

NUMBERS GAME

Area coaches differ
on using analytics

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FOOTBALL
PREVIEW 2024

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The Lima News

Wednesday, Aug. 21, 2024
Section E

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Photos by Jessica Trinko | The Lima News
 Columbus Grove coach Andy Schafer relies on Ned Stechsulte, the team's team statistician, to relay him information during games.

Football, by the numbers

Coaches consider value of analytics

By Chris Howell
 chowell@limanews.com

Analytics. It's a topic that draws responses from all ends of the spectrum.

To certain football minds, it's something that should be left at the tables in Las Vegas. Do I hit on 16 or pray that the dealer busts?

To others, it's about playing the odds. Can you demoralize the opposing team by recovering an onside kick? Is it ever worth kicking field goals or extra points?

What about punting? The rules give you four downs to gain 10 yards. If a coach takes punting out of the equation and uses all four of those downs, maybe instead of throwing the ball beyond the sticks on third-and-long, the offense runs a different play that has the upside for a big gain but at worst, sets up a fourth-and-short.

On the other side of the ball, it could just be about studying the opponent's tendencies. What kinds of plays do they lean on in certain situations?

Some area teams, such as Columbus Grove, give a headset to a statistician. Other teams, like Celina, have one person on the

payroll dedicated solely to analytics.

A common theme among area coaches interviewed was game flow.

Even the ones who embrace the data to the highest degree conceded that sometimes it's not about the numbers, it's about how their team is playing that night and what the situation presents.

"Defensively it's something we use all the time," said Keith Recker, Van Wert's head coach. "We gameplan throughout the week, and we're getting information from the press box on Friday night about what other teams like to do in specific situations. Our calls go off of that, and we track things during the game to see if teams are following their usual tendencies."

The in-game replay system teams use on Hudl has not only been useful for watching opponents but for also scouting themselves.

"It's been valuable to us in terms of self-scouting, not trying to create tendencies," said Travis Moyer, Wapakoneta's head coach. "At the end of the day, I'm still a believer in putting the ball in the hands of your best players, no matter what. It's more about personnel in the situation and relying on the feel of the game."

Frank Russell, of Bath,

shared the same sentiment. No matter what the numbers say, both teams want to be aggressive, determine their own fates and not leave the outcome in anyone else's hands.

"We're going to be very aggressive because that's who we are as a team and who I am as a coach," Russell said. "The score and game clock can also dictate that decision, but more times than not, we're going to be on the aggressive side of things."

For Andy Schafer, at Columbus Grove, it's about having the right personnel, not just on the field but also up in the booth.

Ned Stechsulte is Grove's team statistician. He created a system in Microsoft Excel that provides Schafer with any number, anytime he wants it.

Stechsulte, who hasn't missed a game in years, relays the information in-game over a headset directly to the coaching staff. Schafer credits Stechsulte, saying his dedication to the program is the main reason they have access to numbers that help them in real-time.

"No. 1, there's not a lot of systems out there that do it during the game. No. 2, how do you get somebody who cares about your

See NUMBERS | 4E



Frank Russell, of Bath, embraces the concept of analytics but admits that no matter what the number say, his team will always lean on the side of being aggressive.



Lima Senior coach Bill Lawrence expects Isaiah "Boog" Wilson to make big plays for the Spartans this year.

Richard Parrish | The Lima News

High-flying Spartans looking for TCAL repeat

By Chris Howell
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LIMA — When Bill Lawrence was named Lima Senior's head coach in April 2023, he promised the Spartans would be the greatest show on turf.

Fast forward one year later, and Lawrence has backed up that statement.

Lima Senior now has a pass-dominant offense that gets up the field in a hurry. The Spartans use all four downs to get 10 yards if needed, and when the Spartans score, they go for two.

As a team, they take risks, and they play the odds.

That mentality paid off by turning what was a three-win team in 2022 into a 9-3 playoff team that went 6-0 in their first year in the Toledo City Athletic League.

It was just the fifth time in the last 23 seasons that Lima Senior finished with a winning record.

Lawrence called his first season at the helm a whirlwind, but he's confident the Spartans can take another step forward this season.

"Everything is happening around you so fast during that first year," he said. "We're installing a new offense and defense, getting all of our systems in place and figuring out how you want to practice."

"Coming into this season, all of that is established, so now that the kids know these things and why we do them. We're just trying to get better every day in our system. I can breathe a lot easier now that it's year two."

Lawrence also has the luxury of bringing back his junior quarterback, Ja'Niaus Hall, the 2023 Toledo City Athletic League and a selection to The Lima News Dream Team.

Hall put up staggering numbers in Lima Senior's new quarterback-centric offense, finishing his sophomore year with 255 completions for 3,932 yards and 46 touchdowns in 12 games.

Lawrence says his signal-caller added a few inches in height, along with around 15 pounds of muscle after a dedicated offseason in the weight room.

Gaining strength has been a main point of emphasis for the Spartans. In June, an average of 60 kids showed up to morning weight-lifting sessions, and that number stayed consistently above 50 all summer.

"After last year, we knew we had to get stronger," Lawrence said. "Our team had record numbers in the weight room. I'm very excited and proud of them for that."

"Nutrition has also been a big focus for us. If we want to make a deep run, we need to know how to take care of our bodies."

Despite losing four wide receivers, Hall is still surrounded by plenty of talent on offense.

On the offensive line, the Spartans bring back three starters. Players in the mix there include seniors Curtis Pollard (6-1, 282), Harley Klett (5-8, 260), Alex Waithe (5-11, 235) and Jon Tummel (6-0, 260), among others.

In an effort to replace the production of graduated seniors, the Spartans will employ a deep group at wide receiver that includes four returning lettermen in Kahliq Wash, Isaiah Wilson, Keyon Smith and Jaelen Webster.

Wash registered around 500 receiving yards as a junior, Wilson currently holds Division I college offers, and Smith, a big 6-3 target with reliable hands, slides over from the defensive side of the ball.

Amari Addy, Vontae Watkins-Daniel and Amontrae Davis will also see time out wide.

Lawrence called Davis, a freshman, a special player after he had a great offseason, and he's excited about the prospect of adding Watkins-Daniel, who hasn't played football since his freshman year due to injury and eligibility issues.

"He's a talented young man," Lawrence said of Watkins-Daniel. "He's older now and more mature. He's shown a lot of passion and desire to play. We're very proud of him for that."

On defense, the Spartans have linebackers Tavion James (the leading tackler in 2023) and Cam-Ron Nicks back as two of seven returning starters.

Even with a heavy focus on offense, Lawrence said that the defense is something his team will need to lean on, especially in the early part of the season.

"Coach Tristan Reichelderfer (defensive coordinator) and the scheme that we run likes to cause

a lot of havoc," Lawrence said. "Everyone talks about offense, but we're probably going to have to rely on them. We believe that if we want to go back-to-back, we've got to have a stout, physical, tough and hard-nosed defense."

Winning back-to-back TCAL championships is a goal for the Spartans, but their conference opponents might have other ideas. Both Start and Bowsher return important pieces, and Rahsan Wilson took over as coach at Rogers after leading Scott, his alma mater, to a resurgence.

"We have to be ready each week. We can't overlook anyone," Lawrence said. "Last year we came in as the new kid on the block in our conference, and they're not necessarily in love with us being in the Toledo League."

"For us to win it in year one and go undefeated, that puts us on everyone's radar now. These teams are going to be better against us. They've watched film all year watching what we do. The biggest thing is to not be over-confident and keep improving."

Last year the Spartans started 1-2 and were outscored 116-42 in those games. After that, they ripped off eight straight victories, including a conference-clinching 26-14 win over Start on Oct. 20.

The Spartans open the season on Friday, Aug. 23 at home against Piqua. Their first conference game is on Sept. 20 against Bowsher at Spartan Stadium.

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Bill Lawrence (second season)

Division: II

Last year's record: 9-3, 6-0 TCL

Ticket information: limaspartannation.org/tickets

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Janiaus Hall (Jr., QB), Jon Tummel (Sr., C), Alex Waithe (Sr., OL), Kahliq Wash (Sr., WR), Keyon Smith (Sr., DB/WR), Curtis Pollard (Sr.), Cam-Ron Nicks (Sr., LB), Jaelen Webster (Jr., DB), Harley Klett (Sr., OL), Karl Stokes (Jr., DL), Tavion James (Sr., LB), Darvion Young (Jr., LB), Isaiah Wilson (Sr., WR/DB), Denzel Ireland (Jr., WR), Biggie Jefferson (So., DL)

Top newcomers: Amari Addy (Jr., WR), Vontae Watkins-Daniel (Sr., WR/DB), Maxon Hardesty (Jr., LB), Amontre Davis (Fr., WR), Dalton Schick (So., DL/WR), Zymere Bennett (So., LB), Jaypen Jones (So., DB)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 — Piqua
8/30 — at Findlay
9/6 — Marion Harding
9/13 — at Northview
9/20 — Bowsher
9/27 — at Woodward
10/4 — Rogers
10/11 — Waite
10/18 — at Scott
10/25 — at Start, 6 p.m.



2024 Lima Senior SPARTANS





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Experienced LCC finds league home in NWC

By Jim Naveau
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LIMA — With returning starters at 18 positions from a team that went 8-4 last season, Lima Central Catholic is optimistic about what this season could bring.

Last year 24 of the 36 players on the Thunderbirds' roster were freshmen and sophomores and there were only two seniors in the starting lineup.

That kind of math often doesn't add up to a highly successful season but LCC pulled that off to earn its seventh consecutive trip to the playoffs with a combination of young players and the two seniors — quarterback Carson Parker and receiver Billy Bourk — leading the way on the field and in the locker room.

Replacing Parker and Bourk and getting more consistency overall will be two big factors in determining how successful the Thunderbirds are this season.

Parker, who threw for 2,178 yards and 23 touchdowns and rushed for 1,100 yards and 22 touchdowns, was second-team All-Ohio. Bourk (37 catches, 927 yards, 9 TDs) was an All-Ohio honorable mention. Both also started on defense.

"Replacing Carson is going to be tough. Billy is a big loss, too," LCC coach Scott Palte said.

"Those two did a lot. They were two really meaningful dudes. That's a lot of production and a lot of leadership and skill to replace," he said.

The search for a starting quarterback didn't take long. Parker's brother Brady, a sophomore, will take over that job.

"Brady has done a good job. He's a good athlete. Obviously, he's not as physical a player as Carson was

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Scott Palte (eleventh season)

Division: VII

Last year's record: 8-4

Ticket information: <https://www.flyhighbirds.com/HTtickets>

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Lausen Flores (Soph., SB/DB), Michael Quatman (Soph., SB/DB), E.J. Jones (Sr., SE/DB), Matthew Quatman (Sr., RB/DB), J.J. Schnieders (Jr., TE/DE), Carson Heffner (Sr., TE/LB), Mylon Cowens (Sr., SE/DE), Josh Young (Jr., SE/DB), Dakota Gerdemann (Jr., SE/DB), Isaac Leppert (Sr., TE/DE), Caden Falke (Jr., TE, LB), Louis Knotts (Jr., OL/DL), Brady Malcom (Jr., OL/DL), Andrew Baldauf (Jr., OL/DL), Chris Crnkovich (Sr., OL/DL), Jayden Williams (Soph., OL/DL), Gianni McKee (Sr., OL/DL)

Top newcomers: Xavier Pernell (Soph., LB/RB), Dom McKee (Soph., OL/DL), Brady Parker (Soph., QB/DB), Jaxon White (Soph., WR/DB), Carter Lester (Fr., RB/LB), Eddie White (Fr., RB/LB)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/22 — Shawnee

8/30 — Delphos St. John's

9/6 — Carey

9/13 — at Allen East

9/20 — at Fort Loramie

9/27 — at Bluffton

10/5 — Delphos Jefferson

10/11 — at Spencerville

10/18 — at Columbus Grove

10/25 — at Crestview

but he's got a good arm. He can throw the ball. His role will be different than Carson's but he's a good athlete," Palte said.

Running back Matthew Quatman will be "the main cog in our offense," Palte said. As a junior last season, Quatman was third-team All-Ohio when he rushed for 570 yards, caught five touchdown passes, was a starting defensive back and was LCC's kicker.

Linebacker Caden Falke also was third-team All-Ohio and two-way tackle Gianni McKee and defensive back Josh Young were honorable mention All-Northwest Ohio.

Five of LCC's returning

starters are two-way starters: Louis Knotts at defensive line and offensive line, Mylon Cowens at defensive end and wide receiver, Quatman at running back and defensive back, Falke at linebacker and tight end and McKee on the defensive line and offensive line.

Linebacker Carson Heffner, defensive back Josh Young, defensive end Isaac Leppert, defensive lineman Jaylen Williams, slot back Michael Quatman and offensive linemen Brady Malcom, Andrew Baldauf and Chris Crnkovich are returning starters.

LCC will be part of a league for the first time since the 2012 season after rejoining the Northwest



Richard Parrish | The Lima News

Matthew Quatman is expected to be "the main cog in the offense" according to LCC coach Scott Palte.

Conference, where it competed from 2006 to 2012 and was league champion five times in seven years.

Among other benefits, being in a league greatly reduces the amount of travel for the Thunderbirds.

Some of the longest trips LCC has taken since the last time it was in a league include Beverly Fort Frye (192 miles), Gates Mill Gilmour Academy (182 miles), Cambridge (176 miles), Mogadore (165 miles), Licking Valley (127 miles), Huron (119 miles),

Lucas (106 miles) and Columbus Bishop Hartley (101 miles).

The longest road trip for the Thunderbirds this season will be 42 miles when they go to Fort Loramie. The second-longest trip will be going 36 miles to Crestview. Seven of LCC's games will be played in Allen County.

"We used to play Fort Loramie and that was the shortest trip on our schedule," Palte said.

"We've had some great experiences, we've traveled

to some really cool places. We've played in a lot of half-empty stadiums. We've played some weird teams at weird times where maybe there were five fans in the away stands.

"I think the environment (in the NWC) and having some familiarity with our opponents will be exciting for our kids," he said. "I was in the NWC for a long time (as a player and a coach). I know how awesome the environment is on Friday night at those places."

Numbers

From page 2E

program enough to volunteer their time and do that? We just have a special person in Ned, and every time I ask for something, he prides it," Schafer said.

"Technology-wise, we almost look like ESPN studios when we show up to our field. To me, it's like, 'Why wouldn't you want to take advantage of that? You have to have the right people to do it.'"

But how much is too much? How many numbers or tendencies can be put in front of a coach before he overthinks a decision?

Defiance's Travis Cooper and Bluffton's Jeff Richards think there's a point where teams can take it too far.

"It's a fine line," Cooper said. "I think there are times when it can be information overload, but there are some things out there that are really helpful. You can get tendencies and percentages in certain situations when coaches like to do certain things. Those kinds of things definitely help."

Richards added, "It's huge, but just like with anything, you can go too far, one way or another. We'll go as far back as we can if a team has a long-term coordinator, we'll look at what they did three



Jessica Trinko | The Lima News

Bluffton coach Jeff Richards says his team leans on analytics, but they don't use it as a crutch. If a team has a long-term coordinator, they might look back that person's tendencies over the last three or four years.

or four years ago to see if things have changed.

"At the same time, you can tell me that 100% of the time a team is going to do this, then they might decide to do something else, and you get burned. We definitely look at the analytics, but it's not a crutch. It's not something we're going to lean on 100% of the time."

Then there's the other end of the argument.

Some schools believe in the "old school mentality" of conservative play. It relies on a stout defense, strong special teams play and minimizing offensive mistakes to win football

games. It's something that Jim Tressel made famous during his run as coach of the Ohio State Buckeyes.

Sometimes it's about the style of play; other times it's about program numbers or even special teams being the strongest unit on the team.

Pandora-Gilboa, a program that has a 35-man roster, might not develop true tendencies because players might be forced to play a number of different positions in the same game.

"Where we're at, we don't have the time to really focus on the analytics too much, because we never know who's going to be in

the game," Rockets coach Matt Hershey said. "We don't have backups at positions so if somebody goes down, we might start moving players around to different spots on the field."

Cole Harting, of Crestview, said the whole concept might have already hurt the game. The former math teacher went on to say his in-game decisions haven't been impacted by the use of analytics.

Harting also has the luxury of having Hayden Perrott, who's a strong kicker with the ability to knock through a field goal or pin a team deep with a punt.

"You see guys not taking field goals even when they should because they have a good kicker," Harting said. "They make decisions based on analytics, and I get it, but I'd rather put some points on the board and force the other team to score than miss a fourth down in field goal territory."

Some programs attempt to gather as much intel as possible, while also relying on game flow.

Other teams have shrugged off the extra information entirely.

It's hard to say who's right or wrong because numbers don't lie, but instincts are important.

Analytics or no analytics, every team just wants one thing — to win football games.

THE ORIGIN OF SPORTS ANALYTICS

By Chris Howell
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The idea of using analytics and statistics to affect your gameplan is hardly a new discussion.

It's something that originated more than 60 years ago, and it's a concept that's still developing today.

In the 1800s, Henry Chadwick, a former cricket reporter for the New York Times, was inspired by a baseball game between New York's Gotham and Eagles to push the use of statistics in baseball.

Chadwick invented the box score. He's the "Father of Sport Analytics and Informatics," according to the Digital Museum of Sport Analytics & Informatics.

His work provided the base for sabermetrics, a blanket term for sports analytics coined by Bill James, the brain behind Moneyball, the concept that former Oakland Athletics General Manager Billy Beane applied to run his low-budget team in the early 2000s.

Beane relied on the principle that a player's overall performance on the field is more important than traditional stats like batting average or home runs. Instead, he used metrics like on-base percentage and defensive runs saved to find value in players that other teams may have overlooked.

That's the long answer. For football, the short answer

is it started right here in Ohio.

Paul Brown, a former head coach of both professional football teams in the state, started using film study and analytics to study his opponents back in 1946.

Brown is the first recorded coach in the NFL to do so. He found the most common formations and plays run by his opponents in the upcoming game and created what is now commonly known as a scout team.

Coaches around the league took notice and began to adopt similar practices in the 1970s.

The use of analytics in football has continued to expand today with people like Paul DePodesta, the chief strategy officer for the Cleveland Browns.

Ironically, DePodesta got his start in baseball and eventually introduced the principles to Beane, and the two worked in Oakland's front office together for five years.

In 2016, after 20 years of experience in baseball, DePodesta was hired by the Browns, and he installed his system of beliefs into the organization, everywhere from the front office to the coaching staff.

As of 2023, the Browns had eight people on staff dedicated solely to the analytics department.

It's a practice that started at the highest level, and now, we're seeing more of it every day in the high school game.

Bath looks to go from surprise to success

By Chris Howell
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BATH TOWNSHIP — Through the first six weeks of last season, Bath went 4-2. The Wildcats upset defending state-champion New Bremen 14-7 in week one and pulled out one-score victories against Shawnee, Elida and Ottawa-Glandorf.

Unfortunately for the Wildcats, their last victory came on Sept. 22 against the Titans.

A back-loaded schedule included Celina, Defiance, Wapakoneta and St. Marys, four of the top five teams in the Western Buckeye League.

Those four losses, and a first-round playoff exit against eventual state champion Glenville, left Bath with a final record of 4-7.

That's a four-win improvement from 2022, when the Wildcats went 0-10.

Last season was about changing the culture for the then-first-year coach Frank Russell. This season, it's about building on that successful first half and taking another step forward.

"The foundation of our program is that we want to get better every single day," said Russell, who enters his second year at Bath. "Everything else will take care of itself. That's our goal as a team for both the players and the coaching staff."

Part of getting better for the Wildcats is determining the best option to lead the offense.

Last year's starting quarterback Zach Welsch, a 2022 WBL honorable mention, is battling it out for the job with sophomore Dylan Cole, who's coming off a strong junior varsity season as a freshman.

Russell used scrimmage season to determine the winner.

"Daniel played really well last year, and we know what Zach did for us," Russell said. "He was a warrior every week who gave us everything he had and he left it all on the field. Without a doubt, both of those are in our top 22, so they're going to be playing a lot of varsity football."

Welsch passed for 1,816 yards and seven touchdowns as a sophomore. He also carried the ball 91 times for 331 yards and scored 13 touchdowns.

Regardless of which player is named starting quarterback, Russell said the other will slot into



Richard Parrish | The Lima News

Bath's Liam Sullivan (#44) returns for his junior year with a prominent role on defense.

another prominent offensive role.

Playing the team's 22 best players is important to the coaching staff. One player who definitely fits the bill is running back Mikey Hale.

The 5-8, 150-pound Hale ran for 1,040 yards and five touchdowns last season on 175 carries. He finished second on the team in total yards only to Welsch, earning him a spot on the WBL's second team.

Hale, who accounted for 66% of Bath's rushing offense, even drew a smile from his head coach after a mention of his development. "He's really fun to coach because he works really hard, and he's worked on his body."

He didn't have a WBL-ready body last year, but that's not the case this year," Russell said of Hale. "He's going to bring everything else he normally brings, but now he's stronger, faster, quicker, and we're pretty excited about him."

Defensively, Bath is a work in progress.

During its five-game losing streak to end the 2023 season, the Wildcats surrendered 38 points per game.

Junior Carson Kinnaird returns after recording a team-high 97 tackles and 5.5 sacks. He's joined by Liam Sullivan, Vinny Vendetta, Jack Rader, Kyle Slaght, Andru McDermot, Ethan Stevens, Foster Deters and Espn Mikesell, who all lettered in 2023.

The Wildcats put together their best defensive game on week one against New Bremen, where they limited the Cardinals to seven points.

"We played well on defense at times last year," Russell said. "It wasn't a complete wash, but I felt like our kids started to realize what level of toughness they need to play with on defense. You need to be a little bit different to play defense. We want to run fast and hit hard. That's a motto we're trying to live up to this year."

Bath has the benefit of a backloaded schedule with games against Celina, Defiance, Wapakoneta and St. Marys coming in weeks 6-10.

The Wildcats dropped from Division IV, Region 14 to Division V, Region 20 for the 2024 season. It's something that Russell thinks his team can take advantage of come playoff time.

"That could be beneficial for us, but we still have to play in the WBL," he said. "In this league, you have to be at your best every week to win games. What we focus on controlling what we can control so we can go out and compete on Friday nights."

Bath opens with New Bremen on Aug. 23, then enters conference play on Aug. 30 against Van Wert, followed by Shawnee and Kenton. They'll face Elida and Ottawa-Glandorf before facing that four-game gauntlet to close out the regular season.

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Frank Russell (second season)

Division: V

Last year's record: 4-7, 3-6 WBL

Ticket information: bathwildcats.org/TicketBoxOffice.aspx

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Logan Markley (Jr.), Andru McDermot (Jr.), Carson Kinnaird (Jr.), Liam Sullivan (Jr.), Jacob Lepley (Jr.), Carson Myers (Sr.), Zach Welsch (Jr.), Ethan Cole (Sr.), Espn Mikesell (Sr.), Vinny Vendetta (Sr.), Foster Deters (Sr.), Mikey Hale (Jr.), Izayah Murphy (Sr.), George Rope (Jr.), Richard Rope (Jr.), Kyle Slaght (Sr.), Ethan Stevens (Sr.), Jack Rader (Jr.)

Top newcomers: Josiah Clark (So.), Daniel Cole (So.), Clayton Rex (So.), Jaxon Foster (Sr.)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 — at New Bremen

8/30 — Van Wert

9/6 — at Shawnee

9/13 — Kenton

9/20 — at Elida

9/27 — Ottawa-Glandorf

10/4 — at Celina

10/11 — Defiance

10/18 — at Wapakoneta

10/25 — St. Marys



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2023 WESTERN BUCKEYE LEAGUE WEEKLY RESULTS

Week 1

Bath 14 New Bremen 7
 Versailles 26 Celina 0
 Elida 42 Rogers 6
 Coldwater 29 Kenton 12
 Eastwood 21 Ottawa-Glandorf 18
 St. Henry 17 St. Marys 0
 Van Wert 47 Bryan 21
 Marion Local 29 Wapakoneta 26

Week 2

Van Wert 64 Bath 42
 Celina 37 St. Marys 15
 Defiance 16 Wapakoneta 13
 Elida 13 Shawnee 9
 Kenton 52 Ottawa-Glandorf 29

Week 3

Bath 20 Shawnee 17, OT
 Celina 17 Van Wert 14
 Defiance 30 St. Marys 15
 Elida 30 Kenton 22
 Wapakoneta 45 Ottawa-Glandorf 0

Week 4

Kenton 38 Bath 34
 Celina 31 Shawnee 8
 Van Wert 43 Defiance 42
 Elida 30 Ottawa-Glandorf 8
 Wapakoneta 14 St. Marys 0

Week 5

Bath 21 Elida 17
 Celina 44 Kenton 14
 Defiance 30 Shawnee 8
 St. Marys 41 Ottawa-Glandorf 14
 Wapakoneta 41 Van Wert 13

Week 6

Bath 28 Ottawa-Glandorf 21
 Celina 24 Elida 12
 Defiance 46 Kenton 18
 Wapakoneta 42 Shawnee 6
 St. Marys 21 Van Wert 19

Week 7

Celina 52 Bath 36
 Elida 19 Defiance 18
 Wapakoneta 35 Kenton 0
 Van Wert 28 Ottawa-Glandorf 21
 St. Marys 49 Shawnee 12

Week 8

Defiance 28 Bath 27
 Celina 27 Ottawa-Glandorf 7
 Wapakoneta 44 Elida 3
 St. Marys 59 Kenton 32
 Van Wert 40 Shawnee 26

Week 9

Wapakoneta 38 Bath 0
 Celina 17 Defiance 0
 St. Marys 43 Elida 0
 Van Wert 41 Kenton 18
 Ottawa-Glandorf 16 Shawnee 15

Week 10

St. Marys 31 Bath 0
 Wapakoneta 30 Celina 3
 Defiance 14 Ottawa-Glandorf 10
 Van Wert 35 Elida 14
 Kenton 28 Shawnee 14

Opening round

Defiance 14 Bay Village Bay 7
 Celina 49 Hillsboro 7
 Wapakoneta 63 New Richmond 21
 Butler 17 Elida 0
 Glenville 44 Bath 0
 St. Marys 42 Wauseon 14
 Van Wert 48 River Valley 30

Regional Quarterfinals

Central Catholic 41 Defiance 25
 Celina 41 Trotwood-Madison 35
 Wapakoneta 42 Butler 7
 Perkins 28 St. Marys 21
 Shelby 71 Van Wert 41

Regional Semifinals

Hamilton Badin 14 Wapakoneta 10
 Celina 27 Tippecanoe 13

Regional Championships

Celina 37 Hamilton Badin 25

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Don Speck | The Lima News

Ryan McGue is back from a leg injury this season and will be the starting quarterback for Elida.

Elida leaning on speed, experience

By Mark Altstaetter
 sports@limanews.com

ELIDA – Experience and speed are normally key factors for success.

Elida head football coach Kyle Harmon hopes those two ingredients will help pave the way for a winning season for his squad.

Elida returns 14 letter winners from last year's team that went 5-6 overall and 4-5 in the Western Buckeye League. The Bulldogs competed in the Division III playoffs, where they lost to Butler in the first round.

For Elida, it all starts on the offensive side of the football.

"Ryan McGue (Sr., 6-4, 205), our quarterback, is back," Harmon said. "We were 4-0 last year (when he started). He had a leg injury, which obviously set us back. He's back and healthy. He's ready to go. He's worked extremely hard."

McGue said he is back to his old form.

"I feel like I'm 100 percent. I went through a lot of physical therapy. Now, I can't even tell," he said.

There will be plenty of weapons around McGue as the Bulldogs will employ a spread offense.

"Amari Wash (Jr., 5-10, 175, WR/RB) is back," Harmon said. "He (Wash) has put on about 15, 18 pounds. ... He looks like a different kid. He's a lot more physical this year, and his strength numbers have gone up, big time. Tyler Dillon (Sr., 6-2, 190, WR) and Noah Jostpille (Jr., 6-4, 190, WR) are the outside receivers. Elisha Reddick (Jr., 6-0, 175, WR) came out – a track guy. He (Reddick) is a two-time 400-meter WBL champion. He hasn't played football before, but he's learning a lot and played really well over the summer.

"Then, we had a tight end, Connor Konopka (Jr., 6-3, 195) who came in from an Elida family that moved back to the area, so we expect big things from him at that spot. Taking

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Kyle Harmon (fifth season)

Division: IV

Last year's record: 5-6 (4-5 WBL). Lost in first round of the Division III playoffs.

Ticket information: <https://www.home.elida.k12.oh.us/hometown-ticketing>

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners include: Ryan McGue (Sr., QB/DB), Amari Wash (Jr., WR/RB/DB), Tyler Siefker (Sr., C/DL), Parker Crim (Jr., OL/DE), Sam Mattox (Sr., LB), Tyler Dillon (Sr., WR, S), Carter Kerby (Jr., OL/DL), Aaryn Dailey (So., OL/DL), Kohen Sullivan (So., LB/WR/RB), Cameron Kaufman (Jr., RB/DB), Noah Jostpille (Jr., WR/DB), Dominic Kohli (Sr., TE/LB), Blake Hollar (So., LB), Preston Crist (So., TE/LB)

Promising newcomers include: Elisha Reddick (Jr., WR/DB), Jayair Morgan (Sr., RB/LB), Dalton Shaffer (Fr., WR/DB)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 at Rogers
 8/30 Shawnee
 9/6 at Kenton
 9/13 at Ottawa-Glandorf
 9/20 Bath
 9/27 Celina
 10/4 at Defiance
 10/11 Wapakoneta
 10/18 St. Marys
 10/25 at Van Wert

over the running back spot is Cam Kaufman (Jr., 5-10, 170). He (Kaufman) is a track guy. Jayair Morgan (Sr., 5-7, 170, RB), came back out. Tyler Dillon (Sr., 6-2, 190, WR/DB) is back for us. Kohen Sullivan (So., WR/RB/LB) will get a lot of time. We have some pretty good skill (players)."

Tyler Dillon is confident about this year's offensive unit.

"I think we have a little more speed than we did last year," Dillon said. "We might be a little smaller on the O-line, but I feel like we can still do some damage down there. I feel like we'll be the same or even better than last year.

"We kind of fell apart when he (McGue) got hurt last year. I think we'll do better this year (on offense)."

Last season, Elida ranked seventh in the WBL in total offensive production. The Bulldogs rushed for 1,565 yards and passed for 1,296 yards.

"We're going to change it up a little bit," Harmon said about his offense. "Our skill guys are built a little bit different. We had

David (Etzkorn) last year, who could pound the ball downhill. Now we have a lot more speed offensively than we had last year. We might try to spread things out. We're going to try to get the ball to our athletes out in space."

Last year as a senior, Etzkorn rushed for 836 yards and had 11 touchdowns. Etzkorn, who also played linebacker, is now playing football at the University of Findlay.

Defensively, the Bulldogs will utilize 4-3 and 4-2-5 schemes.

"We will be similar (to last season)," Harmon said. "We lost a lot of guys on the defensive side. Up front, we return Parker Crim (Jr., 6-3, 235, DE/OT) and Tyler Siefker (Sr., DL/C). We also expect some of the other guys to step up. They've worked hard in the weight room.

"Carter Kerby (Jr., 5-11, 220, DL/OL) got some snaps last year on the D-line. Aaryn Dailey (So., 5-10, 200, DL) also got some snaps on the D-line. Both of those guys have probably put on about 20 pounds."

In 2023, Elida was ranked third in the WBL in total team defense as it allowed 270.5 yards per game. Opponents scored on average, 23 points per contest (fifth in the WBL) against the Bulldogs.

Crim is optimistic about this year's defensive unit.

"We will probably be better this year because we have more speed than we had last year. All of that will complement one another, more than it did last year," Crim said.

Crim, who is being highly recruited by Division I colleges, is not going to allow the recruiting process to deter his focus.

"Not really (going to worry about the future). I just have to do my job, and everything will follow through after that," Crim said.

Tyler Siefker, who plays both ways on a regular basis, is not concerned about what position he plays. He just wants to be on the field as much as possible.


"I've been at center since my sophomore year. I like it there, but I know every position (on the O-line), so it's whatever," Siefker said with a grin. "On defense, they put me at end last year but I've always been on the D-line.

"To be honest, ever since midget football, I've always been an offensive player. I'm just really down to the footwork. So, that's where offense came into play. Defense just came into play. ... It all works hand-in-hand."


Added Harmon, "They (Crim, Siefker) are weight room guys. They work extremely hard. They lift together. They're on the all-time boards for all the lifts. They push each other. They balance each other out. They're two guys who just do their jobs."

Harmon said the WBL will once again be very competitive.

"Week-in and week-out, the Western Buckeye League is a tough conference. It is going to be a battle every Friday night," he said.



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Jessica Trinko | The Lima News

Ottawa-Glandorf coach Ken Schriener returns his starting quarterback, Peyton Kuhlman, for his senior season.

Ottawa-Glandorf looks to compete in WBL

By Mark Altstaetter
sports@limanews.com

OTTAWA – Longtime Ottawa-Glandorf football head coach Ken Schriener wants his team to run the football as much as possible.

Last season, Ottawa-Glandorf struggled at that, which resulted in a 1-9 overall record, and a mark of 1-8 in the Western Buckeye League.

“If you look at the plays we ran last year, we were about as close to 50/50 as we have ever been in my coaching career. That tells me that we’re throwing the ball too much,” Schriener said with a smile. “The goal is to always say 50/50, but to keep the defense off-balance, we want to run the ball. We want to try to grind it out and keep the possession. We’re not a wide-open (offensive) team by any stretch. However, I think this year, we’re also going to have the ability to throw the ball down the field.”

In 2023, the Titans averaged 89.2 rushing yards per contest, ninth in the WBL.

Returning at quarterback for O-G is senior Peyton Kuhlman (6-foot-4, 200 pounds, QB/DB). Last season, Kuhlman completed 127 of 261 passes

for 1,495 yards with 13 touchdowns and 10 interceptions.

“Peyton (Kuhlman) is a returning starter (quarterback). He’s a three-year starter now,” Schriener said. “We really have high expectations for him. We’re probably going to give him a little more responsibility on the field. We need him to take on the leadership role and work with the rest of those guys.”

Kuhlman will have plenty of weapons around him this season as the Titans will once again employ a spread offense.

“Grant Evers (Sr., 6-0, 200, RB/DB) is a returning running back, along with Vinnie Brinkman (Sr., 6-0, 210, RB/LB),” Schriener said. “Those two guys were the main part of our running back tandem last year. So, they’re back with a lot of experience, and we have high expectations.”

“On the outside, we have Deegan Miller (So., 6-3, 180, WR/DB). He (Miller) is going to be a weapon for us. Dane Duling (Sr., 6-4, 200, TE/DL) will be at tight end. Last year, Dane was a guy that we didn’t use a whole lot at tight end, but track (this past spring) did him a world of good. Those

guys (Miller and Duling) were out there (for track) and really got faster. I think the league will recognize those two guys as being dangerous.”

The Titans have 26 letter winners returning this season. Out of those returners, 10 were starters in 2023.

“We have a number of guys with experience back. Hopefully, that helps us out in the long run,” Schriener said. “Was it (last season) a good experience? ... I don’t know. That remains to be seen but the best part is, we got bigger and stronger in the offseason. I think we also got faster. The kids grew up. The sophomores became juniors. The juniors became seniors. Hopefully, that experience bodes well in the long run.”

O-G returns some key players on the offensive line.

“Up front, we have a lot of guys back with experience,” Schriener said. “The right tackle, Hayden Kaufman (Sr., 6-2, 255, OL/DL) is back. Right guard, Austin Haley (Sr., 5-11, 225, OL/DL), is back as a returning starter as well. Some of the other guys have experience. However, we just have to put it together and see what happens.”

In 2023, O-G’s defense ranked seventh overall in the WBL. The Titans hope to tighten up on the defensive side of the football this season.

“Defensively, we have a lot of guys back. Our guys up front are going to be two-way players,” Schriener said. “We have some sophomores that are going to step up. Hopefully, they mature in a hurry and can handle the pressure of our schedule. We know there are no easy games.”

Schriener is pleased with the number of players on this year’s roster.

“We’re at 80 (players) for the four grades. Numbers are up. I’m excited about that,” he said. “I think the kids are having fun out there. So far, our practices have been much more intense and much more physical. Our mantra this year is to hit. We want to go out and be hitters. I think last year, we were pushed around by some teams because we were not mature and physical enough. I learned a long time ago that you cannot coach big. ... You have to become big. So, that’s a challenge for us. I think our kids did a great job in the offseason. Now, they can go out there, learn the techniques and play football.”

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Ken Schriener (29th season)

Division: IV

Last year’s record: 1-9 (1-8 WBL)

Ticket information: <https://www.ottawaglandorf.org/o/oglsd/page/tickets>

Returning 2023 letterwinners include: Peyton Kuhlman (Sr., QB), Austin Haley (Sr., OL/DL), Vinnie Brinkman (Sr., RB/LB), Grant Evers (Sr., RB/DB), Hayden Kaufman (Sr., OL/DL), Dylan Siefker (Sr., OL/DL), Jayden Stechschulte (Sr., LB/RB), Logan Maas (Sr., WR/DB), Ethan Metzger (Sr., WR/DB), Nolan Horstman (Jr., WR/DB), Trevor Rump (So., RB/LB)

Promising newcomers include: Dane Duling (Sr., TE/DL), Masen Vogt (Sr., WR/DB), Griffin Beckett (Sr., RB/DL), Larkin Felkey (Sr., WR/DB), Kaiden Fenbert (Sr., RB/LB), Will Gulker (Sr., OL/DL), Kolton Schroeder (Sr., WR/DB), Landyn Schulte (Sr., OL/DL), Ajani Thomas (Sr., RB/LB), Derek Brown (Jr., OL/DL), Jayden Guerra (Jr., OL/DL), Deegan Miller (So., WR/RB), Riley Trombley (So., RB/LB), Carson Yaeger (So., QB/DB)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 – Liberty-Benton

8/30 – Kenton

9/6 – at Wapakoneta

9/13 – Elida

9/20 – at St. Marys

9/27 – at Bath

10/4 – Van Wert

10/11 – Celina

10/18 – at Shawnee

10/25 – at Defiance

Schriener said some team goals will never change.

“We always want to compete for the league (championship),” Schriener said. “However, right off the bat this season, the first goal is to beat Liberty-Benton. It’s a

brand-new team on our schedule. ... Gosh, what a game. We get to host that game. I’m sure L-B will bring a big group (of fans) over here. I think our kids are going to be excited about it. I’m sure they (L-B) are going to be excited as well.”



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TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Shane Wireman (first season)

Division: III

Last year's record: 0-10, 0-9 WBL

Ticket information: <https://www.limashawnee.com/page/athletic-tickets>

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Isaac Meeks (Soph., RB/LB), Yamaan Turjman (Soph., OL/DL), Kobe Bentz (Jr., OL/DL), Chase DePalma (Jr., WR/DB), Colton Hopson (Jr., WR/DB), Dalton Hopson (Jr., WR/DB), J.J. Spyker (Jr., QB/DB), Caleb Bacome (Jr., QB/WR/DB), Connor Brewer (Sr., OL/DL), Ben Caprilla (Sr., RB/LB), Michael Garlock (Sr., WR/DB), Akyus Richardson (Sr., HB/DL), Joel Stirn (Sr., WR/DB), Joel Stirn (Sr., WR/DB), Cold Sunderland (Sr., RB/LB)

Top newcomers: Gabe Jamison (Sr., OL/DL), Reece Davidson (Jr., WR/DB), Nicholas Luna (Jr., OL/LB), Reese Graph (Jr., TE/DE)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/22 — Lima Central Catholic

8/30 — at Elida

9/6 — Bath

9/13 — at Celina

9/20 — Defiance

9/27 — at Wapakoneta

10/4 — St. Marys

10/11 — at Van Wert

10/18 — Ottawa-Glandorf

10/25 — Kenton



Shawnee's JJ Spyker (pictured) passed for 708 yards and 6 touchdowns last season.

Richard Parrish | The Lima News

Confidence the first building block for Shawnee

By Jim Naveau
jnaveau@limanews.com

When Shane Wireman became Waynesfield-Goshen's head football coach in 2017 the Tigers were coming off back-to-back 0-10 seasons.

By his fifth season, they won nine games, then won 11 games in 2022 and 10 games in 2023.

When he was hired as Shawnee's head coach earlier this year the Indians had just completed an 0-10 season.

So, no surprise, he has

been asked if there are similarities between the two situations and what he learned at Waynesfield-Goshen that can be used at Shawnee.

"The similarities I see are getting the kids confident again," Wireman said. "It's just getting that confidence back that we want to emphasize."

"Sometimes you can beat yourself just by not believing you can get the job done. We've got to get that mindset changed. If you have a bad play, OK, move on to the

next one. Don't dwell on last week. This week is a new game and a new opportunity," he said.

"We have to get that confidence up and go out there and put it together. We want to establish a program and put some pride back in Shawnee football."

Shawnee has 14 lettermen back from last season's team, including Akyus Richardson, a H-back/defensive lineman who was honorable mention All-Western Buckeye League on defense.

Shawnee ranked tenth in scoring in the WBL (12.7 points a game) and ninth in points allowed (31.3 points a game).

"I would like to see us work on being more consistent offensively. Our players have done a good job of picking up the new system but we still have some kinks to work out from time to time. Defensively, we want to continue to focus on being able to stop the run consistently and not allow the explosive plays, start forcing more

turnover to give our offense some short fields."

J.J. Spyker, who passed for 708 yards and 6 touchdowns last season, and Caleb Bacome are competing for the starting quarterback job.

"Both players bring some great qualities to the position and both impact the game with their arm and on the ground," Wireman said. "I look for both players to contribute to our team in big ways."

Reece Davidson, a wide receiver and a defensive back who did not play football

last season, "brings a lot of play-making ability to our team on both sides of the ball," according to Wireman.

Kobe Bentz and Richardson "will be anchoring our offensive and defensive lines," he said.

"There is some talent back. There is a lot of competition. I think some of the kids are learning a spot is not just going to be handed to you. We want guys to go out there and compete on every rep (repetition) and every play."

2023 ALL-WESTERN BUCKEYE LEAGUE TEAMS

First Team Offense

- QB — Brylen Parker (Van Wert)
- QB — Caleb Moyer (Wapakoneta)
- RB — Jace Knous (Wapakoneta)
- RB — David Etkorn (Elida)
- RB — Colton Mabry (St. Marys)
- WR — Conner Campbell (Van Wert)
- WR — Anthony Wilder (Defiance)
- ATH — Braylon Gabes (Celina)
- OG — Kaden Murlin (Celina)
- OG — Kaden Ware (Wapakoneta)
- OT — Ryan Price (Wapakoneta)
- OG — Dalton Chilcoat (Celina)
- OG — Camden Rothe (St. Marys)
- K — Kyle Beach (Wapakoneta)

First Team Defense

- DE — Dalton Chilcoat (Celina)
- DE — Parker Crim (Elida)
- DE — Kaden Murlin (Celina)
- DE — Kaden Ware (Wapakoneta)
- LB — Joey Truesdale (Wapakoneta)
- LB — Reece Schnarre (Wapakoneta)
- LB — Tucker Ackley (Celina)
- LB — David Etkorn (Elida)

- DB — Braylon Gabes (Celina)
- DB — Grant Jolly (Wapakoneta)
- DB — Caleb Gabes (Celina)
- DB — Garret Rodenberger (Defiance)

Second Team Offense

- QB — Korbin Johnston (Kenton)
- QB — Brez Zipfel (Defiance)
- RB — Brogan Castillo (Defiance)
- RB — Mikey Hale (Bath)
- WR — Grant Jolly (Wapakoneta)
- WR — Grady Kleman-Beazley (Kenton)
- WR — Grant Schroeder (Ottawa-Glandorf)
- OL — Quinten Collins (Bath)
- OG — Caden Allman (Defiance)
- C — Carson Sturwold (St. Marys)
- OT — Devon Story (Van Wert)
- OT — Tyler Doeden Kiessling (Defiance)

Second Team Defense

- DE — Jayden Rampulla (Wapakoneta)
- DT — Logan Compton (St. Marys)
- DT — Kevin McGuire (Elida)
- DE — Hunter Mabry (St. Marys)
- LB — Joey Robinson (Defiance)


- LB — Alec Schroeder (Ottawa-Glandorf)
- LB — Abel Rubio (Defiance)
- DB — Kevin Perry (St. Marys)
- DB — Gage Stemen (Van Wert)
- DB — Jarrett Mullen (Wapakoneta)
- DB — Amari Wash (Elida)

Honorable Mention Offense

- QB — Zach Welsch (Bath)
- RB — Grant Evers (Ottawa-Glandorf)
- RB — Derek Lyons (Shawnee)
- RB — Dominik Osborne (St. Marys)
- RB — Keldyn Bill (Van Wert)
- WR — Skyler Lhamon (Bath)
- WR — Kaden Page (Wapakoneta)
- TE — Nick Newell (Celina)
- TE — Grant Houser (Wapakoneta)
- OL — Kameron Elson (Celina)
- OL — Steven Hoffman (Defiance)
- OL — Preston Coppler (Shawnee)
- OL — Terry Amborski (St. Marys)
- OL — Tanner Mele (St. Marys)
- OL — Caleb Bledsoe (Van Wert)
- OL — Austin Brown (Wapakoneta)

Honorable Mention Defense

- DL — Jazin Phillips (Defiance)
- DL — Seth Leffler (Kenton)
- DL — Austin Haley (Ottawa-Glandorf)
- DL — Akyus Richardson (Shawnee)
- LB — Carter Altstaetter (Celina)
- LB — Corbin Lehman (Celina)
- LB — Andrew Irizarry (Defiance)
- LB — Ayden Dalley (Elida)
- LB — Luke Leffler (Kenton)
- LB — Jayden Mustain (Kenton)
- LB — Vinnie Brinkman (Ottawa-Glandorf)
- LB — Garrett Looney (Shawnee)
- LB — Aaron Reichert (Van Wert)
- DB — Kahne Sullivan (Bath)
- DB — Vinny Vendette (Bath)
- DB — Antonio Lopez (Defiance)
- DB — Jackson Covault (Elida)
- DB — Seth Sharp (Elida)
- DB — Issac Earl (Elida)
- DB — Colby Howard (Kenton)
- DB — Griffin Seimet (Ottawa-Glandorf)
- DB — Noah Dixon (St. Marys)
- DB — Reese Krugh (Van Wert)
- DB — Nate Metzger (Wapakoneta)



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St. Marys enters season with high expectations

By Nate Stidham
sports@limanews.com

St. Marys enters the fall with elevated expectations and with its sights on a league-high 26th Western Buckeye League championship.

Bo Frye, who's led the Roughriders to at least one playoff win in his first three seasons, has had plenty of success as head coach, but one thing that has eluded him during his tenure is that WBL title.

The Riders' last conference crown came in 2018 as part of a three-peat under former head coach Doug Frye.

"The number one goal is to win the WBL championship. It will never change here," said Bo Frye. "At some point, we have to get back to winning WBL championships, and every year with how hard we work, I think we stay in that mix. In the last two years, if things would've bounced our way we would have had two league championships."

St. Marys went 7-5 last year before falling to Perkins in the second round of the OHSAA Playoffs.

Fortunately for them, they bring a plethora of upperclassmen and returning starters back to the front line, including 19 returning starters and 15 seniors.

Two of those pieces are a pair of 1,000-yard rushers, Colton Mabry (221 rushes, 1,456 yards, 19 touchdowns) and Dominik Osbourne (198 rushes, 1,258 yards, 9 touchdowns). Both will play prominent roles in



Don Speck | The Lima News

Senior running back Dominik Osbourne is expected to play a huge role again in the Roughriders' Wing-T offense.

the Roughriders' patented Wing-T offense.

"A tiger doesn't change its stripes," said Frye of his offensive philosophy. "We don't plan to change our stripes. Running the ball is what we do here and our kids are good at executing it. We start running the Wing-T at a young level. It's something that we believe in and we have success doing it. We're going to run the football and we have a couple of quarterbacks that can throw the ball if needed."

Frye is hopeful that the overall talent his team brings back on a roster with 21 seniors helps get them off to a better start.

Last year, St. Marys went 0-4 before flipping the switch and finishing strong. Another start like that could cost the Roughriders a chance at competing in the WBL.

Defensively St. Marys brings back over half of a unit that allowed 18.1 points per game. That group includes two of the Roughriders' top three

leading tacklers from 2023, Cameron Dammeyer (89 tackles) and Noah Dixon (85 tackles).

"We will shuffle around our defensive formation based on which team we play that week," said Frye. "In the WBL, we see so many distinctive styles so we have to stay ready. We return a lot of experience on that side of the ball and that will help."

"Owen Otte is a sophomore who will start for us on the defensive line along with Caleb Turner.

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Bo Frye (fourth season)

Division: III

Last year's record: 7-5, 6-3 WBL

Ticket information: roughriderssports.net/event-tickets

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Jacob Kessler (Sr., QB/ATH/DB), Colton Mabry (Sr., RB), Dominik Osbourne (Sr., RB), Noah Dixon (Sr., RB/DB), Terry Amborski (Sr., OL/OC), Camden Rothe (Sr., OG), Will Glass (Sr., OG), Ross Bowman (Sr., OT), Keaton Fischbach (Sr., TE), Jack Snethkamp (Sr., TE), Caleb Turner (Sr., DL), Hayden Davis (Sr., LB/DL), Cameron Dammeyer (Sr., LB), Luke Borns (Sr., LB), Ryan Ruvoldt (Sr., DB), Tre Moore (So., ATH), Owen Ott (So., DL), Taylor Compton (So., LB), Parker Beam (So., DB)

Top newcomers: Bradey Triplett (Jr., K), Luke Rammel (Jr., QB/RB), Aiden Meinerding (Jr., QB/SE), Wesley Blair (Sr., DB), Logan Chiles (Jr., DB), Caleb Schmidt (Jr., RB), Xander Post (Jr., OT), Koby Reineke (Sr., OT), Gavin Ahlers (Sr., OT), Cole Mullins (Jr., DL), Matt Murray (Jr., DL), AJ Hertenstein (Sr., DL), Robert Williams (Sr., DL), Dyllan Fink (So., RB)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

- 8/23 — St. Henry
- 8/30 — Celina
- 9/6 — at Defiance
- 9/13 — Wapakoneta
- 9/20 — Ottawa-Glandorf
- 9/27 — at Van Wert
- 10/4 — at Shawnee
- 10/11 — Kenton
- 10/18 — at Elida
- 10/25 — at Bath

He (Turner) played a lot last year and had an active motor. Taylor Compton is a big piece of our linebacking core, and of course, Noah Dixon is well known in our secondary."

Junior Bradey Triplett, a dual sport athlete from the soccer team, is in line to kick. He replaces Logan Rush who hit 33-of-36 extra points last year.

With Frye entering his fourth season, his confidence level and expectations for his team remain the same.

"I feel the same way right now that I do at

this point every season. We're excited to get going but we don't really know what we have until we get on the field and play games. I have a great staff. My brother (Koby Frye) calls the offense, my best friend (Nick Yahl) calls the defense, and my dad (Doug Frye) is still able to be around and help. We've been coaching together for 10 years and that helps tremendously."

St. Marys opens its season at home on Aug. 23 against St. Henry before taking on rival Celina in week two.

Lawrence shrugs off 'traditional football'

By Chris Howell
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LIMA — In a conversation about what the statistics tell you to do in football, there's always one anomaly.

That's Bill Lawrence at Lima Senior, a former assistant under two legendary Kenton coaches, Brent Fackler and Hall-of-Famer Mike Mauk, who studied under Kevin Kelley at Pulaski Academy.

Kelley, who's currently the head coach at Sheridan High School in Arkansas, gained notoriety for his playing style, which includes a pass-heavy offense, rarely ever punting, always going for two after a touchdown and

kicking multiple inside kicks in a game.

It's a formula that's produced positive results in both Mauk's and Kelley's careers.

In 31 years at Kenton, Mauk compiled a record of 221-122. He led the Wildcats to back-to-back state championships in 2001 and 2002.

Kelley had a winning percentage while serving as head coach at Pulaski Academy from 2003-2020. During that time, he led the program to nine Arkansas Activities Association State Championships and finished his tenure with a record of 216-29-1.

So does the system work? The answer to that

question has been a resounding yes, and Lawrence has carried on the beliefs of his mentors.

He said it's about two things, putting pressure on the other team and using the power of the unknown.

"Your team has to believe in what you're doing," Lawrence said. "When you take that lead and you're up eight against a team that doesn't like to go for two, you make them have to make some different decisions."

"After we score, you also have to defend all the inside kicks that we do."

Lawrence said the object behind the inside kick is to demoralize the other team. He points

to odds that say when a team recovers at least one inside kick in a game, the percentage of that team winning the game goes up to about 80.

The Spartans recovered multiple inside kicks in more than one game last year.

"It just turned the game," Lawrence said. "Last season we were up six at halftime and we came out and recovered two inside kicks in the third quarter. All of a sudden we were up 21."

"I would hope that teams have to prepare 15-30 minutes per day for that because you never know what we're going to do. I may dream something up the night before a game, and then we'll do it."

It's also a matter of keeping Lima Senior's offense in rhythm. That's not something that can happen if the Spartans kick the ball deep and the other team has a long 90-yard scoring drive.

In a worst-case scenario where the Spartans allow their opponent to score, he wants them to do it quickly.

And when Lima Senior gets the ball back, sometimes its best defense is its offense. They use all four downs to get 10 yards, which can alter playcalling.

In a rare situation where the offense isn't moving the ball, the Spartans might punt — but it's not that simple.



Richard Parrish | The Lima News

Bill Lawrence, a former assistant under legendary Kenton coach Mike Mauk, has carried the beliefs of his mentors on the use of analytics into the program at Lima Senior.

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Wapak aims for 4th-straight WBL title

By Chris Howell
chowell@limanews.com

WAPAKONETA — Wapakoneta is the standard in the Western Buckeye League.

In 2023, the Redskins won their third consecutive league title, and it doesn't appear they'll be slowing down anytime soon.

That success starts at the top with coach Travis Moyer, who enters his 11th season at Wapak.

His team went 10-3 last year with an 8-1 record in the WBL and made it all the way to the regional semifinals before suffering a 14-10 loss to Hamilton Badin in an injury-riddled game.

It was the second-straight season the two teams met in the playoffs, and both times, Badin pulled out a one-score win.

The Redskins led until the final two seconds of its season despite losing starting quarterback Caleb Moyer to a broken collarbone and running back Jace Knous to a knee injury.

It was a heartbreaker, but the program didn't dwell on it.

They hit the weight room in January in an effort to have another strong offseason.

For Moyer and the Redskins, that's where sustaining success begins.

"Our kids understand the importance of lifting," he said, "and it's something that sets the precedent that we need to need to be at our best if we want to compete for a championship. Our kids have bought into that."

"As a program, we've played in a lot of big games. It's that preparation that starts in January that gives us a chance to compete at the highest level."

The top offseason priority for Wapakoneta has been to get its starting quarterback healthy. By the look of things, Caleb Moyer's collarbone seems to be back at full strength.

The 6-2, 190-pound junior spent the summer throwing with or competing against some of the top arms in the state, names such as Findlay's Ryan Montgomery (University of Georgia com-

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Travis Moyer (11th season)

Division: III

Last year's record: 10-3, 8-1 WBL

Ticket information: wapak.org/page/tickets

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Grant Houser (Sr., TE/DE), Chris Martin (Sr., OL/DE), Grant Stauffer (Sr., WR/DB), Ryan Walter (Sr., WR/LB), Bryson Pack (Sr., RB/LB), Landen Micco (Sr., OL), Jarrett Mullin (Jr., RB/DB), Caleb Moyer (Jr., QB/DB), Wyatt Buell (Jr., OL/DL), Noah Bishop (Jr., RB/DB), Ryan Richardson (Jr., WR/DB), Kaden Page (Jr., WR/DB), Brody Presar (Jr., OL/LB), Mason Ludwig (Jr., OL), Daron Houser (So., OL/DL)

Top newcomers: Braydon Hower (Sr., TE/DE), Toby Wilcoxson (Sr., TE/DE), Noah Burnfield (Sr., WR/DB), Ethan Eisert (Sr., K), Ross Honigford (Sr., TE/DL)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 — St. Johns Jesuit

8/30 — Defiance

9/6 — Ottawa-Glandorf

9/13 — at St. Marys

9/20 — Van Wert

9/27 — Shawnee

10/4 — at Kenton

10/11 — at Elida

10/18 — Bath

10/25 — at Celina

mit), Lakota East's JT Kitna (uncommitted), Gahanna Lincoln's Brennen Ward (University of Kentucky commit) and Bellefontaine's Tavien St. Clair (Ohio State University commit).

Moyer and St. Clair have even developed a personal relationship after throwing together each of the last two offseasons. It's something that Travis Moyer appreciates from more than just a competition standpoint.

"Tavien is a phenomenal kid. Anytime you can surround yourself with an elite talent like Tavien St. Clair, I think it only inspires you and pushes you to be better," he said. "To me, I think competition is always positive, and when you look at what he does, it lets you know where you need to improve to compete at that level."

Moyer passed for 1,812 yards and 14 touchdowns as a sophomore. He added 464 yards and 10 touchdowns on the ground, earning him a spot on the WBL's first team and an honorable mention in the state of Ohio.

Travis Moyer thinks we'll see a bigger, faster and stronger Caleb Moyer on the field this fall. He calls his son another coach on the field, meaning he has a great handle on the offense. "He's continuing to

improve at understanding his position and competing at a high level. We have extremely high expectations for that position, and it's not easy to play quarterback here," he said. "We've seen an incredible amount of growth in him since the Marion Local game last year."

Depth on the offensive line is one question the Redskins face. With the loss of players like Kaden Ware (first-team WBL) and Austin Brown (WBL honorable mention), returners Chris Martin (Sr., 5-11, 205), Landen Micco (Sr., 5-11, 210) and Mason Ludwig (Jr., 5-11, 225) take on even larger roles.

Bryson Pack (Sr., 5-9, 170), Jarrett Mullin (Jr., 5-7, 165) and Noah Bishop (Jr., 5-6, 145) slot in at running back for the now-graduated Knous. The trio combined for 243 yards and four touchdowns on 41 carries in 2023.

Out wide, Wapak possesses a pair of Division I recruits, Grant Houser at tight end and Kaden Page at receiver.

Houser announced his commitment to the University of Louisville this summer, and Page has already fielded three offers from Miami (Ohio), Toledo and Western Michigan.



Don Speck | The Lima News

Kaden Page is back at wide receiver for Wapakoneta after catching 55 balls for 653 yards and seven touchdowns last season.

Page, a WBL honorable mention, caught 55 balls for 653 yards and seven touchdowns last season.

The two are joined by Ryan Richardson (Jr., 6-2, 170) and Ryan Walter (Sr., 6-0, 185) as top targets for Caleb Moyer, with an emphasis on sharing the wealth.

"It's our goal to spread that ball around as much as we can and get as many people involved as possible," coach Moyer said. "Anytime you can start with a guy like Grant (Houser), you're in good shape, and Kaden (Page) gives us that big-play threat. We want to get them the ball in space and let them do their thing."

On defense, the secondary is the most experienced position group consisting of returners Caleb Moyer, Jarrett Mullin and Ryan Richardson.

The Redskins took their biggest hit on that side of the ball with the losses of

Ware, the WBL's Defensive Lineman of the Year, and Joey Truesdale, the WBL's co-defensive back of the year, among others.

There are holes to fill, but that's nothing new for Moyer and his staff.

"We lost a good amount of guys on defense, but that's not out of the ordinary for us," he said. "We're a team that normally plays veteran players on that side of the ball. We're going to have some new faces there, but we're a big believer that if we want to compete for a championship we have to play really well defensively."


Although they're no longer opening the season against Marion Local, the Redskins still face a tough schedule early on, starting with St. John's Jesuit, followed by Defiance, Ottawa-Glandorf and St. Marys.

The good news is that those first three games come on their home turf. Last year, Wapakoneta


started 0-2. Even though Moyer believes that adversity brought his team closer together, he hopes to get that first win out of the way sooner this season, especially with a daunting WBL schedule ahead.

"It's always our goal to win game No. 1 and get off to a good start," Moyer said. "I've always thought the hardest game of the season to win is the first one, so you want to get that first win out of the way as quickly as you can."

"When guys step into our program, the expectation is to compete for a league championship and hopefully someday win a state championship. With that comes a responsibility and understanding that we have to work hard to try and achieve those goals. It's hard to win in the WBL. There are phenomenal players and Hall-of-Fame-type coaches so every week during the season is a grind."



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TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Zach Turner (fourth season)

Division: IV

Last year's record: 3-7, 3-6 WBL

Ticket information: kentonathletics.com/online-ticketing

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Korbin Johnston (Sr.), Bob Wilkinson (Sr.), Bill Wilkinson (Sr.), Austin Ashbrook (Sr.), Ethan Ashbrook (Sr.), Grady Kleman-Beazley (Sr.), Carson Delong (Sr.), Ty Coomes (Sr.), Trenton Delong (Sr.), Quinn Reffner (Sr.), Zach Burroughs (Sr.), Dylan Searson (Sr.), Matt Handel (Sr.), Zayne Perkins (Sr.), Blaine Bushong (Sr.), Alex Rogel (Sr.), Junior Wright (Sr.), Maddox Hommel (Soph.), Jayde Mustain (Soph.)

Top newcomers: Lincoln Hjima (Soph.), Maddux McFarlin (Fr.), Gavin Sealscott (Fr.)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 — Eastwood

8/30 — at Ottawa-Glandorf

9/6 — Elida

9/13 — at Bath

9/20 — Celina

9/27 — at Defiance

10/4 — Wapakoneta

10/11 — at St. Marys

10/18 — Van Wert

10/25 — at Shawnee



Don Speck | The Lima News

Zayne Perkins is back on the field for Kenton this season after seeing some playing time as a sophomore in 2023.

Kenton aims for higher standard, more wins

By Jim Naveau

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KENTON — With two state championships, two state runners-up and six other trips to the semifinals of the state football playoffs in the last 32 years, expectations are always high at Kenton.

For the last three seasons, results have not been on the high end of the scale for the Wildcats, who went 3-7 last season, 1-9 two years ago and 0-10 the year before that.

In trying to get more positive outcomes on Friday nights in the present, Ken-

ton coach Zach Turner has looked into the past and emphasized what he calls the standard of Kenton football.

“At the end of my second year I started evaluating things a lot harder,” Turner said. “What I learned is we’ve got to create the right behaviors, we’ve got to create the right mindsets. That’s what made Kenton football great. We had kids who worked really hard, we had kids who loved the program and poured their heart and soul into it.”

“When I say get back to the standard of Kenton

football, what I believe Kenton football was is blue collar, gritty kids who worked hard. Our kids have really taken to that aspect. We’re starting to see that standard come back” he said.

Kenton’s offense is led by quarterback Korbin Johnston and receiver Grady Kleman-Beazley, both of whom were second-team All-Western Buckeye League selections last season.

Johnston, a four-year starter, passed for 2,712 yards and 19 touchdowns last season and rushed for 796 yards and 11 touchdowns. Kleman-Beazley had 90 catches for 1,007

yards and 11 touchdowns.

Turner calls Johnston “one of our best leaders,” and said, “He never misses a day of weight lifting. He’s been there every single day from Dec. 1 to now. He is what you ask for in a senior quarterback.”

The Kenton coach said Kleman-Beazley “is a kid we have high expectations for.”

“We have a good group of receivers. Maddox Hommel, a sophomore is going to be a big piece of that. Blaine Bushong is going to be in the slot. We have Carson Delong coming back Steven Piper is going to be a split end and Zayne Perkins is

going to be a slot on the other side,” Turner said.

“I have really high expectations for our receiving corps and their ability to make plays and to block on the perimeter, which is important.”

Linebacker Jayden Mustain had a big freshman season last year with 95 tackles and was honorable mention All-WBL.

Kenton ranked first in the WBL in total offense (421.4 yards per game) last season but was only sixth in the league in scoring at 23.4 points a game.

Defensively, the Wildcats were ninth in the WBL in

yards allowed (375.5 yards per game) and tenth in points given up (36.1 per game).

“We stalled a little bit in the red zone and Korbin kind of got banged up late in the season. A big emphasis is how we score the ball, and how we put the ball in the end zone. You’ve got to be able to score when you get down in there. You can’t settle for no points or three points. That’s a big emphasis for us this year,” Turner said.

“Our defense is going to be much improved. That tenth in points allowed is going to change,” he said.

Van Wert rebuilds with hopes to compete

By Chris Howell

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VAN WERT — Van Wert has developed a track record under coach Keith Recker.

The Cougars tend to be extremely skilled on offense with one of the league’s best athletes at quarterback.

They almost always roll out a talented group of playmakers who pose a multitude of threats from all sides of the field.

And they’ve consistently competed for the top spot in the WBL standings.

All of that has been true in the past. But 2024 comes with a different set of challenges.

While still very talented, Van Wert is much younger and much more inexperienced than in past seasons.

However, one thing that hasn’t changed is the attitude and work ethic that Recker and his staff instill in its players.

“These guys have really come in with a good mentality and a good attitude,” Recker said. “I think they understand that we lost quite a bit over the last few years, so they understand that there’s a lot of work to be put in, but their attitude has been better than expected and they’re ready to go.”

For the Cougars, it comes down to learning techniques that come with a spread offense and a 4-2-5 defensive scheme.

It’s a tall task to replace the production of 14 starters on an 8-4 team, but hav-

ing a well-rounded athlete under center always helps, and this year that player is Briston Wise.

After appearing in 11 games last season at running back, quarterback and defensive back, Wise becomes the full-time starter for the Cougars over sophomore Keaten Welch and freshman Zac Crummey.

Wise collected 334 yards on offense with two touchdowns in 2023.

“We want to put an athlete and a good arm back there, and Briston is both of those things,” Recker said. “He threw a no-hitter at the ACME state tournament, and he can run around everywhere. He’s done a really good job of taking control of that position.”

“Like every year, we want to get the run game going so that Briston doesn’t have to sit back and throw it 40 times. That’s one of his strengths, so we hope we can do a better job of establishing that.”

Both Welch and Crummey will slot in at different positions with prominent roles in the offense, but Recker stated that all three players are capable of taking snaps.

Crummey, a 6-5, 220-pound freshman, made quite an impression on the coaching staff in the offseason and the early parts of camp.

“He’s a big, tall, strong kid. He’s going to be really good. Right now it’s just about learning for him,” Recker said. “He’s playing some H-back for us, and he

runs the ball really well in between the tackles. He’s a tough guy for the defense to bring down.”

After serving as a backup during his junior season, Case Stegaman will play a prominent role on both sides of the ball, splitting time at running back with Geary Hilleary, who’s also in line for carries. Geary’s older brother, Jake, was a starting running back during his time at Van Wert a handful of seasons ago.

Keaten Welch slots in at wide receiver along with sophomore Micah Cowan and Nate Gearhart, a three-year junior varsity player who’s in line for his first prominent role at the varsity level.

“He never stopped working, and he’s faster this year, running in the 4.7’s,” Recker said of Gearhart. “He has great hands, and he’s a smart player.”

Returning lettermen on the offensive line include Nick Edwards (5-10, 270), Chance Youngpeter (6-0, 225) and Trevor Dotson (6-3, 215).

At one point last season, 21 of Van Wert’s 22 starters were seniors. That was a hard pill to swallow, especially on the defensive side where the Cougars allowed 30 points per game.

Other players in the rotation were young, like Donovan Winkeljohn (6-0, 155) and Micah Cowan (6-0, 175), who combined for 63 tackles and five interceptions.

Caine Shobe (5-8, 150) joins those two in the secondary and Nick Edwards (5-10, 270) anchors the defensive line.

“We had to take a good look at ourselves going into this season to evaluate who we have and what they’ll be good at,” said Recker of his personnel. “It’s all about making sure our scheme fits us and not the other way around. We’ve had a lot of communication about that between the coaches and players about why we’re doing what we’re doing. These guys have to be assignment-sound and able to take care of their responsibilities. We’ve done a better job of that early on in practice.”

The Cougars finished 2023 in a three-way tie for third place in the WBL standings. They’ll open with Bryan at home on Aug. 23, followed by Bath and defending conference champion Celina.

That game against the Bulldogs opens a four-week stretch where the Cougars also take on Defiance, Wapakoneta and St. Marys.

“In our league, there are no games where we can just walk on the field and out-athlete or out-physical someone. We really have to be ready to bring it every week,” Recker said. “Our guys expect to win. That’s something they’ve learned how to do and we hope that pays dividends early on this year.”



Don Speck | The Lima News

Briston Wise is expected to take over under center for the Cougars.

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Keith Recker (13th season)

Division: IV

Last Year's record: 8-4, 6-3 WBL

Ticket information: wvcs.net/vwathletics/Content2/ticketing

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Aaron Reichert (Sr., RB/LB), Briston Wise (Sr., QB-RB/DB), Hayden Davis (Sr., HB/LB), Kyle Eggleston (Sr., RB/LB), Case Stegaman (Sr., WR/DB), Donovan Winkeljohn (Sr., WR/DB), Trevor Dotson (Sr., OL/DL), Nick Edwards (Sr., OL/DL), Griffin McCracken (Sr., K), Chance Youngpeter (Sr., OL/DL), Micah Cowan (So., WR/DB), Keaten Welch (So., QB/DB), Maddox Workman (So., WR/LB)

Promising newcomers: Zac Crummey (Fr., QB/DL), Xavier Kelly (Fr., WR/DB), Geary Hilleary (Sr., RB/LB), Nate Gearhart (Sr., WR/DB)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 — Bryan

8/30 — at Bath

9/6 — at Celina

9/13 — Defiance

9/20 — at Wapakoneta

9/27 — St. Marys

10/4 — at Ottawa-Glandorf

10/11 — Shawnee

10/18 — at Kenton

10/25 — Elida

Celina looks to defend WBL crown

By Nate Stidham
sports@limanews.com

CELINA – Celina enters the 2024 season looking to defend its share of the Western Buckeye League championship.

It was the eighth time the Bulldogs had captured the WBL title and that run of success didn't end until they were one game away from the Division III State Championship game.

A season like that builds high expectations.

"Last year was a fun ride. We had a great group of kids," said Celina coach Brennen Bader. "That was a group of kids that paid their dues and fought through tons of adversity in their careers. We still have kids left over from that roster and we hope that experience builds into this season."

Bader enters his eighth season coming off a 12-3 record in 2023. The seniors on his roster have seen a complete turnaround since their freshman season when they went 1-9 in 2021. The same group went 6-5 in 2022 before last year's historic run.

"The year we went 1-9 I'd remember sitting in the coach's office and thinking man, this team is still so much fun to coach. They come in every day with the will to improve," said Bader. "They checked all the boxes but they were young and inexperienced with a lot of Freshman and Sophomores playing that year."

"We felt as a coaching staff that we had something special brewing. The next year we made the playoffs and that really sparked our run in 2023. Now, most of that same group comes back and these upcoming seniors have seen the entire process. We believe that will help them this season."

Last season the Bulldogs averaged 288 yards per game. 206 of those yards came on the ground. A big piece of that rushing attack was second-team all-state selection Braylon Gabes, who had 1,178 all-purpose



Dalton Chilcoat (right) is back to anchor the offensive and defensive lines for the Bulldogs. Don Speck | The Lima News

yards and 10 touchdowns as a senior.

Three key athletes are back in the fold and all three are seniors, a group that includes running back Jon Lutz (76 rushes for 585 yards and four touchdowns), and quarterback Bobby Morris (59-for-103, 750 yards, seven touchdowns).

Dalton Chilcoat, a third-team all-state lineman, also brings back experience up front.

"Bobby (Morris) got some playing time for us as a Junior," said Bader. "We had a two-quarterback system last year and he came in during some real key moments and made huge throws, especially in the Defiance game when he helped us seal our share of the WBL."

Schematically, Bader's Bulldogs will look the same on Friday nights. They'll run a ground-and-pound style attack on offense with suffocating and protective play on defense.

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Brennen Bader (eighth season)

Division: III

Last year's record: 12-3, 8-1 WBL

Ticket information: celinaschools.org/BulldogSports.aspx

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 – Columbus South

8/30 – at St. Marys

9/6 – Van Wert

9/13 – Shawnee

9/20 – at Kenton

9/27 – at Elida

10/4 – Bath

10/11 – at Ottawa-Glandorf

10/18 – at Defiance

10/25 – Wapakoneta

"We want to put a premium on getting downhill and being able to pass in situations where we need to," said Bader. "With the way Bobby has been throwing, it gives us the option to be more balanced."

"Defensively, we must be able to stop the run and mitigate or eliminate big explosive plays that can hurt you

in games. We must be sound on that side of the field. We need to make teams earn it and we feel like we have the guys that can do that."

Celina kicks off its season on Aug. 23 at home against Columbus South High School. In week two, the attention turns to WBL play when the Bulldogs take on rival St. Marys.

Defiance aims to continue climb

By Chris Howell
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DEFIANCE — When Travis Cooper took over at Defiance, he inherited a team that went 1-9 in 2020.

Since then, the Bulldogs have upped their win total each of the past three seasons, going from 3-7 in 2021 to 7-5 in 2022 and 8-4 last season.

Defiance ended the year in a three-way tie with Van Wert and St. Marys in the WBL standings with a record of 6-3. It was their highest league finish since 2014.

With two straight playoff appearances under their belt and eight returning starters on both sides of the ball, this season is all about continuing that upward trajectory, dealing with expectations and handling the pressure that comes with being a winning program.

"For us, it's about staying hungry and not being satisfied with steps we've already taken," Cooper said. "We were able to sneak up on some people in the past because they knew how we used to be,

but our guys have a little more of an expectation they're being held to. With expectation comes pressure so we'll see how our guys handle that."

Defiance will be tested early, starting with four road games in its first five weeks. That includes a matchup with defending WBL champion Wapakoneta in Week 2, followed by its home opener against St. Marys.

Cooper believes that having a high number of multi-sport athletes is something that lessens the blow of a road-heavy first half, meaning his players are familiar enough with the trips that it won't be a deciding factor in games.

"I'm not sure home or away really matters to them," he said. "There are parts of me that like the pregame of a road trip because it forces your kids to lock in earlier with fewer distractions. We're trying to look at that first stretch as a positive in that way."

The Bulldogs lost six key pieces to graduation, three on each side of the ball.

On offense, that

includes first-team WBL and honorable mention all-State safety Garret Rodenberger, second-team WBL running back Brogan Castillo and second-team WBL guard Caden Allman.

Brez Zipfel, a second-team WBL and all-State honorable-mention quarterback, headlines the group of returning players.

See DEFIANCE | 17E



Drew Boggs and the Delphos St. John's Blue Jays are on a mission to get back to the playoffs. Don Speck | The Lima News

Blue Jays want to return to the postseason

By Dave Boninsegna
sports@limanews.com

Delphos St. John's has a list of goals for this season but one stands out above the rest — make the playoffs.

The Blue Jays ended last year with a mark of 4-6 overall (2-6 MAC) and although they couldn't work their way over the .500 mark, the season had some memorable moments.

It started with a win over Delphos Jefferson and a come-from-behind victory over Lima Central Catholic.

However, the conference schedule for Delphos St. John's proved to be much more difficult as they suffered shutout losses in back-to-back games against Versailles and Marion Local.

That's where the Blue Jays want to improve.

Todd Schulte begins his 26th season as head coach and despite losing 10 seniors, his team brings back a host of talent with a strong desire to return to the postseason.

"We want to build on the guys who have past experience," Schulte said. "Logan Duncan started a few games last year as a freshman and Austin Arnold played a lot of offense. We foresee him (Arnold) doing good things on defense as well this season."

The Blue Jays had a productive season on the defensive side of the ball starting with TJ Werts, the team's leading tackler (55 solo, 84 overall). Werts, as a two-way player, also ran for 565 yards and six touchdowns.

Tyler Lindeman is also in line for a solid role on both sides of the ball.

"Tyler is a part of a solid core we have coming back on both sides," Schulte said.

Drew Boggs should be back under center for the Blue Jays after throwing for 497 yards and seven touchdowns last year in a three-way split for the job with Grant Ulm and Drake Fittro.

On offense, Delphos St. John's collected 2,548 total yards with almost an even split between the pass and run (1,213 passing, 1,335 rushing).

The Blue Jays are hoping for an uptick on that side of the ball and a step forward on defense in order for them to compete in the daunting Midwest Athletic Conference.

"I think we play in the best league in the state. Every week is a challenge," Schulte said. "If we can get through our two non-league games at the start and get into league play with a winning record, that would build a lot of confidence."

Delphos St. John's starts its season at home on Aug. 23 against Sidney Lehman. They'll play LCC in week two before hitting the road for their MAC opener on Sept. 6 against Versailles.

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Todd Schulte (26th season)

Division: VII

Last year's record: 4-6, 2-6 MAC

Ticket information: delphosstjohns.org/TicketInformation.aspx

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Tyler Lindeman (Sr., DB/WR), Austin Shafer (Jr., DB), Connor Gaynier (Sr., DB/WR), Drew Boggs (Sr., DB/QB), Braden Pohlman (Sr., DB/WR), Riley Mueller (Jr., LB), Alex Martz (Sr., LB), TJ Werts (Sr., LB/RB), Logan Duncan (So., OL), Austin Arnold (Jr., OL), Josh Mueller (Sr., DE/OL), Jackson Hoersten (Jr., DL),

Top newcomers: Christian Young (So., DB/QB), Owen Gilles (So., LB/TE) Hank Walpole (Jr., DB/WR), Camden Gable (Jr., LB/OL) Alex Herron (Sr., LB/OL)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 – Lehman Catholic

8/30 – at LCC

9/6 – at Versailles

9/13 – Marion Local

9/20 – at Fort Recovery


9/28 – Anna, 1:30 p.m.

10/4 – Coldwater


10/11 – at St. Henry

10/18 – at Parkway


10/25 – New Bremen



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2024 DELPHOS ST. JOHN'S BLUEJAYS

PLAYERS TO WATCH



MATTHEW QUATMAN
LIMA CENTRAL CATHOLIC
RUNNING BACK/DEFENSIVE BACK
5-10, 175 lbs, SENIOR

Quatman splits time between running back and slot receiver on offense. He caught 32 balls for 590 yards and six touchdowns as an all-state receiver and ran for an additional 690 yards and nine touchdowns on 114 carries in his junior season. On defense, he recorded 64 total tackles and two interceptions.



CADEN FALKE
LIMA CENTRAL CATHOLIC
TIGHT END/LINEBACKER
6-1, 210 lbs, JUNIOR

Falke was a first-team Northwest District and third-team all-state linebacker as a sophomore. He made 113.5 total tackles with 1.5 sacks during his sophomore season. 59 of his tackles were solo and 13 went for a loss.



JA'NIAUS HALL
LIMA SENIOR
QUARTERBACK
6-1, 165 lbs, JUNIOR

In his first season as Lima Senior's starting quarterback, Hall was third-team all-state and the Toledo City Athletic League Player of the Year after throwing for 3,932 yards and 46 touchdowns. He added 357 yards and three touchdowns on the ground as a sophomore.



PARKER CRIM
ELIDA
DEFENSIVE END
6-3, 235 lbs, JUNIOR

Crim was a force on Elida's defense as a sophomore, recording 73 tackles (20 for loss), 10.5 sacks, two forced fumbles with one recovery and two blocked punts. Those numbers earned him a spot on the WBL's first team.



GRANT HOUSER
WAPAKONETA
TIGHT END/DEFENSIVE END
6-5, 235lbs, SENIOR

Houser committed to the University of Louisville in the offseason. He played an important role as a blocker during his junior year and finished with seven catches for 75 yards, earning a WBL honorable mention on offense.



MIKEY HALE
BATH
RUNNING BACK
5-8, 150 lbs, JUNIOR

Hale ran for 1,040 yards and five touchdowns last season on 175 carries. He finished second on the team in total yards and accounted for 66% of Bath's rushing offense, earning him a spot on the WBL's second team as a sophomore.



TRENTON BARRAZA
COLUMBUS GROVE
RUNNING BACK/DEFENSIVE BACK
6-1, 190 lbs, SENIOR

Barraza topped 1,900 yards with 21 touchdowns on the ground last year. He was the Northwest Conference Offensive Player of the Year and named first-team all-state in Division VI as a junior.



COLTON MABRY
ST. MARYS
RUNNING BACK
5-10, 200lbs, SENIOR

Mabry rushed for 1,456 yards and 19 touchdowns on 221 carries during his junior season out of the Roughriders' Wing-T offense. He was a WBL first-teamer in 2023 and he's set to earn his fourth varsity letter this fall.



LANDEN WORCESTER
BLUFFTON
RUNNING BACK/LINEBACKER
5-11, 201 lbs, SENIOR

Worcester was an all-state linebacker after recording his third straight season with at least 100 tackles. On offense, he rushed for more than 1,700 yards and 26 touchdowns as a junior.



CALEB MOYER
WAPAKONETA
QUARTERBACK/DEFENSIVE BACK
6-2, 190 lbs, JUNIOR

Moyer passed for 1,812 yards and 14 touchdowns and ran for 464 yards and 10 touchdowns as a sophomore. He was an all-state honorable mention and a member of the WBL's first team.

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Nate Reynolds | The Lima News

Starting quarterback Jackson Thompson is back under center for the Mustangs in 2024.

Allen East looks to build on key returners

By Mark Altstaetter
sports@limanews.com

HARROD – Allen East head football coach Joel Billings does not want to look too far ahead.

However, with an all-senior offensive line and depth at the skill positions, Billings is cautiously optimistic about the upcoming season.

In 2023, Allen East went 4-7 overall and 3-4 in the Northwest Conference. The Mustangs got into the Division VI postseason playoffs, where they lost to Anna in the first round.

Allen East returns 13 letter winners from a year ago, including 10 starters.

“We have a good nucleus back,” Billings said. “Right now, the offensive line has five seniors, which is pretty rare. I don’t know if we’ve ever had that while I’ve been a head coach.”

“Skill-wise, Ethan Young (Sr., 5-10, 163, WR/DB) will be the top receiver coming back. We feel that we have a pretty good nucleus of guys that are all a little bit similar. Ethan Hersh-

berger (So., 5-9, 148, WR/DB) is going to be a sophomore, who played some last year. Deacon Jones (5-8, 150, WR/DB) is a junior. He (Jones) has played at some skilled spots.”

Allen East also returns its signal-caller and starting running back from a year ago.

“Jackson Thompson (Jr., 5-10, 185) is back at quarterback. Last year was his first year (at quarterback),” Billings said. “Playing quarterback was not what he (Thompson) played in the lower levels. He has made some progress in the seven-on-sevens. He’s a great athlete, and really the kind of kid that you would want to play quarterback for you. ... It’s somebody you would want, character-wise. We’re excited to have him back.”

“At running back, Jacob Pinks (Sr., 5-10, 170) is returning. Miles McDorman (So., 5-10, 170) is a sophomore, who made big strides last year in practice and was out there on special teams. He (McDorman) had a good offseason.”

Last (regular) season,

Thompson was 63 of 156 passing for 928 yards with six touchdowns and 10 interceptions. He also rushed for 510 yards on 118 carries with 9 touchdowns.

“With Jackson (Thompson at quarterback), we will probably run more than we throw, but we will still be a spread offense. We’ll try to stay balanced, and really try to take what’s there,” Billings said.

Last season, Allen East scored 25.7 points per game. Defensively, the Mustangs gave up 24.8 points per contest.

“At the skill spots, we have a lot of flexibility,” Billings said. “We are almost two-deep at most of the skill spots. We feel confident.”

On the defensive side of the ball, Allen East yielded 302 yards per game in 2023.

“Defensively, we will be very similar to what we were in the past (3-5-3 scheme). We will just keep building off the system and try to fix the weaknesses,” Billings said. “We have Kyden Culbertson (Sr., 6-1, 230, OL/DL) back. Braylon

Paxson (So., 5-10, 190, OL/DL) is back. He (Paxson) played a lot on offense last year as a freshman. Grant Slusser (Sr., 6-3, 200, LB) is new. He (Slusser) played his freshman year, then came back out.

“Levi Nickles (Sr., 5-10, 165, WR/LB) is back. Ethan Hershberger (So., 5-9, 148, WR/DB) will play safety. Hunter Nickles (Sr., 5-11, 170, WR/LB) is another kid in that senior class who’s been bidding his time and got a lot of playing time last year. At defensive back, Jackson Friesner (Sr., 5-11, 160, WR/DB) returns. We’ve got some young guys that are competing for spots, too.”

Billings said the Northwest Conference should be very competitive this fall.

“We have two new teams coming in. Fort Loramie has always had the big-frame (type of) kids. With LCC, I think Coach (Scott) Palte is one of the better coaches in the area, if not the best coach in the area. He always seems to utilize his personnel really well. Of

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Joel Billings (fifth season)

Division: VI

Last year’s record: 4-7, 3-4 NWC

Ticket information: alleneastschools.org/purchase-tickets

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Ethan Hershberger (So., WR/DB), Ethan Young (Sr., WR/DB), Deacon Jones (Jr., WR/DB), Hunter Nickles (Sr., WR/LB), Jacob Pinks (Sr., RB/LB), Levi Nickles (Sr., WR/LB), Jackson Friesner (Sr., WR/DB), Lane Wildermuth (Sr., OL/DL), Braylon Paxson (So., OL/DL), RJ Davies (Sr., OL/DL), Ben McFarland (Sr., OL/DL), Kyden Culbertson (Sr., OL/DL), Jackson Thompson (Sr., RB)

Top newcomers: Cam Smith (Fr., WR/DB), Grant Slusser (Sr., QB/LB), Miles McDorman (So., RB/LB), Josh Busick (Jr., WR/DL), Dakota Henry (Sr., OL/DL)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 – Toledo Scott

8/30 – at Newark Catholic

9/6 – Indian Lake

9/13 – LCC

9/20 – at Crestview

9/27 – Columbus Grove

10/4 – at Spencerville

10/11 – Delphos Jefferson

10/18 – at Bluffton

10/25 – Fort Loramie

course, you have Columbus Grove there. Also, Bluffton and Crestview are there. Our goal is to show up and compete. I don’t really talk to them (his players) about

winning a league title. I tell them, ‘Let’s just show up and do our best and focus on those things that are going to get you in that position,’ he said.

2023 NORTHWEST CONFERENCE WEEKLY RESULTS

Week 1

Pandora-Gilboa 25 Columbus Grove 22
Delphos St. John’s 45 Delphos Jefferson 6
Ada 24 Upper Scioto Valley 22
McComb 42 Allen East 7
Bluffton 42 Benjamin Logan 7
Crestview 41 Parkway 27
Leipsic 25 Lake 19
Spencerville 28 Ridgemont 12

Week 2

Riverdale 40 Ada 27
Allen East 28 Arlington 3
Bluffton 28 Pandora-Gilboa 21
Columbus Grove 24 Liberty-Benton 14
McComb 55 Crestview 13
Ayersville 42 Delphos Jefferson 26
Leipsic 48 Van Buren 0
Spencerville 35 Paulding 8

Week 3

Ada 41 Buckeye Central 25
Indian Lake 28 Allen East 27

Bluffton 42 Ayersville 0
Patrick Henry 40 Columbus Grove 28
Crestview 21 Wayne Trace 20
Leipsic 21 Pandora-Gilboa 14
Riverside 45 Spencerville 10
Paulding 56 Delphos Jefferson 25

Week 4

Crestview 47 Ada 9
Leipsic 21 Allen East 0
Bluffton 63 Delphos Jefferson 0
Columbus Grove 40 Spencerville 0

Week 5

Leipsic 55 Ada 24
Crestview 51 Allen East 28
Bluffton 56 Spencerville 0
Columbus Grove 49 Delphos Jefferson 0

Week 6

Bluffton 48 Ada 0
Columbus Grove 47 Allen East 28
Crestview 52 Delphos Jefferson 6

Leipsic 40 Spencerville 6

Week 7

Ada 28 Delphos Jefferson 0
Allen East 49 Spencerville 7
Bluffton 21 Crestview 0
Columbus Grove 28 Leipsic 14

Week 8

Spencerville 35 Ada 14
Bluffton 34 Leipsic 0
Columbus Grove 37 Crestview 0
Allen East 41 Delphos Jefferson 0

Week 9

Columbus Grove 56 Ada 6
Bluffton 42 Allen East 0
Crestview 42 Spencerville 0
Leipsic 33 Delphos Jefferson 0

Week 10

Allen East 49 Ada 7
Columbus Grove 14 Bluffton 7
Leipsic 49 Crestview 28

Delphos Jefferson 31 Spencerville 28

Opening Round

Edison 48 Spencerville 0
Bluffton 63 Paulding 6
Columbus Grove 42 Lakota 17
Anna 58 Allen East 28
Crestview 42 Calvert 14
Pandora-Gilboa 33 Leipsic 24

Regional Quarterfinals

Bluffton 38 Wynford 0
Columbus Grove 34 Black River 6
Lima Central Catholic 44 Crestview 28

Regional Semifinals

Columbus Grove 37 Carey 21
Bluffton 34 Ottawa Hills 0

Regional Championships

Columbus Grove 17 Bluffton 10

State Semifinal

Versailles 30 Columbus Grove 13



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Pirates excited for more this year

By David Trinko
dtrinko@limanews.com

BLUFFTON — There's a "different vibe" at Bluffton this year, as all-state linebacker Landen Worchester says.

After back-to-back 5-5 seasons in 2021 and 2022, last year's 12-2 team might've been a surprise. With 20 returning letterwinners and nine returning starters, people know what the Pirates are capable of doing.

"Last year, we'd come out, we're the underdogs," said Worchester, a 5-foot-11, 201-pound all-state first-team linebacker and the team's leading running back from last year. "No one expected us to win. But this year, we have a big X on our back. There's no surprises anymore."

Coach Jeff Richards said he wanted his players to come out every game in 2024 ready to do whatever they needed to win. "We want to be the hunter, not the hunted," Richards said. "We want to go into every single game expecting to win. We expect to perform at a high level, no matter the situation, no matter where we're at. We want to go into every single game as the aggressor."

It will be hard to top the dominant performance from last year's defense. The Pirates recorded nine

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Jeff Richards (41-42, ninth season)

Division: VI

Last year's record: 12-2

Ticket information: <https://www.blufftonschools.org/athletics/athletics-tickets>

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Landen Worchester (Sr., RB/LB), Carson Kruse (Sr., WR/DB), Brody Sommers (Sr., OL/DL), Quinn Eachus (Sr., WR/DB), Griffin Stackhouse (Sr., WR/LB), Noah Bricker (Sr., Ath/LB), Tayte Giesige (So., QB/DB), Javen Crawfis (Kr., WR/DB), Avery Sprunger (Jr., WR/DB), Brody Anderson (Sr., WR/DB), Micah Rehm (Jr., WR/DB), Lleyton Miller (So., Ath/DB), Jackson Bowlus (Jr., RB/LB), Parker Lovell (So., RB/LB), Ethan Kohli (Sr., RB/LB), Mason Shank (So., OL/DL), Braylin Scherger (Sr., OL/DL), Xavier Diller (Sr., OL/DL), Austin Scherger (Sr., OL/DL), Gabe Meza (Sr., TE/LB)

Top newcomers: Jackson Brauen (Sr., K), Evan Grothaus (Jr., OL/DL), Hunter Betts (Jr., OL/DL), Sawyer Bowling (Fr., OL/DL), Braylon Goings (Jr., OL/DL)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 — at Benjamin Logan

8/30 — at Pandora-Gilboa

9/6 — Ayersville

9/14 — at Delphos Jefferson

9/20 — Spencerville

9/27 — Lima Central Catholic

10/4 — at Crestview

10/11 — at Fort Loramie

10/18 — Allen East

10/25 — Columbus Grove

shutouts. They bring back all-state performers at each level of the defense, including honorable mention pick Brody Sommers (6-foot-2, 236 pounds) as a defensive lineman, first-teamer Worchester at linebacker and honorable mention selection Carson Kruse (6-0, 177 pounds) at defensive back after recording 119 tackles last year.

"I feel like that helped me come into this year knowing more about what I'm going to see and the people that I'm going to go against and for my teammates on the line too," said Sommers, who had 48 tackles and three sacks last year. "I can be a vocal point and help them since we had a great senior class last year that



Bluffton's Landen Worchester crosses the goal line for a touchdown as Spencerville's Josh Schindler makes the hit during last year's game. Worchester is back at running back and linebacker for his senior season.

File photo | The Lima News

showed me how to do it. Now I can take that role and continue it."

The Pirates will continue an aggressive style, Richards said. Worchester, a middle linebacker, has had at least 100 tackles every year since starting as a freshman. Quinn Eachus (Sr., WR/DB, 5-10, 162 pounds) is back after tallying 10 interceptions over the past two years.

"We want to be a pressure-based defense," he said. "We want to make the other team's offense uncomfortable."

Offensively, there will be some changes. While Worchester is back after rushing for more than 1,700 yards and 26 touchdowns last year, a new face will hand him the

ball. Tayte Giesige, a 6-0, 170-pound sophomore, takes over at quarterback and has different skills than last year's starter, all-state selection Garret Bogart, who signed to play college ball at Defiance College after completing 75% of his passes last year and didn't throw an interception until Week 14.

"Tayte's skill set is different than Garret's, so we're going to use him a little bit differently," Richards said. "... He can run a little bit."

The Pirates will compete in a revamped Northwest Conference, which saw Ada and Leipsic leave with perennial playoff contenders Fort Loramie and Lima Central Catholic joined.

The Pirates finish off the season against league-champion Columbus Grove.

"I think it's as competitive as it's ever been," Richards said. "I maintain that until somebody knocks off Grove, they should be the favorite. ... The conference, just like it should be, every week you can't have an off game."

The Pirates believe they're up for the challenge.

"We have the X on our back now," Sommers said. "Last year, we shocked a lot of people. This year, we're the ones that are expected to succeed. So we just have to work hard every day. We need to play as a group, focus and practice as hard as we can."

Reach David Trinko at 567-242-0467 or on Twitter @Lima_Trinko.

2023 ALL-NORTHWEST CONFERENCE TEAMS

First Team Offense

QB — Landon Best (Columbus Grove)
RB — Trenton Barraza (Columbus Grove)
RB — Landen Worchester (Bluffton)
WR — Zach Reynolds (Columbus Grove)
WR — Braeden Jordan (Bluffton)
WR — Trent Siefker (Leipsic)
TE — Beau Eggleston (Crestview)
OL — Kylan Mayes (Columbus Grove)
OL — Jacob Granger (Bluffton)
OL — Ethan Ziesloft (Leipsic)
OL — Quinn Westhoven (Leipsic)
OL — Daniel Fredritz (Bluffton)
SP — Kyle Basil (Bluffton)

First Team Defense

DL — Kyle Lathrop (Columbus Grove)
DL — Kylan Mayes (Columbus Grove)
DL — Quinn Westhoven (Leipsic)
DL — Brody Sommers (Bluffton)
LB — Landen Worchester (Bluffton)
LB — Loudon Auchmuty (Columbus Grove)
LB — Isaac Kline (Crestview)
LB — Gavin Bogart (Bluffton)
DB — Quin Schroeder (Leipsic)

DB — Zach Reynolds (Columbus Grove)
DB — Carson Clum (Allen East)
DB — Carson Kruse (Bluffton)

Second Team Offense

QB — Garret Bogart (Bluffton)
RB — Quin Schroeder (Leipsic)
RB — Jack Hoel (Allen East)
WR — Nate Coulter (Spencerville)
WR — Carson Clum (Allen East)
WR — Gavin Bogart (Bluffton)
TE — Hayden Dearth (Bluffton)
OL — Landen Polling (Allen East)
OL — Trevor Whitney (Spencerville)
OL — Preston Kreisler (Crestview)
OL — Ethan Johnson (Columbus Grove)
OL — Evan Walls (Crestview)
SP — Trenton Barraza (Columbus Grove)

Second Team Defense

DL — Beau Eggleston (Crestview)
DL — Brogan Paxson (Allen East)
DL — Dalton Amos (Ada)
DL — Jacob Granger (Bluffton)
LB — Landen Huston (Columbus Grove)

LB — Mike Jimenez (Leipsic)
LB — Jacob Pinks (Allen East)
LB — Karder Agner (Delphos Jefferson)
DB — Hunter Jones (Crestview)
DB — Grant Eversole (Columbus Grove)
DB — Trenton Barraza (Columbus Grove)
DB — Braeden Jordan (Bluffton)
DB — Quinn Eachus (Bluffton)

Honorable Mention Offense

QB — Bryson Penix (Crestview)
QB — Levi Green (Ada)
RB — Jaret Harting (Crestview)
RB — Braxton Leeth (Crestview)
WR — Hunter Jones (Crestview)
WR — Kellin Putman (Crestview)
WR — Kyle Hopkins (Columbus Grove)
WR — Tyler Wilkins (Delphos Jefferson)
WR — Will Sensabaugh (Spencerville)
TE — Brady Basinger (Columbus Grove)
OL — Loudon Auchmuty (Columbus Grove)
OL — Matt Weitzel (Delphos Jefferson)
OL — Jose Garica (Leipsic)
OL — RJ Davies (Allen East)
OL — Owen Arnett (Ada)

OL — Lane Wildermuth (Allen East)
OL — Ty Meyer (Columbus Grove)
OL — Brody Sommers (Bluffton)
SP — Logan Jolliff (Ada)
SP — Trey Hensley (Allen East)

Honorable Mention Defense

DL — Connor Douglas (Columbus Grove)
DL — Marco Eiden (Bluffton)
DL — Connor Sheets (Crestview)
DL — Wren Sheets (Crestview)
DL — Jake Scheckelhoff (Leipsic)
DL — Trevor Whitney (Spencerville)
DL — Dalton Smith (Allen East)
DL — Xach Houx (Delphos Jefferson)
LB — Hayden Dearth (Bluffton)
LB — Jordan Scott (Allen East)
LB — Carter Layman (Spencerville)
LB — Zayden Martin (Crestview)
LB — Caden Hedrick (Allen East)
DB — Estevan Carrillo (Leipsic)
DB — Trey Hensley (Allen East)
DB — Dylan Short (Spencerville)
DB — Hayden Perrott (Crestview)



2024 Bluffton PIRATES



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Grove won't back away from high expectations

By David Trinko
dtrinko@limanews.com

COLUMBUS GROVE — If you're a football player at Columbus Grove, you learn not to back away from high expectations.

The football schedule lists every game through the state championship, and the Bulldogs have been to the state semifinals the past two years. With 20 letterwinners back from last year's 12-3 team, the team isn't shy about its expectations.

"We expect to get to Week 15 and play Marion Local (in the state semifinal)," said Trenton Barraza, a 6-foot-1, 190-pound senior and four-year letterwinner who plays running back and linebacker for the Bulldogs. "You know, we're pushing every week for better and better. We want to win one week at a time, but in the back of our heads, we've got Week 15 in our head. We need to do everything we can to get to that game and then win more."

For a team that's made the playoffs the last four years and won or shared the Northwest Conference title five of the last six seasons, expectations are part of the game. They'll move down from Division VI to Division VII this year.

"Maybe I shouldn't say it, but it is kind of the standard here now," coach Andy Schafer said. "That being said, what we've talked about is, 'How do we raise the standard?' How do we make it even farther?"

The Bulldogs' depth certainly helps. They have nine first-year lettermen, nine second-year lettermen and two third-year lettermen. One of those is Barraza, who topped 1,900 yards with 21 touchdowns on the ground last year. He's



Jessica Trinko | The Lima News
Columbus Grove's Trenton Barraza (3) darts for a gain against Bluffton in the Division VI regional final at Findlay last year. Barraza is back for his senior season for the Bulldogs.

already at top form, Schafer said, comparing his field vision now to the Carey playoff game last season. He's also developed into a stronger leader.

"I felt like he was kind of hitting his stride, hitting his peak in that game," Schafer said. "There were some big plays with his vision that I hadn't seen develop, and I'm already seeing it in practice, which is obviously insane to think of."

The Bulldogs also have quarterback Landon Best

(Jr., 5-11, 155 pounds) back. Best started as a sophomore last year and completed nearly 70% of his passes. Receiver Kyle Hopkins (Sr., 6-1, 165) is back too. Brady Basinger (Soph., 6-1, 205) is at tight end or H-back. There were three graduations from the offensive line, including both guards, but their replacements are coming along, Schafer said.

The other three-year letterwinner is Kylan Mayes, a

6-foot, 270-pound offensive and defensive lineman who can't wait to re-introduce himself to opposing quarterbacks. He said the Bulldogs have been working "at high, high intensity, high effort every day" to achieve their goals.

"We're just trying to get to the quarterback and get the defensive backs and linebackers a little break," said Mayes, who topped 70 tackles last year and had four sacks. "It just gives them a break, and it gets the fans

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Andy Schafer (13th season)

Division: VII

Last year's record: 12-3

Tickets: Sold at games

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Kyle Hopkins (Sr., WR/DB), Landon Best (Jr., QB/DB), Trenton Barraza (Sr., RB/DB), Brady Basinger (Soph., TE/LB), Trevon Baxter (Jr., WR/DB), Trenton Wynkoop (Soph., RB/LB), Landen Huston (Soph., RB/LB), Riley Sautter (Sr., WR/DB), Jamesen Rader (Sr., WR/LB), Luke Groch (Sr., WR/DL), Gavin Barraza (Jr., WR/DB), Grant Eversole (Sr., RB/DB), Levi Schroeder (Sr., RB/LB), Josh Gannon (Sr., RB/DL), Kylan Mayes (Sr., 6-0, 270), Gavin Schroeder (Sr., 5-10, 200), Brady Fuerst (Sr., 5-9, 220), Ty Meyer (Sr., 5-11, 210), Layton Blankemeyer (Sr., 6-1, 175), Evan Verhoff (Jr., K/P)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

- 8/22 — Pandora-Gilboa
- 8/30 — at Liberty-Benton
- 9/6 — Patrick Henry
- 9/13 — at Spencerville
- 9/20 — Delphos Jefferson
- 9/27 — at Allen East
- 10/4 — Fort Loramie
- 10/11 — at Crestview
- 10/18 — Lima Central Catholic
- 10/25 — at Bluffton

excited, gets our team going when we get to the QB."

They'll miss some large bodies from last year on the defensive line, Schafer said, but they do have at least two guys back on the defensive line, linebacking corps and defensive backfield.

"I think you just have to adapt," Schafer said. "That's where we're at right now, trying to figure out how we adapt to not having size. That's one thing a coach can't coach. Still, I like the way our defense is playing."

The Bulldogs can't afford to get off to a slow start like they did last year when they started 1-2 before going on an 11-game win streak. A tough Northwest Conference awaits them, especially with playoff regulars Fort Loramie and Lima Central Catholic joining the league.

"Obviously this year, I think we really just want

to start off strong," Mayes said. "In previous years, we hadn't been starting off strong. This year, we really want to come out and get off to a big start."

It's a tough task, though, with Pandora-Gilboa, Liberty-Benton and Patrick Henry all opening up the year before the NWC gauntlet begins. They wrap up the regular season against Bluffton, which the Bulldogs beat by a touchdown in the regular-season finale and playoffs in 2023.

"We've done a lot of team-building activities," Schafer said. "We've had some talks, and we've done everything we can to make sure that everybody's buying in early and understanding the importance of the early games because our schedule is brutal."

Reach David Trinko at 567-242-0467 or on Twitter @Lima_Trinko.

2023 LEAGUE STANDINGS

Western Buckeye League		
League Overall		
Celina	8-1	12-3
Wapakoneta	8-1	10-3
Defiance	6-3	8-4
Van Wert	6-3	8-4
St. Marys	6-3	7-5
Elida	4-5	5-6
Bath	3-6	4-7
Kenton	3-6	3-7
Ottawa-Glandorf	1-8	1-9
Shawnee	0-9	0-10

Toledo City Athletic League		
League Overall		
Lima Senior	6-0	9-3
Start	5-1	5-6
Scott	4-2	5-5
Waite	2-4	2-6
Rogers	2-4	2-8
Bowsher	2-4	2-8
Woodward	0-6	0-10

Northwest Conference		
League Overall		
Columbus Grove	7-0	12-3
Bluffton	6-1	12-2
Leipsic	5-2	8-3
Crestview	4-3	7-5
Allen East	3-4	4-7
Spencerville	1-6	3-8
Ada	1-6	3-7
Delphos Jefferson	1-6	1-9

Northwest Central Conference		
League Overall		
Waynesfield-Goshen	9-0	10-1
Upper Scioto Valley	8-1	8-3
Elgin	7-2	8-3
Hardin Northern	6-3	6-4
Ridgedale	5-4	6-4
Ridgemont	4-5	4-6
Perry	3-6	3-7
North Baltimore	2-7	3-7
Cory-Rawson	1-8	1-9
Crestline	0-9	0-10

Blanchard Valley Conference		
League Overall		
Liberty-Benton	7-0	9-1
Pandora-Gilboa	5-1	7-3
McComb	4-2	8-2
Arlington	4-2	6-4
Elmwood	2-4	3-7
Van Buren	2-4	3-7
Riverdale	1-6	4-6
Arcadia	0-6	2-8

Midwest Athletic Conference		
League Overall		
Marion Local	8-0	10-0
Coldwater	7-1	9-1
Minster	6-2	8-2
Versailles	6-2	8-2
Anna	4-4	5-5
New Bremen	3-5	4-6
St. Henry	2-6	3-7
St. John's	2-6	4-6
Ft. Recovery	1-7	1-9
Parkway	1-7	2-8

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GOOD LUCK THIS SEASON BULLDOGS!



Luke Rode returns under center for the Wildcats after an injury-riddled season in 2023.

Don Speck | The Lima News

Wildcats building on offseason momentum

By Dave Boninsegna
sports@limanews.com

Delphos Jefferson closed out the 2023 season by snapping a 10-game losing streak and finishing with a 1-9 record.

It was a transition year for the Wildcats with a focus on getting younger players some of their first varsity time.

This fall the hope is that ending last season on a high note translates into more wins on the field this season.

"It was great to see our seniors from last year go out the way they did with a win," said first-year head coach Allan Pohlman. "That gave us a lot of

momentum going into the offseason and we've been building on that momentum going into this season. Last year we made huge strides in gaining experience and we figured out how to win towards the end of the year."

One of those players who hope to build on the team's season finale win is an incoming sophomore, Dean Trentman.

The 5-foot-10, 185-pound running back rushed for 286 yards and four touchdowns in that win over Spencerville. His longest rush in the game went for 72 yards.

The Wildcats also return senior running back Karder

Agner and junior quarterback Luke Rode, who was a significant contributor last year despite an injury-riddled season.

Delphos Jefferson's mix of youth and experience should be on full display in 2024 with 12 returners and 10 freshmen entering the fold.

"We may be a young team but there's a lot of experience returning," Pohlman said. "We've been working hard throughout the offseason in the weight room and these guys are learning what it takes to win."

Pohlman is confident his team is ready to compete despite a lackluster performance last season.

"We feel good about our

progression this offseason and we're continuing to build from what we started last year. Our goal is to make the playoffs. We're taking it one week at a time by focusing on doing the small things right. If we continue to build on what we started last year, we believe we can be competitive in every game we play."

Delphos Jefferson kicks off its season on Thursday, Aug. 22 at home against College Hill.

Two more non-league games follow against Parkway and Paulding before the Wildcats turn their attention to Northwest Conference play on Sept. 14 against Bluffton.

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Allan Pohlman (first season)

Division: VII

Last year's record: 1-9, 1-6 NWC

Ticket information: delphoscitieschools.org/athletics/ticket-information

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Karder Agner (Sr., RB/LB), Tanner Hetrick (Sr., OL/DL), Sam Hastings (Sr., OL/DL), Luke Rode (Jr., QB/DB), Jace Lindeman (Jr., WR/DB), Lucas Millmine (Jr., WR/DB), Blaine Maloney (Jr., OL/LB), Parker Shade (So., WR/DB), Jaxon Rarhig (So., OL/DL), Dean Trentman (So., RB/LB), Brady Miller (So., OL/DL), Kellen Brotherwood (So., WR/DB)

Top newcomers: Kasen McPheron (Fr., OL/DL), Tyler Hetrick (Fr., OL/DL), Sean Hauter (Fr., OL/DL), Zach East (Fr., OL/DL), Nelson Miller (Fr., RB/LB), Andrew Cooley (Fr., WR/DB), Marquivious Wannamacher (Fr., WR/DB), Ayden Jennings (Fr., WR/DB)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/22 — North College Hill

8/30 — at Parkway

9/6 — at Paulding

9/14 — Bluffton, 1:30 p.m.

9/20 — at Columbus Grove

9/27 — Crestview

10/5 — at LCC, 4 p.m.

10/11 — at Allen East

10/18 — Fort Loramie

10/24 — Spencerville

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Travis Cooper (fourth season)

Division: III

Last year's record: 8-4, 6-3 WBL

Ticket information: <https://defiancebulldogs.org/main/ticketing/>

Returning 2023 letter winners: Brez Zipfel (Sr., QB), Anthony Wilder (Sr., WR), Steven Hoffman (Sr., OL), Romeo Valle (Sr., OL), Tyler Doeden (Jr., OL), Jordyn Wright (Jr., WR), Brady Borton (Sr., WR), TJ Kellermeyer (Sr., WR), Abel Rubio (Sr., LB), Joey Robinson (Sr., LB), Cohen Stockman (Sr., OLB), Logan Hutcheson (Sr., DB), Eli Howerton (Sr., DB), Kelton Gibbs (Jr., OLB), Alex Hinojosa (Jr., DL), Ray Salinas (Sr., DL)

Top newcomers: Noah Gomez (Sr., RB/DB), Mitchell Taylor (Sr., TE/LB), Chase Commisso (So., RB/LB), Jackson Becker (So., OL/DL), Jack Heinze (So., OL/DL)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 — at Napoleon

8/30 — at Wapakoneta

9/6 — St. Marys

9/13 — at Van Wert

9/20 — at Shawnee

9/27 — Kenton

10/4 — Elida

10/11 — at Bath

10/18 — Celina

10/25 — Ottawa-Glandorf

Defiance

From page 12E

The 6-2, 175-pound Zipfel enters his fourth season as the starter after throwing for 1,460 yards and 20 touchdowns. He added 272 yards on the ground and seven touchdowns as a junior.

"He got thrown in there as a freshman and the growth he's had since then is remarkable," Cooper said. "It's such a luxury as a head coach and play-caller to have a guy who's thinking along the same lines as you. Any coach will tell you that the growing pains of a young quarterback are rough, but it's going to pay dividends eventually and that's where we're at with Brez."

Cooper said Zipfel gives him the ability to go into

more detailed parts of the offense as opposed to the basic points they started with a few years ago.

Zipfel also has three reliable returning pieces in front of him, with offensive linemen Steven Hoffman (WBL honorable mention), Tyler Doden-Kiessling (second-team WBL) and Romeo Valle.

Protection? Check. What about playmakers? That's also taken care of. Abel Rubio, who took over for an injured Brogan Castillo last year, will patrol the backfield. On the outside is a talented wide receiver group consists of Anthony Wilder, Jordyn Wright, Brady Borton and TJ Kellermeyer.

Wilder, a 5-9, 175-pound WBL first-teamer, compiled 1,311 all-purpose yards in 2023 and 14 total touchdowns.

His 4.4 40-yard dash

speed allows him to line up all over the field for Defiance. Just like Zipfel, Wilder has been on the field for his entire high school career.

"I think he's one of the best athletes in the league," Copper said. "He was a first-team kid, and he's been playing since he was a freshman. He's extremely talented."

In addition to his role at running back, Abel Rubio (Sr.) leads the defense at linebacker along with Joey Robinson (Sr.), who was an all-state player last season.

Other returning starters for the defense include Cohen Stockman (Sr., OLB), Kelton Gibbs (Jr., OLB), Logan Hutcheson (Sr., DB), Eli Howerton (Sr., DB), Alex Hinojosa (Jr., DL) and Ray Salinas (Sr., DL).

Cooper said the plan is to rotate players up front and

rely on a veteran secondary

Some other key player who could also work themselves into the mix on either side of the ball are Noah Gomez (Sr., RB/DB), Mitchell Taylor (Sr., TE/LB), Chase Commisso (So., RB/LB), Jackson Becker (So., OL/DL) and Jack Heinze (So., OL/DL).

Depth is the main concern for the Bulldogs. The total number of players on roster is around 50, which is down, according to Cooper. He called it "quality over quantity" but also said they need some luck staying healthy throughout the season to compete in the WBL.

"Top to bottom we're a really good league," he said. "I really think that even the bottom teams in the league are better than the good teams in some other leagues. There are no easy games."

Bearcats continue to build in Koenig's second season

By Nate Stidham
sports@limanews.com

Year one was challenging for head coach Kyle Koenig. Spencerville earned a postseason berth but finished 3-8 as they battled roster numbers and injuries throughout the 2023 campaign.

Year two for Koenig's Bearcats will see increased numbers and experienced returners in key areas, giving the program some excitement to build around.

"We have a lot of guys back from last year, so that's been a positive for us," said Koenig. "We're also learning a lot about the newcomers on our team. I'm really excited to see what this year holds for us."

"Last year we hit the injury bug early and then we hit a rough patch right after our non-conference schedule.

We lost Nathan Coulter for a handful of games and he was our most athletic piece on both sides of the ball. It was good and bad because we had to mix in different guys. Will Sensabaugh and Grady Smith were able to get playing time, and that'll pay off this year."

When Spencerville lines up on offense this season, they'll once again operate out of the Wing-T.

"We will continue to run our ground and pound style approach," said Koenig. "We want to run the ball, and at the end of last year, we had some success in the passing game when we needed to, especially when

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Kyle Koenig (second season)

Division: VI

Last year's record: 3-8, 1-6 NWC

Ticket information: spencervillebearcats.com/Content2/194

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Will Sensabaugh (So., ATH/DB), Dylan Short (Jr., WR/DB), Carder Orr (Sr., ATH/DB), Grady Smith (Jr., ATH/DB), Zach Looser (Jr., RB/LB), Josh Schindler (Sr., OL/LB), Gavin Schwartz (Sr., OL/LB), Javier Franco (Sr., OL/DL), Trevor Whitney (Sr., OL/DL)

Top newcomers: Neo Eutsler (Jr., WR/DB), Owen Conley (Jr., RB/DB), Kolten Grigsby (Fr., RB/LB), Braylon McNett (So., OL/DL), Drew Mack (Jr., OL/DL)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 — Ridgemoor

8/30 — at Wayne Trace

9/6 — at Riverside

9/13 — Columbus Grove

9/20 — at Bluffton

9/27 — at Fort Loramie

10/4 — Allen East

10/11 — LCC

10/18 — Crestview

10/25 — at Delphos Jefferson

our running backs were falling left and right. We went to one back gun and found some things we liked out of that, so we're going to try and do a little bit of both."

Defensively there will only be minor tweaks to Spencerville's approach.

"On the defensive side of the ball, we're going to line up and try to get you with our blitzes," said Koenig. "We want to play downhill."

Senior Carder Orr returns under center (700 passing yards and four touchdowns in 2023) but Spencerville is forced to replace its top two rushers, Nathan Coulter and Carter

Layman, who combined for 919 yards and eight touchdowns last fall.

"Carder Orr is a special talent," said Koenig. "Everyone got to see what he can do on the basketball court, now I'm excited for that to translate to the football field. He's smart and knows what everyone is supposed to do on every play. If our guys have any questions, Carder is the guy to ask."

"We're still trying to figure out who our feature running back is going to be. Will Sensabaugh will run a little bit, but we want to use him on the outside more."



Richard Parrish | The Lima News

Carder Orr and the Bearcats are looking to take a step forward after finishing 3-8 in 2023.

Along with Sensabaugh (41 receptions, 331 yards), Zach Looser is going to be in the backfield mix after he ran for 269 yards on 59 carries in his sophomore season. Dylan Short (6 receptions, 125 yards), is another weapon for Orr who'll take on a more prominent role.

The Bearcats also have four senior offensive linemen back in the mix. Josh Schindler, Gavin Schwartz, Javier Franco and Trevor

Whitney all played various positions on the line last year. Whitney headlines the position group at 6-foot-4 and 280 pounds.

"Trevor is a guy that never shies away from anything, and nor should he," said Koenig. "He's a great kid who worked extremely hard in the offseason going to camps and different places to train and work on his craft."

"On the defensive side of the ball, I don't think he can be stopped. He was

creating a lot of havoc at nose tackle for us, which is exactly what we need him to do. He's going to be an important piece of the puzzle."

Spencerville opens the season at Memorial Field against Ridgemoor on Aug. 23. They'll follow that with two consecutive road games at Wayne Trace and Riverside before opening Northwest Conference action on Sept. 13 against Columbus Grove.

2023 ALL-NORTHWEST DISTRICT TEAM

DIVISION II

First team

Offense

Ends- Zaveon Garner, Lima Senior, 6-3, 180, sr.; Troy Hazuda, Oregon Clay, 6-0, 185, jr.; Jackson Turner, Toledo St. John's, 5-10, 175, sr. Tight end- Hudson Byers, Oregon Clay, 6-3, 225, jr. Linemen- Dillon Robinson, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 6-3, 270, sr.; Kaden Mayle, Fremont Ross, 6-6, 315, jr.; Will Luther, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 5-10, 255, sr.; Josh Adamczyk, Sylvania Southview, 5-10, 240, jr.; Kayden Grzymkowski, Toledo St. John's, 6-1, 285, jr. Backs- Isaac Sexton, Sylvania Southview, 5-10, 190, sr.; Braden Gardner, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 6-2, 185, jr.; J.D. Moncrief, Fremont Ross, 5-4, 145, sr. Quarterbacks- Grant Kinnee, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 6-4, 195, jr. Kicker- Seth VonLehmden, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 6-0, 170, sr.

Defense

Linemen- Cadence Carswell, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 5-10, 240, sr.; Jack Schultz, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 6-0, 205, sr.; Carson Adamczyk, Sylvania Southview, 6-1, 225, sr. Linebackers- Henry Robie, Toledo St. John's, 6-2, 210, sr.; Luke Gibbs, Oregon Clay, 6-1, 220, sr.; Drew Young, Sylvania Southview, jr.; Elijah Simms, Fremont Ross, 6-2, 170, sr. Backs- Carter Schaller, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 6-0, 175, sr.; Emite Lamb, Sylvania Southview, 5-9, 160, sr.; Marvon Thompson, Toledo Start, 5-8, 155, so.; Parker Sears, Sylvania Southview, 6-1, 165, sr. Punter- Owen Graff, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 6-4, 190, jr. Co-Offensive players of the year: Isaac Sexton, Sylvania Southview; Grant Kinnee, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne. Defensive player of the year: Carter Schaller, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne.

Lineman of the year: Dillon Robinson, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne. Coach of the year: Bill Lawrence, Lima Senior

Second team

Offense

Ends- Chance Sanders, Lima Senior, 5-9, 150, Sr.; Winn Sharp, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 6-4, 195, sr.; Raheem Brown, Toledo St. Francis, 5-9, 150, jr. Linemen- Owen Palmer, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 6-0, 225, Jr.;

Zavier Lopez, Fremont Ross, 6-0, 215, jr.; Hudson Vance, Sylvania Southview, 6-0, 266, Sr.; Alex Hinds, Toledo Bowsher, 6-4, 330, sr.; Ramone Burkes, Toledo Start, 5-8, 215, sr. Backs- Evan Skolmowski, Toledo St. John's, 5-10, 190, sr.; Jonah Tall, Toledo Start, 5-9, 150, so.; Traven Horton, Toledo St. Francis, 5-9, 180, sr. Quarterbacks- Ja'Niaus Hall, Lima Senior, 5-9, 150, so.; Mason Heintschel, Oregon Clay, 6-2, 200, jr.

Defense

Linemen- Dominic Brown, Fremont Ross, 6-0, 225, sr.; Brady Czerniakowski, Sylvania Southview, 5-9, 240, sr.; Alijah Bailey, Toledo Start, 6-0, 185, sr. Linebackers- Jameson Carey, Sylvania Southview, 5-8, 175, sr.; Me'Air Moore, Toledo Start, 6-0, 200, jr.; James Sprott, Toledo St. Francis, 5-11, 175, sr.; Zalen Harris, Fremont Ross, 5-8, 160, jr. Backs- Jayce Frymire, Fremont Ross, 5-11, 150, jr.; Landon Gates, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne, 6-0, 170, sr.; Owen Shanahan, Fremont Ross, 5-9, 150, sr. Punter- Ray Mullings, Toledo Bowsher, 5-11, 216, sr.

Honorable mention: Grant Mies, Fremont Ross; Blake Schoch, Fremont Ross; Rhien Hottinger, Fremont Ross; Greg Ptaszynski, Holland Springfield; Kaden Hampton, Lima Senior; I'Rell Farrow, Lima Senior; Jon Tummel, Lima Senior; Alex Waithe, Lima Senior; J'Sean Hicks, Lima Senior; Tavion James, Lima Senior; Jalen Jones, Lima Senior; Jackson Veler, Oregon Clay; Connor Cody, Sylvania Northview; Keegan McClain, Sylvania Northview; Avery Offenburt, Sylvania Southview; Jace Rowland, Sylvania Southview; Scott Hearn, Sylvania Southview; Zack Carter, Sylvania Southview; Will Mayzies, Sylvania Southview; Jordan Singer, Toledo Bowsher; Gabe Lightner, Toledo Bowsher; Zakir Smith, Toledo Bowsher; Sam Malenfant, Toledo St. Francis; Ricky Grover, Toledo Waite; Maddox Barrow, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne; Cassius Krueger, Whitehouse Anthony Wayne.

DIVISION III

First team

Offense

Ends- Jaylen Watson, Toledo Central Catholic, 6-0, 180, sr.; Daryl

Barnett, Toledo Scott, 6-2, 189, sr.; Jack Koerper, Tiffin Columbian, 5-11, 170, sr.; Amarr Davis, Mansfield Senior, 6-0, 175, sr. Linemen- Marc Nave, Toledo Central Catholic, 6-4, 310, sr.; Elijah Williams, Toledo Central Catholic, 6-3, 280, sr.; Kaden Murlin, Celina, 6-1, 255, sr.; Ethan Reynolds, Tiffin Columbian, 6-2, 267, jr.; Caden Allman, Defiance, 5-9, 195, sr.; Ahmaan Thomas, Mansfield Senior, 6-4, 290, sr. Backs- Marquen Braswell, Toledo Central Catholic, 6-0, 205, sr.; Jace Knous, Wapakoneta, 5-11, 210, sr.; Braylon Gabes, Celina, 6-1, 185, sr.; Damien Brockington, Tiffin Columbian, 5-10, 174, sr. Quarterbacks- Brayden Roggow, Tiffin Columbian, 6-4, 202, sr.; Caleb Moyer, Wapakoneta, 6-2, 185, so.; Bodpegn Miller, Ontario, 6-4, 180, jr. Kicker- Trey Booker, Ontario, 6-0, 185, sr.

Defense

Linemen- Blake Hershey, Clyde, 6-0, 218, sr.; Michael Cannings, Toledo Central Catholic, 6-2, 280, sr.; Dalton Chilcoat, Celina, 6-2, 250, jr.; Grason Bias, Ontario, 6-3, 225, sr.; Kaden Ware, Wapakoneta, 6-2, 190, sr. Linebackers- Zander Johnson, Sandusky, 6-2, 200, sr.; Davonte Wright-Ward, Toledo Central Catholic, 6-1, 225, sr.; Tucker Ackley, Celina, 5-8, 180, sr.; Joey Robinson, Defiance, 5-8, 165, jr.; Maurice Bradley II, Mansfield Senior, 6-4, 230, jr.; Joey Truesdale, Wapakoneta, 6-0, 220, sr. Backs- Grant Jolly, Wapakoneta, 6-0, 165, jr.; Marvon Greenlee, Toledo Central Catholic, 5-9, 160, sr.; Garret Rodenberger, Defiance, 6-4, 190, sr.; Quinton Frankhouse, Ontario, 6-0, 175, sr. Punter- Quinten Debolt, Mansfield Senior, 5-10, 160, sr. Co-offensive players of the Year- Marquen Braswell, Toledo Central Catholic; Damien Brockington, Tiffin Columbian. Co-defensive players of the Year- Maurice Bradley II, Mansfield Senior; Michael Cannings, Toledo Central Catholic. Lineman of the year- Marc Nave, Toledo Central Catholic. Coaches of the year- Aaron Eckert, Ontario; Greg Dempsey, Toledo Central Catholic.

See NW DISTRICT | 19E

2023 ALL-NORTHWEST CENTRAL CONFERENCE TEAMS

First Team Offense

QB — Drew Breitigam (Waynesfield-Goshen)
RB — Alex Sanders (Upper Scioto Valley)
RB — Quinten Harrison (Elgin)
RB — Carter Curtis (Hardin Northern)
End — Dalton Jordan (Waynesfield-Goshen)
End — Xander Wilson (Hardin Northern)
TE — Bodi Hipsher (Hardin Northern)
C — Jacob Brown (Elgin)
G — Drew Cook (Waynesfield-Goshen)
G — Mykal Ellerbrock (Upper Scioto Valley)
T — Mason Thompson (Upper Scioto Valley)
T — Clay Rager (Hardin Northern)
K — Nolan Hopson (Hardin Northern)

First Team Defense

DL — Nels VanGundy (Elgin)
DL — Bodi Hipsher (Hardin Northern)
DL — Drew Cook (Waynesfield-Goshen)
DL — Layden Porter (Waynesfield-Goshen)
LB — Grant Breitigam (Waynesfield-Goshen)
LB — Landon Shepard (Elgin)
LB — Alex Sanders (Upper Scioto Valley)
LB — Kaden Guinn (Hardin Northern)
DB — Dalton Jordan (Waynesfield-Goshen)
DB — Drew Breitigam (Waynesfield-Goshen)
DB — Maddox Underwood (Upper Scioto Valley)
DB — Xander Wilson (Hardin Northern)
P — Xander Wilson (Hardin Northern)

Second Team Offense

QB — Brayden Townsend (Ridgedale)
RB — Mason Howard (Ridgedale)
RB — Dakota Peckham (Cory-Rawson)
RB — Maddox Underwood (Upper Scioto Valley)
End — Nathan Thiel (Ridgedale)
End — Jason Thomas (Perry)
TE — Carson Barnes (Waynesfield-Goshen)
C — Kam Frank Hardin Northern
T — Braylon Ardner (Perry)
T — Landon Shepard (Elgin)
G — Bo Bame (Hardin Northern)
G — Nels VanGundy (Elgin)
K — Lane Steinke (Waynesfield-Goshen)

Second Team Defense

DL — Braylon Ardner (Perry)
DL — Beau Sanders (Upper Scioto Valley)
DL — Caleb Atha (Elgin)
DL — Brayden Townsend (Ridgedale)
LB — Mason Thompson (Upper Scioto Valley)
LB — Quinten Harrison (Elgin)
LB — Nathan Thiel (Ridgedale)
LB — Troy Spencer (Waynesfield-Goshen)
DB — Nash Lust (Elgin)
DB — Connor Scott (Upper Scioto Valley)
DB — JJ Slaughterbeck (Ridgedale)
DB — Kimari Glenn (Perry)
P — Jay Carter (Waynesfield-Goshen)

Honorable Mentions

Blake Bohem (Cory-Rawson)
Hunter Niese (Cory-Rawson)
Lane Banner (Cory-Rawson)
Brett Cheney (Crestline)
Parker Bowman (Crestline)
Ky Taylor (Crestline)
Russell Sherman (Elgin)
Kaiden Luikart (Elgin)
Stephen Castillo-Carey (Elgin)
Justin Reffitt (Hardin Northern)
Sean Kuhlman (Hardin Northern)
Rowan Frater (Hardin Northern)
Lucas Long (North Baltimore)
Rowan Tackett-Spangenberg (North Baltimore)
Brody Walter (North Baltimore)
Kadin Jones (Perry)
Isaiah McFadden (Perry)
Connor Reed (Perry)
Landon Murphy (Ridgedale)
Evan Ricketts (Ridgedale)
Brody Fultz (Ridgedale)
Clayton Patterson (Ridgemont)
Jevin Henderson (Ridgemont)
Patrick Stacklin (Ridgemont)
Drew Sanders (Upper Scioto Valley)
Ryan Roberts (Upper Scioto Valley)
Doug May (Upper Scioto Valley)
Jace Kaufman (Waynesfield-Goshen)
David Born (Waynesfield-Goshen)
Jayce Turner (Waynesfield-Goshen)

Harting has Crestview ready to contend

By Chris Howell
chowell@limanews.com

CONVOY — Last fall, Cole Harting was entering his first season as a head coach.

Crestview was coming off a down year at 4-6, missed the playoffs and lost Carson Hunter, its three-sport athlete and starting quarterback, to graduation.

For Harting, last season was about just trying to stay on top of things in his new role. He had a new system to implement with a new staff around him and a new group of players to become familiar with.

The Knights responded to their new coach by going 7-5, including a 5-1 start, and they won a playoff game 42-14 over second-seeded Tiffin Calvert.

This season, the next step is to sustain that success in a community with high expectations, something that Harting says always comes back to the kids in the program.

“It all comes back to them,” he said. “From last year to this year, our kids have worked really hard. We graduated a group that’s hard to replace, but these kids are the secret to the success. If they work hard, they’ll always give themselves a chance to win.”

Crestview lost 13 seniors to graduation, a group that included its top two receivers Beau Eggleston (51 catches, 639 yards, 5 touchdowns) and Kellin Putman (27 catches, 410 yards, 3 touchdowns), its second-leading rusher Jaret Harting (60 carries, 453 yards, 5 touchdowns) and its defensive leader Isaac Kline (80 tackles, 2 sacks, 2 interceptions).

Offensively they’re still in good shape, however, with the return of starting quarterback Bryson Penix, running back Braxton Leeth and wide receiver Wren Sheets.

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Cole Harting (second season)

Division: VI

Last year’s record: 7-5, 4-3 NWC

Ticket information: crestviewknights.com/athletics/21-22_opponent_ticket_info

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Bryson Penix (Sr., QB/LB), Wren Sheets (Sr., WR/DE), Isaiah Barton (Sr., WR/DB), Zayden Martin (Sr., RB/LB), Ayden Martin (Sr., TE/LB), Aiden Adams (Sr., OL/DL), Ryden Cereghin (Sr., OL/DL), Liam Putman (Jr., TE/DE), Braxtyn Coutts (Jr., WR/DB), Braxton Leeth (Jr., RB/DB), Hayden Perrott (Jr., WR/DB), Ethan Lugabihl (Sr., LB)

Top newcomers: Denver McDougall (So., OL/DL), Kale Lichtensteiger (So., OL/LB), Will Sheets (So., OL/DE), Kane Roberts (Sr., OL/DL), Cash Hammons (Fr., WR/DB)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

- 8/23 — Parkway
- 8/30 — McComb
- 9/6 — Wayne Trace
- 9/13 — at Fort Loramie
- 9/20 — Allen East
- 9/27 — at Delphos Jefferson
- 10/4 — Bluffton
- 10/11 — Columbus Grove
- 10/18 — at Spencerville
- 10/25 — at LCC

In his first season as the full-time starter, Penix threw for 1,965 yards and 14 touchdowns and ran for 173 yards and four touchdowns.

He constantly tested the secondaries by throwing the ball downfield, something that paid off many times but also resulted in a league-high 13 interceptions.

After one year in the system, Harting believes those numbers will even out.

“My offense has always been centered around the quarterback, so to come in last year and not have any of that experience and play the way he did was phenomenal,” Harting said of his senior signal-caller. “After being in the system for a year with an entire offseason to prepare, that experience will be huge for him. Knowing that, I think the turnovers will go way down and the

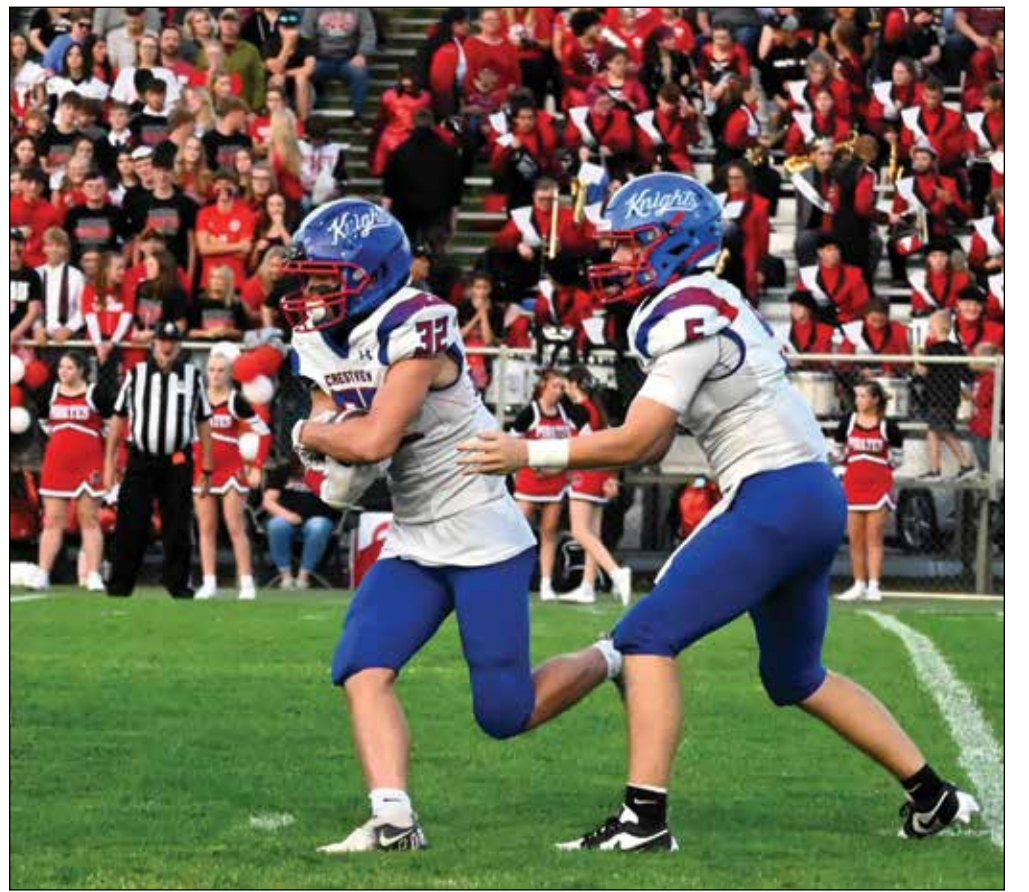
production is going to go up even higher.”

Penix, who was hesitant to play quarterback when Harting was first hired, earned an honorable mention in the Northwest Conference last year.

“He was more of a line-backer when I got here, and coach (Jake) Harmon (defensive coordinator) has made the comment that he’s probably one of the best he’s ever had,” Harting said. “Now he’s fully embraced the role as quarterback, and that’s huge. It’s a position that you have to want if you’re going to excel at it, and now he’s taken the next step and doing an incredible job.”

Leeth returns in the backfield after a sophomore season where he ran for 1,240 yards and 19 touchdowns.

He was set to split time with Jaret Harting last season, but when Harting



Jessica Trinko | The Lima News

Crestview quarterback Bryson Penix and running back Braxton Leeth both return to the Knights following NWC honorable mentions in 2023.

went down with a leg injury, Leeth took the job and ran with it.

“He’s definitely one of the top running backs in the league,” coach Harting said. “He’s a kid that works so hard on his exact role. He’ll come out with his dad to the field and do running back drills in the offseason even when it’s snowing out. I don’t know if I’ve ever seen a kid that dedicated to that specific position in all the years I’ve coached.”

Sheets (402 yards, 4 touchdowns) projects to lead a group of wide receivers that also include Isaiah Barton, Hayden Perrott, Liam Putman and Braxtyn Coutts, among others.

On the line, Aiden Adams and Ryden Cereghin return, while Denver McDougall, Kale Lichtensteiger, Will Sheets and Kane Roberts are some new names in the mix.

When asked about the

defense, Harting said the Knights return nine starters, and plenty of players will play two-way roles, starting with Sheets, Putman, Adams, Coutts and Zayden Martin, who finished second on the team in tackles last season.

He also credited defensive coordinator Jake Harmon for the way he prepares his unit.

“He does a really good job of developing our guys on that side of the ball,” Harting said of Harmon. “We return two defensive ends in Liam Putman and Wren Sheets. We need to fill some spots in the interior, but we definitely have some guys that can step up and make those plays.”

The Knights open the season with three straight home games against Parkway, McComb and Wayne Trace. After that, they hit the road to face Fort Loramie, one of two new team in the con-

ference this year along with Lima Central Catholic.

Crestview visits LCC in week 10. The two teams have met in three of the last four years, and the T-Birds are 3-0 in those matchups. This time they’ll face off as conference rivals instead of on a playoff collision course.

Adding LCC and Fort Loramie is something Harting sees as a benefit to the Northwest Conference.

“They’re two really good programs, and the opportunity to play them just ups the competition for everyone,” he said. “Really, there are no weeks off and I’m excited to compete against them.”

The Knights play six home games in 2024. They have an important two-game stretch against Bluffton and Columbus Grove, the conference’s top two teams last season, in weeks seven and eight.

NW District

From page 18E

Second team

Offense

Ends- Marcellus Land, Toledo Rogers, 6-0, 185, jr.; Bryce Roggow, Tiffin Columbian, 6-4, 188, sr.; Brayden Fogle, Lexington, 6-4, 215, so.; Dylan Floyd, Ontario, 6-0, 185, sr.
Linemen- Donte Waddington-Jones, Sandusky, 6-3, 280, jr.; Kendrick Bankston, Toledo Central Catholic, 5-11, 260, sr.; Tyrell Green, Toledo Central Catholic, 6-5, 325, sr.; Brayden Robinson, Ontario, 6-1, 240, sr.; Matt Sheets, Lexington, 6-6, 250, sr.; Ryan Price, Wapakoneta, 6-3, 220, sr.
Backs- Anthony Wilder, Defiance, 5-10, 175, jr.; Cayden Spotts, Ashland, 5-10, 205, sr.
Quarterbacks- Brez Zipfel, Defiance, 6-2, 180, jr.; Duke Reese, Mansfield Senior, 6-4, 205, sr.
Kickers- Zach Greber, Celina, 5-9, 155, sr.; Kyle Beach, Wapakoneta, 5-7, 145, sr.

Defense

Linemen- Keishon Seitz, Tiffin Columbian, 5-10, 172, sr.; Ronald Collins, Toledo Central Catholic, 5-10, 250, sr.; Symirr Phillips, Mansfield Senior, 6-1, 240, jr.; Adean Nicol, Lexington, 6-2, 260, sr.; Parker Crim, Elida, 6-3, 235, so.
Linebackers- Demecus Beach, Toledo Scott, 5-9, 195, jr.; AJ Hickman, Tiffin Columbian, 5-9, 167, sr.; Chase Studer, Ontario, 5-10, 190, sr.; Camden Boozer, Lexington, 6-0, 185, jr.; David Etzkorn, Elida, 5-11, 190, sr.; Reece Schnarre, Wapakoneta, 5-11, 185, sr.
Backs- Jayden Barnes, Toledo Central Catholic, 6-1, 180, sr.; Caleb Gabes, Celina, 6-1, 175, sr.; Antonio Lopez, Defiance, 5-10, 150, sr.; Tyler Sauder, Ashland, 6-0, 160, jr.

Honorable mention:

Tyler Doeden-Kiessling, Defiance; Colby Daniel, Clyde; Clark Norman, Clyde; Kam Shortridge, Clyde; Ben Rothhaar, Norwalk; Tommy Vanderpool, Norwalk; Amir Aaron, Sandusky; Jamarion Alexander, Sandusky; Jose Aguilar, Sandusky; James Fox, Sandusky; Correon Martin, Sandusky; Aa’zoriyon Bonner, Sandusky; Ja’ceous Shannon, Bowling Green; Curtis Strode, Toledo Central Catholic; Victor Singleton, Toledo Central Catholic; Dayvion Sanders, Toledo Rogers; Gilvarion Smith, Toledo Rogers; LeBron Jones, Toledo Rogers; Carmel Smith, jr., Toledo Scott; Linwood Alison, Toledo Scott; Brady Gooding, Tiffin Columbian, Taleb Al-Zakwani, Tiffin Columbian, Max Fortney, Tiffin Columbian; Brogan Castillo, Defiance; Joe Caudill, Lexington; Nathan Bernhard, Ashland; Landon Foltz, Ontario; Ryder Hendley, Ontario; Landon Sowards, Ontario; Craig Powers, Ontario; Cole Dille, Ontario; Ja’Ontay O’Bryant, Mansfield Senior; Jamier Petty, Mansfield Senior; Jah’mere Dotson, Mansfield Senior; Jaden Jones, Mansfield Senior; Mason Green, Lexington; Seven Allen, Lexington; Markale Martin, Lexington; Will Kepple, Mansfield Madison; Cameron Kuhn, Mansfield Madison; Grayson Sasis, Mansfield Madison; Josh Pancake, Ashland; Joe Isenhardt, Ashland; Michael Franz, Ashland.

DIVISION IV

First team

Offense

Ends- Braylon Collier, Sandusky Perkins, 6-2, 170, jr.; Issaiah Ramsey, Shelby, 6-3, 180, sr.; Tyson Rodriguez, Wauseon, 5-11, 170, sr.
Linemen- Haiden Bollini, Sandusky Perkins, 6-1, 215, jr.; Eli Schwemley, Shelby, 5-10, 225, sr.; Luke Hardy, Napoleon, 6-0, 265, sr.; Holden Hunter, Galion, 6-3, 302, sr.; Camden Rothe, St.

Marys Memorial, 5-11, 190, jr.
Backs- Isaac Bunts, Sandusky Perkins, 5-9, 195, jr.; Sam Herold, Bryan, 5-11, 230, sr.; Gabe Ivy, Galion, 5-9, 150, sr.
Quarterbacks- Logan Lesch, Sandusky Perkins, 6-1, 195, sr.; Brayden DeVito, Shelby, 5-11, 165, so.; Kaden Holman, Upper Sandusky, 6-3, 195, sr.
Kicker- Noah Normington-Slay, Sandusky Perkins, 6-5, 195, sr.

Defense

Linemen- Reagan Kaufman, Sandusky Perkins, 6-0, 190, jr.; Henry Eggers, Napoleon, 6-1, 205, sr.; Linkon Tyrrell, Galion, 6-3, 195, sr.; Logan Compton, St. Marys Memorial, 6-0, 235, sr.
Linebackers- Mike Young, Sandusky Perkins, 6-2, 190, jr.; Austin Kovar, Wauseon, 6-1, 205, sr.; Carson Frankhouse, Galion, 5-10, 190, sr.
Backs- Weston Sturzingar, Sandusky Perkins, 6-2, 175, jr.; Trey Rubinstein, Napoleon, 6-3, 185, jr.; Lance Miller, Fostoria, 5-10, 185, so.
Punter- Landon Campbell, Galion, 6-1, 210, sr.
Co-offensive players of the year- Logan Lesch, Sandusky Perkins; Brayden DeVito, Shelby.
Co-defensive players of the year- Trey Rubenstein, Napoleon; Linkon Tyrrell, Galion.
Co-linemen of the year- Haiden Bollini, Sandusky Perkins; Holden Hunter, Galion.
Coach of the year- Bo Frye, St. Marys Memorial.

Second team

Offense

Ends- Ethan Hill, Upper Sandusky, 5-8, 135, sr.; Dylan Burger, Bellevue, 6-1, 180, sr.; Connor Campbell, Van Wert, 6-2, 180, sr.
Linemen- Eli Sanchez, Sandusky Perkins, 6-4, 270, so.; Landen Thourot, Wauseon, 6-1, 180, sr.; Carson McKenzie, Bellevue, 6-1, 220, sr.; Trent Kubach, Bellevue, 6-3, 300, jr.; Carson Sturwald, St.

Marys Memorial, 6-2, 275, sr.
Backs- Skyler Winters Shelby, 5-10, 200, sr.; Colton Mabry, St. Marys Memorial, 5-10, 210, jr.
Quarterbacks- Jase Kepler, Bryan, 6-1, 186, sr.; Brylen Parker, Van Wert, 6-0, 200, sr.
Kicker- Casey Lantz, Shelby, 6-4, 160, sr.

Defense

Linemen- Kasper Marten, Shelby, 6-2, 300, sr.; Ian Martin, Wauseon, 6-0, 188, sr.; Haydn Sartor, Bellevue, 6-4, 190, sr.; Hunter Mabry, St. Marys Memorial, 6-2, 205, sr.
Linebackers- Miles Swisher, Shelby, 5-9, 180, sr.; George Eggers, Napoleon, 6-1, 194, so.; Ethan Lewis, Upper Sandusky, 5-10, 175, so.
Backs- Kevin Perry, St. Marys Memorial, 6-0, 195, sr.; Joey Diederich, Sandusky Perkins, 6-0, 175, jr.
Punter- Owen Espinoza, Napoleon, 6-0, 170, jr.

Honorable mention:

Trey Parsons, Wauseon; Vinny Strohl, Sandusky Perkins; Braxden Martin, Sandusky Perkins; Kaiden Nixon, Sandusky Perkins; Collin Angney, Vermilion; Ashton Martin, Bellevue; Nic, Eyster, Shelby; Xadrin Ream, Shelby; Issiah Beck, Shelby; Mason Vent, Shelby; Karsen Homan, Shelby; Jay Jackson, Bellville Clear Fork; Evan Tahmalwash, Bellville Clear Fork; Kasey Swank, Bellville Clear Fork; Devin Dietrich, Napoleon; Logan Patterson, Wauseon; Alex Griffith, Galion; Hunter Miniard, Galion; Jacob Chambers, Galion; Gavin Miller, Fostoria; Machi Johnson, Fostoria; Gavin Frey, Upper Sandusky; Ethan Lewis, Upper Sandusky; Mikey Hale, Bath; Quintin Collins, Bath; Korbin Johnston, Kenton; Grady Klemman Beazley, Kenton; Devon Story, Van Wert; Gage Stemen, Van Wert.

DIVISION V

First team

Offense

Athlete- Jack Hurst, Archbold, 5-11, 205, sr.
Tight end- Blake Simon, Milan Edison, 5-10, 175, sr.
Ends- Jaqui Hayward, Oak Harbor, 5-10, 170, sr.; Cam Robinson, Wildard, 6-1, 180, sr.; Beau Harkelroad, Huron, 5-11, 160, sr.; AJ Harlamert, Coldwater, 5-10, 160, sr.; Seth Elchert, Findlay Liberty-Benton, 6-3, 195, so.
Linemen- Scott Smith, Oak Harbor, 5-9, 215, sr.; Landon Bockelmer, Liberty Center, 6-3, 265, sr.; Carson Smith, Milan Edison, 5-9, 195, sr.; Caleb Gittus, Genoa Area, 6-4, 250, sr.; Ian Sibbersen, Pemberville Eastwood, 6-0, 260, sr.; Mason Siegel, Archbold, 6-0, 245, sr.
Backs- Colton Kruse, Liberty Center, 6-0, 185, sr.; Caiden Maize, Pemberville Eastwood, 5-10, 165, sr.; Aidan Antry, Genoa Area, 6-0, 180, sr.
Quarterbacks- Baylen Blockberger, Coldwater, 6-1, 165, jr.; Aiden Brunkhorst, Genoa Area, 6-3, 190, sr.; Mason Modd, Findlay Liberty-Benton, 5-11, 175, sr.
Kickers- Cameron Manner, Huron, 6-0, 160, jr.; Noah Harr, Pemberville Eastwood, 6-2, 180, sr.

Defense

Linemen- Jacob Ridener, Oak Harbor, 6-0, 210, jr.; Wyatt Ripke, Archbold, 6-5, 248, sr.; Paul Lautzenheiser, Pemberville Eastwood, 6-2, 195, jr.; Jake Elchert, Findlay Liberty-Benton, 6-1, 190, sr.
Linebackers- Cody Depweg, Coldwater, 6-2, 220, jr.; Cy Finnen, Milan Edison, 6-10, 185, jr.; Donni Hartley, Huron, 6-3, 220, sr.; Denver Stewart, Genoa Area, 6-2, 185, Sr.; Brady Birkmeier, Findlay Liberty-Benton, 6-2, 185, sr.; Trenton Kruse, Liberty Center, 6-0, 185, sr.



Richard Parrish | The Lima News

Perry's Kimari Glenn runs against a pair of Hardin Northern defenders during a game last season. The speedy Glenn is back as a wingback for the Commodores, who will switch to a double-wing pistol formation on offense.

Perry brings new offensive look into 2024

By David Trinko
dtrinko@limanews.com

PERRY TOWNSHIP — Perry coach Seth Evans grinned a bit as he described the Commodores' offense this year. "It's still spread-ish," the fourth-year head coach said.

The Commodores will be running a double-wing pistol formation, which lines the wide receivers up just behind and outside the tight ends. The quarterback will stay lined up back away from the center, with a running back still in the backfield. It's reminiscent of a wishbone or Wing-T offense, except from the shotgun formation.

"It looks really like a little flex bone," Evans said. "You know, we have a ton of speed. Kimari Glenn just came off a fantastic track season where he went to state in all four of his events, so we have speed there at wing. Boss Horrison is playing the other wing. There's a lot of speed there, and Boss is one of the most patient runners that I've ever coached. It looks like he's slowing down, and then he's just waiting for his blocks to set up." Isaiah McFadden

remains the primary running back for the Commodores, who improved from 1-9 in 2022 to 3-7 last year. Hunter Scott is back at quarterback for Perry, which has 18 returning letterwinners and 15 seniors on this year's squad, including Glenn, Horrison, McFadden and Scott.

"They're working out the kinks but like what they're seeing," Evans said.

"It's more timing with your motions, and then into your traps, your fakes and your play-actions," Evans said. "That's really the hardest part, getting the timing of the offense just right."

It opens up the possibilities, as any of those players could be running the ball. They've been unselfish, Evans said.

"I don't think they care, honestly, who gets the ball," Evans said. "I think they are selfless. I think they just would rather win, even if it means they don't get the ball. They'd rather win than carry the ball."

The Commodores won't abandon their passing game, one of their distinguishing characteristics in recent years. They'll still aim to evenly split their

running and passing plays, although Evans admitted it could skew 60% run, 40% pass.

While diversity is still a goal on offense, the primary focus on defense remains stopping the run. Most of the teams in the Northwest Central Conference prefer to grind it out. Perry will counter with a 5-3 defensive scheme.

Wyatt Taviano, a sophomore, has stepped into the shoes of several quality linebackers Perry's had in recent years.

"He's a little bit more of a traditional linebacker, as far as he can read a guard, and he's very smart defensively," Evans said. He can make some plays."

He's joined in the linebacking corps by Diego Williams, an outside linebacker who "just clicks."

"He's really kind of come on strong and can read a defense now," Evans said.

There's also experience up front, with Noah Cox back for his fourth year as a starter, this time at nose guard. He's part of a strong defensive line that includes fellow seniors Caiden Mort and Connor Reed.

The Commodores have reasons to be excited

about the year. They're better conditioning than in recent years, and they're well-disciplined, Evans said. The large group of 15 seniors has spent its entire high school time with Evans and knows what the coach expects.

"Those guys were freshmen at the time I started as head coach, so I'll always count these guys as my guys now," Evans said. "They've really been the backbone and the cornerstone of what we're trying to change here. It hadn't been easy for them. They had to buy into what I was saying, but they did it this year."

It's been evident in the offseason commitment. The Champions Club, which rewards commitment to working out in the weight room in the offseason, saw its membership grow from two last year to eight this year. While there aren't a lot of vocal leaders on the team, there are plenty of upperclassmen who lead by example.

"We're building a program here, and these seniors were a huge part of helping build that up," Evans said.

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Seth Evans (fourth season, 11-29)

Division: VI

Last year's record: 3-7

Tickets: Available at the venue

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Brodin Eickholt (Jr., WR/LB), Connor Patrick (Sr.), Hunter Scott (Sr., QB), Eric Williams (Soph.), Boss Horrison (Sr., WB/DB), Preston Evans (Sr.), Wyatt Taviano (Soph., LB), Isiah McFadden (Sr., WR/LB), Kimari Glenn (Sr., WB/DB), Conner Lynch (Sr., K), Tese Watkins (Sr.), Noah Cox (Sr.), Diego Williams (Sr., OL/LB), Connor Reed (Sr., OL/DL), Gage Morlock (Sr.), Aiden Hale (Sr.), Jacob Magness (Sr.), Caiden Mort (Sr.)

Top newcomers: Colten Scott (Fr., WR), J'Quann Glenn (Soph.), Jaiden Luster (Fr.), Bentley Gibson (Fr.)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 — Dixie

8/30 — at Ridgemoor

9/6 — North Central

9/13 — at Upper Scioto Valley

9/20 — at Hardin Northern

9/27 — North Baltimore

10/4 — at Cory-Rawson

10/11 — Waynesfield-Goshen

10/18 — Elgin

10/25 — at Ridgedale

They know they could be part of something bigger.

"I was always taught there's a difference between a team and a program," Evans said. "You know, anybody can have a team. Any team can show up and play on any given night. But in a program, you don't have to ask kids to come out and play. It's

expected. You don't have to ask kids to come into the weight room in the offseason. It's expected. ... Those are the things that are just known, and we're getting there. This senior class has really kind of helped push that."

Reach David Trinko at 567-242-0467 or on Twitter @Lima_Trinko.

2023 NORTHWEST CENTRAL CONFERENCE WEEKLY RESULTS

Week 1

Arcadia 34 Cory-Rawson 7
Buckeye Central 50 Crestline 0
Elgin 30 Cardington-Lincoln 0
Arlington 27 Hardin Northern 7
North Baltimore 48 Vanlue 14
Lehman Catholic 76 Perry 6
Ridgedale 20 Hilltop 6
Spencerville 28 Ridgemoor 12
Ada 24 Upper Scioto Valley 22
Waynesfield-Goshen 42 Mississinawa Valley 0

Week 2

Upper Scioto Valley 56 Cory-Rawson 14
Waynesfield-Goshen 63 Crestline 0
Elgin 32 Ridgedale 0
Hardin Northern 49 North Baltimore 21
Ridgemoor 62 Perry 28

Week 3

Hardin Northern 47 Cory-Rawson 26
Perry 26 Crestline 8
Elgin 59 North Baltimore 0
Ridgedale 32 Ridgemoor 16
Waynesfield-Goshen 35 Upper Scioto Valley 6

Week 4

North Baltimore 44 Cory-Rawson 35
Ridgedale 41 Crestline 0
Elgin 53 Ridgemoor 26
Waynesfield-Goshen 28 Hardin Northern 19
Upper Scioto Valley 50 Perry 0

Week 5

Elgin 50 Cory-Rawson 14
Ridgemoor 48 Crestline 6
Hardin Northern 42 Perry 12
Waynesfield-Goshen 49 North Baltimore 6

Upper Scioto Valley 50 Ridgedale 14

Week 6

Waynesfield-Goshen 55 Cory-Rawson 13
Elgin 59 Crestline 14
Hardin Northern 29 Ridgedale 0
Perry 14 North Baltimore 6
Upper Scioto Valley 40 Ridgemoor 0

Week 7

Perry 41 Cory-Rawson 24
Upper Scioto Valley 81 Crestline 0
Waynesfield-Goshen 57 Elgin 22
Hardin Northern 48 Ridgemoor 6
Ridgedale 37 North Baltimore 15

Week 8

Ridgedale 34 Cory-Rawson 7
Hardin Northern 64 Crestline 0
Upper Scioto Valley 32 Elgin 30

Waynesfield-Goshen 50 Perry 7
Ridgemoor 52 North Baltimore 24

Week 9

Ridgemoor 48 Cory-Rawson 14
North Baltimore 39 Crestline 0
Elgin 61 Perry 0
Upper Scioto Valley 24 Hardin Northern 13
Waynesfield-Goshen 53 Ridgedale 20

Week 10

Ridgedale 19 Perry 16
Upper Scioto Valley 52 North Baltimore 20
Waynesfield-Goshen 41 Ridgemoor 12
Cory-Rawson 33 Crestline 6

Opening round

Trimble 37 Elgin 6
McComb 53, Upper Scioto Valley 22
Edon 34 Waynesfield-Goshen 27

W-G ready for the challenge

By Mark Altstaetter
sports@limanews.com

WAYNESFIELD – There's a new head football coach this season at Waynesfield-Goshen.

However, the vibes around the program are anything but new.

Former Spencerville and Delphos Jefferson head football coach Chris Sommers takes over the W-G football program after Shane Wireman stepped down as the Tigers' head coach earlier this year. Wireman was then hired as Shawnee's head football coach.

After very successful stints at Delphos Jefferson and Spencerville as a head coach, Sommers stepped down from Spencerville in 2023 and accepted an assistant coach position at Fort Loramie, where he coached for one season.

However, once the opportunity at W-G presented itself, Sommers said he felt compelled to pursue it.

"I really wasn't looking (for a head coaching job)," Sommers said. "I was very blessed to be at Fort Loramie and learn under Coach Wells. ... He taught me a lot. We had been very close for many years. It was a great place to be."

"But when this (head coaching position at W-G) came open, I knew it was a good program. It felt right to me. When I came over to interview, it was easy for me to really see that it was. I felt like if I got the opportunity, this would be the place I would want to be. The interview committee was amazing. Then when I did get the job and started to work with the athletes I knew this was what I was looking for. So, I'm thrilled. I'm blessed beyond words. I didn't close the door (on coaching football). I love football. I just want to be involved. When this opportunity came up, I prayed about it."

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Chris Sommers (first season)

Division: VII

Last year's record: 10-1, 9-0 NWCC

Ticket information: wgschools.org/o/wga/page/online-ticket-purchasing

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Jace Kaufman (Sr., QB/DB), Grant Breitigam (Sr., RB/LB), Tyler Wireman (Sr., WR/DB), Bradey Miller (Jr., RB/LB), Reed Waitman (Jr., WR/DB), Carson Barnes (Sr., RB/LB), Gage Steinke (Sr., RB/LB), Troy Spencer (Sr., OL/LB), Brody Roberts (Jr., OL/DL), Layden Porter (Sr., OL/DL), Kolton Webb (Jr., OL/LB), Jayce Turner (Sr., OL/DL), Eli Zechman (So., OL/DL)

Top newcomers: Griffin Stiles (Fr., RB/DB), Braylen Clay (Fr., RB/LB), Trenton Faraglia (Fr., WR/LB), Lincoln Glaser (Fr., OL/LB), Cole Little (Fr., OL/DL), Levi Coy (Fr., OL/DL), Landon Kabara (Fr., OL/DL)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 – Mississinawa Valley

8/31 – at Crestline

9/6 – Upper Scioto Valley

9/13 – Hardin Northern

9/20 – at North Baltimore

9/27 – Cory-Rawson

10/4 – at Elgin

10/11 – at Perry

10/18 – Ridgedale

10/25 – at Ridgemont

Sommers has 13 letter winners returning from last season's 10-1 (9-0 North-West Central Conference) squad. Last season, W-G lost in the first round of the playoffs to Edon.

"We have 13 letter winners back – about six or seven guys on both sides of the ball," Sommers said. "Obviously, they had a lot of success here, and they've lost some really good players. However, we certainly have a number of good players coming back and we're really excited."

Sommers brings his trademark Wing-T offense to W-G. In previous campaigns, the Tigers employed a spread offense. Sommers said his new players have been very receptive to the new offense.

"We are all Wing-T," Sommers said. "We did a camp at St. Marys. Their coaches have always been fantastic. That really helped our guys to see what we want to do, and the way we want to do it so that was a

great camp for us. We hit the ground running this summer. We've seen good improvement each and every day. We're excited about it."

"But it (new offense) comes with guys changing positions. It really went well. I can't say enough about the players. That's what I appreciate so much. They just come in and work."

Sommers said that he feels good about his coaching staff at W-G.

"Bringing John (Edinger) with me (as an assistant) has really helped. He's been with me for many years. I was a head coach for 10 years total, and he was with me for maybe eight years. He retired for a couple of years, but I got him back. Brent Binkley was with me at Delphos Jefferson. He's on the staff so those guys are familiar with it (Wing-T). I also inherited some really great coaches. It's a great mix. I've always been blessed in that way."



Don Speck | The Lima News

Grant Breitigam of Waynesfield-Goshen is a player that coach Chris Sommers is excited about on both sides of the ball.

The Lord has always taken care of me by putting great people around me," he said.

Sommers is optimistic about his offensive unit.

"At running back, Grant Breitigam (Sr., 5-9, 170, RB/LB), who has been a standout defensive player, has shown us a lot at running back. We're really excited," Sommers said. "Carson Barnes (Sr., 6-0, 195, RB/LB) and Gage Steinke (Sr., 5-8, 145, RB/LB) are back. Both of these guys were receivers in the past. They have shown good speed and power. We're excited about the running back corps. We also return three of the five offensive linemen. That's been a huge positive so we like our guys up front."

The Tigers will look a little different this season on the defensive side of the ball.

"We'll be in a 3-5 (formation) up front. We felt like it was the best system here," Sommers said. "The guys have taken to it. They

enjoy it. So far we've seen a lot of good things from it. We really like our D-line. They're big and physical, and we like that. We're going to have to be in good shape to go both ways."

There is plenty of excitement flowing around the W-G camp this summer.

"I would say that it's pretty exciting. It's a good experience," Carson Barnes said. "I think it (Wing-T) will work pretty well. It will help us get our running game going. I think we'll be pretty good with the Wing-T."

Layden Porter (Sr., 5-8, 205), an offensive and defensive lineman, feels optimistic about the transition to the new offense.

"We're used to more pass-block material. However, since we're rolling with this new offense, I like the pace of it. ... It's definitely more fast-paced. Overall, I think we should have plenty of success with it," Porter said.

Added senior lineman

Troy Spencer (5-10, 185, OL/LB), "Now that we've changed our plays, we will run the ball more often. So, it's a little easier to learn the plays, and it's a lot simpler. I think we'll be pretty good at it."

Sommers realizes how successful the W-G football program has been over the past few years, and he's ready for the challenge. Wireman guided W-G to a 21-2 mark in two seasons, which included two undefeated NWCC championships.

"I think that's the expectation (win the NWCC and get into the playoffs) here, which I'm excited about."

"... That's where the bar is," Sommers said. "That's good. That's where you want the program to be, and the guys expect it. It's a hungry team. They came to the early-season workouts and really got after it. Coach Wireman did a really good job with this program. Now, I want to continue that and keep it going."



Jackelyn Johnson | The Lima News

Maddox Underwood is expected to be a playmaker on both sides of the ball for Upper Scioto Valley.

UPPER SCIOTO VALLEY TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Dustin Price (eighth season)

Division: VII

Last year's record: 8-3, 8-1 NWCC (second place)

Ticket information: usvschools.org/athletics.aspx

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Maddox Underwood (Sr.), Mason Thompson (Sr.), Ryan Roberts (Jr.), Andru Kindel (Jr.), Caiden Lowery (So.), Beau Sanders (So.), Nick Goodin (Sr.), Zack Goodin (Sr.), Mykal Ellerbrock (Sr.), Wyatt Hector (Sr.), Doug May (So.)

Top newcomers: McCain Underwood (So.), Toby Helton (So.)

Strengths: Athletic and versatile players

Need to work on: Individual jobs and trust in each other

Players to watch: Maddox Underwood (playmaker on both sides of the ball), Mason Thompson (big, athletic, smart player), Beau Sanders (aggressive, great physical attributes), Ryan Roberts (potential to have a breakthrough season)

Coach's analysis: "We expect to compete for a conference title and win two playoff games, which hasn't been done here. In order to do so, we have to take advantage of opportunities, play fast and aggressive on defense and create turnovers."

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/23 – Ada

8/30 – Cory-Rawson

9/6 – at Waynesfield-Goshen

9/13 – Perry

9/20 – Ridgedale

9/27 – at Ridgemont

10/4 – at Dayton Christian

10/11 – at Elgin

10/18 – at Hardin Northern

10/25 – North Baltimore



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Jessica Trinko | The Lima News

Pandora-Gilboa quarterback Cory Gerten scans the field during last year's game at Bluffton. Gerten returns as a junior signal-caller for the Rockets, who went 8-4 last year.

TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Matt Hershey (53-25, eighth season)

Division: VII

Last year's record: 8-4

Ticket information: <https://www.pgrockets.org/index.php/activities/athletics/hometown-ticketing>

Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Cory Gerten (Jr., QB), Andrew Miller (Sr., RB/LB), Ben Burkholder (Jr., RB/LB), Chase Meyer (Jr., WR/DB), Logan Moser (Sr., OL), Parker Gallaspie (Sr., OL/DL), Eli Cobb (Sr., DL), Anthony Gerschutz (Sr., DL), Lane Lee (Sr., WR/DB)

Top newcomers: Conner Gerten (Soph., OL/LB), Alex Tuschilling (So., OL/DL), Layton Cannode (Soph., WR/DB), Braydon Ferguson (So., WR/LB), Caleb Doty (So., OL/DL), Landon Siefker (Sr., OL/DL, Andrew Webster, Jr., WR/DB), Nolan Leatherman (Jr., WR/DB)

2024 schedule

(Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)

8/22 — at Columbus Grove

8/30 — Bluffton

9/6 — at Van Buren

9/13 — at Leipsic

9/20 — Arlington

9/27 — at Elmwood

10/4 — at Liberty-Benton

10/10 — Arcadia

10/18 — Ada

10/25 — Riverdale

Rockets look for offensive balance

By David Trinko
dtrinko@limanews.com

PANDORA — Pandora-Gilboa lived up to its mascot, the Rocket, last year, with 23 touchdowns and 2,421 yards through the air last season.

While the Rockets certainly will miss graduated star receivers Aidan Morris and Colin Harris, don't expect the Rockets to be grounded this year.

"I'd like to say we're going to be balanced," P-G coach Matt Hershey said. "Doesn't every coach want to say that? If you look back at it, in our games in the past, the big games that

we've won, we've had great balance."

Cory Gerten is back for his junior year at quarterback, and senior Andrew Miller returns as a senior running back after rushing for 1,139 yards and 12 touchdowns.

"Obviously, yeah, we did lose those two receivers who we were able to air it out to, so now I feel like teams are going to close the box a little bit more and focus on our running game," Miller said. "We do have some receivers coming up who are able to catch the ball and able to run routes. That will be a key to letting us spread

the field."

The Rockets have junior Chase Meyer, senior Lane Lee and sophomore Layton Cannode all available to catch the ball as receivers. Gerten said he feels like he has a good understanding of the offense after starting as a sophomore.

"I know the plays mostly, and I can help the other guys get to where they need to be," Gerten said. "It's a lot easier when you know the playbook."

As much as Pandora-Gilboa misses Morris and Harris on offense, they might be just as missed on defense. Lee and Meyer return to the defensive

backfield. Many players will start on both sides of the ball for the Rockets, who went 8-4 last season. Overall, they have 11 letter-winners back.

"Our biggest concerns are just depth," Hershey said. "It's finding guys when people are cramping up or when fatigue sets in because we are a Division VII school with 35 players. We're going to need more than our first 11."

It helps to have someone like Miller, an all-state honorable mention linebacker as a junior, returning. Still, there are questions, Hershey admitted.

"We've got to focus and

find some pass rushers on the outside," Hershey said, "somebody who can help out our young secondary and not give the opposing quarterbacks tons of time in the pocket."

Overall, Pandora-Gilboa hopes to remain competitive in the Blanchard Valley Conference. They'll have to get through an emotional start to the season, though, with rivalry games against Columbus Grove, Bluffton and Leipsic in three of the first four weeks of the year.

"We've got a gauntlet right of the gate with our rivals," Hershey said. "As far as the BVC goes, Liberty-Benton won it last year,

and I'd have to say they're the favorite to win it this year. We had them on the ropes last year, and we're hoping maybe this year we can deliver the knockout punch that gets us a championship."

The Rockets are upbeat for 2023, Gerten said, and ready to deliver some surprises.

"It's pretty fun," he said. "We have some upcoming people who will be good. We've got some newer players, so our opponents don't really know who we'll be when we start playing."

Reach David Trinko at 567-242-0467 or on Twitter @Lima_Trinko.

NW District

From page 19E

Backs- Mason Welsch, Coldwater, 6-2, 185, jr.; Marcus Medina, Milan Edison, 5-10, 175, sr.; Mike Lalonde, Oak Harbor, 5-9, 160, jr.; Chase Miller, Archbold, 6-0, 180, sr.; Landen Kruse, Liberty Center, 6-0, 16, sr.; Anthony Gomez, Northwood, 5-10, 160, jr. Punter- Max Walker, Liberty Center, 5-10, 185, Soph.

Co-Offensive players of the year- Jaqui Hayward, Oak Harbor; Mason Modd, Findlay Liberty-Benton.

Co-Defensive players of the year- Cody Depweg, Coldwater; Jacob Ridener, Oak Harbor.

Lineman of the year- Landon Bockelman, Liberty Center.

Coaches of the year- Scott Garlock, Findlay Liberty-Benton; Jim Hall, Milan Edison.

Second team Offense

Athlete- Zach Elchert, Findlay Liberty-Benton, 6-3, 195, Soph. Tight end- Kaiden Sanchez, Pemberville Eastwood, 5-10, 195, sr.

Ends- Grant Schroeder, Ottawa-Glandorf, 6-1, 185, sr.; Jack Simpson, Tontogany Otsego, 6-3, 200, sr.; Andre Lewis, Pemberville Eastwood, 5-10, 155, jr.; Braylen Harlamer, Coldwater, 5-10, 155, sr.

Linemen- Cale Wenning, Coldwater, 6-0, 260, sr.; Brady Jolliff, Findlay, Liberty-Benton, 6-1, 235, sr.; Garrett Lindsay, Oak Harbor, 5-10, 205, sr.; John Shinaver, Genoa Area, 6-0, 260, sr.; Seth Navarre, Liberty Center, 6-3, 235, sr.; Brian Burrows, Archbold, 5-8, 220, sr.

Backs- Dalton Witter, Oak Harbor, 6-0, 210, sr.; Lucas Dominique, Archbold, 5-11, 175, sr. Quarterbacks- Kadya Donnell, Pemberville Eastwood, 6-1, 180, jr.; Cade Brenner, Archbold, 6-2, 160, sr.

Kicker- Brodey Roth, Delta, 6-2, 170, jr.

Defense

Linemen- Carson Graalman, Genoa Area, 6-0, 220, sr.; David Oregon, Archbold, 6-4, 320, jr.; Zander Zeiter,

Liberty Center, 6-0, 215, jr. Linebackers- Alec Schroeder, Ottawa-Glandorf, 6-2, 208, Sr.; Andrew Badenhop, Pemberville Eastwood, 6-1, 180, sr.; Travis Bouyer, Oak Harbor, 5-11, 190, Soph.; Dagan Meyers, Port Clinton, 6-0, 195, sr.; Austin Maize, Pemberville Eastwood, 6-0, 175, sr.; Justin Ruple, Delta, 6-0, 160, sr. Backs- Anderson Roberts, Findlay Liberty-Benton, 6-0, 170, sr.; Alex Spencer, Genoa Area, 5-11, 170, jr.; Colton Woodward, Pemberville Eastwood, 5-10, 150, jr.; Cam Kahle, Liberty Center, 5-8, 155, jr.; Stephen Diller, Archbold, 6-1, 180, sr.

Honorable mention:

Troy Milligan, Coldwater; Will Barry, Coldwater; Andrew Jones, Coldwater; Jack Ebbing, Coldwater; Miles Pottkotter, Coldwater; Evan Hall, Oak Harbor; Garry Brooks, Oak Harbor; Kaleb Wood, Oak Harbor; Isaac Schulte, Oak Harbor; Dom Lindenberger, Genoa Area; Ethan Recker, Pemberville Eastwood; DayQuan Oliver, Pemberville Eastwood; Drew Luidhardt, Pemberville Eastwood; Devin Farley, Otsego; Montay Coleman, Northwood; Zaegan Byington, Northwood; Julien Chappell, Northwood; Jason St. Claire, Northwood; Cody Scroggins, Huron; Jackson McNulty, Huron; Andrew Delaney, Huron; Ayden Bartzen, Huron; Vinny Majoy, Huron; Ashton Perdue Huron; Ryan Fox, Willard; Isaac Robinson, Willard; Ian McClanahan, Willard; Paxton Flores, Willard; Zach Rang, Milan Edison; Luke Langhals, Milan Edison; Davin Wende, Milan Edison; Luke Blatnik, Milan Edison; Grayson Smith, Milan Edison; Colton Chambers, Liberty Center; Landon Griesinger, Delta; Josiah Gomez, Archbold; Javen Carpenter, Findlay Liberty-Benton; CJ Barbara, Findlay Liberty-Benton; Micah Oliver, Bloomdale Elmwood; Jimmie Palmer, Bloomdale Elmwood; Austin Haley, Ottawa-Glandorf.

DIVISION VI First team Offense

Athlete- Trevor Vogt, North Robinson Colonel Crawford, 6-1, 175, sr.

Ends- Reddick Pillarelli, Toledo Ottawa Hills, 5-11, 180, sr.; Taylor Young,

Attica Seneca East, 6-0, 180, jr.; James Rindfuss, Bucyrus Wynford, 5-11, 190, sr.; Julian Washington, Castalia Margaretta, 6-4, 165, so. Tight end- Jack Perozek, Toledo Ottawa Hills, 6-3, 215, sr.;

Linemen- Matt Allomong, Carey, 6-4, 290, sr.; Braxton Balog, Collins Western Reserve, 6-0, 210, sr.; Kylan Mayes, Columbus Grove, 6-1, 240, jr.; Jacob Granger, Bluffton, 6-4, 260, sr.; Jack Vicente, Toledo Ottawa Hills, 6-0, 260, sr.; Kalen Skidmore, Bucyrus Wynford, 6-1, 216, sr.; Lane Rike, North Robinson Colonel Crawford, 6-1, 200, sr.

Backs- Trenton Bazzara, Columbus Grove, 6-2, 175, Jr.; Connor Dawson, Collins Western Reserve, 6-0, 185, jr.; Rocco Pillarelli, Toledo Ottawa Hills, 5-7, 165, so.; Kaiden Blair, Bucyrus Wynford, 5-10, 180, sr.

Quarterback- Blake Foes, Attica Seneca East, 6-1, 200, sr.; Landon Best, Columbus Grove, 6-0, 145, so. Kicker- Kyle Basil, Bluffton, 6-2, 183, sr.; Brandon Leal, Kansas Lakota, 6-0, 165, jr.; Gage Bodey, Castalia Margaretta, 6-0, 172, sr.

Defense

Line- Nathan Brodman, Carey, 6-4, 225, sr.; Kyle Lathrop, Columbus Grove, 5-9, 180, sr.; Brody Sommers, Bluffton, 6-2, 205, jr.; Caleb Cunningham, Ashland Crestview, 6-5, 250, sr.; Payne DeGray, North Robinson Colonel Crawford, 6-4, 210, so. Linebackers- Landen Worcester, Bluffton, 5-11, 200, jr.; Conner Norden, Huron, 6-0, 175, sr.; Landon Auchmuty, Columbus Grove, 5-8, 185, sr.; Gavin Barker, Ashland Crestview, 6-3, 185, jr.; Grady Gustwiler, Defiance Tinora, 5-10, 175, sr.; Luke Gnepper, Toledo Ottawa Hills, 6-1, 235, sr.; Ryan McMichael, North Robinson Colonel Crawford, 6-1, 190, sr.; Kaine Smetzer, Castalia Margaretta, 5-10, 189, sr.

Backs- Austin Niederkohr, Carey, 6-1, 180, sr.; Zach Reynolds, Columbus Grove, 6-2, 175, sr.; Carson Kruse, Bluffton, 5-11, 173, jr.; Kayden Radzik, Defiance Tinora, 6-0, 175, sr.

Punter- Braxton Morton, North Robinson Colonel Crawford, 5-10, 165, sr. Offensive player of the year- Connor

Dawson, Collins Western Reserve. Co-Defensive players of the year- Nathan Brodman, Carey; Landen Worcester, Bluffton. Linemen of the year- Matt Allomong, Carey; Caleb Cunningham, Ashland Crestview; Kalen Skidmore, Bucyrus Wynford.

Coaches of the year- Jeff Richards, Bluffton; Andy Schafer, Columbus Grove; Cyle Skidmore, Bucyrus Wynford; Brandon Carter, Toledo Ottawa Hills.

Second team Offense

Athlete- Carter Smiley, Carey, 5-9, 150, sr. Ends- Braeden Jordan, Bluffton, 5-8, 180, sr.; Mason Thorla-Lopez, Van Buren, 5-10, 145, jr.; Tyson Ringler, Ashland Crestview, 6-1, 165, jr.; Riley Dunbar, Metamora Evergreen, 6-5, 195, sr.

Tight end- Brayden Roesti, Defiance Tinora, 6-3, 195, sr.; Hayden Dearth, Bluffton, 6-3, 200, sr. Linemen- Daniel Fredritz, Bluffton, 6-3, 250, sr.; Jack Woods, Paulding, 5-9, 210, sr.; Landen Newsome, Defiance Tinora, 6-1, 220, sr.; Drew Matz, Kansas Lakota, 6-2, 200, sr.; Don Hemmer, Attica Seneca East, 6-2, 275, sr.; Aden Spence, North Robinson Colonel Crawford, 5-11, 270, jr.

Backs- Ayden Reymier, Ashland Crestview, 5-10, 175, so.; Eli Steen, Carey, 6-0, 240, so.; Kobe Foor, Paulding, 5-10, 210, sr.; Micah Thomas, North Robinson Colonel Crawford, 5-10, 205, sr.

Quarterbacks- Garret Bogart, Bluffton, 6-0, 163, sr.; Liam Kuhn, Ashland Crestview, 6-2, 155, so.; William Zeekyk, Sherwood Fairview, 5-8, 150, so.

Kickers- Jacob Bishop, Defiance Tinora, 5-10, 130, jr.; Micah Walker, Toledo Ottawa Hills, 6-1, 180, jr.; Alex Mossing, Metamora Evergreen, 5-10, 160, fr.

Defense

Line- Graham Askins, Defiance Tinora, 5-10, 180, sr.; Dillon Shough-Germann, Paulding, 6-3, 245, sr.; Grant Richardson, Metamora Evergreen, 6-3, 205, sr.; Carter Radzik, Defiance

Tinora, 5-6, 260, fr.; Gabe Garlick, Kansas Lakota, 5-8, 170, sr.; Luke Hicks, Attica Seneca East, 6-4, 210, sr. Linebackers- Gavin Bogart, Bluffton, 6-0, 160, sr.; Alex Putnam, Carey, 6-4, 200, sr.; Karter Goon, Ashland Crestview, 6-1, 170, so.; Loukas Carter, Mount Blanchard Riverdale, 5-10, 175, jr.; Joey Guisinger, Defiance Tinora, 5-8, 180, sr.; Kaden Bruner, North Robinson Colonel Crawford, 6-1, 200, jr.; Evan Wright, Bucyrus Wynford, 5-11, 205, sr.

Backs- Carson Clum, Lafayette Allen East, 5-8, 140, sr.; Jackson Snyder, Toledo Ottawa Hills, 6-2, 180, jr.; CJ Biddle, Kansas Lakota, 5-8, 150, sr.; Ashton Warren, Bucyrus Wynford, 6-3, 173, sr.

Honorable mention:

Jonah Peter, Carey; Quinn Eachus, Bluffton; Cam Furr, Riverdale; Davin Harbor, Riverdale; Ethan Johnson, Columbus Grove; Landen Huston, Columbus Grove; Grant Eversole, Columbus Grove; Grayson Burgess, Ashland Crestview; Brice Perkins, Ashland Crestview;

Dylan Burge, Ashland Crestview; Mason Kinney, Collins Western Reserve; Rylee Supeck, Collins Western Reserve; Colton Robertson, Metamora Evergreen; David Taylor, Hicksville; Logan Green, Rockford Parkway; Devon Crouch, Rockford Parkway; Chase Dussel, Lakota, Micah Williams, Lakota, Isaac King, Lakota, Max Nordhaus, Lakota, Brett Martin, Seneca East, Jackson Gayheart, Seneca East, Nicholas Parks, Seneca East, Justin Reiter, Seneca East; Sawyer Cooper, Bucyrus; Blayne Barto, Bucyrus; Bryce Locker, Wynford; Kenneth Kotalik, Wynford; Connor McMichael, Colonel Crawford; Lucas Foy, Colonel Crawford; Brennen Reber, Colonel Crawford; Dalton Rohrbaugh, Castalia Margaretta; Dylan Gibson, Castalia Margaretta; Logan Windau, Castalia Margaretta; Kellen Moore, Castalia Margaretta; Jordan Luzader, Castalia Margaretta; Judah Keller, Castalia Margaretta; Kameron Lewis, Bucyrus; Tucker Antoine, Haviland Wayne Trace; Anthony Evans, Bucyrus Wynford.



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TEAM PROFILE

Coach: Joe Kirkendall (fifteenth season)
 Division: VII
 Last year's record: 8-3, 5-2 NWC
 Tickets: Available at the gate
 Returning 2023 varsity letter winners: Lyzaya Berg (OL), Jose Garcia (OL), Donovan Cunningham (OL), Colin Foreman (OT), Quinn Westhoven (RB/DE), Ty Lammers (WR/DB), Jayce Brecht (WR/LS), Colin Niese (RB/LB), Tommy Offenbacher (DB), Tavis Bejarano (CB), Grant Davis (DT), Gio Vallasana, Tyler Walther (OL/DT), Clark Schroeder (WR)
 Top newcomers: Kadin Schroeder, Leo Parker, Micah Ruiz, Marquise Williams, Avery Paris, Myles Camareno, Aaron Hazelton, Marc Kirkendall
2024 schedule
 (Kickoffs scheduled for 7 p.m.; subject to change)
 8/23 – Lake
 8/30 – at Van Buren
 9/6 – Elmwood
 9/13 – Pandora-Gilboa
 9/20 – at Arcadia
 9/26 – at Riverdale
 10/4 – McComb
 10/11 – Liberty-Benton
 10/18 – at Arlington
 10/25 – at Ada



Nate Reynolds | The Lima News

Ty Lammers, Leipsic's starting quarterback last season, will slide over to play wide receiver in 2024.

Experienced lines a strength for Leipsic

By **Jim Naveau**
 jnaveau@limanews.com

LEIPSIC – Maybe the most notable area of strength for Leipsic this season is having experienced players at almost every position on its offensive line.

That experience runs so deep that when the three leading ball carriers from last season's team (8-3 overall, 5-2 Northwest Conference) graduated, coach Joe Kirkendall moved honorable mention All-Ohio offensive tackle

Quinn Westhoven to the No. 1 running back position this season.

"We lost almost 95 percent of our rushing statistics from last season," Kirkendall said, looking back to last year when Estevan Carrillo and Quinn Schroeder, who were four-year starters, both rushed for more than 600 yards and Trent Siefker gained nearly 500 yards on the ground.

"Quinn Westhoven is the fastest guy on our team or the second-fastest. That will be an inter-

esting transition. Our other running back will be Colin Niese (who started at linebacker last season as a freshman). We'll use those two, rotate them and figure some things out," Kirkendall said.

Leipsic has four returning starters on its offensive line – tackles Lyzaya Berg and Colin Foreman, center Donovan Cunningham and guard Jose Garcia. The defensive line has three returning starters – Westhoven, Berg and Grant David.

"You have to go back to

2010, 2011 to see a team where we had this many guys coming back (on the offensive line). It's a calming thing. It does reduce a lot of anxiety. We ran the ball really, really well last year. We had some limitations throwing but our offense was still pretty effective and it was all through the run game. Those guys coming back is a calming feeling," Kirkendall said.

Freshman Marc Kirkendall will start at quarterback for the Vikings. Jayce Brecht, who had 16

catches a year ago and last season's starting quarterback, Tyler Lammers, will be the Vikings' top wide receivers.

Freshman slot receiver Aaron Hazelton also is expected to be among the top pass catchers.

"We have a lot of seniors. We have a lot of length. We have a freshman coming in who is going to start for us from Day 1 at the slot position, kind of a hybrid receiver/running back position. You can hit him with that quick, short

pass or you can run him off tackle. He's going to be well beyond what you'd expect from a freshman playing that position," Kirkendall said.

On defense, Lammers, Tommy Offenbacher and Tavis Bejarano are returning starters in the defensive backfield and Brecht is a returning starter at long snapper.

Leipsic will return to the Blanchard Valley Conference this season after playing in the Northwest Conference for the last three seasons.

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