

West home for six games

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That, apparently, is what worries the rest of the Big North. League coaches have selected West, which received six of eight first-place votes in the preseason coaches poll, as the favorite despite the fact that the Titans return just one offensive starter.

"West has good tradition, a good coach and a solid group of athletes," said Cadillac head coach Jim Webb. "Traditionally they're right in it, plus they're motivated."

Prisk agrees that his team will play with added enthusiasm.

"These kids aren't going to accept mediocrity from themselves," he said. "They're driven. They're playing with a purpose."

The only returning starter on offense for West is senior wide receiver Greg Roper (5-foot-10, 170 pounds). There are other returnees who saw playing time, but Roper was the only full-time starter.

Among those who saw game action a year ago was senior quarterback Kent Wood (5-10, 175), who takes over for playmaker Kevin Kipke, who graduated. Wood entered games twice last year after Kipke was injured. Both times he came in with the Titans trailing — at Gaylord and Sault Ste. Marie.

"Kent knows how to deal with adversity," Prisk said. "Both times he came in last year he was in a tough

spot. That Soo game was played in a quagmire. It was a mess."

Prisk said he admires Wood's work ethic and leadership.

"Anything Kent could do to make himself better this year, he did it," Prisk said. "There's not a kid on this team who doesn't respect him."

"He's a quality kid. They believe in him and I have faith in him. He has great leadership ability. We have a team that needs to mature on offense, and he's the right guy to drive the boat."

Wood will be protected by a completely rebuilt line. Senior guards Nick Gotts and James Landry are physical bookends — Gotts is 5-9, 190, Landry 5-10, 190.

Senior tackle Jeffrey Nickerson is 5-11, 220; senior tackle John Olinik is 6-2, 270; and sophomore center Mike Lemcool is 5-8, 200. Carlson (6-4, 215) will play tight end and wide receiver, while Chris Stowe (6-2, 170), the fastest player on the team, will join Roper as a wideout.

"Our offensive line is incredibly strong," Prisk said. "They just haven't had much game experience."

Senior Phil Thiel (6-0, 235) and sophomore Ben Van Zale (6-0, 220) will both see action at fullback, with a number of players competing for time at running back. Senior Mike Flynn (5-10, 160), junior Tyler Perketta (5-11, 170), senior John Schumacher (5-10, 160), junior Alex

Schumacher (5-11, 155), sophomore Tony Gourlay (6-2, 180) and senior Dave Marsh (5-10, 160) are all in the mix.

"We have good depth in the backfield," Prisk said.

Defensively, the Titans return seven starters, much to the delight of defensive coordinator Jerry Angers. Many of those returnees will also be two-way players this year. Back are outside linebacker Carlson, inside linebacker Thiel, inside linebacker-turned-tackle Nickerson, outside linebacker John Schumacher, safety-turned-cornerback Stowe, cornerback Marsh and senior cornerback Jacob Nuss (5-9, 150).

Senior Josh Beagle (6-1, 170) saw some playing time at defensive end last fall and will take over the role full-time this season. Nickerson moved to tackle to make room for VanZale at inside linebacker. Perketta may play safety. The other positions are still up for grabs.

"I know we're inexperienced in some spots, but don't underestimate these kids," Prisk said. "They were 9-0 as freshmen. They were 6-3 as sophomores."

"We lost a lot of those kids to things that as an educator you don't want to lose kids to — drugs, alcohol, poor grades. But the kids who are still here are solid kids. They're dedicated, and they know how to win."

Central wants to take next step

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coaches."

Senior linebacker Tom Apsey said the West win is all but forgotten by the 2002 players.

"It was exciting, but this is a new year," Apsey said. "We have to go out the first game against Escanaba, take it to them again and go from there. We'll worry about West when it gets to that week."

The defense returns relatively intact. But it's also a unit that surrendered 32.4 points a game in 2001. So it's also time for the Trojan defenders to take the next step as well.

"I expect good things from them," Clark said. "They have placed high expectations on themselves. I hope they'll be able to live up to it."

All four starters return on the defensive line for the Trojans: Zane Ziebarth (19 tackles, two sacks), Kyle Huffman (36 tackles), Charlie Ellibee (33) and Jeff Fancy (40).

Linebackers Ty Curtis and Apsey and Ty Curtis are also back, where they will be joined by Fred Shier and Adam Valentino.

The two leading tacklers for the Trojans last season were Apsey (85 tackles) and Curtis (77). Curtis also had three sacks and Apsey two.

Nick Pinto (55 tackles) and Josh Thornton are back to patrol the secondary for TC Central. They'll be joined by Kevin Lillie.

"We've got the experience this year," Apsey said. "We really don't have any excuses. We just need to get the job done and let our offense do the rest."

attack return in Mills at quarterback and Pinto at running back.

"We have the possibility to do spectacular things as we've seen in the first week and a half of practice," Mills said. "We also have the possibility of a slip-up, which we have also seen in practice. We'll have to see how we play the first game and see how we do."

Mills improved as the season went along in a system that puts a lot of emphasis on the QB making the proper reads.

"He's starting to eliminate the mistakes he made in the past," Clark said. "He's learned a lot of a short amount of time."

Clark said the Trojans have tweaked some of their blocking schemes for Mills, who is more of a pure pocket passer.

"We're doing some different things to make him more successful and still stick in the framework of the offense."

Mills hit on 110-of-208 passes in 2001 for 1,509 yards and nine TDs.

Pinto rushed for 963 yards on 159 carries and scored six touchdowns last season. He was also a threat through the air, catching 45 passes for another 562 yards.

"There's a lot of things defenses have to watch out for," Mills said. "They can't just play the run, because we can throw. They can't just play the pass, because we have Pinto who can run."

"You can't just focus on one thing."

Mills will have two experienced targets to throw to in Erik Burke and Brandon Hillborn. Burke caught 54 passes for 543 yards and six touchdowns last season while Hillborn snagged 58 for 245 yards and one score.

Newcomers Ed Beyne and Doug Garrow should also be threats as receivers.

"Those two have really worked hard in the offseason," Clark said of Beyne and Garrow. "I've been impressed with their speed and quickness."

On the offensive line, the Trojans return a lot of players, even though many of them weren't full-time starters.

Clark said he likes what he's seen so far in the players who have to keep Mills safe.

"This is probably the first year we've had depth," Clark said. "I feel pretty confident with the ones and twos across the board. They're already ahead of where the line was last year probably three games into the year."

Kyle Clute is expected to anchor the TC Central offensive line at center. It's a position that is even more important in the Trojans scheme because the shotgun is used a lot more.

Among the front-runners at the two guard positions are Joel Pier-Fitzgerald and Ziebarth. Alden Schaub and Patrick Welton are among those vying for the two tackle positions.

The overall numbers on the TC Central varsity squad are not comparable with other large football schools.

Clark said he put an emphasis on the players that showed up for offseason conditioning.

"The first year we had six or seven kids who committed top the offseason program and were working hard," he said. "Now we have up to 23, 24 or 26 kids. Our numbers have improved there over the course of time. So the kids kind of weeded themselves out."

Clark said the work ethic the Trojans showed during the summer has carried

2001 STATISTICS

RUSHING				RECEIVING			
player	No	Yds	TD	player	No	Yds	TD
Adam Totten	113	797	10	Tim Freundl	15	291	2
Kevin Kipke	87	671	10	GREG ROEPER	11	207	0
James Larsen	92	609	11	James Larsen	8	118	0
Mike Flynn	13	108	1	Kyle Sullivan	4	32	0
TOTAL	348	2356	37	TOTAL	46	743	3

PASSING						
player	ATT	COMP	PCT	YDS	TD	INT
Kevin Kipke	73	38	.521	644	3	7
KENT WOOD	22	8	.364	99	0	3
TOTAL	95	46	.484	743	3	10

DEFENSE						
player	SOLO	ASST	TOT	SACK	FUM	INT
DAVID MARSH	40	18	58	0	0	1
PHIL THIEL	33	18	51	2	0	0
Warren Tvardik	29	19	48	3	1	1
NICK CARLSON	27	19	46	1	0	0
JEFF NICKERSON	20	26	46	1	2	0

Returning players in CAPS

2001 RESULTS

Detroit CC 37, TC West 17
TC West 41, Reeths-Puffer 0
TC West 55, Alpena 0
TC West 42, Cadillac 33
TC West 42, Cheboygan 14
TC West 35, Petoskey 0
Gaylord 21, TC West 14
Sault Ste. Marie 13, TC West 7
TC Central 31, TC West 28

RECORD: 5-4 (4-3 conf.)

2002 SCHEDULE

Fri. Aug. 30 vs. Grand Haven
Fri. Sep. 6 at Reeths-Puffer
Fri. Sept. 13 at Cheboygan
Fri. Sept. 20 vs. Cadillac
Fri. Sept. 27 vs. Sault Ste. Marie
Fri. Oct. 4 at Petoskey
Fri. Oct. 11 vs. Alpena*
Fri. Oct. 18 vs. Gaylord
Fri. Oct. 25 at TC Central

Big North games in bold
* = Homecoming

2001 STATISTICS

RUSHING				RECEIVING			
player	No	Yds	TD	player	No	Yds	TD
NICK PINTO	159	963	6	BRANDON HILLBORN	-	245	1
TYLER MILLS	53	80	3	Ivor Christiansen	-	220	1
ERIK BURKE	6	47	0	ERIK BURKE	-	543	6
Scott Carrier	18	29	0	NICK PINTO	-	562	0
TOTAL	244	1158	9	TOTAL	121	1704	10

PASSING						
player	ATT	COMP	PCT	YDS	TD	INT
TYLER MILLS	208	110	.529	1,509	9	14
Kevin McClatchey	28	11	.393	195	1	2
TOTAL	236	121	.513	1704	10	16

DEFENSE						
player	SOLO	ASST	TOT	SACK	FUM	INT
TOM APSEY	-	-	85	2	-	0
TY CURTIS	-	-	77	3	-	0
NICK PINTO	-	-	55	0	-	0
Tom Karam	-	-	51	1	-	0
Andy Stuck	-	-	42	2	-	0

Returning players in CAPS

2001 RESULTS

TC Central 21, Escanaba 12
Forest Hills No. 35, TC Central 14
Cadillac 45, TC Central 0
TC Central 22, Alpena 21
Petoskey 18, TC Central 12 (2OT)
Cheboygan 47, TC Central 21
Sault Ste. Marie 53, TC Central 35
Gaylord 33, TC Central 3
TC Central 31, TC West 28

RECORD: 3-6 (2-5 conf.)

2002 SCHEDULE

Fri. Aug. 30 at Escanaba
Fri. Sep. 5 vs. Forest Hills Northern
Fri. Sept. 13 vs. Petoskey
Fri. Sept. 20 at Sault Ste. Marie
Sat. Sept. 28 at Cadillac
Fri. Oct. 4 vs. Cheboygan*
Fri. Oct. 11 at Gaylord
Fri. Oct. 18 at Alpena
Fri. Oct. 25 vs. TC West

Big North games in bold
* = Homecoming

over into the start of fall practice. The coach said the first week of practice went smoother than it has during his tenure with the Trojans.

"We might lose a game here or there,"

he said. "We might get out-talented a game or two, but we won't get out-worked."

"Overall I have no complaints with the team work ethic and the attitude."