



2017 Central Plains Oiler football team

Stars aligned for 2017 Oiler squad

BY MIKE COURSON

Winning is supposed to be cyclical in high school sports. The Central Plains Oilers have been an exception with playoff appearances in each of the last four seasons. Last fall, the Oilers were a perfect 10-0 before a second-round playoff loss to Spearville. With six starters back on offense and seven back on defense, Central Plains is again lined up for a magical year on the gridiron.

"Expectations are always high for us," said senior Alex Barton. "There's always that one place we want to get to. I like what we've got. Expectations are high, from coaches all the way down to the players."

Not since the perfect season in 2014 have the stars lined up so perfectly for the Oilers. "We started out '14 and I thought we were horrible the entire season," said CPHS coach Chris Steiner. "I didn't finally walk off the field and go 'we aren't too bad' until we beat Spearville."

"All season long I was frustrated. I didn't think we were doing things up to our potential. I didn't know where we were going to end up, then it ended up being an extraordinary year."

Steiner has most of his skill players back, starting with junior Devin Ryan at quarterback. The three-sport standout completed 103 of 152 passes last year for 1,650 yards and 32 touchdowns, compared to just three interceptions.

Junior Myles Menges transferred from cross-county rival Ellinwood in the offseason. In his debut under center for the Eagles last fall, Menges threw for 1,814 yards and 20 touchdowns.

Brownlee has several returning runners in first year atop Sterling program

BY MIKE COURSON

The Runnin' Bears came up short of the state track meet last year but some of the top runners from a year ago are back in 2017. Former assistant coach Larry Brownlee is ready to take over the group as head coach for the first time.

"We look to be stronger this season," he said. "Our area of the state has some tough cross county competition in Class 3A, but we are hopeful that we will be able to battle for a state berth by the end of the season."

Hugoton and Halstead proved to be the top-two boys' teams in 3A last year, respectively, and both those squads made for a loaded regional meet in Sterling. William Weiner placed 27th in the field, and Max Dutton ran 35th. Both return for their senior

Central Plains football 2017

Sept. 1	VICTORIA
Sept. 8	@Ness City
Sept. 15	OTIS-BISON
Sept. 22	@Kinsley
Sept. 29	@Canton-Galva
Oct. 6	@Little River
Oct. 13	ELLINWOOD
Oct. 20	@St. John
Oct. 26	GOESSEL

"It's still a good race," Steiner said in just the second day of practice. "We kind of had a quarterback battle last year with (Alex) Hickel and Ryan when they split time and both played quarterback for us."

If Menges does not get the nod at quarterback, he's plenty capable of pulling in passes. Steiner will also have back one of the top receivers in the state in Barton, who caught 47 passes for 815 yards and 17 touchdowns last year.

"It's nice," Barton said of the quarterback battle. "Eight-man isn't real popular for its passing but it kind of is. I'm just happy for them to be able to put the ball where it needs to be."

In the backfield, Central Plains returns two of its top-three rushers from a year ago. Hickel saw limited time at quarterback and led the team with 530 yards on 65 carries. Senior Dalton Beck ran the ball 84 times for 457 yards.

The Oiler defense has been stout in recent years. Last fall, the squad allowed more than two touchdowns just twice in the regular season against Div. II powers Victoria and Otis-Bison. With seven starters back, and the addi-

tion of Menges and Mason Doll from Ellinwood, expectations remain high on that side of the ball.

"They've been great additions to our team," said Steiner. "Both of them fit in real well. It was nice they were here in the spring to do stuff with the kids. They were here all summer long so it doesn't really feel like they're transfers now. They've been here long enough it seems like they're just part of the team."

Dalton Beck paced the defense with 104 tackles last fall, followed by Barton with 103 tackles and Kade Beck with 98 tackles. Hickel was fourth on the squad with 80 tackles. Senior Philip Donecker and junior Brett Liebl combined for nine sacks.

Barton was huge in the secondary with eight interceptions and he also caused three fumbles. Ryan picked off four passes, and Kade Beck had three interceptions. Barton was the main special teams guy last year as well, kicking and punting for the Oilers.

Central Plains can once again expect an early test as Central Prairie League rival Victoria comes to town in week one.

Sterling XC 2017

Aug. 31	@Smoky Valley
Sept. 7	@Hesston
Sept. 14	@Stafford
Sept. 19	@SE of Saline
Sept. 26	@Lyons
Oct. 5	HOME
Oct. 10	HOA League meet
Oct. 21	Regionals
Oct. 28	State

seasons.

"Both have been running on the varsity team since their freshmen year," Brownlee said. "They put in a lot of summer miles and are starting the season strong."

Brownlee will have some numbers on the boys' side. Sophomores Kyle Stover, Josh Curtis, and Luke Harding all return in

search of varsity spots, and junior Moises Zimmerman and sophomore Cade Wilkey are newcomers pushing for varsity spots.

There could be a changing of the guard in Class 3A this year. Halstead graduated three top-20 runners from state, and

see Runnin' Bears, page 3



2017 Sterling Black Bear football team

Schneider takes over in Sterling

BY MIKE COURSON

Tyson Bauerle orchestrated one of the biggest turnarounds in Kansas on the football field last year. Sterling went winless in 2015 before Bauerle, in his first year as head coach, won six of his first eight games. The Black Bears ultimately lost in the first round of the playoffs to Class 3A runner-up Hesston.

Bauerle has changed roles at a different school, and now it's Derek Schneider's turn. The basketball coach led the school to a state championship in 2012, and has been an assistant football coach since joining the school.

"It's an honor that I'd even be mentioned for the football position," Schneider said. "I take the job very seriously. I've been the basketball coach here a long time but that doesn't make this any less important. I was a college football player, so I love football. It was a first passion as a player."

Schneider will have most of last year's squad back with 10 returning starters on both sides of the ball. Joel White will be missing in action after rushing for over 1,000 yards and 25 touchdowns.

There will be a new quarterback in town as sophomore Brady Myers transitions to that role. Myers took over for an injured Kenan Comley late last year, throwing for 81 yards against two of 3A's best in Halstead and Hesston.

Comley's injury cost him his basketball season, but the senior returns as a wideout in 2017. The speedy Comley played in just eight games last year, throwing for nearly 2,000 yards and rushing for another 619 yards on 100 carries.

Senior Blake Richter was a big-play wideout, playing in just seven games last year but finishing with 463 yards on 31 receptions. Senior Lucas Briar had receptions in all 10 of the games last year. In all, he brought in 42 receptions for 338 yards and six scores.

The offense will be bolstered up front with a series of returners. Seniors Trent Jones and Eli Miller both weigh in at 220 pounds, and senior John Schweizer comes in at 195 pounds but with lots of

Sterling football 2017

Sept. 1	REMINGTON
Sept. 8	@Sedgwick
Sept. 15	INMAN
Sept. 22	@Moundridge
Sept. 29	@Marion
Oct. 6	ELL-SALINE
Oct. 13	@Hutch Trinity
Oct. 20	HAVEN
Oct. 26	HALSTEAD

height at 6-5. Senior Brady Ravenstein is also back on the line.

"Our offensive line will be experienced and led by a solid core of seniors," Schneider said. "I am

expecting great mental toughness and leadership from this group.

"Our backfield and see Sterling, page 3

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