

Hanzlick ready to help Hoisington repeat successful 2015 season

By NOAH SCHEIDER  
With 20 wins in two seasons, Coach Zach Baird has made winning a habit in his two years at Hoisington. In 2015, his defense shut down the opposition, never allowing more than 21 points in a game until a quarterfinal loss to a powerful Halstead team that scored 40 or more points in eight of its 13 games. The Cardinals won their first 11 games before ending the season with that loss.

Hoisington's offensive production was far from disappointing. The Cardinals averaged more than 45 points a game and ran the ground-and-pound attack, featuring then-senior Steffan Dolecheck and returning senior workhorse Hunter Hanzlick.

Last season, Baird's offense ran the ball 441 times and threw the ball just 56 times. When the Cardinals did pass, Dolecheck was their go-to guy. He totaled five receiving touchdowns and 232 yards on just 14 catches. He also ran the ball for more than 600 yards and 10 more scores. While that is a load of production to replace, Baird remains optimistic he can do that in 2016.

"Yes, Steffan was our No. 1 option when we were going to throw it last year, and we will definitely miss his play making skills, but I have complete confidence in



2016 Hoisington Cardinal football team

our guys who will fill that spot this year," he said.

Departed senior Zade Sanders also added to the offensive assault with seven total touchdowns on the season.

Though the two graduating seniors will be missed, Baird returns much of his squad from last year. Senior Hunter Hanzlick returns as the team's workhorse behind seniors Landen Urban, Justin Bradley, and Ben Schneider, back on the offensive line. Last year, Hanzlick ran for 1,949 yards and 28 touchdowns. He also added one receiving score.

Senior Cam Davis should jump at the opportunity to fill a part of the void left by Dolecheck. Last fall, Davis was second on the team with 174 yards and a touchdown on 10 receptions.

Senior Tyler Specht is back to quarterback

the team after rushing for 10 touchdowns and throwing for 10 more last season. He completed 65 percent of his pass attempts and threw only four interceptions.

The Cardinal defense should once again be stout with three of its top tacklers back from a year ago. Landen Urban led the way with 73 tackles, Bradley had 44 tackles, and Sean Urban finished with 41 tackles.

Senior Christopher Wright graduated after leading the team with 7.5 sacks, but Schneider returns with 4.5 sacks last fall. Hanzlick had 29 tackles and two sacks in 2015.

The Hoisington secondary was very active last season with 20 interceptions. The Cardinals will miss Dolecheck's six picks and three interceptions from Kody Lang, who also graduated, but Davis came up with four

takeaways last year, and junior Rudy Gearhardt picked off two passes.

Baird will also have to replace Dolecheck on special teams. Last year, the senior averaged better than 30 yards a return. Davis was the primary kick and punt returner, averaging 29 yards a kick return and 17 yards a punt return. Four of those returns went for scores.

Baird said the key to success this season is, "Having this group of kids buy into working everyday in the weight room this summer." And with good reason. Any great smash-mouth offense runs behind a great offensive line. With the graduations of both Wright and Justin Umphrey, the Cardinals lost two starting linemen on both sides of the ball.

"Anytime you lose quality starters as we did

last year, there are big shoes to fill," Baird said. "On the other side of that, our guys have done an excellent job preparing. I'm excited to see different players step up and fill those roles."

The Cardinals will again be favorites to win their district that includes Ellsworth, Lyons and newcomer Hutchinson Trinity. The team will kick-off 2016 with back-to-back home games. The first game will pit Hoisington against CKL-foe Kingman. The second game will be one to watch as Class 3A runners-up Collegiate comes to town.

The state champion-

ship heartbreaker, in which the Spartans lost by just one point, could be a motivator for the Spartans. Collegiate moved up to 4A after losing the 3A title game to Rossville. The Spartans had won all their games by at least 21 points prior to that loss.

Even with Collegiate looming in week two, Baird's focus remains on Kingman. "We won't look past Kingman week one," he said. "That is where all of our focus will be."

The old-school Baird not only wants to run the ball down the opposition's throats and stifle opposing offenses, he wants to focus solely on the here and now. The results speak for themselves. Baird will continue to limit his team's goals each week.

"We don't judge our success on wins and losses," he said. "We will base our success off our willingness to prepare during the week, the effort and discipline that we play with, and if each player will sacrifice for the better of the team. If we can do those things, we will be successful and the wins and losses will take care of themselves."

Hoisington football 2015

Sept. 2	KINGMAN
Sept. 9	COLLEGIATE
Sept. 16	@Hillsboro
Sept. 23	WASHINGTON CO.
Sept. 30	@Pratt
Oct. 7	NICKERSON
Oct. 14	@Ellsworth
Oct. 21	@Larned
Oct. 27	LYONS

La Crosse looking to build up for grid success

By MIKE GILMORE  
Late-season injuries figured into a rough Class 2-1A district schedule for La Crosse veteran coach Jon Webster in 2015. The Leopards, used to making the playoffs, sat out of last season's bracket with a 1-2 finish in District 7 and a 3-6 overall record.

In 2016, Webster, who enters his eighth season at La Crosse with an overall record of 64-15, is calling for his multiple starters to take the field stronger, faster and more explosive.

"What we did over the summer will be a big key to our success," Webster said. "Our young guys need to learn our systems and schemes

quickly; our seniors must provide great leadership. Offensively, we must be better up front and be able to run the ball and our defense must be able to control the line of scrimmage.

"Hopefully, the linemen returning can build from their experience last year."

Clayton Herdman returns as a 6-3, 215-pound senior to take the snap on offense and make tackles from the defensive secondary. Last year, Herdman rushed for 926 yards on 165 carries to lead the team with 10 touchdowns; he also passed for 815 yards with 44 completions in

127 attempts, for six TDs, with nine interceptions.

Jasey Woods also returns as a 5-10, 202 senior fullback, bringing 353 yards on 102 carries and four scores from last season. Woods also recorded a team-leading 93 tackles on defense, with 63 solo stops.

Brad Collins, a senior at 5-10, 178, will be looked to at fullback; juniors Brett Herrman (5-9, 151) and Zak Brown (5-9, 163) will share time at wide receiver.

The Leopards open on the road at Elkhart Sept 2 and face Ellis, Oakley and Plainville in October for district play.

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