morehead State, 1
- Nov. 14: Marist, 1
- Nov. 21: at Drake, 2

KENT STATE

- Sept. 4: at Illinois, 9
- Sept. 12: Delaware State, 6
- Sept. 19: at Minnesota, noon
- Sept. 26: Marshall, TBA
- Oct. 3: Miami (Ohio), 3:30
- Oct. 10: at Toledo, 3
- Oct. 17: at UMass, 3:30
- Oct. 24: Bowling Green, TBA
- Nov. 5: Buffalo, 7:30
- Nov. 10: at Ohio, 8
- Nov. 18: Central Michigan, 8
- Nov. 27: at Akron, TBA

MIAMI (OHIO)

- Sept. 5: Presbyterian, 3:30
- Sept. 12: at Wisconsin, noon
- Sept. 19: Cincinnati, 3:30
- Sept. 26: at Western Kentucky, 3:30
- Oct. 3: at Kent State, 3:30
- Oct. 10: at Ohio, 2
- Oct. 17: Northern Illinois, 2:30
- Oct. 24: at Western Michigan, 2
- Oct. 29: Buffalo, 7:30
- Nov. 7: Eastern Michigan, TBA
- Nov. 14: Akron, TBA
- Nov. 21: at UMass, TBA

OHIO

- Sept. 3: at Idaho, 9
- Sept. 12: Marshall, 7
- Sept. 19: SE Louisiana, 2
- Sept. 26: at Minnesota, 3:30
- Oct. 3: at Akron, 2
- Oct. 10: Miami (Ohio), 2
- Oct. 17: Western Michigan, TBA
- Oct. 24: at Buffalo, TBA
- Nov. 4: at Bowling Green, 8
- Nov. 10: Kent State, 8
- Nov. 17: Ball State, TBA
- Nov. 24: at Northern Illinois, 7:30

TOLEDO

- Sept. 3 Stony Brook, 7
- Sept. 12 at Arkansas, 4
- Sept. 19 Iowa State, 8
- Sept. 26 Arkansas State, TBA
- Oct. 3 at Ball State, 3
- Oct. 10 Kent State, 3
- Oct. 17 Eastern Michigan, TBA
- Oct. 24 at UMass, TBA
- Nov. 3 Northern Illinois, 8
- Nov. 10 at Central Michigan, 8
- Nov. 17 at Bowling Green, TBA
- Nov. 27 Western Michigan, TBA

YOUNGSTOWN STATE

- Sept. 5: at Pittsburgh, 1
- Sept. 12: Robert Morris, 7
- Sept. 19: State Francis (Pa.), 4
- Oct. 3: at South Dakota, 3
- Oct. 10: Illinois State, 7
- Oct. 17: South Dakota State, 4
- Oct. 24: at Southern Illinois, 7
- Oct. 31: at Western Illinois, 2
- Nov. 7: Missouri State, 2
- Nov. 14: North Dakota State, 2
- Nov. 21: at Indiana State, 1:05



AP FILE

- Toledo running back Kareem Hunt and the Rockets have their sights set on a MAC title.

Malvern Hornets



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WEEK 1

Thursday, Sept. 10
Pittsburgh at New England, 8:30
Sunday, Sept. 13

Indianapolis at Buffalo, 1
 Green Bay at Chicago, 1
 Kansas City at Houston, 1
 Carolina at Jacksonville, 1
Cleveland at N.Y. Jets, 1
 Seattle at St. Louis, 1
 Miami at Washington, 1
 New Orleans at Arizona, 4:05
 Detroit at San Diego, 4:05
 Baltimore at Denver, 4:25
Cincinnati at Oakland, 4:25
 Tennessee at Tampa Bay, 4:25
 N.Y. Giants at Dallas, 8:30

Monday, Sept. 14

Philadelphia at Atlanta, 7:10
 Minnesota at San Francisco, 10:20

WEEK 2

Thursday, Sept. 17

Denver at Kansas City, 8:25

Sunday, Sept. 20

New England at Buffalo, 1
 Houston at Carolina, 1
 Arizona at Chicago, 1
San Diego at Cincinnati, 1
Tennessee at Cleveland, 1
 Detroit at Minnesota, 1
 Tampa Bay at New Orleans, 1
 Atlanta at N.Y. Giants, 1
San Francisco at Pittsburgh, 1
 St. Louis at Washington, 1
 Miami at Jacksonville, 4:05
 Baltimore at Oakland, 4:05
 Dallas at Philadelphia, 4:25
 Seattle at Green Bay, 8:30
Monday, Sept. 21
 N.Y. Jets at Indianapolis, 8:30

WEEK 3

Thursday, Sept. 24

Washington at N.Y. Giants, 8:25

Sunday, Sept. 27

New Orleans at Carolina, 1
Oakland at Cleveland, 1
 Atlanta at Dallas, 1
 Tampa Bay at Houston, 1
 San Diego at Minnesota, 1
 Jacksonville at New England, 1
 Philadelphia at N.Y. Jets, 1
 Indianapolis at Tennessee, 1
Pittsburgh at St. Louis, 1
Cincinnati at Baltimore, 1
 San Francisco at Arizona, 4:05
 Buffalo at Miami, 4:25
 Chicago at Seattle, 4:25
 Denver at Detroit, 8:30
Monday, Sept. 28
 Kansas City at Green Bay, 8:30

WEEK 4

Thursday, Oct. 1

Baltimore at Pittsburgh, 8:25
Sunday, Oct. 4

N.Y. Jets at Miami, 9:30 a.m.
 (London)
 Houston at Atlanta, 1
 N.Y. Giants at Buffalo, 1

Oakland at Chicago, 1
Kansas City at Cincinnati, 1
 Jacksonville at Indianapolis, 1
 Carolina at Tampa Bay, 1
 Philadelphia at Washington, 1
Cleveland at San Diego, 4:05
 St. Louis at Arizona, 4:25
 Minnesota at Denver, 4:25
 Green Bay at San Francisco, 4:25
 Dallas at New Orleans, 8:30

Monday, Oct. 5

Detroit at Seattle, 8:30
Byes: Tennessee, New England

WEEK 5

Thursday, Oct. 8

Indianapolis at Houston, 8:25

Sunday, Oct. 11

Washington at Atlanta, 1
Seattle at Cincinnati, 1
 St. Louis at Green Bay, 1
 Chicago at Kansas City, 1
 Buffalo at Tennessee, 1
 New Orleans at Philadelphia, 1
Cleveland at Baltimore, 1
 Jacksonville at Tampa Bay, 1
 Arizona at Detroit, 4:05
 New England at Dallas, 4:25
 Denver at Oakland, 4:25
 San Francisco at N.Y. Giants, 8:30

Monday, Oct. 12

Pittsburgh at San Diego, 8:30
Byes: Carolina, Miami,
 Minnesota, N.Y. Jets

WEEK 6

Thursday, Oct. 15

Atlanta at New Orleans, 8:25

Sunday, Oct. 18

Cincinnati at Buffalo, 1
Denver at Cleveland, 1
 Chicago at Detroit, 1
 Houston at Jacksonville, 1
 Kansas City at Minnesota, 1
 Washington at N.Y. Jets, 1
 Miami at Tennessee, 1
Arizona at Pittsburgh, 1
 Carolina at Seattle, 4:05
 San Diego at Green Bay, 4:25
 Baltimore at San Francisco, 4:25
 New England at Indianapolis, 8:30

Monday, Oct. 29

N.Y. Giants at Philadelphia, 8:30
Byes: Dallas, Oakland, St. Louis,
 Tampa Bay

WEEK 7

Thursday, Oct. 22

Seattle at San Francisco, 8:25

Sunday, Oct. 25

Buffalo at Jacksonville, 9:30 a.m.
 (London)
 New Orleans at Indianapolis, 1
 Minnesota at Detroit, 1
Pittsburgh at Kansas City, 1
 Houston at Miami, 1
 N.Y. Jets at New England, 1
 Atlanta at Tennessee, 1
Cleveland at St. Louis, 1
 Tampa Bay at Washington, 1
 Oakland at San Diego, 4:05
 Dallas at N.Y. Giants, 4:25
 Philadelphia at Carolina, 8:30

Monday, Oct. 26

Baltimore at Arizona, 8:30
Byes: Chicago, **Cincinnati**,
 Denver, Green Bay

WEEK 8

Thursday, Oct. 29

Miami at New England, 8:25

Sunday, Nov. 1

Detroit at Kansas City, 9:30 a.m.
 (London)
 Tampa Bay at Atlanta, 1
 Minnesota at Chicago, 1
Arizona at Cleveland, 1
 Tennessee at Houston, 1
 N.Y. Giants at New Orleans, 1
Cincinnati at Pittsburgh, 1
 San Francisco at St. Louis, 1
 San Diego at Baltimore, 1
 N.Y. Jets at Oakland, 4:05
 Seattle at Dallas, 4:25
 Green Bay at Denver, 8:30
Monday, Nov. 2
 Indianapolis at Carolina, 8:30
Byes: Buffalo, Jacksonville,
 Philadelphia, Washington

WEEK 9

Thursday, Nov. 5

Cleveland at Cincinnati, 8:25
Sunday, Nov. 8

Miami at Buffalo, 1
 Green Bay at Carolina, 1
 St. Louis at Minnesota, 1
 Tennessee at New Orleans, 1
 Washington at New England, 1
 Jacksonville at N.Y. Jets, 1
Oakland at Pittsburgh, 1
 Atlanta at San Francisco, 4:05
 N.Y. Giants at Tampa Bay, 4:05
 Denver at Indianapolis, 4:25
 Philadelphia at Dallas, 8:30

Monday, Nov. 9

Chicago at San Diego, 8:30
Byes: Arizona, Baltimore, Detroit,
 Houston, Kansas City, Seattle

WEEK 10

Thursday, Nov. 12

Buffalo at N.Y. Jets, 8:25

Sunday, Nov. 15

Detroit at Green Bay, 1
 Carolina at Tennessee, 1
 Miami at Philadelphia, 1
Cleveland at Pittsburgh, 1
 Chicago at St. Louis, 1
 Jacksonville at Baltimore, 1
 Dallas at Tampa Bay, 1
 New Orleans at Washington, 1
 Minnesota at Oakland, 4:05
 Kansas City at Denver, 4:25
 New England at N.Y. Giants, 4:25
 Arizona at Seattle, 8:30

Monday, Nov. 16

Houston at Cincinnati, 8:30
Byes: Atlanta, Indianapolis, San
 Diego, San Francisco

WEEK 11

Thursday, Nov. 19

Tennessee at Jacksonville, 8:25

Sunday, Nov. 22

Indianapolis at Atlanta, 1
 Washington at Carolina, 1
 Denver at Chicago, 1
 Oakland at Detroit, 1
 N.Y. Jets at Houston, 1
 Dallas at Miami, 1
 Green Bay at Minnesota, 1
 Tampa Bay at Philadelphia, 1
 St. Louis at Baltimore, 1
Cincinnati at Arizona, 4:05
 San Francisco at Seattle, 4:25
 Kansas City at San Diego, 8:30

Monday, Nov. 23

Buffalo at New England, 8:30
Byes: **Cleveland**, New Orleans,
 NY Giants, **Pittsburgh**

WEEK 12

Thursday, Nov. 26

Philadelphia at Detroit, 12:30
 Carolina at Dallas, 4:30
 Chicago at Green Bay, 8:30

Sunday, Nov. 29

Minnesota at Atlanta, 1
St. Louis at Cincinnati, 1
 Tampa Bay at Indianapolis, 1
 New Orleans at Houston, 1
 San Diego at Jacksonville, 1
 Buffalo at Kansas City, 1
 Miami at N.Y. Jets, 1
 Oakland at Tennessee, 1
 N.Y. Giants at Washington, 1
 Arizona at San Francisco, 4:05
Pittsburgh at Seattle, 4:25
 New England at Denver, 8:30
Monday, Nov. 30
Baltimore at Cleveland, 8:30

WEEK 13

Thursday, Dec. 3

Green Bay at Detroit, 8:25

Sunday, Dec. 6

Houston at Buffalo, 1
 San Francisco at Chicago, 1
Cincinnati at Cleveland, 1
 Baltimore at Miami, 1
 Seattle at Minnesota, 1
 Carolina at New Orleans, 1
 N.Y. Jets at N.Y. Giants, 1
 Jacksonville at Tennessee, 1
 Arizona at St. Louis, 1
 Atlanta at Tampa Bay, 1
 Kansas City at Oakland, 4:05
 Denver at San Diego, 4:05
 Philadelphia at New England, 4:25
Indianapolis at Pittsburgh, 8:30
Monday, Dec. 7
 Dallas at Washington, 8:30

WEEK 14

Thursday, Dec. 10

Minnesota at Arizona, 8:25

Sunday, Dec. 13

Atlanta at Carolina, 1
 Washington at Chicago, 1
Pittsburgh at Cincinnati, 1
San Francisco at Cleveland, 1
 New England at Houston, 1
 Indianapolis at Jacksonville, 1
 San Diego at Kansas City, 1
 Tennessee at N.Y. Jets, 1
 Buffalo at Philadelphia, 1

Detroit at St. Louis, 1
 New Orleans at Tampa Bay, 1
 Oakland at Denver, 4:05
 Dallas at Green Bay, 4:25
 Seattle at Baltimore, 8:30
Monday, Dec. 14
 N.Y. Giants at Miami, 8:30

WEEK 15

Thursday, Dec. 17

Tampa Bay at St. Louis, 8:25

Saturday, Dec. 19

N.Y. Jets at Dallas, 8:25

Sunday, Dec. 20

Houston at Indianapolis, 1
 Atlanta at Jacksonville, 1
 Chicago at Minnesota, 1
 Tennessee at New England, 1
 Carolina at N.Y. Giants, 1
 Arizona at Philadelphia, 1
 Kansas City at Baltimore, 1
 Buffalo at Washington, 1
 Green Bay at Oakland, 4:05
Cleveland at Seattle, 4:05
Denver at Pittsburgh, 4:25
 Miami at San Diego, 4:25
Cincinnati at San Francisco, 8:30
Monday, Dec. 21
 Detroit at New Orleans, 8:30

WEEK 16

Thursday, Dec. 24

San Diego at Oakland, 8:25

Saturday, Dec. 26

Washington at Philadelphia, 8:25

Sunday, Dec. 27

Carolina at Atlanta, 1
 Dallas at Buffalo, 1
 San Francisco at Detroit, 1
Cleveland at Kansas City, 1
 Indianapolis at Miami, 1
 N.Y. Giants at Minnesota, 1
 Jacksonville at New Orleans, 1
 New England at N.Y. Jets, 1
 Houston at Tennessee, 1
 Chicago at Tampa Bay, 1
 Green Bay at Arizona, 4:25
 St. Louis at Seattle, 4:25
Pittsburgh at Baltimore, 8:30
Monday, Dec. 28
Cincinnati at Denver, 8:30

WEEK 17

Sunday, Jan. 3

New Orleans at Atlanta, 1
 N.Y. Jets at Buffalo, 1
 Tampa Bay at Carolina, 1
 Detroit at Chicago, 1
Baltimore at Cincinnati, 1
Pittsburgh at Cleveland, 1
 Tennessee at Indianapolis, 1
 Washington at Dallas, 1
 Minnesota at Green Bay, 1
 Jacksonville at Houston, 1
 Oakland at Kansas City, 1
 New England at Miami, 1
 Philadelphia at N.Y. Giants, 1
 Seattle at Arizona, 4:25
 San Diego at Denver, 4:25
 St. Louis at San Francisco, 4:25

Note: Sunday night games
 are flexible after Week 4

Road to playoffs starts in division

From our news services

BEREA

Browns coach Mike Pettine is well aware of the media's low expectations for the organization. Told before training camp not a single preseason magazine predicts Cleveland will finish higher than last in the AFC North, he fired off sarcastic comebacks such as, "Call the league, cancel the season," and, "I think I saw one that had us fifth in the division."

But in all seriousness, Pettine will use the skepticism in an attempt to motivate the players after he guided them to a record of 7-9 during his first season.

"Nobody wants to be disrespected," Pettine said. "It's a prideful group, and I just see it as a motivating thing. We had two wins over division opponents last year by 21 points. We just feel our best path to get to where we want to be is through the division."

The Browns appeared to be on the cusp last season. They were 6-3 with sole possession of first place in the division, then 7-4 and in the thick of the playoff hunt.

But a meltdown at quarterback — Brian Hoyer slumped, and Johnny Manziel fell on his face in relief — and a slew of injuries led to five consecutive losses to end the season.

"We didn't show the maturity. We didn't show the ability to close football games, and that's what really hurt us," safety Donte Whitner said. "Good teams go out there and step on your throat, and they do it over and over again. They do it constantly, and they don't care. They can find different ways to win football games."

Speaking of good teams, the other three in the AFC North — Pittsburgh Steelers (11-5, 4-2 in the division), Cincinnati Bengals (10-5-1, 3-3) and Baltimore Ravens (10-6, 3-3) — made the playoffs last year.

The Browns were 2-4 in the division, defeating the Steelers at home and the Bengals on the road. They have never had a winning record in the AFC North, which formed in 2002.

Ascending from the cellar of a tough division seems to be especially daunting for the Browns because of their quarterback situation. Veteran journeyman Josh McCown is the favorite to start ahead of Manziel. McCown is 17-32 as a starter in 12 NFL seasons.

The other starting quarterbacks in the division are the Steelers' Ben Roethlisberger (106-52), the Ravens' Joe Flacco (72-40) and the Bengals' Andy

Dalton (40-23-1).

"It's 11 players out there at a time; it's not just one," Pettine said. "We have a lot of confidence in all of our players when we go out there, and we felt that last year we could be very competitive in the division, splitting with Pittsburgh and how the last six quarters against them went."

"And then you look at how well we played against Cincinnati and how they returned the favor up here, we feel we certainly can compete with them. And then we had fourth-quarter leads in both Baltimore games. So it's not like we feel like we're staring up a mountain at the division."

Here's a look at what the Browns will be up against:

STEELERS Pittsburgh spent the spring following an impressive 11-5 season locking down the core they believe will propel them to a seventh Lombardi Trophy. Roethlisberger signed a five-year deal worth around \$100 million. Defensive end Cam Heyward is locked up for the rest of the decade after agreeing to a six-year contract shortly before camp opened. Head coach Mike Tomlin and general manager Kevin Colbert will be around through at least 2018.

Stability isn't an issue in Pittsburgh. It hardly ever is, even following an eventful few months in which defensive coordinator Dick LeBeau, safety Troy Polamalu, cornerback Ike Taylor and defensive end Brett Keisel either left, retired or weren't asked back.

BENGALS Sure, the main focus in Cincinnati is always on Dalton. He was booed when introduced before a celebrity softball game at Great American Ball Park during the All-Star Game festivities — the only one who got treated so poorly. He has taken them to the playoffs four years in a row, a franchise first. But the Bengals have lost in the first round each time, with Dalton playing some of his worst games.

Overall, Cincinnati hasn't won a playoff game since the 1990 season, one of the longest stretches of futility in NFL history. But that's a Cincinnati story line for December. For now, it's about fixing the defense, tweaking a few things, and getting the Bengals in shape to contend for another postseason appearance.

RAVENS Despite losing several key players during the offseason, Baltimore has reason to believe it is better than a year ago.

Squeezed by the salary cap, Ravens general manager Ozzie Newsome traded defensive tackle Haloti Ngata and failed to retain wide receiver Torrey Smith, linebacker Pernell McPhee and tight end Owen Daniels.

But Baltimore's offensive line remained intact, Joe Flacco is coming off his finest NFL season and the defensive backfield — a major problem in 2014 — is healthy and stocked with talent.

Now, if the rookies can work themselves into the mix, the Ravens will be poised for a return trip to the playoffs.

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