

TCSF

Glads headed in a new direction

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side football," Cleland said. "It's one thing to say, 'God, family, football,' and it's another thing to do it."

On the football field, the Gladiators should contend for another Lake Michigan Conference championship. They were 6-0 in the LMC last season and 10-2 overall, falling to Norway in the Division VII regional finals.

Among the returnees is four-year varsity player Sivek, a 6-foot, 218-pound senior who plays fullback and linebacker. Sivek gained 604 yards on 100 carries last season and scored 11 rushing touchdowns.

Sellers said Sivek will also play some at the half-back position so he can get more carries.

"Travis wants to play college football, and he's put the work in to reach that goal," Sellers said. "He doesn't say much, but he's started to become more of a vocal leader on this team."

Sivek said he made a conscious effort to speak out more.

"I'm trying to get better," he said. "Our senior class isn't very vocal, so a few of

us have to step up and do it. "At first it was a little awkward, but I'm getting better."

Joining Sivek in the backfield is 5-11, 180-pound senior running back/defensive back Kevin Curtis, son of St. Francis assistant coach Steve Curtis.

Curtis had a 6.6-yard per carry average a year ago and scored four touchdowns. He also had seven interceptions.

"He's a coach's son, so he's been around football a lot and it shows," Sellers said. "He's our big hitter on defense and he's one of our faster kids. He's laid back like Sivek, then he gets out on the field and tears it up."

Petterson, in his third season on varsity, is the Gladiators' Mr. Everything. The 6-1, 188-pound senior plays running back, tight end, defensive back and handles kicking and punting duties.

Petterson rushed for three touchdowns and had four receiving TDs last fall.

"He's probably our best athlete," Sellers said. "He does it all."

Petterson said he enjoys being in on just about every play.

"It's tiring, but it's worth it," he said. "I've done a lot of work to stay in shape and it's going to pay off."

Sellers said Petterson is "getting looked at" by several colleges for his kicking and punting ability. Petterson nailed a 55-yard field goal during the Ray Guy camp at Eastern Michigan University over the summer.

Another third-year varsity player is Jacob Preston, a 5-8, 195-pound guard-defen-

sive lineman who Sellers expects will "be a leader on the line for us."

Other key seniors include tackle Caleb Richardson (6-2, 270), tight end-nose guard Brett Milliman (5-11, 165) and running back-defensive end Sean Currie (5-10, 160).

Junior Joe Hastings (6-3, 180) will quarterback the St. Francis offense. Sellers said Hastings "has a lot of poise even though he's never started a varsity game."

"He's has a prototypical quarterback's body," Sellers said. "He has a nice arm. He's not going to overpower anybody, but he makes good reads."

"And he's come a long ways with his footwork."

Other juniors who will play key roles are lineman Josh Beckwith (6-0, 170) and end Josh Jorkasky (6-3, 180), although Jorkasky will be out at least two weeks after separating his shoulder in practice last Wednesday.

Sophomores to watch are tackle Patrick Rigan (6-5½, 215) and guard/linebacker Chad Biggar (6-0, 175).

Sellers' coaching staff contains some familiar names. In addition to Cleland, Jim Carroll is coaching the backs, Joe Forlenza the linemen and Curtis is handling special teams and the scout team.

Craig Bauer is the junior varsity head coach and is assisted by Scott Doriot and volunteer Mark DeSantis.

"The philosophy hasn't changed, but the teacher has," Cleland said of Sellers. "He's reinvigorated all of us. Jim Carroll has been doing this for 40 years and he's excited like it's first year."

TROJANS

Central going on ground offensive

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players on the defense," said Garrow, a senior who started at wide receiver last year. "But they're learning pretty quick. They're up there for a reason."

"We haven't seen a lot of the defense — just the one scrimmage. Having the other scrimmage canceled kind of hurt us there. That first game is really going to help determine where we are."

Junior Hayden Brown and senior Adam Mervau will vie for kicking and punting duties, while Burke and Pinto will return opponents' kicks and punts. Clark says the kicking rotation will likely be a week-to-week proposition.

"We're going to keep a point total during the week, and whoever wins gets the job that week."

Clark says this off-season was critical in terms of changing attitudes and keeping noses to the proverbial grindstone.

"Our strength has been our work ethic," he said. "This off-season, the kids really set the tone. If they weren't involved in other sports, they were at least 75 percent of the workouts. Every kid made a commitment to the weight room and to each other."

During the team's annual trip to 'Unity Camp' — a visit to Camp Leelanau that involves such activities as swimming, high ropes, group

synthesis and, of course, football-related diversions — Clark outlined a four-pronged team mantra as well as the slogan for the upcoming season.

"The motto is, 'Be an 11,'" he explained. "It's actually from the 'Bigger, Stronger, Faster' program. On a scale of 1-10, you shoot for 11."

We also want to stress the four parts — faith, family, education and football. We like them to be well-rounded. We're not looking to be the stereotypical meathead football players."

Clark also set forth four goals for his players.

"We want the kids to better people," Clark said. "I know this sounds cliché, but we really try to live up to it. We want them to be fundamentally sound, and we want them to always hustle. Not everyone is going to be an All-State or All-American player, but you can always hustle. And fourth — never quit. If we do these four things, the winning will take care of itself."

As for a possible trip to the postseason, Clark says his team's schedule won't hurt it any.

"We have six games at home," he said. "The games against (TC) West is technically a road game, but it's at Thirlby (Field). We'll try to take it one game at a time. We have a tough game to open with, and if we don't beat Esky, we have no chance to go undefeated."

Edgecomb says a playoff berth is not outside the realm of plausibility.

"Yeah, it's a possibility," he said. "A big possibility, I hope. We have to try our best to win each game without looking ahead, and when we're done — prepare for the next game without looking ahead."

WEST

Titans keeping eyes on the prize

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tremendous amount of time in the weight room. We've improved that a lot over the summer."

"We're definitely the leaders," Griffin said. "If we don't make our blocks then, of course, nothing happens. We just need to come off the line and be vicious so everyone knows we're coming for them."

Perkette, who had just one passing attempt in 2002 playing behind Kent Wood, did rush for 252 yards last season. The main ball carrier will be Van Zale, who had 50 carries for 248 yards last season.

When the Titans put the ball in the air, seniors Chris Spognardi and Zach Wood will man the split end positions. West has a lot of candidates for the wing positions including Gourlay, Schumacher, junior Ryan Schroeder and Martin.

While running the football will be the strong suit for the Titans, Prisk said his team must be able to pass effectively.

"We have to be able to

spread the field and throw the ball a little bit," he said. "We have to use our speed; we've got some quick kids. If we can spread the field ... I wouldn't want to take Ben Van Zale one-on-one."

"We like to spread it out a little bit," Perkette said. "We can throw it in the air or keep it on the ground, either way."

The Titans return a lot of players on their special teams, including Schumacher at punter, Kiogima at kicker

and long-snappers Van Zale and Zach Wood.

"We have a lot of kids back on special teams," Prisk said. "We were pretty-much senior dominated last year and a lot of the seniors didn't play on special teams so we have a lot of those kids back."

"We spend a lot of time on it. We spend 30 minutes a practice on special teams and some days you can spend a little more. We think it's important."