

Cardinals lose another big class, still ready for move to Class 2A

By MIKE COURSON

Hoisington lost its most successful group of seniors in school history after the 2016 season. That slowed down the Cardinals in 2017, but only barely. Zach Baird's squad still posted a 7-4 record and won a playoff game against Cimarron before falling to eventual state runner-up Phillipsburg.

The 2018 season will introduce yet another era of Cardinal football. Now a Class 2A team, Baird has back seven of his 11 offensive starters from a year ago, and five back on defense.

"This group doesn't have a bunch of experience coming back, but I like the way these guys are working," Baird said. "They've had a good summer in the weight room and are off to a good start this

year."

Hoisington took another big hit to graduation. Gone this time is Sean Urban, who put together back-to-back 1,000-yard rushing seasons. He ran for better than 1,500 yards last season.

Rudy Gearhart finished third on last year's squad with 435 yards, and Gearhart and Urban accounted for 16 of the team's 19 receptions.

Defensively, Jake Curtis graduated after leading the Cards with 71 tackles. Urban, Gearhart, Jared Curtis, and Eric Barrett were also big defensively.

But Baird's Cardinals also return a mix of firepower. Senior Xavier Robinson is



coming off a silver-medal at the state track meet. He and fellow senior Braxton

Donovan will play at wideout and double as defensive backs on defense.

Last winter, Wyatt Pedigo earned his first state championship on the wrestling mat. The junior returns to the backfield after rushing for better than 600 yards last year. He will also play linebacker after finishing second on the team with 70 tackles in 2017.

Sophomore Mason Haxton is the other big skill play back in the mix. As a freshman, Haxton threw the ball just 17 times but completed nine passes for 182 yards and a touchdown. He threw three

interceptions. Haxton ran the ball 44 times for 150 yards and three scores. Haxton will become an important part of the secondary on defense this year.

Most of Baird's returners come up front. Jason Bradley, Riley Philbern, Kam Schne-weis, and Chandler Blackwell all return to the offensive line. Dallen Hutchcraft will play tight end. With the exception of Schneweis, who will drop back to play linebacker on defense, that group will also line up on the defensive line.

With a 39-8 record in his first four seasons at Hoisington, Baird's Cardinals have been a staple in the Class 3A playoffs. Hoisington has made the postseason in each of the last six seasons.

The format changes this

fall as Hoisington and a host of other Class 3A programs drop to Class 2A. Instead of the standard four-team district where the top-two teams advance, Hoisington's new district includes Ellsworth, TMP, Minneapolis, Norton, and Phillipsburg. The top-four teams out of each district will advance to the cross-district playoffs for week nine of the season on Oct. 26.

Hoisington opens with back-to-back home games against Pratt and Nickerson, then spends three weeks on the road before returning home to face Ellsworth for Homecoming on Sept. 28. The Cardinals close out the season with two games against Mid-Continent League powers Phillipsburg and Norton to determine the final district standings.

Five returners back for Lady Cardinal volleyball team

Hoisington football 2018

By MIKE COURSON

With just seven wins a year ago, there is plenty of room for improvement from the Hoisington volleyball

team. With five returning varsity players back, including three starters, the opportunity will be there for fifth-year coach Kayci

Hedash.

"I want the girls to work hard," Hedash said. "We don't have a big team so they are going to have to be on the court the whole time. I would like them to have 'competitive fun.'"

The Lady Cards will be a relatively young group in 2018. Liberal Brooke Bachar is gone to graduation, as is Joanna Lockwood, who earned an all-league honorable mention in the middle.

Senior Riley Brungardt leads the group of returners alongside juniors Bailey Sanders, Jenna Urban, and Taylor Boxberger, and sophomore Suzanna Schneider.

"We lost our libero, so our back row is going to take a bit of a hit," said Hedash. "I am hopeful that the other girls will step up and be able to fill her spot. They are willing to put in the work and I'm hoping it will show on the court."

Hoisington gets to play at home several times this year. The Lady Cards will host Clay Center and Smoky Valley in a triangular on Sept. 18. Hoisington's big tournament is scheduled for Sept. 18 and will include teams from Otis-Bison, Central Plains, Phillipsburg, Smith Center, and St. John. The Lady Cards close out the regular season with three-straight triangular at home on Oct. 9, Oct. 11,

and Oct. 15. The finale includes tests against Class 6A Dodge City and Class 5A Great Bend.

Hedash is ready to watch her small squad turn those numbers into a positive this fall. "I am looking forward to seeing the girls grow as players," she said. "They are going to be spending a lot of time on the court, so I hope that they use that to their advantage."

Aug. 31
 Sept. 7
 Sept. 14
 Sept. 21
 Sept. 28
 Oct. 5
 Oct. 12
 Oct. 19
 Oct. 26

PRATT
 NICKERSON
 @Larned
 @TMP
 ELLSWORTH (HC)
 @Minneapolis
 @Phillipsburg
 NORTON
 Playoffs TBA

Hoisington volleyball 2018

Aug. 25	CKL @Halstead
Aug. 30	@Holcomb
Sept. 5	@Larned Tri.
Sept. 11	@Pratt Tri.
Sept. 15	@Russell Tourn.
Sept. 18	HOME TRI
Sept. 22	HOME TOURN.
Sept. 25	@Hesston Tri.
Oct. 2	@Lyons
Oct. 4	@SE Saline Tourn.
Oct. 8	HOME TRI.
Oct. 11	HOME TRI.
Oct. 20	Sub-state
Oct. 26-27	State

Hoisington XC 2018

Sept. 1	HOME
Sept. 6	@Hesston
Sept. 13	@Hays
Sept. 20	@Larned
Sept. 27	@Ness City
Oct. 4	@Sterling
Oct. 11	CKL @Smoky Valley
Oct. 20	Regional
Oct. 27	State @Rim Rock

Good Luck Cardinals!



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