

Key WMU player missing

KALAMAZOO (AP) — The Western Michigan football team looking to fill key spots left by graduation and a significant injury.

Anthony Allsbury, two-time All-Mid-American Conference defensive end and on the Lombardi Trophy award list, is out for the season with a knee injury received in practice.



"It's a crushing blow," head coach Gary Darnell told the Kalamazoo Gazette.

The Broncos' defense turned into the ninth-best in the nation two years ago when Western also enjoyed its second consecutive MAC West championship season. Allsbury and Chris Browning, now also a senior, were the bookends on a dominant defensive line.

The team's defense has remained dominant in practice.

A key addition at the wide receiver spot is senior Jermaine Lewis, whose transition from safety has been a

smooth one.

At 6-foot-4, Lewis is a legitimate deep threat that is expected to spread the defense and open up the field for All-MAC tight end Mobolaji Afariogun and the running game led by Philip Reed.

The Broncos also have Kendrick Mosley and strong physical receivers Antonio Thomas and Brandon Johnson to turn an off-season question mark into a real strength on offense.

Another receiver catching coaches' eyes is junior Christopher Chestnut out of College of the Canyons. Junior college transfers Willie Pope and Eugene Childs have impressed Darnell at the cornerback spot.

"When we get out here in pads, it really screws it down as far as who can get into a block and fight off a block and those sort of things," Darnell said.

Jonathan Drach is considered the front-runner for the starting quarterback job over Jeff Welsh.

QB uncertain at Central

MOUNT PLEASANT (AP) — The Central Michigan football team has its entire starting lineup planned out for this season — except for who is going to be the quarterback.

The team returns this fall with a 1,000-yard rusher, four starting linemen and all its top receivers on offense. The Chippewas have two returning starters at quarterback, but neither has established himself as the starter.



Derrick Vickers, a junior, started the first seven games last season before hurting his knee. Derek Gorney, a senior, started the final four games.

"We are going to go with one quarterback," coach Mike DeBord said. "Derrick is probably in the lead for the spot right now, but I'm not going to name him the starter. We've got training camp to go through before we decide on the starter."

Turnovers probably will make the difference in who gets the top spot.

"We simply had too many interceptions last year," DeBord said. "I don't care who plays. I'll play the guy who's going to take care of the football. Last year, we also had 43 dropped passes. That didn't help either."

Both quarterbacks had good and bad moments last season.

Last year, Central Michigan went to a no-huddle offense, and DeBord liked the results.

"Offensively, we know what we're doing," DeBord said. "It's up to the defense to react. The no-huddle doesn't allow them much time to adjust or substitute."

The strategy paid off last season.

Terrence Jackson rushed for 1,194 yards and 10 touchdowns on 252 carries despite playing with a cast on his broken right hand. The 235-pound junior saw limited playing time in the first three games.

Schedule tough on Eagles

YPSILANTI (AP) — Eastern Michigan will kickoff the 2002 season with games against four tough teams and just a few returning starters.

The Eagles will open with games against Michigan State, Toledo, Southeast Missouri State and Maryland.



The Eagles, a unanimous pick to finish last in the Mid-American Conference West Division, enter their second consecutive season without a predetermined starting quarterback, return just four offensive starters and 10 total from a squad that had a 2-9 record.

Still, Eastern head coach Jeff Woodruff said he has not apprehensions about a schedule featuring three 2002 bowl teams.

"I'm not getting wrapped up in scheduling as much as I am in preparing the team for each game," Woodruff said. "I think you can gain a lot from playing top-20 teams early, though. You can see where you're at

and see what you need to do."

Last year Eastern Michigan started 1-3, losing three consecutive games — to Maryland, Indiana State and Western Michigan — by a composite score of 103-27.

It could be a tougher challenge this year. The combined 2001-02 record of this season's opening four opponents is 31-16, including a 3-0 mark in bowl games by defending MAC champion Toledo (10-2), Maryland (10-2) and Michigan State (7-5). Southeast Missouri State finished 4-7 last year.

But Woodruff said the tough start should give his players more confidence when playing against other MAC teams later in the season.

"You think, 'OK, I played against that All-American tackle, now I can play against any tackle in the MAC.' So we'll spend a lot of time in pre-season camp talking about those kinds of things," he said.

"What an incredible opportunity for us. You go out and get to play this game against some top-notch teams."



The Associated Press

Marshall quarterback coach Larry Kueck, right, watches as Byron Leftwich passes to a receiver during summer practice at Marshall Stadium in Huntington, W.Va.

MAC: Disney to Buffalo

By The Associated Press

Only in the Mid-American Conference is Orlando, Fla., considered to be in the nation's heartland.

"It sounds a little bit funny," Central Florida coach Mike Kruczek said.

UCF becomes the 14th member of the MAC this fall. At least UCF won't have to make the trek to Buffalo in December. It'll be in early November instead.



There might be some fuzzy thinking involved in the weird geography, but in many ways Central Florida will feel right at home.

Kruczek was a record-setting quarterback at Boston College and spent four years with the Pittsburgh Steelers as a backup to Terry Bradshaw.

The guy who developed the Minnesota Vikings' Daunte Culpepper into a star passer at UCF will see a lot of firepower at the position in the MAC. Six of the top seven quarterbacks in the league return — led by No. 19 Marshall's Byron Leftwich.

Team capsules, in predicted order of finish:

EAST

MARSHALL: Thundering Herd have won the East every year since joining the MAC in 1996. ... First league school to play in bowls five years in a row when it beat East Carolina 65-62 in GMAC Bowl. ... Leftwich has eight other returning offensive starters, including RB Franklin Wallace.

MIAMI (OHIO): QB Ben Roethlisberger set MAC freshman records for passing yards (3,105) and TDs (25). ... Miami returns a pair of All-MAC linebackers, Terrell Jones and Matt Robillard, and five other starters on defense.

2001 STANDINGS

WEST DIVISION

school	Division			All	
	W	L	GB	W	L
Toledo	4	1	—	9	2
No. Illinois	4	1	—	6	5
Ball State	4	1	—	5	6
W. MICHIGAN	2	4	2.5	5	6
C. MICHIGAN	1	4	3	3	8
E. MICHIGAN	0	5	4	2	9

EAST DIVISION

school	Division			All	
	W	L	GB	W	L
Marshall	6	0	—	10	2
Miami (Oh.)	4	2	2	7	5
Bowling Green	4	2	2	8	3
Kent State	3	3	3	6	5
Akron	3	3	3	4	7
Buffalo	1	5	5	3	8
Ohio	0	6	6	1	10

CENTRAL FLORIDA: UCF is 11-4 vs. MAC teams since moving to I-A. ... Golden Knights open at Penn State, at Arizona State and at Marshall. ... QB Ryan Schneider passed for almost 3,000 yards and 17 TDs.

KENT STATE: After going 5-37, Golden Flashes finished 2001 by going 5-2. ... Double-threat QB Joshua Cribbs ran for 1,019 yards and passed for 1,516. ... Drew only 2,973 fans to home win against Northern Illinois last year.

AKRON: Season rests on return of TB Brandon Payne, who averaged 100 yards rushing in the first five games before knee injury. ... Allowed 471 yards per game in 2001.

OHIO: Only three starters back from defense that gave up 30 ppg (Bobcats are at Florida Sept. 14).

BUFFALO: Chad Bartoszek (42 catches, 441 yards) one of top TEs in

nation. ... Bulls lost entire defensive line and all but one linebacker. ... Scored 107 points in three wins, 98 points in eight losses.

WEST

BOWLING GREEN: Most improved I-A program last year, going from 2-9 to 8-3. ... Returns top two rushers (Josh Harris, Joe Alls), top two passers (Harris, Andy Sahn) and top receiver (Robert Redd). ... Must rebuild defense; seven starters graduated.

TOLEDO: Loses four offensive and seven defensive starters from 10-2 team that beat Marshall in the MAC title game and Cincinnati in the Motor City Bowl. ... Enters season with 14-game home winning streak.

WESTERN MICHIGAN: Signed 10 juco transfers. ... Jermaine Lewis, a two-time All-MAC safety, shifts to WR. ... Coming off first losing season (5-6) in six years.

NORTHERN ILLINOIS: Won four of last five in 2001. ... Tied with Toledo and Ball State for West title last year, first trophy since winning MAC in 1983. ... TB Thomas Hammock (1,096 yards) is back but Josh Haldi takes over at QB.

BALL STATE: TB Marcus Merriweather is MAC's leading returning rusher (1,244 yards), and needs 1,100 more to become No. 1 at the school. ... Every offensive starter but one lineman is back, while defense lost most of front wall and two LBs.

CENTRAL MICHIGAN: Has most returning starters in MAC (18). ... LB James King tied NCAA record by blocking four punts vs. Michigan State. ... TB Terrence Jackson back after 1,194-yard season.

EASTERN MICHIGAN: Lost nine of last 10, including 65-62 triple-overtime loss at Akron to close season. ... WR Kevin Walter needs 18 catches to become school's career leader. ... Outscored 181-36 in first and third quarters last season.