

## UA, Westland to meet in battle of revamped teams

Thursday, August 23, 2007

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Before studying videotape from Westland's scrimmages this week, Upper Arlington High School football coach Mike Golden was not sure what to expect from the visiting Cougars in the opener Friday.



Upper Arlington's Brandon Von Voigt catches a pass in front of Watterson's Seth Willoughby during their scrimmage Aug. 11. The Golden Bears open Friday at home against Westland.

The Golden Bears played Westland twice last season, winning 41-35 in the opener and 28-21 in the first round of the Division I playoffs. But the Cougars, who qualified for the playoffs for the first time and finished 7-4 to post their first winning season since 1994, went through major changes during the offseason.

Not only did Westland lose 27 players to graduation, but it also has a new coach. Jeff Jones stepped down June 21 and was replaced by Brian Smith, a former assistant at DeSales.

"They have a whole new staff this year, so I don't know what direction they're going in," Golden said.

The biggest loss personnel-wise was quarterback Kasey Wendal, who made first-team all-state and was the district Offensive Player of the Year after rushing for 1,943 yards and 23 touchdowns on 278 carries and completing 118 of 213 passes for 1,571 yards and 17 touchdowns.

"They lost some great players, especially their quarterback," Golden said. "You don't replace a Kasey Wendal. He's a great quarterback."

Wendal's mobility and versatility gave opposing defenses fits. In the two games against the Bears last season, the Ashland University-signee totaled 285 yards rushing and 293 yards passing. He accounted for 244 on the Cougars' 251 total yards in the opener and 334 of their 364 total yards in the playoff contest.

"He was so special," Golden said. "He's such an X factor. I'll be interested to see how they recover (from losing Wendal)."

Expected to replace Wendal at quarterback is Jared South. Other key offensive players for the Cougars include tailback Andrew Moore, tailback and wide receiver DeMarcus Jackson and fullback Tyler Entingh, who was second on the team in rushing last year with 432 yards on 122 carries.

Westland has several new faces on its offensive line and, according to Smith, the lack of depth on the line is a concern.

Defensively, the Cougars will utilize a 3-4 scheme. Key players include Jackson at cornerback, Entingh and Chris Hamilton at linebacker and Matt Hoyt and Darion Williams on the line.

"It's going to be hard for any team getting a new coach and getting a new offense and a new defense," Cougars safety Mike Jarrell said. "I think we're on the right track. We're learning stuff. We're picking up as we go. It will take us a little while to get going. But once we get going, I think we can do something because we have some good players."

UA hopes to take advantage of the fact that Westland is in a transition period.

But with only three regular starters back from a year ago, the Bears are in a similar situation as the Cougars. And so from Golden's perspective, the opener represents an opportunity for his team to build its confidence.

"It's going to be a real big night for our kids," he said. "We'll see where we're at. ... It's very important to get our feet on the ground running."