

BACK IN THE SADDLE

A 'reinvigorated' Larry Sellers returns to the TC St. Francis sidelines, vows a 'Return to Glory'

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TRAVERSE CITY — It wasn't anything specific he said or did, but it didn't take long for the players at Traverse City St. Francis to realize that the most successful football coach in northern Michigan was back.

After a year away to attend to personal matters, Larry Sellers once again assumed the reins of the entity he helped build into one of the state's premiere football programs.

"Pretty much the first time he started talking at that first meeting (of the season), it was clear," said Gladiators senior halfback Pat Heintz. "He's very intense, and his enthusiasm for the game is unparalleled. And he has a vast knowledge of football to go with that passion."

Heintz wasn't the only player who used the 'i' word when describing Sellers' return to the sideline. "The intensity and the drive for perfection," said fellow senior back Mac Schilling. "He just has that presence. We knew he was back right away. He's not a guy who is concerned with flash — he's all business, right to the point."

While Sellers directs the St. Francis program, he doesn't do it single-handedly. The staff includes Craig Bauer, who stepped in on an interim basis last year and guided the Glads into the playoffs, and is a former head coach at Elk Rapids. Former Traverse City Central coach Joe Forlenza and ex-Suttons Bay front man Steve Curtis also have head coaching experience. Jim Carroll has been on the St. Francis staff since the Kennedy administration, Mark

DeSantos is a former University of Michigan standout who played in three bowl games for the legendary Bo Schembechler. Ex-Gladiator stars Pat Cleland and Josh Sellers round out what many feel is the finest staff in the region.

Travis Sivek, a junior expected to see time at both halfback and fullback, says the team is fortunate to have such a collection of talent leading the squad.

"We're blessed with a lot of great coaches," he said. "I'm not sure if people realize it, but we have a coaching staff that is equal to what some colleges have."

Sellers was especially complimentary of Bauer, who took the reins under difficult circumstances.

"I can't say enough about Craig and the job he did. He came in on short notice into a tough situation and kept the ship solid — more than that; he kept us pointed in the right direction."

Sellers and Co. will be busy this year trying to improve upon a two-year span that has seen the Glads drop 10 contests, including blowout losses to Kingsley and Glen Lake in the playoff openers to cap the past two campaigns.

"We don't want to be embarrassed like that ever again," Sellers said. "This fall, our plans are to play St. Francis football again — we'll come at you with the run and pass when we dictate, not when other teams force us to."

"I'm reinvigorated, refreshed and I've had a lot of time to think about my approach to football. You never forget how to ride a bike, and I'm back on the bike. My batteries are recharged and I think the athletes sense that."

Senior halfback Colin Quinn was among those that immediately sensed Sellers' renewed vigor.

"He's a huge, huge motivator," said Quinn. "The attitude he brings to the sidelines can't be (compared) to anything I've experienced. I can't describe how excited we are that he's back."

If the Gladiators' backfield was crowded last year, it's downright jam-packed for 2002. As many as a dozen runners could see duty lugging the ball, including Heintz, Sivek, Quinn, Mac and Sam Schilling, a sophomore, plus seniors John Bourdon and Andrew Donaldson, and juniors Garrett Petterson, Sean Currie, Kevin Curtis, Tyler Schell and Ryan Asam.

"We'll keep 'em hungry," said



Record-Eagle/Elizabeth Conley

Traverse City St. Francis head football coach, on 'Star,' returns to the Gladiators after a year away. Sellers is flanked by the 2002 edition of the Gladiators. Special thanks to Casalae Farms in Traverse City and to Marley Martin, owner of 'Star'.

2001 STATISTICS

RUSHING				RECEIVING			
player	No	Yds	TD	player	No	Yds	TD
PAT HEINTZ	96	519	6	Joe O'Grady	8	78	1
MAC SCHILLING	88	479	2	PAT HEINTZ	8	36	0
TRAVIS SIVEK	79	438	12	D.J. Brick	7	53	0
COLIN QUINN	70	394	2	JOHN BOURDON	5	32	0
JOHN BOURDON	45	164	1	COLIN QUINN	2	40	0

PASSING						
player	ATT	COMP	PCT	YDS	TD	INT
ADAM CLARK	33	11	.333	197	1	1
GARRETT PETTERSON	38	9	.237	87	0	4
TOTAL	74	20	.270	284	1	5

Returning players in CAPS

2001 RESULTS

- St. Francis 19, Benzie Central 9
- Glen Lake 7, St. Francis 6
- St. Francis 20, Kalkaska 7
- St. Francis 28, Elk Rapids 6
- Charlevoix 30, St. Francis 6
- Muskegon CC 47, St. Francis 12
- St. Francis 49, East Jordan 6
- St. Francis 21, Harbor Springs 8
- Boyne City 21, St. Francis 20
- Glen Lake 37, St. Francis 0*

RECORD: 5-5 (4-2 conf.)
* = MHSAA playoff game

2002 SCHEDULE

- Thurs. Aug. 29 at Benzie Central
- Fri. Sep. 6 at Glen Lake
- Sat. Sept. 14 vs. Kalkaska**
- Fri. Sept. 20 at Elk Rapids**
- Sat. Sept. 28 vs. Charlevoix**
- Sat. Oct. 5 vs. Muskegon Catholic*
- Fri. Oct. 11 at East Jordan**
- Sat. Oct. 19 vs. Harbor Springs**
- Fri. Oct. 25 at Boyne City**

Lake Michigan games in bold
* = Homecoming

Sellers. "If one makes a mistake, we have another who can come in and carry (the ball)."

Sivek points out that circumstances will likely dictate who gets the carries over the course of a given contest.

"I think all of us will get the ball at different times," he said. "A lot depends on the particular situation. With all the players we have that can run the ball, I think we can keep fresh legs rotating in there."

That would seem to be Sellers' mindset as well.

"I like our backs a great deal," he said. "We have some nice depth there. We can do a lot of different things and show a lot of

different looks."

With so many mouths to feed, the potential for dissension is there. But according to Mac Schilling, the likelihood of a rift is nil.

"We all have the talent to go out on the field and be 'the guy,'" he explained. "But it doesn't even matter where we fit in. We all know some guys (are better at) blocking and some at runners, but we're not greedy about it in any way. It's an honor just to be out there contributing to St. Francis football."

As Heintz points out, the vast array of size and skill in the Gladiators backfield provides for a certain flexibility.

"We can go big with our 'hogs' package with Sam and Travis and Colin or go smaller with Mac, myself and John. With all the depth we have, we can be versatile."

Sam Schilling, the youngster of the group but among the biggest at 215 pounds, says he's still getting acclimated to football at the varsity level, and isn't concerned with carries.

"It's a lot different on varsity," he said. "Guys are bigger, quicker and faster. Coach told us that we're going to do a lot of subbing in, pumping the ball down the field. It doesn't matter if I don't get the ball as much as I used to (on JV). We're trying to win."

The plethora of talented running backs wouldn't be able to ply their trade without the big guys up front doing the dirty work, and the Glads boast an offensive front with size and experience, led by senior Kyle Anderson, a 220-pound tackle, and Mike Schram, who is seeing time with the first unit at center after playing guard last season. Both are in their third years with the varsity squad.

"It (playing center) is a little different," Schram said. "Each quarterback holds their hands a little different and they want a snap that's a little bit different. Playing guard you can just fire off the ball, but at center you have to snap it and get off the ball. It's just something I'm not as used to, but it takes some getting used to. I really liked playing at guard, but whatever it takes to get it done, I'm more than willing to do."

"Bascially, we're a power team," Anderson said. "And running off-tackle is something we do a lot of. We have new people in different positions, so we're still finding our strengths, but we should be good this year."