

Ellinwood looking to clear hurdles, get to playoffs in 2017

By MIKE COURSON

Expectations were high for the Ellinwood football team right after a pair of wins to end the season. Those two wins - a 58-36 victory over playoff-bound Little River and a 54-6 thrashing of Canton-Galva - marked two-thirds of the Eagle win total for the season.

But with a small graduation class, the winning was supposed to carry over into 2017. Then the losses began. After the season, two players transferred to Central Plains, including Myles Menges, who had made his debut as an impressive quarterback.

Just two days into the practice season, head coach Jason Duvall was relieved of his coaching duties. With Duvall gone, sophomore Peyton Duvall, who was slated to play quarterback in 2017, transferred, leaving interim head coach Alex Birney without a quarterback.

"I think we have some guys on the team who can step in and fill the role," Birney said. "We're probably going to have to change our offense a bit to fit what we have, but I don't think it will be that big of a problem. We have a lot of experience returning on the offensive line so that helps a lot trying to get a new quarterback in the system."

Birney took the changes in stride. A former wideout and safety for the Eagles, Birney has been around the EHS programs enough to feel confident working with the athletes under a new, bigger role.

"I'm pretty confi-



2017 Eagle Football, front row from left: Drew Blake, Colby Prescott, Nathan Monday, Jacob Herrman, and Todd Hamby. Second row: Zeb Hughes, Kody Koetter, Bryce Baker, Landon Robl, Ethan Hayes, and Jayce Christiansen. Third row: Dylan White, Ryan Niles, Cole Kubick, Woodson Corbett, Isaak Fischer, and Kyler Doll. Fourth row: Austin Trimmer, Eli Hernandez, Aiden Ricker, Cameron Stevenson, and Michael Dimitt. Back row : Asst. Coach Dave Kempke, Coach Alex Birney, and Asst. Coach Monte Doll.

(photo courtesy of Lesli O'Neill/EHS)

dent in myself and our team," said Birney. "I've been around them in all three sports. I've been an assistant in football, basketball, and track ever since I moved back so I know them really well. I think we're going to have a lot of fun."

"They guys responded well to the situation we're in and we're just working really hard to do the best we can," said Birney. "I think if we just go out and do the best we can we're going to shock some people."

Sophomore Kyler Doll will get the nod at

quarterback. Doll has played quarterback in the younger ranks and is familiar with the offense.

Leading the returning skill players will be senior Drew Blake out of the back field. Last year Ellinwood was largely a throw-first team so the state-level sprinter Blake carried the ball just 61 times for 304 yards and seven touchdowns.

"There are only two teams who have someone faster than me, so I'm hoping to be able to run all over everybody," Blake said.

Blake will have some

help up front with the offensive line back from



2017 Lyons Lion football team

(photo courtesy of Amanda Dawson/LHS)

Lions starting over after 0-9 season

By MIKE COURSON

The numbers tell the story from a year ago: zero wins, four shutouts, and a defense that allowed nearly 50 points a game.

The Lions are ready to turn the page in 2017. The task will be a tall one in the a Central Kansas League that saw seven of its 11 teams reach the playoffs a year ago. Having just a handful of returners is not likely to

help matters, either.

The good news is Terek Smith returns as quarterback. The 6-2, 205-pound senior emerged as one of the leaders on the basketball team last winter, and those qualities will again be needed on the gridiron.

"Terek has worked hard in the offseason," said LHS coach James Johnston. "Look for big things from him this year."

Up front, Smith will have senior Manuel Moreno (5-9, 200) and sophomore Wade Foster (5-9, 215) blocking for him.

"Manuel has worked hard in the weight room this summer," Johnston said. "Wade has worked hard in the weight room this summer and has gotten a lot stronger."

Sophomore fullback Alejandro Pena (5-9, 220) has also spent time in the

Eagles will be without their top-two receivers a year ago in Tyson Martinez and Duvall, who accounted for more than 1,200 of the team's 1,814 receiving yards.

Ellinwood remains in a competitive district that features Central Plains and Little River. Central Plains returns a stacked lineup in search of a fifth-straight playoff run, and Little River returns most of its squad albeit under a new coach.

"I really think we'll be able to make it to the playoffs this year," Blake said. "I think we have a very good opportunity and I really think our record is going to be pretty good."

weight room and will be the main threat out of the backfield this fall.

Defensively, Johnston highlights a pair of defensive backs in senior Wlisses Landeros (5-10, 165) and junior Chris Goans (5-8, 140).

"We don't have a lot of kids out this season," Johnston said. "Lyons had its best turnout for summer weights in a number of years. There are some good football players on the team, we just don't have a lot of depth. Keeping people healthy will be very important."

Looking down the schedule, the Lions will have to face reigning Class 4A, Div. II champion Pratt on the road. The district portion of the schedule includes road games at Larned and Ellsworth, and a home finale against powerhouse Hoisington.

Ellinwood football 2017

Sept. 1	KINSLEY
Sept. 8	@Otis-Bison
Sept. 15	@Victoria
Sept. 22	NESS CITY (HC)
Sept. 29	@St. John
Oct. 6	GOESSEL
Oct. 13	@Central Plains
Oct. 20	LITTLE RIVER
Oct. 26	@Ganton-Galva

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Lyons football 2017

Sept. 1	HILLSBORO
Sept. 8	@Nickerson
Sept. 15	MINNEAPOLIS
Sept. 22	@Pratt
Sept. 29	@Haven
Oct. 6	SMOKY VALLEY
Oct. 13	@Larned
Oct. 20	@Ellsworth
Oct. 26	HOISINGTON

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