

FALL SPORTS 2015



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Liberty: Patriots ready for loaded OCC slate



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

By Michael Rich

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Steve Hale smiled when he looked at the Olentangy Liberty football team photos that lined his wall. There's been one constant figure in each one over the entire 12-year history of

the program ... him. "We've seen a lot of change," he said. "We used to be a Division II program and we became a D-I program. We've seen lots of growth, we've seen a lot of kids come through here." One of those kids was his son, Jake Hale, who was a Second-Team All-OCC and All-District player for the Patriots last season. He's on the Bobcat football team this season and his father watched him come through the Liberty program since he was in the second grade all the way through his graduation in the spring. "It's been fun, it's been exciting," Hale said. "All of those things and being the only coach here, I guess there's something to that too. We don't talk about it, we don't think about it ... but I guess there's something different, or interesting, or exciting about that." Hale has amassed an 83-47 record while coaching the Patriots and picked up his 100th win as a high school coach last season.

The Patriots finished 9-3, losing to St. Edward (Lakewood) 41-12 in the second round of the Division I tournament. A 6-1 record in the OCC-Central Division was good enough for second in the league, with the only blemish against conference-winner Dublin Coffman. "At the end of the year, we felt like we were playing really well," Hale said. "We beat a very good Toledo Whitmer team pretty soundly and then we challenged the state champion." Liberty loses a group of talented players from last year's squad, though. "We lost a lot of seniors last year," Hale said. "But we've got some solid players coming back to us this year."

Alex Lando passed for 2,045 yards and 22 touchdowns last season, completing 68.2 percent of his passes, and threw nine interceptions. He's back for his senior season and will continue to lead the Liberty offense.

"He looks good so far in camp and obviously we're expecting a lot of things from him in terms of leadership and all of the other stuff that comes with that," Hale said. "I think he'll do the same." Lineman Hunter Littlejohn, who took home First-Team All-OCC and All-District and Second-Team All-State honors, is now plying his trade at Indiana University. "Any time you lose a Big Ten kid, that's a lot to fill, but we feel like our young kids have developed a lot over the offseason and should do a really good job stepping in for him," Hale said. Chris Adams, who was a Second-Team All-OCC pick last season, leaves another hole on the line that will need to be filled.

Nate Brock and Ben Casale return on the offensive line from last year's squad. Brock was an OCC and district honorable mention selection last season. "Those guys are rock solid," Hale said of Brock and Casale. "Brendan Hunter was a kid that did some nice things for us as a junior last year."

One key returnee is lineman A.J. Arcuri, a recent commit to Michigan State, who has played defense for the Patriots for the vast majority of his career. "He played a lot of defense for us last year, but they recruited him as an offensive player," Hale said. "We haven't played him a lot on offense yet, so he may plug in there." Rushing and receiving is interchangeable at Liberty, and the team lost some pretty big production in both areas in Nick Durtschi and Jacob Wiseman.

Durtschi, First-Team All-OCC and Second-Team All-District, rushed for 1,254 yards on 231 carries last season, both team-highs. He also caught 44 passes for 364 yards and four touchdowns. He was second on the team in catches and yards and third in touchdowns as a receiver. "Nick Durtschi was a really good back for us, obviously," Hale said. "Losing him to graduation is significant, but we've got some young guys that have been waiting in the shadows to get a chance. But, certainly, losing Nick — he was a heck of a talent."

Wiseman, Second-Team All-OCC and All-District, had 641 yards on 59 receptions and scored nine touchdowns, leading the team in all categories. He also had 392 yards on the ground and eight touchdowns, both good for second most on the team, and he carried the ball 60 times, third most. Hale was undecided on who exactly would step in to fill the void, but senior Torre Bower or sophomores Trent Davies, John Paolo and Johnny Wiseman are leading candidates at running back.

"We have a few guys there, we're not sure exactly which direction that's going to go, but somebody will step in," Hale said. Bower is the only one of the three that recorded rushing yards last season, going for 53 on 18 carries in three games.

Brendan White and Will Fowler, who was honorable mention All-OCC, both return to help solidify the receiving corps, though they will move around a lot like Wiseman and Durtschi did last season.

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this year, but the same thing that people have seen from us the last four or five years, they'll see again," Hale said. "I think we'll be as athletic as we've ever been on the edge."

White and Fowler also return to the defensive secondary.

Replacing three linebackers will be the biggest challenge on defense. Ed Warinner should slide in at linebacker and the other replacements, "we'll figure it out as they develop," Hale said.

The schedule is a mirror from last season, but last season's home games are now on the road and vice versa.

The Patriots see district rivals Olentangy Orange and Olentangy in the first two weeks of the season. "That's challenging, playing both of them right off the bat, back-to-back," Hale said. They shut out the Pioneers 36-0 last season on the road before losing 35-34 on the last play — a failed two-point conversion — to Olentangy at home. "(Olentangy) is a big game," Hale said. "We know it's worth a lot of computer points. The first goal that we set for our guys is that we want to be district champs, meaning our local district here, and then we want to be league champs — we haven't done that yet in (the OCC-Central) — and then we want to go to the state playoffs and see how we do there."

Liberty plays Dublin Jerome in the third week, a team it beat on the road 35-12 last season. The Patriots will host the Celtics, who finished 4-6 last season. The OCC-Central is full of perennial powers — Upper Arlington, Dublin Coffman and Hilliard Davidson — and the Patriots play all three, along with Marysville, on the road this season, making it more difficult. "One thing we have in this league (is) good teams with really good coaches," Hale said. "Our league is going to be incredibly challenging with the level of skill players — there's a considerable number of Division I scholarship players that are well coached."

Michael Rich can be found on Twitter @mrichdelgazette.

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Schedule

Aug. 28 vs. Orange, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 4 @ Olentangy, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 11 vs. Dublin Jerome, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 18 vs. Central Crossing, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 25 @ Upper Arlington, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 2 @ Marysville, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 9 vs. Westland, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 16 @ Hilliard Davidson, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 23 @ Dublin Coffman, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 30 vs. Thomas Worthington, 7:30 p.m.

NAME	YR	Jersey #	Positions	Height	Weight	Years Lettered
Acker, Austin	SO	76	OT/DT	6'0	300	
Anthony, Jordan	SR	6	WR/LB	5'6	150	2
Ash, Aaron	JR	36	F/LB	5'9	170	
Atiyeh, Ben	FR	85	WR/DB	5'7	140	
Baesman, Kyle	FR	86	WR/DB	5'10	131	
Bart, Brandon	FR	37	WR/DB	5'6	120	
Bisang, Nathan	JR	3	WR/LB	5'9	170	2
Bradburn, Nick	JR	48	FB/LB	5'10	185	1
Brown, Les	JR	21	WR/DB	5'5	140	1
Cochran, Wes	JR	79	OT/DT	6'0	295	1
Cooper, Nick	SR	7	WR/DB	5'9	150	2
Damico, Leo	SO	72	OL/DL	5'10	225	
Doods, Josh	SR	63	C/OG/DT	5'6	220	1
Faulk, Duncan	FR	13	WR/DB	5'9	130	
Fout, Jacob	SR	56	OT/DT	6'1	260	1
Garber, Zach	FR	45	WR/LB	5'9	160	
Garrett, Heath	SO	34	FB/LB	5'9	160	
Goble, Ethan	FR	24	WR/DB	5'9	140	
Hartman, Brady	FR	54	OL/DL	5'7	150	

Haywood, Matt	SO	71	C/DL	6'0	240	
Herriot, Sam	FR	62	OL/DL	5'10	165	
Hogg, Ian	SR	2	WR/DB	6'2	185	2
Hogg, Tanner	SO	9	WR/DB	6'0	170	
Honeter, Kolton	FR	31	F/LB	5'10	180	
Hurt, Cameron	FR	14	WR/DB	5'4	120	
Huss, Nick	FR	1	WR/DB	5'9	130	
Kidwell, Ben	SR	5	FB/LB	5'10	185	2
Kidwell, Nick	JR	32	WR/LB	6'2	150	
Man, Jacob	SR	18	QB/P/DB	5'9	155	1
Marshall, Kellen	SO	12	QB/DB	5'11	170	
Mayo, Daryl	JR	33	FB/LS/DE	5'9	168	1
McCully, Blayde	JR	40	FB/LB	6'0	220	2
Mckean, Jack	FR	52	OL/DL	5'11	180	
Miller, Gabe	SR	11	WR/KR/DB	5'11	170	3
Minshall, Nate	SO	64	OL/DL	5'10	190	
Mirka, Cameron	SO	73	OL/DL	6'1	215	
Murphy, Colin	SO	80	WR/DE	6'3	160	
Owens, Grant	FR	8	QB/LB	6'0	175	
Park, Andy	SR	75	OT/DE	6'2	245	3
Pennington, Travis		20	WR/LB	6'0	170	
Penry, Dylan	FR	77	C/DT	5'11	215	
Pentecost, Matt	FR	88	WR/LB	6'2	190	
Pressley, Mitchell	JR	68	OL/DL	6'5	225	
Prozapas, Oleg	JR	82	WR/DE	6'0	170	
Purcell, Kyle	JR	17	WR/DB	6'0	140	
Santillan, Chris	JR	35	WR/DB	5'9	170	2
Schilling, Tim	SR	15	QB/WR/DB	5'10	165	2
Schnieder, Zach	SO	84	WR/DE	5'10	150	
Schumm, Matt	JR	22	FB/LB	5'10	190	2
Scharff, Sam	SR	38	PK/P	5'7	145	1
Smothers, Jack	SO	57	C/DL	5'11	220	
Spaulding, Ben	JR	4	QB/LB	6'0	170	1
Staley, Paul	FR	28	FB/LB	5'11	175	
Tarullo, Jordan	JR	55	OL	6'0	270	
Templeton, Ryan	SO	19	WR/DB	5'11	150	
Tubaugh, Nick	SR	53	OG/DT	5'9	225	1
Walls, Eli	SR	67	OL/DL	6'3	285	2
Webb, Brandon	SR	74	OG/DE	6'0	200	1
Wells, Braxton	JR	10	WR/DE	6'2	190	1
Westover, Todd	SR	43	WR/DB	6'2	175	2
Wycoff, Gardon	SR	90	OG/DE	6'2	210	3
Wycoff, Teren	SO	25	FB/LB	6'2	215	1

Matt Stephens	Head Coach	WR's/DB's
Chris Craig	Def. Coord.	LB's
Deke Hocker	Off. Coord.	QB's
Tom Glissman	Off. Line	
Nick Powell	Def. Line	
Zach Henzel	Frosh. Coach	RB's
Mike Pennington	Varsity Asst.	OL/DL
Eric Pettit	MS Head Coach	
Mike Marshall	Asst. Coach	
Tommy McCallister	Asst. Coach	
Jaime Man	Asst. Coach	

Orange: Young Pioneers hungry for improvement



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

By Michael Rich
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Olentangy Orange football coach Zebb Schroeder is building a football program. Open since 2009, the Pioneers have only one playoff appearance and one conference title. In 2013, they were 1-9, so when Schroeder took over last year, he knew that he would have to build from the ground up.

Last year, they took some lumps – outscored 74-0 combined by both district rivals Olentangy and Olentangy Liberty. But they got non-conference wins over Milford and Hilliard Bradley and OCC-Capital wins over county-rival Delaware Hayes and Franklin Heights, the latter of which took a 22-point rally in the fourth quarter to overcome a 21-point deficit. “We were a very young team,” Schroeder said. “There were some games we were only playing four or five seniors. A lot of sophomores got action last year.” Schroeder is just trying to stay the course. He’s got 33 sophomores and only 16 seniors on a roster of 69. “We are in the process of building,” Schroeder said. “We’ve added 17 or 18 kids from last year’s numbers. We’ve got a good size freshman class and really good numbers at the middle school (level) right now.”

Schroeder, 15-25 in four years as a coach at Orange and Delaware Hayes, says the biggest key for his team is replacing bigs from both his lines, including Sam Damko, Kenny MacMillan, Kyle Pennington and Nick Lee. “We lost some key guys up front,” Schroeder said. “Those guys are going to be tough to replace because they were tough, good players ... and smart players, too.” Damko was a first team All-OCC pick as a defensive lineman and MacMillan was second team All-OCC, going both ways. The biggest key on both lines is staying healthy. Schroeder says that they haven’t developed enough depth behind Tyler Houston, Jake Fisher, Nic Melsap, Matthew Parker, Zach Skidmore and Albert Von Fossen — who will all play both ways either full time or at some point. “We’re lacking numbers — just big kids in the junior and senior class,” Schroeder said. “We have some good kids. The ones we have are pretty good. But we just don’t have an abundance of older lineman. So we’re going to have to find some sophomores — and we have a very good sophomore class — to kind of fill in the holes up front.”

Schroeder said the linebacker position was similar to the lines. Christian Albertini, Connor Ryan, A.J. Glass and Blake Skuratowicz all return to the Pioneers with some experience. “A.J. and Christian run really well — they’re not the biggest kids, but they run really well,” Schroeder said. “Blake is the thumper in that group — he’s big, almost 230 pounds. He’s a very physical football player.”

Orange will have to replace departed quarterback Will Phillis, who transferred to Hilliard Bradley over the summer. Schroeder feels like the quarterback situation is under control

with junior J.D. Dayhuff and sophomore Luke Schmelling. “We felt like we had two real good sophomore quarterbacks (last season),” Schroeder said. “(Dayhuff and Schmelling) are just a joy to coach. They are the guys that really care, they really think about the game (and) they lead by example. We’re in a really good situation with those guys.”

Schmelling played varsity lacrosse as a freshman last spring. “(He) is a very good athlete, he throws the ball really well and he’s a competitor,” Schroeder said. Schroeder feels the biggest strength of his team is the skill positions. Orange will have the services of last year’s leading rusher Tyler Lichter, who gained 466 yards on the ground on 104 carries and scored five touchdowns. “He missed some time last year — he dealt with a really bad groin injury,” Schroeder said. “But, he’s in great shape — he’s put on about 20 pounds from last year and he’s a very dynamic runner.”

They lose the team’s second-leading rusher, Roark Vaile-James, who ran for 409 yards and a touchdown on 83 carries. Bobby Eleyet should get more touches this season at running back. He was fourth on the team in rushing last year with 89 yards on 18 carries in limited action. “He’s quick, he’s very fast ... he’s just a tough football player,” Schroeder said. Matthew Collins, who led the team with 405 yards and five touchdowns on 27 catches, and Michael Sargent, who led the team with 30 receptions, are both back. Hunter Shepherd is back after catching 15 passes for 213 yards and a touchdown last year. “(Collins and Shepherd) will kind of serve as hybrid receivers and runners,” Schroeder said. “We’ll try to get them the ball in space.” Schroeder said the key to his team’s success will be getting the ball to players who can make plays because quickness and speed in the skill positions are strengths.

Michael Kowalksi returns at safety. Zach Pfeifer and Josh Forrester both started at corner last year and return. Steven Collins also returns from last year. There’s a wealth of competition in the defensive secondary. Schroeder said there are, “10 kids that could go out on a Friday night and play varsity football from an athletic standpoint.”

“I think it really helps those guys concentrate in practice and narrow down their assignment because they want to be nit-picked — they want to be perfect,” he said. The Pioneers will open at district-rival Olentangy Liberty. The Patriots beat Orange 38-0 to open last season. “They’re going to be very good,” he said. “They’re just so solid right now. I’m sure they have a ton of confidence coming off their playoff year last year. At some point, though, they’re 17-year-old kids just like we’re 17-year-old kids.”

Orange has only one victory each over district-rivals Liberty and Olentangy since opening in 2009. It beat Liberty 22-8 in 2011 and Olentangy 27-6 in 2009. The Pioneers travel to Bishop Watterson in Week 2 before playing Westerville Central in the home opener in Week 3. “The non-conference is quite a load, but we’re excited about the challenge,” Schroeder said. “Our kids, our coaches, our community — we want to be the best. We’re excited about the challenge. We want to play the best teams in Central Ohio and see where we stack up.” Watterson, a perennial power, struggled to a 2-8 record last season with wins over Walnut Ridge and St. Charles.

Westerville Central, on the other hand, made it all the way to the regional final before losing to eventual state champion St. Edward (Lakewood) — the school that ended Liberty’s playoff run in the previous round. “We want to be challenged in the early going,” Schroeder said. “We want to see how our kids respond to a tough situation.”

The conference schedule remains the same as last year, except for the home sites. The Pioneers will host Olentangy on Sept. 25, the second conference game. “Olentangy is the champ,” Schroeder said. “They kind of waltzed their way through last year and until somebody knocks them off, they’re probably the favorite (this season).”

Michael Rich can be found on Twitter @mrichdelgazette.

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Schedule

Aug. 28 @ Liberty, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 4 @ Watterson, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 11 vs. Westerville Central, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 18 @ New Albany, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 25 vs. Olentangy, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 2 vs. Mount Vernon, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 9 @ Delaware Hayes, 7:30 p.m.
 Oct. 16 vs. Franklin Heights, 7:30 p.m.
 Oct. 23 vs. Big Walnut, 7:30 p.m.
 Oct. 30 @ Worthington Kilbourne, 7:30 p.m.

PLAYER	GRADE	NUMBER	HT	WT
ALBERTINI, CHRISTIAN	11	1	5'10	185
LICHTER, TYLER	12	2	6'	190
COLLINS, MATTHEW	12	3	5'7	165
SHEPHERD, HUNTER	12	4	5'9	155
PARKER, MATTHEW	12	5	6'1	180
ELEYET, BOBBY	11	6	5'10	175
COLLINS, STEVEN	11	7	6'0	177
KUNCHAL, ALEX	11	8	5'10	175
COLLINS, TREVOR	11	9	5'10	165
TROMBETTI, MICHAEL	12	10	6'0	190
SARGENT, MICHAEL	12	11	5'10	156
DAYHUFF, J.D.	11	12	6'2	175
SARGENT, THOMAS	10	13	5'11	145
SHELTON, JORDAN	10	14	6'3	170
SCHMELING, LUKE	10	15	6'0	165
NEER, JACK	10	16	6'1	180
FORRESTER, JOSH	12	17	5'10	165
ALMOND, SAM	11	18	5'11	160
STARN, GRAHAM	10	20	5'11	167
RANSOM, BRANDON	10	21	5'10	155
APPLEGATE, JACK	10	22	5'11	190
PFEIFER, ZACH	11	23	5'9	160
RODGERS, JAYDEN	10	24	6'0	155
FORBES, RYAN	10	25	5'8	140
CARDWELL, STEPHEN	11	26	5'9	160
DELELLES, GARET	11	27	6'1	165
RUNYON, GARRETT	10	28	5'10	135
KOWALSKI, MICHAEL	12	29	5'10	165
LISATH, NOAH	12	30	5'10	175
WOODS, DAJUAN	10	31	5'10	164
GLASS, AJ	12	32	5'10	175
FISHER, ZANE	10	33	6'1	162
SARPONG, JOEL	10	34	5'11	150
MITCHELL, KIEGAN	10	37	6'	150
ALVAREZ, SANTINO	11	38	5'9	185
ANSAH-TUTU, KOFI	10	39	6'	155
WATSON, BRIAN	10	40	5'9	148
RYAN, CONNOR	12	41	5'11	173
HOUSTON, BRYCE	10	42	5'11	200
SENSIBAUGH, JIMMY	10	43	5'11	162
GYIMAH, JEFF	11	44	5'10	220
ALASTI, ALEX	10	45	5'10	167
HARTER, NOAH	10	46	5'11	158
SKURATOWICZ, BLAKE	12	48	6'2	229
MELSOP, NIC	12	50	6'5	230
BRIGGS, CARSON	10	51	6'0	180
LONG, LUKE	10	52	5'9	170
HOUSTON, TYLER	12	54	6'3	245
GROTENLUSCHEN, TRENT	10	55	6'1	175
LOFTIS, DYLAN	11	56	6'2	208

SKIDMORE, ZACH	11	57	6'2	235
PATRACUOLLO, NICK	11	58	5'9	240
ROW, DREW	10	59	5'10	167
HOUSTON, JACK	10	60	5'11	205
PARKER, NATHAN	10	61	6'	203
CREASAP, BRAYDEN	10	63	6'0	220
HUTT, HUNTER	10	64	5'10	192
GADRIM, NATE	10	66	6'4	220
FISHER, JAKE	12	68	6'1	235
VAN FOSSEN, ALBERT	12	70	6'3	245
ZINN, JAKEB	10	72	6'1	217
RANKIN, JAMES	11	73	5'10	240
CLIFFORD, MITCH	11	77	6'0	277
PITTENGER, TRACE	10	78	5'11	285
COATES, TJ	11	80	6'3	185
METCALF, JOE	11	85	5'10	150
KUFRIN, KYLE	10	86	6'1	202
SIMON, GRANT	10	87	5'9	145
MILNER, EMERSON	11	88	6'3	210



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Big Walnut New playmakers ready to step up for Eagles

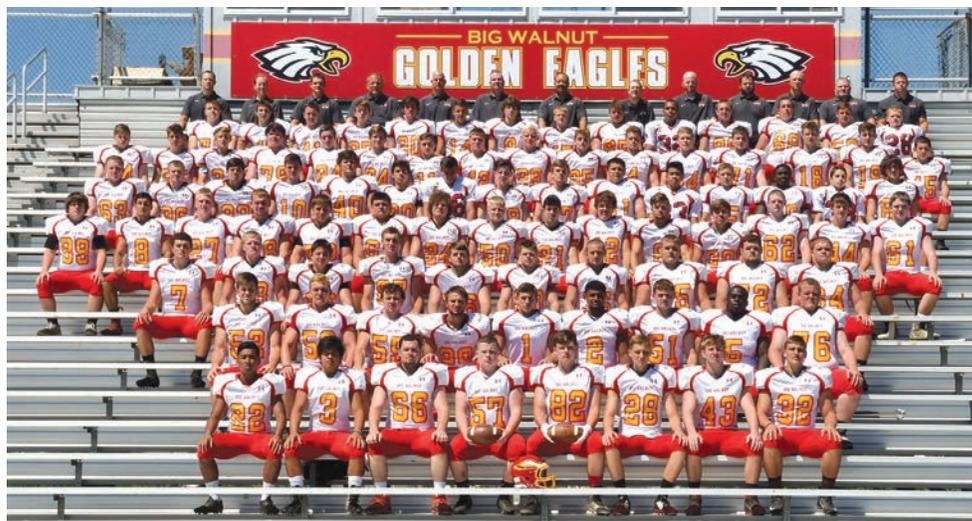


Photo Credit: Lenny C. Lepola

By Ben Stroup
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Adjustments. Football is all about adjustments. Winning boils down to them in all sports, but football is catered to making changes. What do you think halftime's for?

Big Walnut certainly used the break as a time to regroup in 2014, turning close games to convincing wins and flip-flopping deficits on the way to a solid 7-3 campaign — one which saw the Golden Eagles win each of their last four games. BW was just decent in the first halves last fall. The Eagles outscored opponents 68-66 in first quarters and were outscored 103-80 in second quarters.

The third and fourth? They outscored teams 69-27 and 84-39, respectively. That's getting it done. "In high school football, teams are going to come in and give you their best shot," Big Walnut coach Joe Weaver said. "You have to be willing to adjust, and give credit to our kids ... that's what they did. We also have a great coaching staff that was able to make those adjustments."

The Eagles are adjusting this offseason, too ... adjusting to the loss of several standouts from last year's squad. Quarterback Jordan Wall and the two-headed monster of Christian Johnson and Brayden Shepherd — the team's top three rushers from last season — are gone. Johnson led the ground attack with 1,330 yards and 12 touchdowns. Shepherd was close behind, finishing with 973 yards and a team-leading 14 rushing touchdowns, while Wall ran for 318 yards and five TDs.

Despite the losses, Weaver said the adjustments will be strictly personnel related. The Eagles are going to continue to do what they do best. "If you change everything up because you graduate some kids, it's kind of disrespectful to the kids coming in," he said. "It's the next group's job to step up, and the kids want that challenge."

Fortunately, no matter who is getting the ball, and who is giving it to them, Big Walnut is solid as ever up front.

Justin Nelson (6-5, 230), Ethan Hale (6-1, 265), Wayne Lambert (6-1, 290), Richard Kuts (6-0, 282), Tyler Hogg (6-1, 220), Jason Trainer (6-0, 200) and Aaron Zieg (6-1, 334), all seniors, are back on the offensive line. Junior Isaac Swartz (5-11, 265) also returns.

"We want to run the ball, and those guys are the reason we can do it," Weaver said.

"They play well together, that's the biggest thing ... they play as a unit. We are going to go as they go, and they bring that attitude to practice." The task of replacing Wall, who completed 66 of his 133 passes for 1,037 yards and seven TDs last season, will be relegated to senior Michael Sensi (5-10, 186), who threw just two passes last season, or sophomore John Sutton (6-0, 185).

"The two guys really push each other, which is nice to have in a quarterback battle," Weaver said. "They are competing for the same spot, but they want each other to be successful." Senior Cole Weaver (5-7, 170), juniors Evan Garcia (5-8, 180) and Philip Roberto (6-0, 170) and sophomore Tyler Ronk (6-1, 190) will make up a largely inexperienced backfield.

Seniors Isaac Lucas (6-2, 195), Joe Kontul (6-2, 180), Josh Seabrook (6-3, 227) and Hayden Bowmar (6-3, 195), junior Cody Priestas (6-5, 215) and sophomore Chase Adams (6-0, 155) will look to replace Joe Muench, Alec Evans and Joey Mazzi, the team's top receiving threats from last season, and seniors Hayden D'Amico (6-1, 215) and Jacob Trott (6-2, 215) will see time at tight end.

Weaver said his defense will be anchored by a physical group of lineman including seniors Chukwuka Akusoba (5-10, 260), Daniel Zitello (6-1, 220), Charlie Klinedenst (5-10, 190) and Sam Edwards (5-9, 215), and juniors Zach Pruyn (6-4, 225) and Sandy Smith (5-8, 195). Hale will also see time on the defensive side. "We are going to rotate a lot of guys in," Weaver said. "They all have physical mindsets, and we want the D line to control the line of scrimmage."

The Eagles will run a 3-4 again this fall, with senior linebackers Joey Schooley (6-3, 251), Jarrett Adkins (6-0, 190) and Dalton Edwards (5-6, 165), juniors Sam Boyd (5-11, 170) and Kobe Swackhammer (6-3, 197), and sophomores Brandon Mosher (6-0, 193) and Abe Myers (6-2, 200) rounding out the unit. Lucas, Roberto and seniors Donovan Chhuom (5-6, 160), Jesse Temple (5-8, 170) and Anthony Pisano (5-8, 170), along with juniors Nick Ulery (6-0, 170) and John West (5-10, 170), will patrol the secondary.

As always, the Eagles want to compete for a conference crown. Beyond that, the expectation is to continually improve. "The main thing is, each day we just want to get a little bit better," Weaver said. "Our expectations will grow as the team does. We like what we have, the biggest thing is never being satisfied. Each week, 1-10, will be a grind. We have to get better each week, and the guys seem ready to do that."

Follow Ben Stroup on Twitter @delgazette_ben.

Schedule

Aug. 28 @ Mansfield Senior, 7 p.m.
Sept. 4 vs. Canal Winchester, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 11 @ St. Charles, 7 p.m.
Sept. 18 @ Olentangy, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 25 vs. Delaware Hayes, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 2 vs. Worthington Kilbourne, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 9 @ Mount Vernon, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 16 vs. New Albany, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 23 @ Orange, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 30 vs. Franklin Heights, 7:30 p.m.

#	Name	Grade	HT	WT
1	Cole Weaver	12	5'7"	170
2	Josh Seabrook	12	6'3"	227
3	Jesse Temple	12	5'8"	170
4	David Hunt	10	5'7"	184
5	Chukwuka Akusoba	12	5'10"	260
6	Nick Ulery	11	6'0"	170
7	Jacob Trott	12	6'2"	215
8	Philip Roberto	11	6'0"	170
9	Chase Adams	10	6'0"	155
10	Sam Boyd	11	5'11"	170
11	Matt Priestas	10	5'7"	158
12	Kaleb Kocak	11	6'1"	195
13	Hayden Bowmar	12	6'3"	195

14	John Sutton	10	6'0"	185
15	Josh Kem	11	5'9"	158
16	Michael Sensi	12	5'10"	186
17	Drew Kurtz	10	5'7"	120
18	Kaleb Phillips	10	6'4"	204
19	Tyler H Ronk	10	6'1"	190
20	Isaac Lucas	12	6'2"	195
21	John West	11	5'10"	170
22	Donovan Chhuom	12	5'6"	160
23	Evan Garcia	11	5'8"	180
24	Kobe Swackhammer	11	6'3"	197
25	Colin White	10	5'11"	155
26	Noah McKinney	11	5'8"	165
27	Cody Priestas	11	6'5"	215
28	Joe Kontul	12	6'2"	180
29	Abe Myers	10	6'2"	200
30	Colton Hogg	10	6'0"	180
31	James Hanly	10	6'0"	150
32	Daniel Zitello	12	6'1"	220
33	Tyler A Ronk	11	6'0"	190
34	Brandon Mosher	10	6'0"	193
35	Hunter Garee	10	5'5"	135
36	Anthony Pisano	12	5'8"	170
37	Alex Ramsey	11	5'10"	193
38	Lane Davis	11	5'7"	129
39	Keaton Lyles	10	6'0"	220
40	Jeff Tutorow	11	6'0"	245
41	Zach Bare	10	5'6"	148
42	Curtis Bowmar	10	6'1"	211
43	Charlie Klindednst	12	5'10"	190
44	Cole Amato	11	6'3"	185
45	Kyle Disbennett	10	5'7"	138
46	Kyle Hand	10	5'8"	130
47	Garrett Gollihugh	11	5'10"	146
48	Illya Geraci	10	5'10"	155
49	Nick Smoke	10	5'6"	139
50	Tyler Shaw	11	5'8"	210
51	Jason Trainer	12	6'0"	200
52	Justin Nelson	12	6'5"	230
53	Isaac Swartz	11	5'11"	265
54	Luke Apple	10	5'9"	190
55	Jarrett Adkins	12	6'0"	190
56	Branden Anderson	12	5'9"	200
57	Sam Edwards	12	5'9"	215
58	Chase Conard	10	5'11"	170
59	Joey Schooley	12	6'3"	251
60	Dalton Edwards	12	5'6"	165
61	Noah Mozek	10	6'1"	240
62	Chris Hale	11	6'2"	225
63	Noah Mason	10	5'10"	213
64	Ethan Hale	12	6'1"	265
65	Tanner Daniels	10	6'1"	235
66	Tyler Hogg	12	6'1"	220
67	Luke Starkey	11	6'2"	266
68	Trevor Shuster	10	5'11"	224
70	Sandy Smith	11	5'8"	195

71	Justin Stooksbury	10	6'1"	200
72	Richard Kuts	12	6'0"	282
73	Zander Kelly	10	5'10"	224
74	Caleb Cagle	10	6'0"	200
75	Wayne Lambert	12	6'1"	290
76	Aaron Zieg	12	6'1"	334
78	Zack Pruyn	11	6'4"	225
79	Caleb Pierce	10	6'3"	280
80	Owen Ramsey	11	5'10"	149
81	Gabe Ball	11	6'1"	235
82	Hayden D'Amico	12	6'1"	215
83	Corbin Willison	10	6'4"	173
84	Jackson Seiple	10	6'0"	160
85	Shane Swartzentruber	10	6'0"	160
87	Tommy Fleser	12	6'5"	185
88	Tyler Shuster	10	5'10"	200
89	Evan Alvey	10	5'7"	211
90	Simon Srisongkham	11	6'1"	155

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Buckeye Valley: Barons primed for productive season



Photo Credit: BV

By Ben Stroup
bstroup@delgazette.com

Buckeye Valley won just a handful of football games last season, four to be exact, but two of those came in the final two weeks of the season — wins which had an invigorating impact on the team as it headed into the offseason. Couple the strong finish — a 28-13 win over Upper Sandusky and 12-0 shutout of North Union in back-to-back weeks — with the luxury of an entire offseason, something Matt Stephens and his staff didn't have entering last season, and the Barons are pretty happy with where they're at.

"It's been a drastic change from year one to two," Stephens said. "One nice thing was we ended the season with the two wins to give us some momentum. After that, I had a core group of guys not participating in a winter sport who were working on things everyday in the weight room." The payoff came quickly ... and word spread. "They saw themselves getting stronger and that becomes contagious," the coach said. "Another group joined up in the spring and, looking back on the gains we've made — increases in bench, squat, everything — we're much stronger physically. We've had good buy-in from the guys."

Leading returners include captains Gardon Wycoff (6-2, 210), Eli Walls (6-3, 285) and Ben Kidwell (5-10, 185). "I'm pleased that the team looks to those guys for leadership," Stephens said. Wycoff and Walls, both seniors, will anchor what should be a solid offensive line while adding depth to the defensive front. Kidwell, meanwhile, just a junior, will return to the backfield where he led the team in rushing last year with 506 yards and six touchdowns. He also hauled in 20 receptions covering 180 yards to go with three more TDs.

Stephens said senior Tim Schilling (5-10, 165) and junior Ben Spaulding (6-0, 170) could both see some time running the offense behind center. "Those two are locked in a true competition for the quarterback spot right now," he said. "I don't really know who has the upper hand, but they can both lead the team down the field." Schilling got the bulk of the reps last season, completing 94 of his 152 passes for 880 yards. He had eight touchdown passes, but threw 10 interceptions. He was a threat to run, too, finishing as the team's second-leading rusher with 304 yards and two TDs.

Spaulding threw just 16 passes last season, but completed 10 of them covering 70 yards. He finished the season with one touchdown pass and one pick.

Senior Gabe Miller (5-11, 170) returns as the team's leading receiver, but will be head-

ing up a young group of playmakers on the perimeter. "Gabe is a guy who is going to have a big year," Stephens said. "He's an example of a guy who has gotten himself physically prepared. He's explosive, hard to catch and can make guys miss."

Miller finished with 37 grabs for 282 yards and four touchdowns last fall, but the other three projected starters — senior Ian Hogg (6-2, 185), junior Nathan Bisang (5-9, 170) and junior Braxton Wells (6-2, 190) — are new. The trio has a combined four receptions. Stephens said he's still trying to find the best five to anchor the offensive line, but Walls will return to his center spot, senior Andy Park (6-2, 245), who started all 10 games at tackle last season, is back, Wycoff can play at either tackle or guard, seniors Josh Dodds (5-6, 220) and Brandon Webb (6-0, 200) are both returning lettermen, and senior Jacob Fout (6-1, 260) and junior Wes Cochran (6-0, 295) are battling for a spot as well.

The defense, coming off the season-ending shutout of the Wildcats, returns quite a few standouts, including first team All-State defensive back Nick Cooper (5-9, 150), who the Barons hope will be ready for the opener after rupturing his spleen during the baseball season. "Nick is a little banged up, but he should get full clearance this month," Stephens said of his senior corner. "He had seven picks last year and five as a sophomore, so we'd like to get him back Week 1. Fortunately, he's not a guy that needs a lot of reps, so he should be able to step right in when he's ready."

Junior Chris Santillan (5-9, 170) will likely hold down the other side of the field while Hogg can step in as a third corner if needed. Safeties include returning senior Todd Westover (6-2, 175), Miller and Schilling, who could see some time there if he's not behind center. "Todd is a smart kid who gets us into coverages," Stephens said. "Gabe is probably our best kid athletically and Schilling played a little safety as a sophomore ... I know he doesn't shy away from contact." Sophomore Teren Wycoff (6-2, 215), the younger brother of Gardon, started all 10 games at linebacker last year — something he'll look to do again from his middle backer position. Teren was the team's leading tackler as a freshman (50 solo, 49 assisted and three for loss).

Junior Blayde McCully (6-0, 220) and senior Jordan Anthony (5-6, 150) will also provide support behind the line. "Blayde is a physical kid who got crazy in the weight room this offseason," Stephens said, "and Jordan, while a little guy, is tough to block on the edge. He's tough as nails." Kidwell and Spaulding could also help out at linebacker while Walls, Park, Gardon Wycoff, Cochran, Wells, senior Nick Tubaugh (5-9, 225) and junior Daryl Mayo (5-9, 168) will be part of a constantly rotating defensive line in an effort to keep the guys fresh.

Senior kicker Sam Scharff (5-7, 145), who had a standout season last fall, will also be back to headline the special teams. Scharff made all five of his field goals (long of 38) and 16 of his 19 point-after attempts. From a scheme standpoint, Stephens said this year's squad will run the same type of stuff last year's did ... the difference being the players will be more familiar with how things should be run.

"Offensively, we'll be in a one-back look 95 percent of the time," Stephens said. "We will be in shotgun, spread and multiple ... we want to spread the field and get guys out of the box. "Defensively, we will still be in 4-3. I love speed on D. We did a nice job turning people over last year and will look to do the same again."

Stephens said this year's group is determined to post a winning record, something BV hasn't done since going 7-3 in 2012. "The guys put a lot of time and effort into this thing, and we want to get this thing turned around," the coach said. "I don't see 5-5 as an improvement. We want a winning record. With a winning record, you can win your conference. If you win your conference, you can get in the playoffs."

Buckeye Valley opens the season Aug. 28 against host Hayes. The Barons will host Columbus Whetstone and Johnstown the next two weeks to smooth out the non-conference portion of their schedule, then travel to Galion to open the MOAC slate.

Follow Ben Stroup on Twitter @delgazette_ben.

-- Schedule

Aug. 28 @ Delaware Hayes, 7 p.m.

Sept. 4 vs. Whetstone, 7 p.m.

Sept. 11 vs. Johnstown-Monroe, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 18 @ Galion, 7 p.m.

Sept. 25 @ Fairbanks, 7 p.m.

Oct. 2 vs. Jonathan Alder, 7 p.m.

Oct. 9 vs. Pleasant, 7 p.m.

Oct. 16 @ River Valley, 7 p.m.

Oct. 23 vs. Marion Harding, 7 p.m.

Oct. 30 @ North Union, 7 p.m.

NAME	YR	Jersey #	Positions	Height	Weight	Years Lettered
Acker, Austin	SO	76	OT/DT	6'0	300	
Anthony, Jordan	SR	6	WR/LB	5'6	150	2
Ash, Aaron	JR	36	F/LB	5'9	170	
Atiyeh, Ben	FR	85	WR/DB	5'7	140	
Baesman, Kyle	FR	86	WR/DB	5'10	131	
Bart, Brandon	FR	37	WR/DB	5'6	120	
Bisang, Nathan	JR	3	WR/LB	5'9	170	2
Bradburn, Nick	JR	48	FB/LB	5'10	185	1
Brown, Les	JR	21	WR/DB	5'5	140	1
Cochran, Wes	JR	79	OT/DT	6'0	295	1
Cooper, Nick	SR	7	WR/DB	5'9	150	2
Damico, Leo	SO	72	OL/DL	5'10	225	
Doods, Josh	SR	63	C/OG/DT	5'6	220	1
Faulk, Duncan	FR	13	WR/DB	5'9	130	
Fout, Jacob	SR	56	OT/DT	6'1	260	1
Garber, Zach	FR	45	WR/LB	5'9	160	
Garrett, Heath	SO	34	FB/LB	5'9	160	
Goble, Ethan	FR	24	WR/DB	5'9	140	
Hartman, Brady	FR	54	OL/DL	5'7	150	
Haywood, Matt	SO	71	C/DL	6'0	240	
Herriot, Sam	FR	62	OL/DL	5'10	165	
Hogg, Ian	SR	2	WR/DB	6'2	185	2
Hogg, Tanner	SO	9	WR/DB	6'0	170	
Honeter, Kolton	FR	31	F/LB	5'10	180	
Hurt, Cameron	FR	14	WR/DB	5'4	120	
Huss, Nick	FR	1	WR/DB	5'9	130	
Kidwell, Ben	SR	5	FB/LB	5'10	185	2
Kidwell, Nick	JR	32	WR/LB	6'2	150	
Man, Jacob	SR	18	QB/P/DB	5'9	155	1
Marshall, Kellen	SO	12	QB/DB	5'11	170	
Mayo, Daryl	JR	33	FB/LS/DE	5'9	168	1
McCully, Blyde	JR	40	FB/LB	6'0	220	2
Mckean, Jack	FR	52	OL/DL	5'11	180	
Miller, Gabe	SR	11	WR/KR/DB	5'11	170	3
Minshall, Nate	SO	64	OL/DL	5'10	190	
Mirka, Cameron	SO	73	OL/DL	6'1	215	
Murphy, Colin	SO	80	WR/DE	6'3	160	
Owens, Grant	FR	8	QB/LB	6'0	175	
Park, Andy	SR	75	OT/DE	6'2	245	3
Pennington, Travis		20	WR/LB	6'0	170	
Penry, Dylan	FR	77	C/DT	5'11	215	
Pentecost, Matt	FR	88	WR/LB	6'2	190	
Pressley, Mitchell	JR	68	OL/DL	6'5	225	
Prozapas, Oleg	JR	82	WR/DE	6'0	170	
Purcell, Kyle	JR	17	WR/DB	6'0	140	
Santillan, Chris	JR	35	WR/DB	5'9	170	2
Schilling, Tim	SR	15	QB/WR/DB	5'10	165	2
Schnieder, Zach	SO	84	WR/DE	5'10	150	
Schumm, Matt	JR	22	FB/LB	5'10	190	2
Scharff, Sam	SR	38	PK/P	5'7	145	1
Smothers, Jack	SO	57	C/DL	5'11	220	
Spaulding, Ben	JR	4	QB/LB	6'0	170	1

Staley, Paul	FR	28	FB/LB	5'11	175	
Tarullo, Jordan	JR	55	OL	6'0	270	
Templeton, Ryan	SO	19	WR/DB	5'11	150	
Tubaugh, Nick	SR	53	OG/DT	5'9	225	1
Walls, Eli	SR	67	OL/DL	6'3	285	2
Webb, Brandon	SR	74	OG/DE	6'0	200	1
Wells, Braxton	JR	10	WR/DE	6'2	190	1
Westover, Todd	SR	43	WR/DB	6'2	175	2
Wycoff, Gardon	SR	90	OG/DE	6'2	210	3
Wycoff, Teren	SO	25	FB/LB	6'2	215	1

Matt Stephens	Head Coach	WR's/DB's
Chris Craig	Def. Coord.	LB's
Deke Hocker	Off. Coord.	QB's
Tom Glissman	Off. Line	
Nick Powell	Def. Line	
Zach Henzel	Frosh. Coach	RB's
Mike Pennington	Varsity Asst.	OL/DL
Eric Pettit	MS Head Coach	
Mike Marshall	Asst. Coach	
Tommy McCallister	Asst. Coach	
Jaime Man	Asst. Coach	

Olentangy: Braves motivated by state-semifinal finish

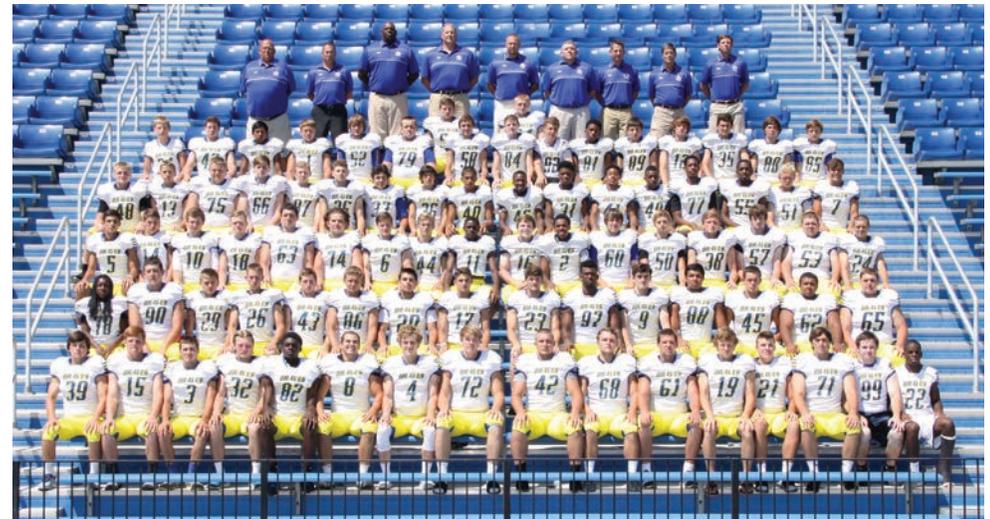


Photo Credit: HR Imaging

By Michael Rich
mrichdelgazette@gmail.com

Olentangy football coach Mark Solis put it as simply as he could, "Bottom line is we are competing for a state championship, period." No ifs, ands or butts. Coming off an undefeated regular season and a state semifinal appearance, a 48-13 loss to LaSalle (Cincinnati) at Dayton Welcome Stadium kept the Braves from a state championship appearance.

“We learned a lot of things about ourselves and it’s made us a better football team and program for playing in a game like that and going through that,” Solis said.

Solis compared the pieces he lost from last year’s team to the players that are replacing them. He’s more confident about his team this season than he was going into last year.

“Boy, I’ll tell you what, I feel really good about this football team,” he continued. “I knew we were going to be really good last year — I thought we had a chance to be. I think we have a chance to be really, really, really good this year.” The biggest piece missing off of last year’s team is running back Anthony Golden, who led the rushing attack with 1,975 yards on 302 attempts (6.5 yards per carry) and 33 touchdowns. He ran for 1,455 yards and 24 more touchdowns than the second-leading player in those categories, quarterback Deeb Haber.

“We didn’t see that coming out of Anthony,” Solis said. “But Anthony had a great camp, got better and stayed healthy. He had a dream season.” How is Solis planning on replacing that production? “I don’t know – it could be running back by committee,” he said. “Right now Cam Kennedy, a junior, is leading the forefront of winning the job, but we’ve got a couple of other guys that can play there too.” Kennedy had eight carries for 30 yards and a touchdown last season. “I don’t know if we’re going to have that kind of back this year,” Solis said, referring to Golden’s workload. “But, honestly, we didn’t know we were going to have that kind of back last year at this time in camp.” Haber threw for 2,784 yards, 23 touchdowns, nine interceptions and a 62.2 completion percentage.

“Deeb’s coming back as a three-year starter and he knows this offense pretty well — like, really well,” Solis said. “We’ve given him what I like to call the keys to the car. We’re going to let him drive the car a little bit this year. He can handle the responsibility — he’s a smart young man.” Haber loses his top target from last season, Drew Batt, who caught 64 passes for 1,068 yards and 13 touchdowns. But he’s got his second-leading receiver back, Obi Anunike, though he might miss a couple of games after breaking his collar bone in a seven-on-seven scrimmage this summer. Anunike caught 51 passes last season for 606 yards and four touchdowns.

Jacob O’Donnell also returns after catching 16 passes for 217 yards and a touchdown last year. He also played a big part in the return game, returning four kickoffs for 122 yards and a touchdown and seven punts for 99 yards. Defensively, he’s lost defensive lineman Connor Slade, who led the team with 41 tackles for loss, including 21 sacks. “He’s being replaced by another Slade this year, his younger brother,” Solis said. “Jacob is, of the young crop of players coming up, he’s so good. He’s going to start as a sophomore because he’s that good.”

Senior linebackers Jimmy Elmurr and Chris Crumb will anchor the defense again this season. Elmurr had three interceptions, three forced fumbles and three fumble recoveries and Crumb led the team with 30 tackles for loss, including 12 sacks. He also recovered three fumbles and forced another. “The main core of our defense comes back in Jimmy Elmurr and Chris Crumb,” Solis said. “They’re kind of the heart and soul of this defense.”

Seth O’Neal, Thomas Beckman, Jacob Fleck, Alex Draime and Rahim Benton all return on defense. O’Neal led the team with six interceptions and broke up eight pass attempts. Fleck broke up six passes and Beckman broke up five more. “We have really good defensive backs,” Solis said. “Do we have some pieces and parts to fill? Yeah, but all of our kids go one way here. So, we have enough guys in the program, we’re going to be able to find the 11 best guys to play on defense.” So, O’Neal won’t be running the ball this year like he did against LaSalle in last year’s state semifinal? “I’m not saying that,” Solis said. “He and Jimmy (Elmurr) and Chris Crumb would be the three guys that would play a little offense for us. Not a lot, just a little. Just get a little taste, a little sample.”

Another big loss, not only on defense, but on special teams, is defensive back Jarren Williams, who broke up a team-high 12 passes last year. Williams also returned four kickoffs for 171 yards and a touchdown — an average of 42.8 yards per return. But two main components return from last year’s special teams: kicker Jacob Bell and punter Jacob Jenkusky. Bell was 10-for-16 on field goal tries and 67-for-68 on extra-point attempts. Jenkusky averaged 35.3 yards per punt in 30 punts last season.

As far as the schedule, Olentangy will see a couple of familiar foes on the non-conference slate this season. It opens at Westerville South, which they defeated last season 38-6 at home. Week 2 will be the home opener against district-rival Olentangy Liberty, which they defeated 35-34 last season.

The Braves travel to Pickerington North in Week Three. The Panthers finished 4-6 last season, though they won three out of their last four games. Only the site has changed from last year’s conference schedule — the order in which they play them remains the same. They open

against Big Walnut, followed by a trip down route 23 to Olentangy Orange and close the slate at Delaware Hayes.

Only New Albany, Worthington Kilbourne and Mount Vernon scored more than seven points against Olentangy in league play last year. Solis expects New Albany and Worthington Kilbourne to be formidable this year. The season kicks off on August 28.

Michael Rich can be found on Twitter @mrichdelgazette.

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Schedule

Aug. 28 @ Westerville South, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 4 vs. Liberty, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 11 @ Pickerington North, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 18 vs. Big Walnut, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 25 @ Orange, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 2 vs. Franklin Heights, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 9 vs. New Albany, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 15 @ Worthington Kilbourne, 7 p.m.

Oct. 23 vs. Mount Vernon, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 30 @ Hayes, 7:30 p.m.

#	Player	Grade	Height	Weight	Position
1	Riley Bruening	10	5’9”	155	QB
2	Braxtyn Baldwin	11	6’0”	170	DB
3	Christian McFarland	12	5’8”	170	Athlete
4	Deeb Haber	12	6’2”	190	QB
5	Nathan Reidel	11	6’2”	170	WR
6	Brett Flender	11	5’7”	170	DB
7	Anthony D’Andrea	11	5’10”	185	WR/DB
8	Jimmy Elmurr	12	6’0”	235	LB/H
9	Jacob O’Donnell	12	6’0”	180	WR
10	Sam Durst	11	6’1”	170	WR/QB
11	Deonta Mack	11	5’10”	160	Athlete
12	Braydon Chitty	10	5’11”	155	QB/DB
13	Josh Moeller	10	5’10”	150	Athlete
14	Dominic Colatruglio	11	5’11”	160	WR/DB
15	Alex Draime	12	6’0”	215	LB
16	Cam Kennedy	11	5’8”	190	RB
17	Thomas Beckman	12	5’9”	170	DB
18	Kyler Severance	11	5’11”	170	Athlete
19	Jacob Bell	12	6’0”	195	K
20	Nick Lawrence	12	6’0”	225	H
21	Kyle Dickinson	12	6’0”	225	H
22	Dubem Okafor	12	5’9”	170	DB
23	Seth O’Neal	12	5’11”	195	Athlete
24	Nick Pellock	11	5’9”	140	WR/DB
25	Connor Sherry	10	5’10”	160	WR/DB
26	Jake Jenkusky	12	6’2”	175	K
27	Pablo Merrell	10	5’8”	150	RB/DB
29	David Campbell	12	5’9”	160	DB
30	Jaden Konadu	10	5’7”	155	RB/DB
31	Justin Stewart	10	5’10”	175	LB
32	Luke Hurlburt	12	5’10”	195	LB
33	Gunnar Rose	10	5’9”	190	
34	Matt Bell	10	5’11”	160	LB

35 Antonio Tirado	10	6'0"	150
36 Josh Petrone	10	5'5"	130
37 Keneth Konadu	11	5'10"	195
38 Jake Lemaster	11	5'10"	170
39 Jacob Fleck	12	5'9"	185
40 Trey Simpson	10	5'11"	175
41 Ali Iverson	10	5'7"	150
42 Chris Crumb	12	6'1"	255
43 Nate Lawrence	12	5'11"	185
44 Max Hall	11	5'10"	165
45 Alex Trussell	12	5'11"	210
46 Malcolm Mitchell	10	5'5"	140
47 Xavier Harrison	10	5'10"	195
48 Zach Slade	10	6'3"	220
49 Michael Carter	10	5'10"	180
50 John Stadelman	11	5'11"	155
51 James Rosenberry	10	5'10"	165
52 Peyton Hall	10	5'10"	155
53 Austin Corry	11	5'10"	250
54 Ethan Gates	10	5'11"	200
55 Ziyen Sears	10	6'1"	210
57 Trevor Truvelle	11	6'2"	215
58 Dylan Hall	10	5'11"	170
60 Case McCoy	11	6'0"	225
61 Andrew Luxeder	12	6'2"	240
62 Nic Jesus	12	5'10"	250
63 Matt Gray	11	6'2"	250
64 Jacob Slade	10	6'3"	235
65 Jacob Geyer	12	5'10"	250
66 Matthew McCauley	10	6'2"	195
68 Josh Lloyd	12	5'10"	225
71 Ryan Strawser	12	6'2"	245
72 Luke Campbell	12	6'4"	275
74 Hayden Schmidt	11	6'2"	265
75 Nathan Murphy	10	6'0"	275
77 Jamir Benton	10	6'4"	200
78 Inikki Mitchell	12	5'3"	130
80 Xander Gore	10	5'8"	155
81 Jason Stewart	10	5'10"	170
82 Obi Anunike	12	6'4"	210
83 Adam Primm	10	5'9"	135
84 Joel Michael	10	5'11"	160
85 Avery Flanagan	10	5'5"	130
86 Austin Francis	12	5'11"	190
87 Evan Brock	10	5'10"	155
88 Derrick Wyche	12	6'4"	220
89 Tyler Karbler	10	5'9"	145
90 Nick Boggess	12	6'4"	250
97 Rahim Benton	12	6'3"	245

DE

Hayes: Bigger, stronger Pacers ready for 2015



Photo Credit: Rex Welker

By Ben Stroup
bstroup@delgazette.com

The Golden era may have started last season in Delaware, but Hayes never quite developed into the team coach Mike Golden envisioned ... and he didn't necessarily expect it to. Not right away at least. This year, though, with a full and regimented offseason just days away from wrapping up, the first Golden's overseen from start to finish, he's feeling a bit better about things. "I feel 100 percent better about where we are now than last year," Golden said. "This offseason was entirely different. We had a great one ... and it shows. Physically, the guys are bigger, faster and stronger than they were at the start of last season." Of those guys, many of them saw significant time on the field last fall ... meaning they'll be just as ready for the season from a mental standpoint as a physical one. The Pacers, for example, return a ton of playmakers on the offensive side of the ball.

Quarterback Cullen Moore (6-0, 205) is back under center after throwing for 500 yards and five TDs as a sophomore. Golden expects those numbers to go up quite a bit this season. "Cullen started for us as a sophomore and you can tell he's been under the lights for 10 games," Golden said. "He's more athletic and is just a real special talent. He can make all the throws and, more importantly in the scope of our offense, he can throw on the run." Speaking of running, something Hayes did decently last year, three of their top backs -- junior Deven Ward and

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seniors Ethan Tucky (6-3, 225) and Sean Gliebe (5-9, 18) -- are back and ready to go. Tucky, a recent Boston College commit and second team All-Ohio pick as a linebacker -- finished with 708 yards rushing, 300 more receiving and 13 total touchdowns last season. Gliebe, meanwhile, closed with 450 rushing yards and three touchdowns while Ward racked up 300 yards and two touchdowns on the ground. Gliebe is the power guy, Ward is all about speed and quickness and Tucky, well, Tucky brings a bit of both to the table.

The versatility of the backfield is huge in the hybrid wing-t formation Golden likes to run. "Sean has really quick feet for a fullback," Golden said, "and Ethan and Deven like to run downhill. I always like to have two or three guys who can break it and go the distance ... and all three add different dimensions to the game." Of course, they won't be doing much of anything if the offensive line doesn't get the job done. Fortunately for Golden and company, they have a lot of confidence in the big guys up front -- guys like Elliott Shaw, Jacob Hackathorn and Nathan Wilgus. "Those guys all started in the interior of the line, and we have a lot of other guys with experience up front," Golden said. "We feel good about the group. It was a concern coming in, but they worked hard to develop their bodies and I like where they're at." Receivers Derrick Buford and Josh Hyatt are also back after seeing action last season. On the other side of the ball, the conversation starts with Tucky, who did a little bit of everything for the Pacers last season. Tucky finished with 100 tackles, 14.5 for loss, 12.5 sacks and three forced fumbles. "Ethan is an incredibly fast kid -- he finished sixth in the state in the 200 during track season (21.91 seconds)," Golden said. "You'll see him up close to the line and behind the line; he's tremendous as a pass rusher, but he can chase down plays as well."

Stanley Sorn, a nose guard last season, will return to anchor the front of Hayes' 3-5 alignment while linebackers Caleb Cooper, who started inside, and Cole Sparks, who saw some time last season, will fly around just behind the line. Returners to the secondary include Anthony Rodgers, Josh Hyatt and Noah Watts. "We settled into our current defense toward the end of last season," Golden said. "And it was a much better fit for us ... we have a bunch of tweener-sized kids. I've always used four-man fronts, but you can overdo it if you're not careful. Our guys all run really well. That's the biggest thing -- we can run to the ball and we are a lot more physical than last year."

The Pacers are poised to be better across the board, but will have to do what all winning teams do if they want to be successful: run the football and limit big plays. "I think being able to run the ball more consistently than we did a year ago will be key," Golden said. "We can throw, which is nice, but to get where you need to go you have to be able to run the ball. Defensively, I think we will be better at not giving up big plays. We have to be able to absorb more of those plays than we did last year."

Hayes moves to Division II this year, but the switch won't impact the regular-season schedule ... at all. The same 10 opponents the Pacers finish 3-7 against last fall return to the slate. They open against rival Buckeye Valley, a team they beat 30-6 to start last season, Aug. 28. Hayes will travel to Marysville (Sept. 4) and host Westland (Sept. 11) before opening OCC-Capital Division action against visiting Worthington Kilbourne (Sept. 18).

Follow Ben Stroup on Twitter @delgazette_ben.

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Schedule

Aug. 28 vs. Buckeye Valley, 7 p.m.

Sept. 4 @ Marysville, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 11 vs. Westland, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 18 vs. Worthington Kilbourne, 7:30 p.m.

Sept. 25 @ Big Walnut, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 2 @ New Albany, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 9 vs. Orange, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 16 @ Mount Vernon, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 23 @ Franklin Heights, 7:30 p.m.

Oct. 30 vs. Olentangy, 7:30 p.m.

#	Player	Grade	Height/Weight	Position
2	Caleb Naegele	12	5'11" 170	WR/LB
3	Cullen Moore	11	6' 205	QB
4	Jake Bourget	12	5'10" 175	QB
5	Elijah Harrell	11	5'10" 155	WR/CB
6	Grant Conahan	11	5'11" 210	FB/LB
7	Josh Hyatt	12	6'3" 180	WR/LB
8	Aaron Adair	11	5'11" 150	WR/CB
9	Noah Watts	12	5'11" 165	WR/DB/K
10	Derrick Buford	11	6'3" 170	WR/CB
11	Miles Roberts	11	5'9" 155	WR/CB
13	Drew Staley	12	5'7" 160	K
14	Isaiah Moore	10	5'11" 175	QB/CB
15	Anthony Rodgers	11	6'1" 175	WR/SS
16	Max Hendrix	11	6'1" 175	TE/LB
17	Ryan McConaha	11	5'11" 160	WR/CB
18	JC Herrell	12	6' 180	WR/LB
19	Ethan Tucky	12	6'3" 225	RB/LB
20	Deven Ward	11	5'11" 160	RB/CB
21	Gareth Ulmer	12	5'10" 158	WR/S
22	Noah Wheeling	11	5'11" 180	RB/LB
23	Collin Reeves	11	6'1" 175	WR/LB
24	Derrick O'Conner	11	5'9" 180	RB/LB
25	Chase Osborne	10	5'8" 150	WR/CB
26	Ryan Daughenbaugh	10	5'11" 150	QB/S
27	Virgil Rhodes	10	5'4" 130	RB/S
28	Wayne Brookover	11	5'10" 160	FB/LB
29	Blain McCormick	10	5'9" 150	RB/SS
30	Payton Dydek	10	5'8" 135	WR/CB
32	Sean Gliebe	12	5'9" 185	RB/LB
33	Garrett Caldwell	10	5'7" 140	RB/LB
36	Josiah Naegele	10	5'10" 150	RB/LB
37	Alex Dutcher	10	5'4" 130	FB/LB
41	Glenn Pauley	10	6' 200	FB/LB
44	Keltin Melvin	10	6' 185	TE/LB
45	Caleb Cooper	12	5'11" 195	FB/LB
50	Ethan Watts	10	5'10" 160	OL/LB
52	Cole Sparks	12	5'10" 200	OL/LB
53	Mason Davis	11	6'1" 220	OL/DL
55	Stanley Sorn	11	5'11" 250	OL/DL
60	Elliott Shaw	12	6'1" 205	OL/DL
62	Dereck Robinson	10	5'11" 200	OL/DL
64	Nimo Johnson	12	6'2" 300	OL/DL
65	Braden Donges	10	6'3" 240	OL/DL
66	John Spangler	12	5'7" 235	OL/DL
74	Nathan Wilgus	11	6'3" 306	OL/DL
76	Kole Shaw	10	6'1" 260	OL/DL
77	Josh McSweeney	11	5'11" 320	OL/DL
78	Sean Botti	12	6'1" 280	OL/DL
79	Dalton Powers	10	5'10" 180	OL/DL
82	Anthony Matus	10	5'10" 135	WR/CB
83	Josh Dowell	10	5'10" 145	WR/S
85	Todd Toney	10	6'5" 185	WR/TE
86	Jacob Hackathorn	12	6'1" 200	TE/LB

Boy's Soccer: New-look Patriots eager to add to tradition

By Ben Stroup
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Liberty

No matter the faces, the Liberty boys soccer team always seems to be in a familiar place late in the tournament: competing for a state championship. The Patriots have been to the state final four each of the past four seasons, marching all the way to the title game in three of the four. They won the Division I championship three seasons ago and most recently fell to St. Ignatius by an agonizingly slim 2-1 margin in last year's state final. They define sustained success and, no matter who scores the goals or makes the saves, they're in the thick of things each year. Despite losing nine starters from last year's team — a group which finished 19-2-2 on the way to winning OCC, district and regional championships — that's the plan this time around, too. "We lost nine starters," Liberty coach Rick Collins said, "but have some guys that have good experience and some new guys that fit in well." Returning starters include seniors Tiger Pham and Luke Bean. Pham will return to the midfield while Bean, who was a defender last season, will play forward this year. Seniors Trevor Collins (forward), Cameron Cantrell (midfield), Austin Deep (midfield) and Grant Davison (defense) and sophomore Wes Collins (defense/midfield) all played good minutes last season and will probably start this fall, Collins said.



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

Goalies Tommy Hlinka and Jeremy Karr are battling for the starting spot in net while newcomers include senior Jamie Hapensack (defense/midfield), Jake Lancaster (defense) and Lebo Modiselle (forward), juniors Austin Collins (defense), Oliver Person (forward), Caleb Sayre (forward), Ryan Slawson (defense/midfield) and Andrew Slawson (defense) and sophomores Derek Rubadeux, Collin McCort and Stephen Psychogios. "Tiger, Trevor, Luke, Cameron, Austin, Grant and Wes are our core group that experienced the success of past seasons, and we're trying to build around them," Collins said. "We have a lot of hungry new guys who are ready to contribute and compete for minutes, so we'll see how things come together. "This is a very different team from last year, so we're really focusing on getting the team to connect and get on the same page in the preseason. We have a late start to our season (Sept. 2), so we're trying to take advantage of the extra time to get prepared in training."

The Patriots will need that extra time as their schedule is loaded with top teams. "We have a very difficult schedule against some very good teams from Central Ohio and beyond, which will hopefully prepare us for the tournament and help us raise our game," the coach said. "We play Mason (2013 state champs), Copley (fifth in the national preseason rankings, state semifinalists last year, has the returning state Player of the Year), St Ignatius (defending state champs) and Gonzaga College HS (prep school from DC), as well as many of the top teams in Central Ohio." Two of those top area teams, Hilliard Davidson and Dublin Coffman, are in Liberty's conference. "Our league is definitely going to be strong again this year," Collins said. "We had three teams from our league in the regionals last year (Liberty, Coffman and Davidson) and I'm sure both Davidson and Coffman will be strong again this year. Davidson had a lot of sophomores and juniors on its team last year and Coffman has one of the top players in the area in Jack Holland. Upper Arlington and Thomas Worthington will likely compete for the top half and Marysville is always a very hard-working team. I think we'll compete for the OCC title again this year, but it's going to be a very competitive conference that anyone can win."

Hayes

The Delaware Hayes boys soccer program is still looking for that breakout season to get it over the hump. Last year's 5-9-4 campaign certainly wasn't that, but it motivated the group to get on track. "The team has learned a lot and developed over the course of the offseason," Hayes coach Josh Diehl said. "Chemistry is strong, as well as motivation. They are learning how to play to their team strengths and have a hunger to improve individually." Diehl said he squad has the talent to win, just needs to display it all the time. "We are learning the importance of building momentum and consistency into our performance," he said. "As we respect the process and ourselves, we will continue to grow and develop." Senior captains Nathan Lippincott (four-year letterwinner), Carson Geissler (three-year varsity contributor) and Jonah Robinson (a two-year letterman) lead the team into the 2015 season. Lippincott will lead the way in the midfield, Geissler will anchor the defense and Robinson will be back in goal. Seniors Ian Agler, Brandon Becker, Brad Peters, Justin McKee, Ryan Krewson and Nick Kaylor, juniors Alec Olson, Ousman Jallow, Ryan Williams, Colton McCabe, Curtis Herzog, Sam Milner and Mason McGeath and sophomores Zak Koch, Nate White, Sam Green, Connor Derstine, Evan Burkart and Brody Kannally fill out the varsity roster — a group Diehl said has the talent to compete for one of the league's top spots. "Everyone (in the OCC-Capital Division) is competitive," he said. "We will respect and challenge every opponent we face. We will put our value in our performances and trust that the results will quickly follow. That being said, we have the ability to finish in the top portion of the group."



Photo Credit: Rex Welker



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Olentangy

The Braves started slow, but finished the 2014 season with a handful of solid wins. With a young team back, Olentangy coach Pat Shick said the goal this season is to get past the early-season bumps a bit quicker. "We are currently in a year where the main focus is trying to get comfortable with each other," he said. "We lost a lot of seniors last year, so the current upperclassmen haven't had a lot of time to play together ... they haven't had that varsity experience. They are all really talented and know the game, though, so we will have some growing pains, but that shouldn't last long." Shick said the midfield is shaping up to be pretty solid, with junior Nick Celona and sophomore Nick Miller set to run things from the middle of the field. "Nick (Miller) has a presence and awareness on the field that rival that of most seniors," the coach said. "He earned a letter last year and will be an impactful player in the midfield. We will be looking for Nick Celona, who earned his first varsity letter as a sophomore last year, to be more of an attacking threat in the midfield." Another key returner is goalie Collin Hoffmann. "Collin is aggressive, confident and talented," Shick said. "He is a natural leader that the boys look toward. He is going to be a staple in our defense and crucial piece to our puzzle." Shick said the OCC-Capital Division is, like always, solid. It's also wide open. "In the Capital, it will be a toss-up between us, Olentangy Orange and Worthington Kilbourne," he said. "We all have good teams this year, so those are going to be the games to watch. Whoever can win those will win the conference. Both of those coaches are great and have had a lot of success in the past ... it will be fun to see how things shake out."



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

Orange

The Pioneers, who finished 6-0-1 in league play, had to share last year's league crown with co-champs Worthington Kilbourne. This year, with 13 lettermen back from that squad, Orange is looking to nab the title outright. "We have a senior-laden team that has a ton of experience ... just need to put it all together on the field," Orange coach Scott Bryant said. "We need to find someone who can score some goals and keep them out of the back of the net. We have very strong midfield play, it's just the ability to score when needed and defend our goal at all costs that will determine how we do." Starters Jack Brooks, Isaac Arefi, Zach English and Oscar Carvajal, all seniors and two-year lettermen, are back. Junior Brian Juttner is also back. "Brooks, Arefi, and Carvajal will be in the midfield, Juttner a defender, and English a forward," Bryant said. "We're counting on those guys to carry the load with their experience. We also return Sam Morrisson, Rio Siles, Jason Chugh, Eddie Pauly, Timmy Martin, Zack Stiteler, Brandon Thornborough and Will Johnson." Newcomers include Nick Cutler (sophomore goalie), Tyler Clark (senior goalie), Jackson Baehr (senior defender), Sam Sarfo (sophomore forward), Ryan Muller (sophomore forward/midfielder), Alex Real (sophomore defender) and two transfer students, Lukas Manarola (senior forward) and Connor Hill (senior defender). Bryant likes his team's chances at repeating, but knows a title, should the Pioneers get it, will be well earned. "I hope we are in the running, however I know Worthington Kilbourne is very strong again and Olentangy will be very good as well," he said. "Delaware is making strides to improve and Big Walnut is always tough to beat, especially at their place."



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

Buckeye Valley

Buckeye Valley's boys soccer team got a taste of the type of success it strives for each and every year last fall, making it to the district semifinals for the first time in program history. This year, the Barons want a little more. "We believe that we have the pieces to challenge for the

MOAC title," BV coach Eric Staley said. "We are also confident that we can return to the district tournament, and perhaps even advance to the district final this time." The Barons were 11-5-2 last season, finishing third in the MOAC. They're loaded with experience this year, though, which is why Staley feels so good about his group. Top returners include five seniors -- Sam Scharff, Mitch Rotondo, Caleb Herriott, Zach Fathbruckner and Tommy York. Scharff, a forward, was the leading scorer last season, nabbing first team All-District and first team All-MOAC honors in the process. Rotondo, another first team all-conference performer, will return to the midfield; Herriott and Fathbruckner, second team and honorable mention all-league picks, respectively, return to the defense; and Tommy York will be back in the midfield. All five are three-year starters. Junior Caleb King will be taking over for the graduated Nick Lyons, who was a four-year starter in goal. Juniors Anthony Seliskar and Brennan Perrine are also back. "Caleb is very athletic and is a vocal leader," the coach said. "Anthony might be the most complete player on the roster and Brennan has impressed me the most this summer ... he should have a breakout season." Staley said newcomers Brendan Miller and Erik Naslund will both contribute off the bench.

Big Walnut

The Golden Eagles don't have a ton of experienced players back in the fold, but what they lack in seasoning, they make up for in skill. "Our team will strive to play an attractive, positive style of soccer people will enjoy watching" first-year BW coach Tyler DeLorenzo said. "The greatest strength of our team is the overall technical ability of the players on the roster. I believe the quality of our players will allow us to play a possession-based game and be a very creative team in the attack. "The greatest weakness of our team would be the overall youth of our squad. We will have about 10 players who are sophomores or younger who will be contending for varsity minutes this season. If our team can minimize the youthful mistakes this season and remain organized as a defensive unit, I'm confident we will have a successful season." Top offensive returners from last year's 12-5-1 team include sophomores Chase Geddis and Tim Rumas. Newcomer Jonathan Mickley will also strengthen the attack. "I'm looking forward to Chase being the creativity behind much of the positive play I'm hoping to see in the attack this season," DeLorenzo said. "And Jonathan is an exciting attacking talent who will play a significant role for our team this season." The defense will be anchored by senior Jacob Hrusovsky and junior Nick Flury. "Jacob will be the heart of our defense this season," the coach said. "His uncommon combination of physicality and the technical ability to play a possession game from center back will be crucial to what we do as a team this season ... and Nick's leadership made him an each choice for players and coaches alike as one of our captains this season." Other returners include midfielders Taylor Cline (senior) and Sam Mason (sophomore). Defender Tyler Lacy is also back, while junior Chase Muhlbaier is poised to make some noise on the back line. DeLorenzo said Orange and Kilbourne will provide the biggest challenges when league play rolls around. "Olentangy Orange and Worthington Kilbourne both enjoyed undefeated seasons in conference play last year, so both schools have to be considered as favorites to be conference champions this season," he said. "But I believe we will field an extremely competitive team and will be challenging to finish near the top of the conference." Follow Ben Stroup on Twitter @delgazette_ben.



Photo Credit: Lenny C. Lepola

Girls Soccer: New coach, new style of play for Pacers

By Ben Stroup
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Hayes

If Bradd Smiley could coach two girls soccer programs at the same time, he would. Since the OHSAA frowns upon that sort of thing, though, he was left with one heck of a decision in the offseason: stay at Buckeye Valley or take over a young Hayes program? He decided to head over to Hayes, but the decision wasn't an easy one. "Going into my fourth season at BV, I knew we were young, talented and ready to make a run," he said. "We were returning nine starters and 14 letterwinners ... then the Hayes position opened up. I knew it would be a great opportunity

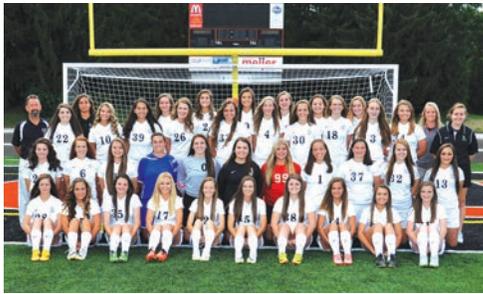


Photo Credit: Rex Welker

for someone to step into, just wasn't thinking me. "My daughter is going into her junior year there and I follow the team close, so I knew they were young, graduating nine seniors from last year's squad, and I also knew they were loaded with talent. As time passed, the thought of coaching at Hayes and helping to build a brand, create a culture and yes, coach my daughter in her last two seasons, was what influenced my decision." With the decision behind him, it's time to go to work. Hayes finished 6-9-2 last year, sixth in the OCC-Capital Division.

The good news, though, is the team returns 13 letterwinners — girls who gained valuable experience through the ups and downs of 2014. Helen Thomson is the lone returning senior while eight juniors — Rachel Wyatt, Savannah Carter, Ashley Tillou, Chloe Vessels, Abbie Jennings, Aidan Garling, Ashley Smiley and Hannah Rafeld — smooth out the list of returning upperclassmen. Sophomores Claire Arthur, Katelyn McKee, Reagan Olsen and Lauren McMillin are also back. With the change at the top, Smiley said he is bringing a new brand of ball to the program ... and the girls are adjusting well. "We are changing the formation and transitioning several girls into different positions with the expectation that the team becomes more creative on offense, controls the middle and defends as a team," Smiley said. "We are a pretty deep, talented and young team that is adapting to an up-tempo style of soccer very well." Smiley said the Pacers will be successful once they get comfortable with the new style ... and each other. "Our success will depend on how soon we can transition and unite as one," he said. "Our conference appears to be very strong this season, and I believe several teams will be in the mix for the conference title. We are hoping to be one of them."

Buckeye Valley

First-year BV girls soccer coach Shannon Schneider may be new to the varsity coaching ranks, but she knows the game. Schneider served as an assistant coach with Columbus Academy for three seasons, played college ball as a goalie at Capital, coaches at the club level and even spent some time coaching the Columbus Crew youth teams. She also knows what it means to play hard, and her Barons epitomize it. "My girls are probably some of the hardest working I've seen," she said. "They have a drive that is really only seen in high school ball. They support each other and connect, and you need that connection to do well." Key returners include seniors Hannah Wunderlich and Erin Lewis, a centerback and midfielder, respectively. "They provide amazing leadership," Schneider said. "They have done everything to get this team to do something more than it has in the past." Juniors Chloe Aquino (forward/midfielder), Elise Schneller (utility) and Anna Cox are also back, as is sophomore forward/midfielder Jillian Hon. "Elise is a hard-working player," the coach said. "Chloe is probably the best ball handler on the team, has a great shot and just as good speed and awareness; Jillian has great speed and knows how to put the ball in the back of the net and Anna, who has been battling lymphoma, motivates the girls. "Anna, who will probably fit in as an outside mid, was told her lymphoma is in remission and

she's been playing at nearly full speed since March." Schneider likes the team she inherited, and expects the program to continue trending upward. "I think people can expect to see a lot of heart with a lot more technical skill," she said. "I believe in knowing what to do with the ball, not just running."

Olentangy

The Braves toppled challenge after challenge last season, winning the OCC-Capital Division championship before marching all the way to the Division I regional finals. This year's challenge, aside from living up to the lofty standards set last season, will be doing it with a significantly different group of girls. "This year we have eight girls with no varsity experience," OCC-Capital Division Coach of the Year Megan Kirsten said. "But our leadership council has been working hard to promote greatness, respect, integrity and toughness in our program. Since 2013, we have had one saying — 'One team, one goal: win states.' "The girls have set high expectations and they are putting in the work to reach each one." Key returners include senior midfielder Maddy Bull and senior goalie Kelsey Hill, two of the captains. Hill was a first team all-conference pick a year ago. Other returning seniors include defender Marissa Eau Claire and midfielders Stephanie Burzynski, Kaylin Jankowski and Abby Miller, a 2014 special mention all-conference honoree. Junior midfielder/forward Sarah Markel (honorable mention all-conference), junior defenders Erin Wilt (second team all-conference) and Julia Scott and junior midfielders Alexa Ustaszewski and Emerson Woerner are also back. The team's young as a whole, but more than willing to work to compensate for it, the coach said. "The girls' biggest strength this year is once again their willingness to learn more about the game and improve their technical and tactical skills," Kirsten said. "We had a lot of great players graduate last year, but we have a lot of players working hard to fill their shoes."



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

Orange

The Pioneers showed plenty of positive signs last season, but finished with a slew of ties (6-6-4) and a third-place finish in league play. In order to creep a bit higher in the standings, the squad will need to be a bit more balanced than it was a year ago. "I believe, with the returners we have at defense and in the midfield, we should be strong in the back and be difficult to score on this season," Orange coach Jim Daugherty said. "We came around at the end of last season, scoring more regularly, and I am hoping we can find the scoring touch earlier and be a team that is difficult to beat this year." Key returners on the defensive side include junior goalie Hannah Sargent, senior defender Katie Calvert, junior defenders Tiera Richardson and Bailey Hurley and sophomore defender Cassidy Ryan. "Hannah has good poise in goal, and will only get better as she gets more experience at the varsity level," Daugherty said. "Tiera has great speed, sees the game well and is very solid at center back; Katie has good composure on the ball and provides good leadership at left back; Cassidy is an extremely hard worker and gets forward very well from her outside right back position; and Bailey will battle for time as an outside midfielder and outside back." Sophomores Megan Cochran and Sami Level are a pair of newcomers Daugherty said will give the team depth on the defensive end. Returning midfielders include senior captain Lexie Chafin, senior Courtney Swisher and juniors Alaina Foy and Mikaela Neil. Sophomores Camryn Thompson, Taylor Foreman and Camila Hall will also look to contribute in the middle of the field. Senior Natalie Toomajian and sophomore Delaney Earl return as the team's top scoring threats. Junior Brynna Johnson will also see time up front. "Delaney makes good runs off the ball, has good speed and I think is growing into a goal scorer," Daugherty said. "She is learning how to shoot with pace, along with being able to have some more sophistica-



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

tion and bend the balls and place them when she is closer to goal. Natalie is good in the air, and strong on the ball, and Brynna is fast, and can get in behind the defense and create dangerous scoring opportunities for herself and her teammates with her speed.”

Liberty

The Patriots had a season to remember a year ago, finishing 17-2-1 while winning district and conference championships. A year later, the standard of success is still there. Ten seniors who had a hand in raising the bar, though, are not. “While we lost 10 seniors, the girls are ready to be back in action for another successful season,” first-year Liberty coach Kristen McMahan said. “As a younger team, we’re learning how to handle the pressure and a target on our back. The girls need to continue to gain confidence as a team and believe in themselves.” Key returners include senior forward Jordan Fike, senior center back Emma Waters, junior center mid Sarina Dirrig and junior center back Emma Koshan. “Jordan has a high work rate, a desire to score and speed up top,” McMahan said. “Emma is a returning captain and a natural leader on and off the field; Sarina wins 50-50 balls, has great vision of the field and is a distributor in the middle; and Emma is a solid defender and communicator in the back.” Key additions to this year’s squad include sophomores Natalie Amodeo, Sydney Weaver and Abby Jones -- a young, but skilled group. “Our strengths include the technical abilities of our players and the desire to collaborate toward a common goal,” the coach said. “The sophomores will continue to bring an impressive work rate that makes all players better and challenges girls to fight for starting spots. The team will need to work on taking risks and making mistakes, though.” McMahan said another conference crown won’t come easy, but that’s the goal. “The Central Division of the OCC is always competitive,” she said. “Davidson and Coffman always put together quality teams and we’re excited to see them on the field this year. We hope to continue the tradition and bring home another OCC championship.”



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

Big Walnut

The Golden Eagles are younger than they’ve been in years ... younger and, quite possibly, better. “This season will be very different from past seasons as we are very young,” Big Walnut coach Drew Pitzer said. “I believe this is one of the most talented teams I’ve had at BW. We will have some learning curves, but I think the ceiling for this team is very high. We are going to be a scrappy and dedicated group, and it will be fun to watch.”

“I think our youth will be a strength and a weakness, but these girls are always working. We will be fit and dedicated every night and I believe we will be a tough opponent every game.”

The Eagles were steady last season, finishing 8-4-5. Colleen White (goalie) is the lone returning senior while juniors Bailey Bodker (midfield), Maddie Aleshire (midfield), Kelly Kreager (forward), Jordan Foxworthy (goalie),

Michaela Pavuk (defender) and sophomores Kaitlin Meade (defender) and Emma Padgett (midfield) are also back. Newcomers include Grace Bodker and Rylee Bussen. “I really like Grace’s soccer IQ and commitment,” Pitzer said. “She is a very technical player who will help the team immediately. Rylee is a very talented player who can play multiple positions for us. Again, soccer IQ is very high.” Pitzer said his team will have to grow up quickly in the always competitive OCC-Capital Division. “I believe we have one of the toughest league schedules in the OCC,” he said. “Olentangy and Orange are both very strong teams, and New Albany is also a very competitive side. Kilbourne was young last year, so we expect a tough game with them as well.



Photo Credit: Lenny C. Lepola

I’m confident in this group’s ability to compete with these teams and look forward to watching them grow.”

Follow Ben Stroup on Twitter @delgazette_ben.

Volleyball: Loaded Golden Eagles poised for solid season

By Ben Stroup
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Big Walnut

Several Delaware County volleyball teams head into the season with young teams, three of which will be led by first-year coaches. Big Walnut is not one of those teams. The Golden Eagles were loaded last year, and marched to an OCC-Capital Division championship and Division I regional semifinal finish because of it. This year, well, they’re pretty stacked again. Senior Jessica Ruffing, an OCC Player of the Year and first team All-Central District honoree, is back to cause chaos from her outsider hitter position; senior Abby Kitchen, a second team All-Central District standout, is back at setter; and senior outside hitter Tiffany Soisson, senior libero Kylie Stickrath, junior middle hitter Bryn Rammelsberg and sophomore middle hitter Emma Urhammer are all back from last year’s 22-4 team. Add in newcomers Olivia Wince (middle hitter), Alexandra Brehm (defensive specialist) and Machaela Podraza — a pair of juniors and a freshman, respectively — and coach Ron Lehman, entering his 26th season at BW, has a lot to like. “Olivia adds depth to the middle,” he said, “Alex can play libero or outside hitter and Mac will help us a lot with her blocking, hitting and scoring ... plus she can stay in and set. “We expect to compete for the league title again, and are looking to have an excellent season.”



Photo Credit: Lenny C. Lepola

Hayes

The Delaware Hayes volleyball team took some lumps last year, winning just a pair of games, but first-year coach Liz Kaylor-Palmer said the program is on track to smoothing some of those out. “Bottom line: we are young,” she said. “I expect a better season in terms of wins this year, but this is a huge growing year for us ... and I think you’re going to see great things out of this program for the next few years. We’ve got the talent, which will continue to grow over time, we just lack varsity experience.”

Key returners include captains Karli Reed and Julia Kaylor — a senior and sophomore, respectively — senior Macie Wright, junior Keiona Houser and sophomore Ally James. “Julia, who started last year as a freshman, will be a big go-to hitter for us,” Kaylor-Palmer said. “Karli was an outside hitter last year, but has transitioned well to the right side; we are ready for Keiona to block big outsides and take some aggressive swings from the right side, which many programs don’t have; Ally is the kind of



Photo Credit: Rex Welker

kid you can give any ball to and she will be smart and aggressive with it; and Macie is a defensive specialist who really goes hard, hustles and never lets a ball drop on her court.” Newcomers who Kaylor-Palmer expects to contribute include sophomore Shelby McQuigg and freshman Chloe Barton, a pair of young setters, sophomore middle hitter Julie Justice, freshman outside hitter Sydney Krewson and freshman libero Emily Gray. Kaylor-Palmer’s new, too ... kind of. While she’s new to coaching the Delaware volleyball program, she’s been part of the Pacer family for

years. While a student at Hayes, which was only five years ago, Kaylor-Palmer played volleyball all four years. After graduating in 2010, she became a standout at Otterbein, where she was a four-year starter and three-year captain, leading the Cardinals to four NCAA Tournament appearances and a conference championship. Her coaching career started in college, where she worked under Monica Wright at various camps around the state. From there, it was off to Logan High School, where she landed her first head coaching gig right out of college. The team finished 12-12 with a first-round tourney win under its belt, but when the job at Hayes became available in the offseason, it was something she simply couldn't pass up. "I wanted to come back to this program and do something great with it," she said, "something I wasn't able to as a player."

Orange

Overall, this year's Pioneers are young. Fortunately for them, though, they have a handful of talented leaders to lean on. Outside hitter Jordan Gels, a four-year starter and Stoney Brook (Division I) recruit is back and ready to go, as is right side hitter Leah Houser and middle hitter Sam Rubal. Houser is an Ohio Dominican recruit (D-II) and Rubal a Lipscomb recruit (D-I). Ashlan Riley and Haley Steward, a pair of two-year letterwinners, are also back for first-year coach Katie Duy. "Jordan and Ashlan will both contribute on the outside, giving us consistency and power," Duy said. "Sam is a huge asset in the middle, offensively and as a blocker, and Leah, along with newcomers Kennedy Holloway and Sydney Reeder, will give us plenty of offensive options and depth on the right side." Duy said the defenders are young, but work hard to offset the inexperience. "We have a young defense in sophomore libero Sophie Dahn and freshman defensive specialist Megan McCollum," she said. "But both are gritty, hardworking athletes that bring a lot of energy to the defense. In addition, freshman middle hitter Carrigan O'Reilly has shown

a lot of maturity and consistency at the position and freshman setter Lauren Perone has done a great job of stepping in and running the offense." As is the case with most young teams, steady improvement is the goal. "We are looking to improve on our fourth-place league and district semifinal finish from last year," Duy said. "Ideally, we would like to be competing with Big Walnut, Olentangy and New Albany, the three teams which finished ahead of us last year, for a league title. "We are very young, but our team has great leadership and the underclassmen have done a great job of buying into the program and have shown maturity."



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

Olentangy

The Braves had a perfectly respectable season last fall, finishing 17-6 overall and second in the OCC-Capital Division with a stellar 12-2 record. Perfectly respectable, though, isn't what they're going for this time around. "To be successful, this team needs to learn how to perform in big matches," Olentangy coach Michelle Mimna said. "We have good seasons all the

time, but we want to get over the hump and beat some of the better teams on our schedule. We have a long way to go to become mentally stronger ... and that is our primary goal." The Braves have several things going for them, most notably five experienced seniors in key spots. Four-year letterwinner Lauren Judge returns to the middle-hitter position and four-year starter Maddie Griffin, who will start the season on the injured list, will provide defense and plenty of hitting from the middle and outside if and when she



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

is cleared to play. Zoe Miller, a three-year letterwinner, will be the team's libero. Sophie Fritz will be a key setter and Sarah Hansel will be a right side hitter. Outside hitter Nhu Do is also back while key newcomers include freshman twins Olivia and Emily Margolies and junior

Lexie Weithman. "The twins will contribute right away as hitters — they both bring nice height (6-1) and athleticism to the team — and Lexie is a defensive specialist with a real motor," Mimna said. Juniors Meghan Cochran (middle hitter), Jaira Lacar (defensive specialist) and Katelyn Petrycki (defensive specialist) will also see varsity time, as will sophomore setter Gabby Trees. As always, Mimna said the goal is to be in the thick of things by season's end. "We expect to contend for the OCC-Capital Division title, and hope to find ourselves deeper into the tournament this year," she said.

Liberty

Liberty will have a familiar look this fall, at least from a personnel standpoint, as the program didn't lose much from last year's steady 14-10 team. "Our strengths will be the competitive attitude that the girls have, and, since we didn't graduate any seniors, these girls already have great chemistry together," Patriot coach Jen Chapman said. Key returners include seniors Shelby Stewart (middle/outside hitter) and Lauren Hofer (outside hitter/back row), junior Madison Brenner (front row/back row) and sophomore Maddie Fogg (setter). Liberty is looking to improve upon last year's third-place league finish and win the conference championship, but knows the OCC-Central Division provides plenty of challenges. "I think our league will be very competitive," Chapman said. "Coffman should be strong again, Davidson is young but has a great coach and Marysville has one of the top hitters in Central Ohio."



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Buckeye Valley

The Barons finished just 8-16 last season, but have a nice blend of seasoned skill play-



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ers back in the fold. Couple that with a stable of talented sophomores and first-year coach Jana Hankins expects the team to trend further and further upward as the season progresses. “We look for a sophomore-dominated squad to grow its skills and chemistry for an end-of-season peak,” Hankins said. The list of returners includes senior Olivia Busby and juniors Olivia Allen and Abby Ross — a trio of quick, defensive-oriented players — senior attackers Sedona Neumann and Morgan Smith and junior attacker Alyssa Thurston. Senior Sierra McCulley, who played back in 2013, is also back as an outside hitter. Key newcomers include sophomore setter Cameron Romo and sophomore right side hitter Hallie Kaiser. “Those two are young, but athletic,” Hankins said. “I look for them to make an impact for the offense right away.” Tori Graves, another athletic sophomore, will be hitting outside while sophomore Sydney Herbert will be a defensive specialist. Josie McKean will be developing as a middle and outside hitter and sophomore Megan Minarchek will contribute as a middle and/or outside hitter, Hankins said. Follow Ben Stroup on Twitter @delgazette_ben.

Girls Tennis: Liberty eyes run at state team tournament

By Ben Stroup
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Liberty

As if the Olentangy Liberty girls tennis team wasn't good enough, the Patriots, nestled firmly in the top 10 of the final Ohio Tennis Zone rankings last fall, landed another weapon over the offseason. Familiar faces set to return from last year's 16-7 squad included Alexia Meyer, a three-year letterwinner who made her first trip to the state showcase last season, fellow three-year letterwinner and senior Anna Delaney, seniors Lizzie Radkiewicz and Avivah Wang, junior Sidney Reineke and sophomore Cellini Ko. Couple the returners with newcomer Alexis Steer, a sophomore who moved into the district from Pataskala, and the Patriots have one of the more potent lineups in the area. Steer played first singles at Watkins Memorial last season, where she broke several school records, earned the first overall seed at her sectional site and made it to the state-qualifying round of districts as a freshman. “This is the biggest move in Central Ohio tennis,” Liberty leader Meaghan Colville, who was named OCC Coach of the Year last season, said.



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

“Lexi is one of Ohio's top players in individual competition. She is a huge addition to our team. Expect to see her playing second singles behind Alexia and first doubles with Anna.” Colville said the returners, meanwhile, are back and better than ever. “Alexia will be playing first singles for our team,” she said. “I expect her to be one of the top players in the city and state, and make a big impact as our No. 1 player. “Anna went undefeated last season in doubles, and will continue to anchor our No. 1 doubles position, Sidney is one of our most

composed players, Lizzie broke through as a top singles player for us last season, Avivah lost only one match at second doubles last season and Cellini seamlessly stepped onto the varsity team and made an immediate impact with match-clinching wins.” The team is loaded, but will need to stay sharp to navigate through an extremely tough schedule. “This Liberty team will be confident, enthusiastic and humble,” Colville said. “This is perhaps the best team in Liberty history and there is talk of making a real run in the state team tournament. Our group knows, though, that there are a lot of fantastic teams around Ohio, and we'll need to be focused during each match on our schedule. “We will be playing, arguably, the toughest schedule in the state. We are playing nine of the state's top 10 Division I teams and four of the top 10 Division II teams. This offers an exciting challenge for our group, and also plenty of opportunity. With five upperclassmen on varsity, we will be relying on experience and leadership. Our team's depth and sense of unity and family are by far our biggest strengths. To be successful, our girls understand

we will need to support each other, put the team first and stay focused on each match ahead of us.”

Olentangy

Senior Bri Brdicka and sophomore Kathleen Jones, singles standouts throughout the regular season, showed their versatility by teaming up for a run that took them all the way to the state showcase as a doubles duo last fall. They nabbed second team All-Ohio honors with a win in the tourney and, complete with the confidence that comes with reaching the sport's elite level, are back to headline the Braves' girls tennis team this season. They'll start the campaign back at singles, as they did a year ago. “Bri is one of our captains and has been an amazing player for us,” Olentangy coach Jeff Luxenberger said. “She is such a positive presence for us, and she is a great role model for all the younger players on our team. Her tennis game is even more consistent and



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

powerful this year, and I can't wait to see how she does. “Kathleen was also nominated as a captain this year, which is unusual for someone so young, but that shows how much respect the other players have for her. She is such a powerful, dynamic player who can hit winners from anywhere on the court.” Beyond the top two, Luxenberger said he has more than enough talent to get that third win on a given night, he'll just need to find a lineup that gives the team the best chance to win. “It's great to have such a strong first and second singles,” Luxenberger

said. “We have a tough schedule this year, but I think I can count on Bri and Kathleen to win most of their matches this season. I've got great players below them, but I'm going to have to try some things out to figure out where we can get our third point in order to win the matches overall. As with any team, we have a great mix of personalities and playing styles with the rest of our varsity squad, and we just need to figure out what roles they will play on the team.” Sophomore Janie Miller, who Luxenberger said is the early favorite for Most Improved Player, will start the season at third singles while senior Olivia Gornichec and junior Alyssa Shakley will also see plenty of varsity action. “Alyssa will likely help us in doubles again this year,” the coach said. “She has a great game for doubles — she knows how to play aggressively and find the weaknesses in other teams — and Olivia has worked hard to make it onto varsity for the first time. She is one of the kindest people I've ever met, but she knows how to get mean on the court. She is a consistent player who will be a good leader on her doubles team, no matter who she plays with.”

Big Walnut

It could take weeks for coach Ryan Balaz to iron out a consistent starting lineup, not because he doesn't have anyone to fill the spots, but because the quantity of quality players is unlike anything he's had since taking over at Big Walnut. “This is the deepest team I have had in my five seasons coaching the girls team,” Balaz said. “At least 13 girls are competing for seven varsity spots this year. The athletes from last year's team have worked hard to get better in the offseason and our incoming freshmen are pushing returnees for varsity time. “Given that so many of the girls are at a similar skill level, practices have been extremely competitive. Many girls can expect to see varsity time this season until we can find combinations that fit together and a lineup that gives us the best chance to win each match. This will be an ongoing process.” Returners include sophomore singles players Macie Kercsmar and Abby Friend. Junior Anna Faust and sophomores Katie Germann and Lexie Kirkpatrick, all of whom earned their first varsity letters on the doubles courts last fall, are also back competing for varsity spots. Balaz said key newcomers include freshman Hannah Moroz, who will play second singles this season, senior Sara Althausser, junior Elisabeth Yuhas, sophomores Kayleigh Cummins, Maria Boyer and Brittany Mills and freshman Lindsey Hill. The team lacks experience as a whole — 16 of the 21 girls competing for playing time are

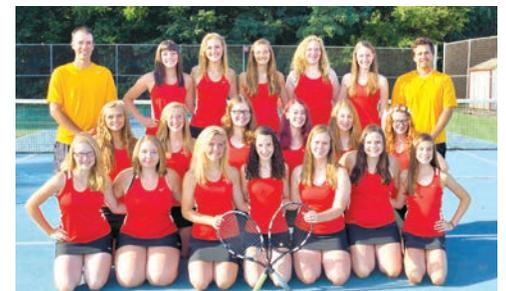


Photo Credit: Lenny C. Lepola

either freshmen or sophomores — but the work ethic is there. “I’m excited about the direction the program is headed with so many underclassmen that are playing year round to improve their skill set,” Balaz said.

Hayes

Last season was certainly a challenging one for Hayes’ girls tennis team. But while the struggles stung at the time, second-year coach Julieanne McClain expects the team to grow from them in the long run ... with the dividends starting to show up this season. “Last year



Photo Credit: Rex Welker

was definitely one of challenges and improvements,” she said, “with coaching changes, some significant injuries and just a lot of change in general. This year we have several varsity returners and we are looking to build on the progress we made last year to have a strong start.” Returners Anna Adams and Mallory Hackett, along with Jillian Goulet, who transferred into the district from Marion Pleasant, should see plenty of time on the singles courts, McClain said. Paris Knipp, Kara Wegmiller and Emily Miklas will likely be key cogs in the

doubles rotation. “We will look to their leadership and experience on the doubles courts to earn key victories this season,” McClain said. “The final doubles spot is still up in the air, but we have several new players who look promising.”

Buckeye Valley

The Barons had a memorable season last fall, finishing with a perfect Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference record. Amber Green landed second team ALL-MOAC honors as a singles standout and Hana Hall and Alexis Poulton did the same as a doubles duo, with Hall and Poulton qualifying for districts at first doubles. Of the three, though, Poulton is the only one back. Along with fellow returners and senior co-captains Kasey Morris and Arianna Phrakornkham, senior Jo Ann Leinenberger and junior Julie Sparks, the five, coach Laura Pappa said, will form the core of this year’s team. Morris and Phrakornkham played second and third singles last fall, and are likely to return to the singles lineup. Pappa said senior Alex and Brienna Garber are also likely to see varsity action this season.

Orange

The Pioneers will have a bit of a different look this season, but first-year coach Justin Dible doesn’t expect his team to lose much ground despite graduating a pair of singles standouts who were fixtures in last year’s lineup. “I still expect us to be in the mid-to-upper level of our league (OCC-Capital Division),” Dible, who took over the program after serving as an assistant last season, said. “We lost our first and second singles players from last year, so everyone needs to move up and take on a bigger role.” That’s where Sundari Vudatala and Sruti Chigurupati, seniors with a combined six years of varsity experience, come in. They’ll step in to the top two spots, at least initially. Junior Isabella Prislusky will see time at third singles while Mary Damko, Katherine Dahn, Abby Daniels and Heather Barnes will play doubles. Dible said he likes his core crew, but is still working on finding a consistent lineup.

“The way I see it, they all put forth great effort in practice and matches,” he said. “They have strong personalities, but strong games to match. The team as a whole is pretty strong, but we’re still working on figuring out who works well together on the doubles side. We just need to find the right mix.”

Follow Ben Stroup on Twitter @delgazette_ben.



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

Boys Cross Country: Barons seeking 6th straight MOAC title

By Michael Rich
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The Buckeye Valley boys cross country team has been the class of the Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference Red Division, having won the conference title each of the past five seasons. Sixth year head coach Nate Ritz has his top runner, Zach Kreft, returning. Actually, he’ll have him for another three seasons because he’s only a sophomore. Kreft has already amassed a school record of 16:22.6, breaking the record set by Aaron Iverson in 1999 by a little more than 10 seconds. He also won the MOAC, won All-District honors and qualified for the state meet last fall. “Having a guy like Zach is huge when it comes to team scoring,” Ritz said. “Zach is a great role model (and) captain for the rest of the guys as well.” Ritz is excited about the sheer numbers of his team. We have one of the larger teams in school history and have a lot of depth,” he said. “This spurs competition within and has pushed us to work harder as a team.” The Barons will be without Luke Davis, Alex Sheehan and Willie Ashburn, who have all graduated. All three were on the team that participated in the regional meet. Sheehan, a four-year letterwinner and captain, won second-team All-MOAC honors last season and Davis was first-team All-MOAC. “Losing Alex and Luke provide big shoes for the current team to fill,” Ritz said. “Both were accomplished runners and helped lead the team to their best finish in school history.” Senior Caleb Herriott, who was first team All-MOAC last season, returns with sophomores Gavin Shearer, Nathan Heiser, Michael Knoechel and Nathan Holst, who is in his first year with the team.

Michael Rich can be found on Twitter @mrichdelgazette.

Orange

The Olentangy Orange boys cross country team was one point away from an OCC-Capital title last season and it has three runners — Hunter Moore, Brandon Morrow and Brandon Lane — returning that won All-OCC and All-Central District honors a year ago. Moore, a junior who is already a two-time letterwinner, finished 20th in the state and took home All Region honors last fall. Marrow, a senior, finished seventh in the region in the 1,600 during the spring’s track season. Lane, a junior, was injured during track season last spring, but has had a great summer and is looking to bounce back, according to third-year coach Adam Walters. Kyle Benecke, who is now running at Ohio Christian University, is the Pioneers’ biggest loss from last season’s team. He was the team’s fourth runner before being injured after the OCC meet. “Benecke was a big part of our success last season and we missed him in the post-season after he got hurt,” Walters said. Walters is looking to junior Tommy Heiden and sophomore Jackson Schiefelbein to help strengthen his club outside of the top three runners. Walters thinks the Pioneers should be the favorites this season after last year’s OCC-Capital champion New Albany lost five seniors. It will be the first conference championship in school history if his projection holds true. “From there, we’d like to finish in the top two at district, the top four at regional and qualify for our first state meet,” Walters said.



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

Olentangy

Ken Whalen takes over the Olentangy boys cross country team from Mike Moran, who retired after last season. Whalen coached at Olentangy Shanahan Middle School for the last eight seasons. Whalen inherits 12 returning letterwinners, three of which — juniors

Anthony Sasso, Alex Garner and Zach Balthaser — ran at the regional meet last season. “Those three are a very solid start to this year’s squad,” Whalen said. “When you add the other nine returning letterwinners, we have a good core of runners.” Sasso qualified for the state meet, the first at Olentangy to do so in over 10 years, and also won All-District and All-OCC honors. Garner took home All-District honors as well. Olentangy finished third in the OCC-Capital behind New Albany and Orange, third in the district meet behind Hilliard Davidson and Thomas Worthington and 11th in the regional meet last season. Charles Rodeheffer and Jacob Darche, who were All-District and second team All-OCC, both graduated along with Tyler Azbell, who was honorable mention All-OCC, and Daylan Sutton. All four were on the regional-qualifying team last season. “It will be tough to replace the senior class from last season,” Whalen said. “All four were also four-year letterwinners, so they will be missed, not just for their running ability, but also their experience and leadership.” Whalen sees Olentangy Orange as his biggest competition in the OCC-Capital. Still, the goal is the same as it is every year at Olentangy ... win the league and qualify for the regional meet. “Winning the league will be a challenge as Olentangy Orange only loses one senior and they finished ahead of us last year,” Whalen said.



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

Liberty

2014 was a bit of an anomaly for the Patriots considering that they qualified for the state meet each of the previous three seasons under coach Jared Mills, who will be entering his ninth season at the helm. Liberty finished fourth in the OCC-Central and Central District meets before a 17th-place finish at the regional meet. The fourth-place finish in conference was the worst since 2005 for a program that has largely been the bridesmaid with eight second-place finishes in the OCC and only one conference title (2011). “Things just didn’t come together last year like we had hoped,” Mills said. But Mills is hoping that this season will be better with the presence of Mitchell Towne, who was injured most of last season. “If he does well, I think we can get back to the state meet,” Mills said, but added, “I don’t want to put it all on him. There’s a lot of pieces that have to come into play, but you’ve got to have a good No. 1 runner.” The biggest losses from last year’s team are Cameron Lackey, Kian Worcester and Vincent Lacava, who have all graduated. Lackey is listed on Liberty’s “Dream Team” with accolades such as a two-time state qualifier, three-time All-District and last year’s team MVP. “(Lackey) pretty accomplished,” Mills said. “He was our No. 1 guy last year. Because of Mitchell being hurt, he took that role and he did a good job. He worked really, really hard.” Worcester was the anchor to the 3,200-meter relay team in the spring and Lacava won the program’s Patriot Award for his team leadership. “(Worcester) was one who led by example,” Mills said. “He was a good all-around runner and a good young man. (Vincent) was one of those dynamic young men that was



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

a good role model, set a good example (and) was very encouraging. He was instrumental to creating a good culture.” Mills is looking toward seniors Towne, Luke Wojciechowski, John Ropchock, Austin Anderson and Will Sengos to provide depth and leadership to the team. Juniors Ryan Milligan and Quin Pollack will join sophomores Logan Boone, Nicolas Anderson, Nathan Warrick, Will Korbana and Brad Raymond to help fill out the roster. Mills is excited to see freshman Adam Clark, who broke the middle school record last season, join the fray. How will the team look this season? “I will preface this by saying that I always tell the kids, ‘success is measured by becoming the best that you’re capable of becoming,’” Mills said. “We want to walk off the course, whatever our last meet is, knowing that we did everything we could to become the best that we could.” He is teaching his team to focus on the process, rather than solely the outcome. “With that said — it is always our goal to get back to the state meet and

compete well at the state meet,” Mills said.

Big Walnut

Third-year Eagles coach Kevin Lewis says that his boys team is working hard to move up in the OCC rankings, and he’s got a plethora of returning runners to count on. Leading the way is junior Matt Halbaken, who Lewis called, “a force to be reckoned with.” Sophomores Jacob Hutchingson and Kaleb Bryant each put in 500 miles of training this summer to get ready for the new season. Senior Michael McGowan returns for his final year along with juniors Reilly Mengel, Zach McDonald and D.J. Werner and sophomores Will Hefner and Josh McGurer. The Eagles finished seventh in the OCC and 15th in the district meet last season and are losing Jon Kahrmann, Bobby Bogantz and Jared Boseker.



Photo Credit: Lenny C. Lepola

Delaware Hayes

Pacers junior Justin Hernan has set himself apart from the rest according to coach Jim Bibler. Hernan was second team All-OCC, Central District Honorable Mention and a regional qualifier last season. Bibler, who is going into his 11th season at the school, is looking for others to step up. “We need others to get fast, quickly, to be a good varsity team,” Bibler said. The Pacers finished fourth in the OCC-Capital and 11th in the district meet last season. They lose Sid Campbell, John Ketterman, Nathaniel Koehler and Drew Williams from last year’s squad. Bibler said he sees his team as a bit of a “mystery” right now. Hudson Baxley and Corbin Binkley are

both seniors that he expects will be leaders on the team. The Pacers will look to Marquis Willis, Seth Kern, Weston Lingo, Charlie Zimmerman and Sam White to step in, though he’s unsure who will fill the void.



Photo Credit: Rex Welker



Girls Cross Country: Pacers look to continue upward trend

By Michael Rich
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"If everyone stays healthy," is a qualifier that is often used in sports, but for Hayes coach Jim Bibler, he's using it more than most when he talks about his girls cross country team. "(The) girls team could be the best that I have had if everyone is healthy," he said. Even though he used the healthy qualifier, it was the first part of that quote that sent the biggest message. And why not? Alicia Rittenour, a junior, returns after being named first team All-OCC and district honorable mention. She qualified for the regional meet last season. "Alicia Rittenour is eyeing the school record and the state meet," Bibler said. "She got to 19:26 as a sophomore and 25th at the regional race." Junior Kristen Puthoff was second team All-OCC last season, and she's back too. Sammi Pirooska and Alyssa Wheeler graduated off of last year's squad that finished third in the OCC-Capital meet and 11th in the district. Pirooska was honorable mention All-OCC last season. "(They) were outstanding four-year letterwinners," Bibler said. Ashely Woller, Libby Traverse, Grace Fowler, Grace Thomas, Ashley Gebhart, Mallorie Watts and Valerie Keller will compete to crack the top seven.

Olentangy

The Olentangy girls cross country team is coming off an OCC-Capital title, the first conference title in 15 years, and eight of its top 10 runners return this season. The Braves are led by senior Kendall Supinger, who is a three-year letterwinner and first team All-OCC selection. Sophomore Melinda Endsley, who set the school record last season with a time of 18:51, was also named first team All-OCC last fall. Ashton Benson, Chloe Murdock and Camryn Stobart, all juniors and all second team All-OCC last season, and sophomores Lauren Householder and Katie Slyh, were honorable mention All-OCC. Sophomore Gillian Sapp and junior Kelsey Andrews-Shearer were in the top 10 last season. Honorable mention All-OCC Claire Hardesty, who was the number two or three runner for Olentangy, along with four-year letterwinners Logan Augustine, Cameron Householder, Lauren Lapid and Elena Smith have all graduated. Olentangy returns 31



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

letterwinners and have 87 runner in total, including what coach Dwight Dewese, who has coached at the school for 13 years, called, "a very talented freshman class." "Our overall depth is a strength again this year," he said. "We are very young and very large. It will be a challenge to keep the team unified with such a large team."

Orange

The future looks bright according to Pioneers second-year coach Rae Kortarba. "Our biggest strength this year is probably the new freshmen who will bring a lot of talent to the team," she said. Orange finished fourth in the OCC-Capital and eighth in the district meets last season, led by Anna Dove, who was first team All-OCC last fall. "The returning girls have been working hard all summer and put in a lot of miles in order to be better than we were last year," Kortarba said. Dove is gone now, along with Rachel Porello, and Kortarba will look to Allie Guagenti and her fellow freshmen to replace them. Seniors Hannah Dieker, Madison Clarkson and Skylar Tucker, who all have three letters, will provide experi-

ence to a young team. Senior Lindsey Brandt and sophomore Zoe Bond also return along with senior Sam Nakayiza and sophomores Sadie Chafin and Kayel Pugazehenti. "I think that because we will have so many new girls on the team, the biggest key to our success is our captains and our returning letter-winners who will help out the new girls," Kortarba said.



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

Liberty

The Patriots are coming off a season in which they won the OCC-Central, district and regional meets and finished sixth in the state championship meet. Six seniors – Micayala Gammon, Sami Krafty, Claire Linn, Caitlin McConaghy, Megan Mockler, and Meghan Piero return for one more go-around. They will be complemented by a crop of incoming freshman, including Grace Sprankle, Emily Matta, Maddie Ailes and Lily Bros. "We have excellent senior leadership and they have set the expectations high for the team. Likewise, we have some strong incoming freshman," Patriots coach Darrell Dewese said. Linn, Piero, Emma Bower and Sarah Colvin all ran in the top seven for Liberty last season. Bower is the team's top returning runner, says Dewese. Dewese, going into his second year with the school, says the goal is the same, "win the league, qualify for states as a team and see where it goes from there." Liberty lost Claire Wiles, Trinity Wiles and Autumn Lowder from its top seven last season. Claire Wiles was a three-time state qualifier and won All-State honors twice. She finished ninth in the state meet last season and is now at The Ohio State University.



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

Big Walnut

The Eagles finished seventh in the OCC-Capital last season and 12th in the district meet. Coach Kevin Lewis, in his third year at Big Walnut, says that sophomore's Leksi Murnieks and Morgan Hemming should be leaders this season after having great track seasons last spring. Senior Rachel Brown, junior Caroline Craig-Bowden and sophomore Adrianna Goodrich are also back on a team that Lewis hopes will compete by developing freshmen throughout the year. "The key to our success will be staying healthy and developing our freshmen throughout the



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season,” Lewis said. The Eagles lost Addison Shawver, Mikaela Smith, Makenna Hemming, Samantha Godby and Sarah Bickel from last year.

Buckeye Valley

Nate Ritz has five consecutive Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference titles leading the boys cross country team at Buckeye Valley, but he’s still looking for No. 1 with the girls. Ritz is still building the program, however,

and is keeping it simple ... he wants to see improvement.

“We are looking to show improvement, which will lead to higher finishes at each meet we attend,” he said. “Our big goals are to see how well we can place at (the) MOAC and district (meets). Placing higher than last year will be a big emphasis this season.” Analise Lajeunesse, a sophomore, earned honorable mention All-MOAC and put herself in the top 20 of the Buckeye Valley record book last season with a time 21:52.06, good for 16th all-time at the school. Senior Emily Hilt, who missed last year due to injury, is back along with senior Kelsey Shearer, juniors Michelle Culley and Madi Shearer and sophomore Dominique Legg. “Many of our girls were younger runners last year,” Ritz said. “Another year in the books in terms of training and more experience with the 5K distance is valuable for our girls team.” Senior Raquel Warner joins the team for the first time and is someone Ritz hopes will provide depth.

Michael Rich can be found on Twitter @mrichdelgazette.

Field Hockey: Olentangy looking for consistency in 2015

By Michael Rich
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Olentangy

Olentangy field hockey coach Biz Brehm has done something at the school that her three predecessors were unable to do ... she stayed more than one year.

“The seniors last year, I was their fourth coach in four years,” Brehm said. “So, they didn’t have any consistency at all. So it was just getting somebody to take over a program that is planning on staying. There were three coaches in the three years, and it’s hard to do anything.” Brehm doesn’t plan on going anywhere. “The kids really need that consistency -- someone that’s going to stay; someone they know is going to put in the hard work and who cares about them and the program,” she said. Olentangy finished 4-7-2 last season and lost to New Albany in the second round of the tournament after both teams had a first-round bye. One of Brehm’s goals is to change the mindset of the team. She said the team has gotten discouraged in the past when falling behind. “It’s going to be heart and hustle,” she said. “(They’re) going to have to go after it, (they’re) going to have to want it and



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

if they show up, they’ll do great ... if and when they show up, they’re going to do great.”

Senior Alex Hummer and junior Allison Martin are two players Brehm specifically pointed out as being key players to the success of the team. Hummer, a goalie, has been a three-year letterwinner. Seniors Haley Abramowitz, Sierra Bell, Sarah Butcher, Hannah McCann and Carly Norris are also back with three years of varsity experience. Olentangy will have 14 seniors in total. “Every senior plays a roll ... they’re all very important,” Brehm said. “I’m excited to see what the seniors do. They’ve been around long enough that they got the skills they need, they just have to apply themselves. They have been so far, so hopefully all of the hard work they’ve put in so far this summer pays off.” Martin, who Brehm called “a stud” will play everywhere on the field. Brehm pointed her out as, “the one to watch.”

Liberty

The Liberty field hockey team will be playing this season with a heavy heart. Junior Mara Hunter was diagnosed with Leukemia in May and will sit out 2015. Hunter, a two-time letterwinner for the Patriots and second team all-conference pick as a sophomore, was second on the team in points, goals and assists last season. “While Mara will not be on the physical field in 2015, she is as much a part of our program as ever,” Patriots coach Marianne Flannery said. “(She comes) to practices as much as she is able and the team is truly inspired by her and motivated to win for her.”



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

The Patriots are coming off a 14-5 season, a conference title and a run to the district finals as a four seed in the playoffs with wins over district rival Olentangy Orange (11-0) and conference foe Upper Arlington (1-0) before losing to Bishop Watterson (1-0). “Defending the conference title will be a very tough task, but one I feel these players are ready for,” Flannery said. Flannery, 42-12 in three seasons, is looking at Karri Stadulis, a three-year letterwinner and first team all-conference player, to be a leader. She had 15 goals and eight assists last season to lead the team. “(She is) a very hard worker who can take command on offense,” Flannery said. “Her stick skills will be valuable to our team this year.” Senior Anna Ruess and junior Claire Buckey, both two-year letterwinners, are back at mid-field. Buckey was honorable mention all-conference last season. “Their distribution skills and transition abilities will help us possess the ball and open up the field,” Flannery said. “Both have a nose for the goal and are effective defenders when necessary.” Seniors Emily Merola and Olivia Susi are also back from last year’s squad and will once again hold down the fort on defense. “(They) are both dynamic defenders,” Flannery said. “Olivia is comfortable in the middle of the field directing, and has great field vision to help get the ball up field quickly. Emily, though small in stature, is a mighty presence on the field. Her fearless and tenacious play will prove worthy against opponents.”

The Patriots lost nine to graduation off of last year’s squad, including Kendall Hunker and Maddie Passarella, who were All-Ohio picks. Passarella set school records for shutouts and goals against as a goalie. Both players are playing field hockey at Miami University in Oxford. They also lost all-conference players Dani Bursinger, Christina Yamarick and Maddie Stegner, and Lauren Ladwig has moved on to play field hockey at Denison University in Granville. “It’s no secret that we lost a talented class, however we are already seeing new leaders step in and take on these roles,” Flannery said.

Katie Flanagan, a junior, will replace Passarella in goal. “She has worked with Maddie the past two years and has been waiting for her turn to lead the Patriots from the cage,” Flannery said. “She is ready, eager to learn and improve and is off to a strong start.” Liberty plays district rivals Olentangy on the road on Sept. 14 and hosts Olentangy Orange on Sept. 29. The Patriots also have a couple of big matchups against Thomas Worthington, which made it to the district finals as well last season, and a rematch with Bishop Watterson. They play at Thomas in the season finale on Oct. 15 and host Watterson on Sept. 17.

Orange

It's a new day at Olentangy Orange and first-year coach Anna Karousis and her staff are pleasantly surprised with what they found. They looked at the 1-9-4 record from last season and quick exit from the tournament, an 11-0 loss to district rival Olentangy Liberty in the first round, and expected to find tumbleweeds on the practice field. "We're pretty pleasantly surprised with the athletic talent and what we have to work with," assistant coach Sarantis Karousis said. "Compared to the record that you see, we think that the athletic talent can achieve more than (they have) in the past, and we're happy with that." Anna Karousis is pleased with how her team has worked over the summer and believes that the tools are already there for the Pioneers to be successful. "The coaching staff has seen players step up to change the culture and expectations in front of them," she said. "The biggest obstacle they will have is belief that they can compete with the best teams in Ohio, which they can."

Four seniors, including forwards Megan Boyce and Eily Cogan and midfielders Kailey Collett and Taylor Combs, are going to provide experience and leadership in the midfield and offensive side of the ball, according to Anna Karousis. Junior Alex



Photo Credit: HR Imaging

Lowry will be another key player on the offensive side. "With what we have, I think we can work a strategy and get better results than what we've seen in the past," Sarantis Karousis said. Anna Peura and Mikhaila Smith, both juniors, will help on defense in front of junior goalie Alysaa Menzo. Sarantis Karousis pointed to games against district-rival Olentangy Liberty, as well as Thomas Worthington and Upper Arlington as benchmarks that will help determine where the Pioneers are as a program. "There's always Olentangy Liberty -- the big rivalry -- the girls are always fired up for them," Sarantis Karousis said. "Thomas Worthington -- they have state titles -- so they're going to be a tough team. Upper Arlington is a tough team. Those are where we get to see where our level is."

Orange faces Thomas Worthington and Upper Arlington in back-to-back games on the road on Sept. 9 and Sept. 14. The Karousis' know the Golden Bears well. Anna led their junior varsity team to a 13-1-1 record last season with Sarantis helping out. The Pioneers also see their district rivals in back-to-back games later in the month. They host Olentangy on Sept. 23 and travel to Liberty on Sept. 29. Michael Rich can be found on Twitter @mrichdelgazette.



Good Luck With Every Goal!

Wishing all these **High School Teams** and all of our area's hardworking students a successful year both on and off the field!



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