

Little River

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right side; sophomore Michelle Loder will be a defensive specialist and outside hitter; sophomore Gracie Richardson will play libero and hit on the outside, and freshman Isabelle Eberle will be a middle blocker and right side hitter.

"There will be a couple other players that will contend for playing time as well," Hull said. "We've had a couple of knee injuries since spring and some students who have moved so this will require other players to step up sooner than anticipated."

Winning will be the ultimate goal, but with such a young group, learning will also be a priority.



Allie Peters

"With a team, loaded with sophomores and freshmen, the potential learning curve is high," Hull said. "These girls

will have to be mentally tough as they learn the speed of game at this level.

"Overall, they are hardworking and athletic. But it will take some time for them to become volleyball savvy as well as becoming confident in the skills necessary to play this game. We will have to work hard to compete consistently at the varsity level.

"I do believe the girls are up for the challenge and will give everything they have to get better as individuals as well as a team. I think this will be an exciting group to watch develop as the season progresses and they come into their own as volleyball players."



Sterling seniors Maddie Thrasher (left) and Lindsay Gilmore return as state medalists for the Sterling tennis team.

(photos by Mike Courson)

Lady Black Bears

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returns as a state medalist. She and teammate Kaci Wilson battled to a fourth-place finish in a loaded South Barber regional that included the state champions from Central Plains and the state third-place finishers from Conway Springs. At state, Gilmore and Wilson won their first three matches before falling to the eventual fourth-place finishers. They bounced back with a win to claim fifth place.

Sophomore Lydia Miller also returns to the squad with varsity experience. Junior Katie Comley returns with some varsity experience, and sophomore Jasmine Bates will pick up some varsity matches this fall.

Sterling will look to improve on a second-

place finish at league last year. Hesston ran away with the title and later qualified all six players to state. Four of those girls graduated in May. Thrasher has had to contend with top players in Hoisington's

Besa Bwalya and Hesston's Morgan Holopirek. Bwalya has graduated last year after a second-place finish at state. The senior Holopirek returns as the reigning CKL Champion and the sixth-place finisher at state.

Sterling tennis 2016

Sept. 1	HOME
Sept. 6	@ Great Bend
Sept. 10	@Pratt
Sept. 15	@Ellsworth
Sept. 17	@Smoky Valley
Sept. 22	@Hillsboro
Sept. 29	@Great Bend (CP)
Oct. 3	CKL @TBA
Oct. 7-8	Regionals
Oct. 14-15	State @Wichita

Tigers

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"it comes down to the six fastest guys on the field. You need some strength, but if our defense is faster than their offense, we're going to cause problems. We want to make them adjust to what we're doing.

"There's a goal-line defense where the bigger people get in the gaps and charge, try to make them make mistakes. But mostly, it comes down to speed."

Chambers' playbook also contains some subterfuge; there are trick plays in six-man just like its bigger brothers.

"The name of the game is when that clock runs down to zero in the fourth quarter, to be one point ahead," Chambers said. "That's the key."

On the roster for 2016, are: seniors, Cy Cain, Roger Klenke, Ryan Klenke and Spencer VanMeter; juniors Caleb Karst; sophomores Trace Baker, Dalton Hamby, Kale McCoy and Logan

Williams; and freshmen Jackson Henbest, Shawn Peterson, Michael Stacy and Preston Stonebarger.

Leading up to the team's soap scrimmage this Friday, Chambers has been mixing and matching, along with running offensive plays and defensive sets. The final starting lineups probably won't be set until right before Western Plains shows up on Sept. 2.

From then on, it's a new experience. "You have eight teams that are

in their first year, so there's not a lot of game film," Chambers said. "You make a lot of phone calls trying to find things out. I'm willing to trade a little. I won't give out my secrets, but I will trade some if they will trade some."

The seven-game regular season ends with an association playoff at the end of October. The six-man championship and third-place games will be played in Dodge City on Saturday, Nov. 5.

Pawnee Heights football 2016

Sept. 2	WESTERN PLAINS
Sept. 9	@Golden Plains
Sept. 16	NATOMA
Sept. 23	Weskan@Grainfield
Sept. 30	Cheylin@Grainfield
Oct. 7	GRAINFIELD
Oct. 21	Postseason tour, TBA
Oct. 27	Postseason tour, TBA
Nov. 5	State title @Dodge City

Eagles

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right now."

Senior Eric Jones is the only other skill player to return from last year. He carried the ball 17 times on varsity last year, running for 85 yards. Junior Drew Blake and senior Destin Baker will also get some touches out of the backfield.

"That will really help us out a lot," said Duvall. "All three of those guys have to start defensively. They can go full out and we can rest one of them here and there offensively. It will really be a benefit for us that all three of those guys in there."

Seniors Colby Prescott and Jacob Herrman return with varsity experience on the offensive line. Sophomore Kody Koetter will take over as center. "He gets after it really well," said Duvall, "but I wish he was a little bigger."

Also on offense, sophomore Mason Duvall and freshman Peyton Duvall will get nods at wide receiver. All three of the running backs will play inside receiver.

Duvall is optimistic about his defense. Jordan Duvall and Schartz easily led the team in tackles last year and will be missed in the middle. Jones and Doll return at linebacker. Jones had 23 tackles last year and Doll had 12 tackles.

Martinez finished with 37 tackles and an interception and will return to his safety position. Baker had 19 tackles last year and could see some time at safety as well. Blake will add some speed at the cornerback position.

On the line, Prescott has gotten slimmer and faster after recording 25 tackles last year. Herrman and Bryce Baker will also be banging away up front.

"Our defense will fly around pretty well, I think," Duvall said. "It's just sticking our nose in there with a bunch of 15 and 16 year olds against 17 and 18 year olds. Are we going to do that?"

Runnin' Bears

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so we have work to do to be ready."

For now, the Runnin' Bear coaches are just ready to see how some summer work has paid off for the athletes.

"Coach Brownlee and I will be looking forward to watching the weekly improvement of all of our runners and look forward to watching and working with them as they make the transition from running to 'racing,'" Whisler said.



Ellinwood's defensive players listen to Coach Monte Doll during a pre-season practice.

(photo by Mike Courson)

Last year, Ellinwood finished third in district play behind Central Plains and Solomon. With virtually every team in the district taking hits from graduation, and St. John replacing Solomon – the Tigers went 0-9 in 2015 – anything could happen.

"I believe it's extremely wide open," said Duvall. "Everyone lost so much. Central Plains is obviously a great program. They have some great players coming back, and they understand the leadership they need. They always work hard and do what they need to do.

"I think the team no one is really looking at is Goessel. I just feel like they have a group coming back that could put some pressure on other teams. I think we can compete with all of them. By that time, after playing Otis-Bison, Victoria, and Ness City, I think that's some good preparation for our district."

Goessel returns six starters on both sides of the ball after a disappointing 3-6 campaign last year. Ellinwood edged Little River last year to finish third in the district, and the Redskins also return most of their starters from a year ago.



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