



2017 Little River football, back row from left: Jon Schlosser, Kody Hawkinson, Peyton Harvey, Levi Swenson, Evan Johanning, Dillinger Page, Jake Wright, and Trey Baldwin. Front row: Josh Braden, Cade Young, Hunter Thomas, Tyler Dingman, Trey Rolfs, Ethan Schafer, and Wyatt Goering. Not Pictured: Graham Stephens, Jordan Moffett, Bryce Sears, Brayden Sears, and Zane Kratzer. (photo by Mike Courson)

Lafferty takes over Little River group ready for another playoff run

By MIKE COURSON

Paul Dold made his mark on the Little River football team, getting his Redskins to the playoffs in two of the past three seasons. Last year's team lost in the first round to finish the season at 4-6 overall. This year, big changes are coming with a new coach and a new quarterback.

Chad Lafferty, the head boys' basketball coach in Little River, will take over for Dold, who spent the last seven years on the sideline.

Gone to graduation is Clay Zeller, who threw for more than 1,000 yards last year and finished second on the team with 501 yards on the ground. Zeller threw for 18 scores and ran for eight more.

The rest of the Redskin backfield will be back in 2017. Senior Peyton Harvey rushed for a team-high 747 yards and 11 touchdowns on 136 attempts last year. Junior Hunter Thomas added 493 yards and eight touchdowns on his 87 carries, and junior Kody Hawkinson ran the ball 23 times for 105 yards and a score.

Lafferty has most of his receivers back as well. Harvey caught 36 balls for 529 yards and 13 of the 18 touchdown passes Zeller threw. Junior Brady Stephenson finished with 275 yards and four scores on 14 receptions, and Thomas had 10 receptions for 137 yards.

Little River football 2017

Sept. 1	@Centre
Sept. 8	BENNINGTON
Sept. 15	WAKEFIELD
Sept. 22	@Solomon
Sept. 29	GOESSEL
Oct. 6	CENTRAL PLAINS
Oct. 13	@Canton-Galva
Oct. 20	@Ellinwood
Oct. 26	ST. JOHN

"We return a good deal of experience from our team last year," Lafferty said. "We will look to improve our offensive output from last year with most of our backfield returning. Defensively we will need to solidify our front line and put teams in second and third and long. We will look to improve each week and start playing our best ball heading into district play early in the season."

Defensively, Lafferty will again be looking to fill some big shoes left by Zeller, who paced the squad with 93 tackles. He also grabbed two interceptions. Also missing in action will be off-season transfer Jonah Nelson, who finished fourth on the team with 57 tackles.

The defense will still have plenty of firepower. Harvey finished second on the squad with 73 tackles in 2016 and pulled in a team-high six interceptions. Senior Dillinger Page was third

on the team with 63 tackles, and senior Jake Wright had 41 tackles. Senior Bryce Sears also returns to the line on both sides of the ball.

Last year, the Redskins got some help from Ellinwood via a last-second loss to St. John to secure a spot in the playoffs. Perennial-power Central Plains is again looking like a favorite to win the district, and Little River should see improved teams in Goesel, Canton-Galva, and St. John.

"Our district will be a very tough road as usual," said Lafferty. "Central Plains will be the team to beat as usual within the district. The other teams in the district will be improved from last season and each has a chance to place in the top two of the district."

Little River opens the season on the road at Centre before welcoming Bennington and Wakefield in weeks two and three.



2017 Little River Lady Redskin volleyball team

Rolfs makes return to court in Little River

By MIKE COURSON

With no unbeaten prep volleyball teams in the state last fall, it's safe to assume Kim Rolfs enters the 2017 season with the state's longest win streak. Rolfs, who accepted in a position at Little River in the off-season, led Central Plains to a perfect 43-0 record in 2015, the last time she coached high school volleyball.

The move will be change of pace for Rolfs, who took over the Central Plains program in 2014. The Lady Oilers finished third in Class 2A that year, then won it all the following year. Rolfs finished her two years in Clafin with an 83-3 record.

So taking over a Little River team that won just 10 games in 2016 will be a change of pace, but Rolfs is looking forward to the test.

"It's going to be a rewarding challenge, I think, for these girls," Rolfs said. "I've worked really hard this summer with most of them and I see a lot of potential, but we need to continue to work or we're not going to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves."

Little River has had promising numbers out for the sport in each of the last several seasons. Solid numbers are again back for Rolfs, but Melanie Renken returns as the squad's lone senior. She is coming off a foot injury over the summer but should be one of the team's key pieces in 2017.

Only four juniors are out for this year's squad in Kylie Eller, Roylin Brillhart, Gracie Richardson, and Jacie Porter. Beyond that, Rolfs is ready to work with a host of younger players and mold them for successful runs in the future.

"I have a lot of young kids who are making some huge strides so that's very promising," she said. "There will be change of culture and the girls will need to embrace that. There is no room for 'what ifs.' Successful teams invest in the process and



Melanie Renken returns as the lone senior for the 2017 Lady Redskins. (photo by Mike Courson)

Little River volleyball 2017

Aug. 29	@Udall Quad
Sept. 5	@Rural Vista Tri
Sept. 9	@Centre Tourn.
Sept. 12	HOME
Sept. 19	@Wakefield Tri
Sept. 21	@Ellsworth
Sept. 23	@Lyons Tourn.
Sept. 26	@Canton-Galva Tri
Oct. 3	HOME QUAD
Oct. 10	HOME QUAD
Oct. 14	WSL Tourn.
Oct. 21	Sub-state
Oct. 27-28	State

have expectations.

"I have been fortunate to coach a lot of girls in the past who had that passion and investment. When I coached a state championship team, there was no chasing down physicals or convincing them they needed to lift weights. They were there and on point. That's what successful teams do. You have to be on point and you have to invest."

"I'm trying to get the girls to invest in what they're doing. The lessons they learn in that will last a lifetime. Whether we win or lose, I don't know, but they will get those life lessons."

Beyond volleyball, Rolfs is ready to embrace

her new district as her son, Trey, will attend school in Little River.

"I'm extremely excited to be working in the same district as my son," she said. "Being completely part of a school district is exciting for me. I've never felt so accepted in a district as I have here in Little River. The community, teachers, students and athletes, and administration have been so supportive and helpful."

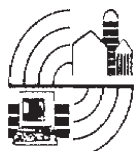
"(On the first day of practice) I received a text from a teacher and coach who was thoughtful enough to ask how my first day went and welcomed me as Redskin. The little things this district does are what makes it great."

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