



2016 Lady Black Bears: From left, Katie Comley, Lydia Miller, Maddie Thrasher, Lindsay Gilmore, and Jasmine Bates. (photo by Mike Courson)

Thrasher, Gilmore back for Sterling

By Mike Courson

Curtis Thompson’s tennis teams are usually making some kind of noise late in the fall. Last year, three Lady Black Bears earned All-State honors with medals at the Class 3-2-1A State Tennis Championships. Two of those players return in 2016 to keep Sterling on the tennis map.

Senior Maddie Thrasher enters her final varsity campaign as a three-time state medalist. She went 31-8 as a freshman and placed eighth at state. As a sophomore, she posted a 33-6 record and finished fifth at state. Last year, she continued to climb the ladder, playing in the state semifinals and finishing third with a 31-6 record. Her only loss at state was against two-time state champion Anna Riedmiller of Wichita

Independent.

Thrasher could have suffered a setback with a serious knee injury during basketball season, but the rehabilitation process has gone well and the senior is ready for her final tennis season.

“My knee feels stronger than ever,” she said. “I am not a very patient person and the baby steps required to rehab an ACL and meniscus tear properly is a painful, annoying process. Through it all, I have learned to treasure every moment I have on and off the court. I have grown mentally stronger throughout this process and I can’t wait to face all adversity that comes my way.”

Senior Lindsay Gilmore also

see Lady Black Bears page 20

Black Bears look to continue improvements into Heart of America League

By Mike Courson

Taking over a Black Bear football team that went winless in 2014, Tyson Bauerle had his work cut out for him last fall. He answered the challenge by winning his first two games as head coach. Sterling was 4-2 before a disappointing 0-3 showing in district play. With nine returners back on both sides of the ball, expectations will be even higher in 2016.

“With the majority of returners on both offense and defense, we look to improve on our record from last year with an emphasis in finishing through district competition,” Bauerle said. “Starting out 4-2 last year but losing all three district games has not set well in the off season. For the first time in awhile, the majority of our roster will be seniors and



2016 Sterling Black Bears: Front row, from left: Javier Zimmerman, Cade Wilkey, Caleb Lambert, Jake Schroeder, Casey Duft, Gage Farney, Kaine Eidson, Hans Anderson, Dalton Stewart, Conan Ball, and Dylan Stewart. Middle row: Dallas Lackey, Kenan Comley, Bryan Montoya, Trent Jones, Adam Padgett, James McNutt, Edward Weiner, Eli Miller, Brady Myers, and Joel White. Back row: Brandon Frederick, Logan Weigel, Dylan Drier, Brett Oden, Ethan Proffitt, John Schweizer, Lucas Briar, Blake Richter, Jake Pieplow, Tyler Comley, and Wyatt Brown. Not pictured: Derek Boeken and Brady Ravenstien. (photo by Mike Courson)

juniors. This group of guys were the ones that have taken some lumps over the past couple years but got great experience at the same time. Our roster has now caught up and it will be exciting to see how we compete.”

The Black Bear offense will feature several returning all-leaguers. Senior Joel White (5-9, 160) accounted for more than 1,000 yards of offense, mostly on the ground, and nine touchdowns to earn first-team honors in a loaded league. Helping him out, senior Brandon Frederick (6-1, 235) anchors the offensive line after earning first-team honors last season.

Junior Kenan Comley (5-9, 165) returns to the quarterback spot after earning an All-CKL honorable mention last year. He rushed for 400 yards and threw for 250 more, accounting for seven touchdowns last season.

Comley will have experience players all around

him. Up front, senior Brett Oden (6-1, 240) returns to the line, and senior Ethan Proffitt (6-2, 205) moves from running back to the line. Junior Brady Ravenstein (5-11, 180) also offers some protection up front.

Elsewhere in the backfield, senior Edward Weiner (5-11, 165) was the other half of the two-headed monster with 633 yards and six scores and 136 carries last season. Sterling mostly ran the ball last year but returns several capable receivers. Junior Blake Richter (6-1, 165) was a big-play man with 191 yards and three scores on 10 receptions. Senior Tyler Comley (6-0, 170) and junior Lucas Briar (6-3, 170) also had catches last season.

“Offensively, all skill positions return from year one in a new offense,” Bauerle said. “Just like on defense, some tweaks will be made to match our skill set, and we’ll be a much more balanced attack compared to a heavy running game last year.”

Last year’s trio of Kenan Comley, White, and Weiner piled up nearly 2,000 rushing yards in the option game last year, but Bauerle hopes to open the field more with his group of receivers that also includes junior Hans Anderson.

“We have plans to get our playmakers the ball through the running game and the passing game,” said Bauerle. “We lost a few seniors on the offensive

line, but we have a good mix of guys that saw snaps last year.”

Bauerle also has big plans for his defense that is centered around Frederick at linebacker. Last year, he earned first-team league honors, and a Class 3A honorable mention from various outlets, including the Wichita Eagle and Topeka Capitol Journal. Last year, Frederick was a beast with 58 tackles, including 44 solos, a sack, four forced fumbles, and two fumble recoveries.

“Defensively, it’s a luxury to return the quantity and quality of players we are,” said Bauerle. “Brandon anchoring the middle linebacker spot is the type of player opposing offenses have to game plan for.”

With nine starters back, Bauerle returns his top-five tacklers, including the entire starting secondary and set of linebackers. Richter finished with 31 tackles and three interceptions last year as a defensive back. Kenan Comley picked off three passes and finished with 21.5 tackles. White and Anderson each recorded 18.5 tackles in the secondary.

Proffitt had 25 tackles and four sacks from his linebacker spot. Weiner recorded 23.5 tackles, and junior Trent Jones (5-10, 210) had 11.5 tackles as a linebacker. Oden returns to the defensive line with 18 tackles from a year ago.

“We have great versatility and athleticism in our linebackers, which will allow us to mix defenses,” Bauerle said. “With another year under their belts, we have a number of upper-classmen ready for solid seasons.”

As it did last year, the Black Bear coaching staff will continue to develop underclassmen. Bauerle has been impressed with his group of sophomores.

“Our early-season plan is to develop some younger players as best we can to see if we can mold a few into being one-way players for us,” he said. “This would be ideal as it would allow some of our typical two-way players some breaks, allowing them to play at a higher level, and would allow some younger guys to gain experience. With some tweaks to match our skill set, we look to be a tough defense both against the run and the pass.”

Things fell apart for Sterling for district play last year. In October, the Black Bears will see three entirely new district opponents in Hutchinson Trinity, Haven, and Halstead. Sterling defeated Haven but fell to a talented Halstead team last year in regular-season play.

“We need to stay healthy through the end of the season,” Bauerle said. “We had a number of guys banged up and a few starters missed district games last year. We need to stay fortunate this season with keeping guys healthy.”

This year’s schedule will be mostly new as Sterling enters play in the Heart of America League.

Sept. 2
Sept. 9
Sept. 16
Sept. 23
Sept. 30
Oct. 7
Oct. 14
Oct. 21
Oct. 27

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