

FOOTBALL

Bears confident despite new faces

Thursday, August 23, 2007

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The Upper Arlington High School football team will have a lot of new faces in its lineup, but that doesn't mean it doesn't have its sights set on winning the OCC-Buckeye Division championship and securing a Division I playoff berth.

The Golden Bears have undergone major changes from a personnel standpoint, as they lost 19 of their 22 regular starters from a year ago when they finished 10-2 overall -- the 12th season in the program's 82 years with at least 10 wins -- and went 4-1 in the OCC-Buckeye to place second to eventual Division I state champion Hilliard Davidson (5-0).

UA finished ahead of Dublin Coffman (3-2), Westerville North (2-3), Grove City (1-4) and Reynoldsburg (0-5).

UA defeated Westland 28-21 in the first round of the playoffs before losing to Davidson 17-0 in a regional semifinal. The Wildcats also handed the Bears their only regular-season loss 19-0.

Among the players lost to graduation were starters Robert Anderson (QB), Rob Blevins (SS/P), Dan Crawford (FB), Joey D'Andrea (LB), Trent Denyes (LB), Grant DeVilbiss (LB), Colin Hallarn (LB), Adam Kattoua (OL/DE), Andy Lombardi (DL), Clark Tanner (WR) and Mike Vaughn (OL/DE) as well as Kevin Schneider (K).

Anderson, a two-year starter, completed 78 of 173 passes for 1,267 yards and 10 touchdowns. Tanner was the team's leading receiver, catching 31 passes for 704 yards (22.7 yards per catch) and six touchdowns in 11 games. Crawford led the team in rushing with 651 yards on 117 carries (5.6 yards per carry). He missed the final five games with a broken left foot.



BY PAUL VERNON/THISWEEK

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.

D'Andrea and Kattoua were first-team all-district. Lombardi, who played most of the season with a torn ACL in his left knee, and Schneider, who made 11 of 17 field-goal attempts, were second-team all-district, and Blevins, Tanner and Vaughn were special mention all-district.

Blevins, DeVilbiss, Kattoua, Schneider, Tanner and Vaughn were first-team all-league. Anderson, Crawford, D'Andrea, Denyes and Lombardi were second-team all-league and Hallarn received honorable mention.

Third-year coach Mike Golden -- whose team opens Friday at home against Westland -- concedes that UA does not have many "regular" starters back from last year.

"But we have a lot of kids who started a game or two because of injuries," he said. "Just about all of our kids have some experience playing under the lights."

UA, which employs the wing-T offense, returns two starters on offense in senior tight end Andrew Colosimo (6-foot-5, 245 pounds) and junior running back Tommy Farwick (6-0, 195). Farwick, who could see time at both halfback and fullback, replaced Crawford in the final five games, rushing for 429 yards on 102 carries (4.2 yards per carry) and scoring five touchdowns.

"Tommy is a year older and stronger," Golden said. "He looks like a player."

Colosimo, who also is expected to start at defensive end, has made a verbal commitment to Akron.

"I think you'll see him be not only a great tight end but a great defensive end this year," Golden said.

Senior Braden Layer (6-1, 180) takes over at quarterback and will be backed up by junior John Townsley (6-3, 190), a move-in from Texas. Senior Mikel Berry (6-3, 245) will start at fullback and junior Alex Drake (5-10, 180) should see significant time at halfback.

Vying for playing time at wide receiver are seniors Kyle Angelos (6-0, 165), Matt Ghidotti (6-0, 175), Jared Sylvester (6-0, 175) and Brandon Von Voigt (5-11, 175) and expected to split time at wingback are juniors Blake Annen (6-4, 200) and Chris Cennamo (6-4, 220). Von Voigt is a move-in from Pennsylvania and Annen is a transfer from Reynoldsburg.

Expected to start on the offensive line are junior Kacy Yuhás (6-2, 245) at center, seniors Travis Calkins (6-4, 230) and Brennan Kurfees (6-3, 240) at the tackles and senior Josh Root (5-8, 225) at guard. Vying for the other guard position are seniors Eric Clements (5-9, 211) and Charlie Williams (5-8, 190) and junior Nat Kell (6-0, 215).

UA returns only one regular starter on defense in Berry, who is expected to start at defensive end but also could see time at nose guard.

Colosimo will be the other starting defensive end, with Kurfees and junior Wade D'Andrea (6-0, 220) also expected to see action. Senior Thomas Sauter (5-10, 217) is expected to start at nose guard, with Berry and Clements backing him up.

The linebacking corps includes only one player who saw significant action a year ago in senior Colin McClain (6-0, 190), who either will start as an inside or outside linebacker. Also competing for one of the two inside linebacker spots are senior Tommy Tench (6-1, 230) and juniors Mark Crawford (5-11, 215) and Phil Gross (6-1, 206).

In addition to McClain, the other candidates for the outside linebacker positions are seniors Justin Dumond (6-1, 175), Nolan Kleinhenz (6-0, 205) and Kyle Sauter (5-10, 175).

In the secondary, seniors Cal Case (6-0, 175) and Gabe Krimm (5-9, 180) are expected to start at free safety and strong safety, respectively. Senior Adam Donahue (6-2, 180) is expected to start at one cornerback position, with Ghidotti, senior Danny Nygren (5-11, 175) and junior Noah Krimm (5-11, 170) competing for the other starting spot.

Others who could see significant time in the secondary are Layer at free safety and junior Anthony Finissi (6-1, 197) at strong safety.

Sylvester is the front-runner to replace Schneider as placekicker and Crawford is expected to handle the punting duties.

"I really like this team," Golden said. "I enjoy their commitment and how they're handling things. Our expectations are always high at Upper Arlington. (The players) expect to win. Their expectations are very high.

"There's no reason to think there will be a dropoff, but we do have to get experience and we have to do that fast. We don't have time (to wait). That's high school football. You have to get good fast."

Golden particularly wants to see progress quickly made by his defense.

"Defensively, we're more inexperienced than offensively," he said. "We're inexperienced on offense, too, but with offense you still control what you do on the field. Defense is reactionary. If there's a concern, that would be it. We need to get good on defense fast."

Golden is confident that his players will be quick learners. Not only do they have talent, but they have proven that they know how to win.

"A lot of our kids played (junior varsity) last year, but the j.v went 8-0 and outscored their opponents 220-28," he said. "That's created a lot of competition. One of the pleasant surprises has been the competition we've had at every position. That really helps because there will be times when kids will have to step in and play because of injuries. I also like our physical strength. We're physically prepared for this season."

Golden does not discount any of the teams in the OCC-Buckeye from winning the league championship.

"We have a tough conference, I'll tell you that," he said. "You have to be ready to play every week, that's for sure.

"Coffman is supposed to be very strong. They have a lot of nice kids back. Grove City has a proud tradition. (Coach) Chad Williams does a great job with the program at Westerville North and Reynoldsburg has a lot of good athletes."

And then there's defending state champion Davidson.

"I know they lost a lot of players, but they have a good, solid program," Golden said. "I'm sure they'll be good."