

Loaded for bear

TC Central ended a 12-year playoff drought last season

BY JAMES COOK
Record-Eagle staff writer

TRAVERSE CITY — Ending a 12-year playoff drought has wetted the appetites of a young Traverse City Central squad.

The Trojans made the post-season for the first time since the split and — despite bowing out with a 42-28 loss to Rockford in the opening round — hope to get to at least an 11th game this campaign.

“The nice part for us was we had done fairly well against a powerhouse and the kids never gave up fighting,” Central coach Kelly Clark said. “This year, the team expects to go further.”

The junior-dominated team returns six defensive starters from last year’s playoff team, with only three starters on offense, plus kicker Hayden Brown.

Last year’s team had six sophomores up on varsity, so the junior-laden team isn’t as inexperienced as it may seem. This year’s team has only one sophomore, starting linebacker Zach Zebarth.

Add to that a crop of other juniors who played on an undefeated JV squad, and the Trojans’ total of just 10 seniors doesn’t seem like such a small number after all.

“We’ll be good this year and even better next year,” Clark said.

Only senior tackle Andrew Hannah returns along an offensive line that lost four senior starters from a year ago.

Juniors Kyle Gorrence (6-foot-1, 225 pounds), Rocky Pickerd (5-11, 305), Nick Rademacher (6-2, 260) and Derek Drelles (6-4,

2003 RESULTS

Escanaba 28, TC Central 21
G.R. Union 34, TC Central 0
TC Central 34, Petoskey 14
TC Central 45, S. Ste. Marie 7
TC Central 34, Cadillac 21
TC Central 35, Cheboygan 6
TC Central 21, Gaylord 12
TC Central 55, Alpena 18
TC West 29, TC Central 21
Rockford 42, TC Central 28*
* - playoffs

2004 SCHEDULE

Fri. Aug. 29 at Escanaba, 7:30
Fri. Sept. 3 vs. G.R. Union, 7:30
Fri. Sept. 10 at Alpena, 7:30
Sat. Sept. 18 vs. Petoskey, 7:30
Sat. Sept. 25 vs. Det. CC (HC), 6:30
Fri. Oct. 1 at Gaylord, 7:30
Fri. Oct. 8 at Cadillac, 7:30
Sat. Oct. 16 at U of D Jesuit, 7
Fri. Oct. 22 vs. TC West, 7:30

285) join Hannah (6-4, 285) to form a line averaging 272 pounds from tackle to tackle.

“They’ve gelled together pretty quickly,” Clark said. “I think this’ll be the best offensive line we’ve had here in terms of size and speed.”

Greg Pinto (5-10, 175) returns at tailback after running up over 500 yards last year, but the other half of the backfield tandem will be filled by Vince Khoury (5-11, 230) and Bill Lazar (6-0, 220) after the graduation of fullback Jeff Fancy.

“Those are some big shoes to fill,” Clark said. “I think Khoury and Lazar are equally as talented and we won’t miss a beat.”

Junior Andy Pascoe (6-1, 190) and senior Rob Knudsen (6-3, 170) are battling for the quarterback spot. Clark said Knudsen currently has a slight edge, but his ability to also play wide receiver gives the team some flexibility. Pascoe will also handle punting duties.

Robbie Harman (5-11, 150) returns to lead the receiving



Record-Eagle/
Lara Neel
Coming off its first playoff appearance since the two Traverse City schools split, TC Central is loading up for the 2004 season.

corps, while Matt Ohlert (5-11, 205) will start at tight end.

The team’s defense will have a different look under a new — and yet familiar — face.

Former head coach and long-time defensive coordinator Roger Wood returns at the reigns on the defensive side of the ball.

“Roger is coming back to take over the defense,” Clark said. “He’ll have the same 5-2 and 4-3 defense he’s used in the past.”

Wood was the defensive coordinator under Jim Ooley and later was head coach for five years, including when Clark played defensive back in 1987-88.

Central returns six starters on defense, which should help in the transition to Wood’s new scheme.

Junior Ben Amon (5-8, 215) and senior David Carlisle (6-1, 220) are back along the defensive line, joined by junior Nick Fowler (5-10, 150).

The starting linebacking corps will be without a senior, as junior returnee Khoury will be joined by juniors Dan Alpers (6-0, 200) and Jerry Swanson (6-1, 175) and sophomore Zebarth (5-11, 195).

The secondary is the most veteran of any of the team’s units, with three of four starters back.

Junior Rudy Prokes (5-10, 175) is back at strong safety and Harman and Pinto will reprise their roles, being joined by junior David Podsaid (5-6, 140).



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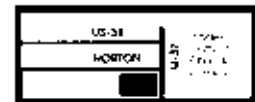
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