

Menges, Hickel, Ryan lead returners at CPHS

By MIKE COURSON
Western Kansas 8-man teams have dominated the state ranks in recent years. Central Plains won the title in 2014, Spearville won in 2015, and Hoxie won last year's title. Ness City picked up a title in 2012. St. Francis has been a contender in recent years, and Osborne, which is split by Highway 281, won titles in 2013 and 2016.

With five-straight playoff runs, the Oilers have been as good as any team in 8-man football during that run. The goal this year will be to make it back to the playoffs and get by some of those tough western Kansas teams in the early rounds of the playoffs.

"We would like to win our league games in a very competitive league," said head coach Chris Steiner, who has posted a 63-14 record in eight years at CPHS. "We would like to win our district and try to make another deep run in the playoffs."

Steiner will have a nice mix of returning talent and new kids. Four starters are back on offense and five on defense. He takes a big hit on the offensive line with three of last year's starting five gone.

"With fewer numbers than we have had since we became Central Plains, I'm looking forward to seeing how our young kids step up and fill spots to create depth for us," Steiner said.

Last year a little mystery surrounded the quarterback spot as Devin Ryan and Myles Menges battled for the position. Menges went on to rank No. 9 in the state in throwing among 8-man quarterbacks last year and he remains under center for his senior season.

Menges earned several all-state honorable mentions after throwing for 1,059 yards and 19 touchdowns on 57-of-94 passing. He threw just three interceptions. With 340 yards and five



Central Plains senior Myles Menges returns as one of the state's top quarterbacks in 8-man football.

(photo by Mike Courson)

touchdowns on the ground, Menges is also a viable running threat.

With Alex Barton, Dalton Beck, and Kade Beck gone to graduation, Ryan becomes the team's leading returning receiver. He caught four passes for 69 yards and a touchdown last year.

Fourteen different Oilers had at least one carry in 2017. Steiner gets back his leading rusher in senior Alex Hickel, who carried the ball 67 times for 580 yards and 16 touchdowns.

At 6-2, 195 pounds, senior Brett Liebl brings some size back as a returning tight end and wideout. He caught four balls for 52 yards in just five games last year. Senior Mason Doll (6-1, 195 lbs) also returns to the offensive line at the guard position with various league and state honors in his pocket.

Junior Jerred Bieberle will see some time in the backfield after rushing for 179 yards a year ago. Senior Grant Heldstab joins Ryan and Liebl

as a receiving threat.

Up front, seniors Mason Wimmer and Kealy Burris bring size at 255 and 225 pounds, respectively. Sophomore Tyler Holmes will also be fighting for a spot.

The Oilers have shined defensively in recent seasons. Central Plains blanked five opponents in 2017 and three teams in 2016. The Oilers have held 14 of their last 18 regular-season opponents to two scores or fewer.

The 2018 squad will be minus its top-six tacklers from a year ago in Barton, Philip Donecker, Kade Beck, Dalton Beck, Lee Letourneau, and Dylan Lemieux. Lemieux and Letourneau combined for 18 of the team's 23 sacks.

Ryan returns to the secondary after earning some first-team all-league and all-state honors from the cornerback position where he had two interceptions and 52 tackles last season.

Bieberle and Hickel return as linebackers with a combined 76 tackles. Liebl and Doll return to the defensive line after splitting 65 tackles last fall. Liebl recorded three sacks in 2017.

Steiner expects tests early and often this season. The Oilers open on the road against Ness City, then host powerhouse Victoria in week two. Central Plains will see some new teams in district play in Moundridge and Skyline. Steiner expects tough games from Little River and a big game against Macksville to close out the regular season.

"We have to stay healthy," he said. "We have to take one game at a time and we need to improve each week and win games on both sides of the ball. We have lots of returning starters and upperclassmen, but we need some young kids to step up and push returning guys and split some playing time and special team spots to give us more depth."

Central Plains football 2018

Aug. 31	@Ness City
Sept. 7	VICTORIA
Sept. 14	KINSLEY
Sept. 21	@Little River
Sept. 28	ST. JOHN
Oct. 5	@Pratt-Skyline
Oct. 12	MOUNDRIDGE
Oct. 19	@Macksville
Oct. 25	Playoffs TBA

Oiler runners look to build on state experience

By MIKE COURSON
Rhiannon Weber has her cross country teams on the way up. Last year, a pair of Lady Oilers qualified for the state meet. This year, more numbers should put the Oiler boys in the mix for some team results.

"I expect us to be competitive this year," Weber said. "We have a lot of runners returning with several key newcomers who will help our boys' side. In the past, we haven't had enough boys to run as a team but we should be able to compete as a team this year."

Running as freshmen a year ago, Hannah Redetzke and Monica Short finished in the top-10 of the Class 2A regional in Greeley County. The top-four runners in that tough regional made the top-11 at state. Redetzke went on to run 26th at state, and Short rounded out the top-40. This year, that sophomore duo will be joined by classmate Amelia Bailey.

Jaydon Whiterock and Brian Whiterock were the lone two regional runners for the Oiler boys last fall. Jaydon ran 45th in that race. The junior Whiterock boys return, as does senior Paxton Hammeke. Sophomore Ethan Hurley joins this year's squad, and Weber has high expectations for freshman Cole Lamatsch and sophomore Jacob Oberle.

In a sport dominated by young runners, the Lady Oilers sophomore trio is poised to make a splash in 2018. On the boys' side, seven of the top-16 runners at state have graduated, leaving the door open to anyone with the endurance to sneak inside. Weber is ready to see what her kids can do.

"I am looking forward to a fun season with a great group of kids," she said.

The Oilers open the season on Labor Day weekend in Hoisington. This year's league run will be held in Ness City on Oct. 11.

Lady Oilers look to begin new state streak

By MIKE COURSON
A run of state tournaments may have come to an end for the Lady Oiler volleyball team last year, but a 31-7 record was nothing to be ashamed of. With five returning starters back, expectations will remain high for Lisa Crites, back for a third season as head coach at Central Plains.

"We expect our fundamentals to be solid," Crites said. "Early in the season we are stressing all of the little things that will make a big difference as we progress through our season. We are working to develop the chemistry and connections that will help us earn some success. As always, we never want to quit a ball, and we want to learn to push past any personally limiting mindset."

There are some big shoes to fill. Kassidy Pflughoeft was a mainstay on the front row and earned an All-State honorable mention and first-team all-league honors last year. She had 295 kills as a senior to finish her career third on the all-time list at the school.

Taylor Oeser was another four-year player who earned second-team all-league honors last season. With 264 digs last fall, she became the school's all-time leader with 1,012 career digs. Julie Donecker was an efficient hitter, second all-time at the school with a 35.3 percent kill rate. She earned an all-league honorable mention with 171 kills last year.

Crites has two returning seniors back in 2018.



2018 Central Plains Lady Oiler volleyball team

Avery Hurley will serve as a defensive specialist and libero with 244 digs last year. She ranks third all-time at the school with a 96.6 serving percentage. Rylee Cunningham will line up on the right but has played all positions across the net. She sits in fourth place all-time at CPHS in assisted blocks.

A talented trio of juniors also return for the Lady Oilers. In just one season, Rachel Lamatsch climbed into the all-time top-five at CPHS in assists with 272 last year. She's also No. 2 all-time in serving percentage at 96.8.

Addison Crites returns to the middle block after moving to No. 3 all-time in assisted blocks and No. 4 overall in total blocks. Delaney Rugan will pick up some blocking action and also returns as one of

the team's top hitters with 132 kills in 2017.

With the likes of Pflughoeft and Donecker gone up front, and Oeser gone in the back, Crites will look to her returners and some new players to pick up the slack.

"We graduated a majority of our hitting offense, and our back row defense," she said. "We hope to have a balanced front row attack and to get better with our reads on defense."

"This team is working well together and pushing each other in drills and conditioning. We are so excited to see this team progress with all aspects of their game and to find success in individual goals as well as team goals."

Central Plains ruled the Central Prairie League in recent years, but the Lady Oilers will again see a

number of tests from the likes of Ellinwood, Otis-Bison, and St. John. "The CPL looks to be wide open with no clear-cut stand out team," Crites said. "There will be some fierce competition for the league title this season."

The Lady Oilers play a home triangular on Sept. 17 and host another triangular on Oct. 2. The squad will stay in Barton County for the Hoisington tournament on Sept. 22.

Central Plains XC 2018

Sept. 1	@Hoisington
Sept. 6	@Hesston
Sept. 13	@Stafford
Sept. 20	@Larned
Sept. 27	@Ness City
Oct. 4	@Sterling
Oct. 11	CPL @Ness City
Oct. 20	Regionals
Oct. 27	State

Central Plains volleyball 2018

Aug. 30	@Wilson
Sept. 8	@Ellsworth Tourn.
Sept. 15	@Russell Tourn.
Sept. 17	HOME QUAD
Sept. 18	@LaCrosse Tri.
Sept. 22	@Hoisington Trn.
Sept. 25	@Kinsley Tri.
Oct. 2	HOME TRI.
Oct. 4	@Smoky Valley Tri.
Oct. 9	@St. John Tri.
Oct. 13	CPL @Macksville
Oct. 20	Sub-state
Oct. 26-27	State

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