

TC Central FROM PAGE 6

15-8 loss to the Trojans — to open the season on Friday and hosts defending Division 1 state champion Rockford the following weekend.

“You’ve got to start out with some wins so you don’t have to play catch-up at the end of the season,” senior lineman Derek Drelles said.

Rockford (12-2) knocked Central out in the opening round of the playoffs two years ago, and also eliminated TC West in the second round last year.

The Trojans’ schedule features five playoff teams — including three of four non-conference foes — and six teams with winning records a year ago. Without Escanaba and 1-8 Cadillac, Central’s opponents had a combined 52-21 record last year. Surprisingly, Central was 4-1 on the road.

Pascoe said it’s important not to overlook anyone this season, and said the team may have done that last year in losses to Petoskey (26-25) and Alpena (28-16).

“Alpena was good, but I thought we should have beat them,” Pascoe said.

Central will be looking to improve on the 1-3 record in home games from a year ago. The Trojans have only four contests at home, but also play TC West at Thirlby Field in a game that is technically a home game for the Titans.

“We can’t give up any home games,” Harman said. “We’ve got to take care of business here. Actually, we’re hoping to take care of them all and not worry about it.”

Ben Amon, who ran for 384 yards last year as the primary backup to graduated senior Greg Pinto (who ran for 841 yards), steps into the starting tailback role, with Vince Khoury leading the way at fullback. Amon and Khoury each averaged 4.8 yards per carry last season.

Junior Jack Begley will

also see time at tailback. At 160 pounds, the shifty Begley is a stark contrast to 205-pound Amon’s bruising running style.

Senior Bill Lazar moved

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from fullback and will start at tight end.

Bailor Bell will start at receiver opposite Harman, with Brooks Bunbury and senior Marcus Martin seeing time as well.

“This year we’ve got so many receivers, so we expect to throw it a lot,” Harman said. “More than last year at least, but not as much as we run.”

Bunbury, a senior transfer from Glen Lake, will step in as the starting kicker, as well as play receiver and defensive back.

Clark said Bunbury’s leg is equal to that of Hayden Brown, Central’s first-team all-conference kicker last year.

“Our kicking game hopefully won’t miss a beat,” Clark said.

Harman has been getting a lot of reps in practice at quarterback. With Rob Knudsen’s departure, the squad needs another signal-caller behind Pascoe.

With Pascoe, Harman and Bunbury — a former quarterback at Glen Lake — the Trojans can have up to three players with QB experience on the field at a time, which plays into the hands of Clark, who likes to throw in trick plays to keep teams off guard.

Teams also have to keep a close eye on special teams to watch for fakes by Pascoe, who also punts.

But even with plenty of talent at the so-called skill positions, the game is usually won or lost in the trenches, and Central hopes a line with four returning starters will lead

the way.

“Our offensive line has everybody back except for right guard (Andrew Hannah),” said Drelles, the starting left tackle. “We’ve

been working on getting off the ball fast and executing.”

Drelles (6-3, 290) and Nick Rademaker (6-1, 255) man the tackle spots, with Josh Tooker (5-11, 185) at left guard and Kyle Gorence (6-0, 205) at center. Sophomore Rocco Khoury (6-4, 250) steps in at right guard for Hannah.

“They are going to be able to create some holes and give us good pass protection,” Pascoe said.

On defense, a deep core of talent will give the Trojans plenty of options.

“We have so much depth on the defensive line,” Pascoe said. “We can go with four big guys or four quick guys.”

The starting defensive line is expected to be comprised of junior Jared Wolf and seniors Nick Fowler, Rademaker and Chris Becker. Fowler was a first-team all-conference pick last year. The 150-pound nose tackle had 38 stops and a fumble recovery.

Three-year starter Vince Khoury leads a deep line-backing corps that also includes Rudy Prokes (who made 60 tackles at safety last year), Lazar, Matt Ohlert (22 tackles last year) and junior Zach Zebarth, who was on varsity last year as a sophomore and registered 29 stops. Tooker and Dan Alpers will also see playing time.

“We’re as deep as we’ve ever been,” Clark said, “and it’s offered us luxuries as far as a different groupings.”

Harman moves from cor-

nerback to free safety, with Tyler Cook, Alex Gage, Dan Shepler and Pat Fancy stepping in at corner.

Harman had six interceptions last year at corner,

— Robbie Harmon, receiver

and his switch to the middle of the field could make him even more of a threat.

“It makes it difficult for teams to throw over the middle of the field,” Clark said.

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