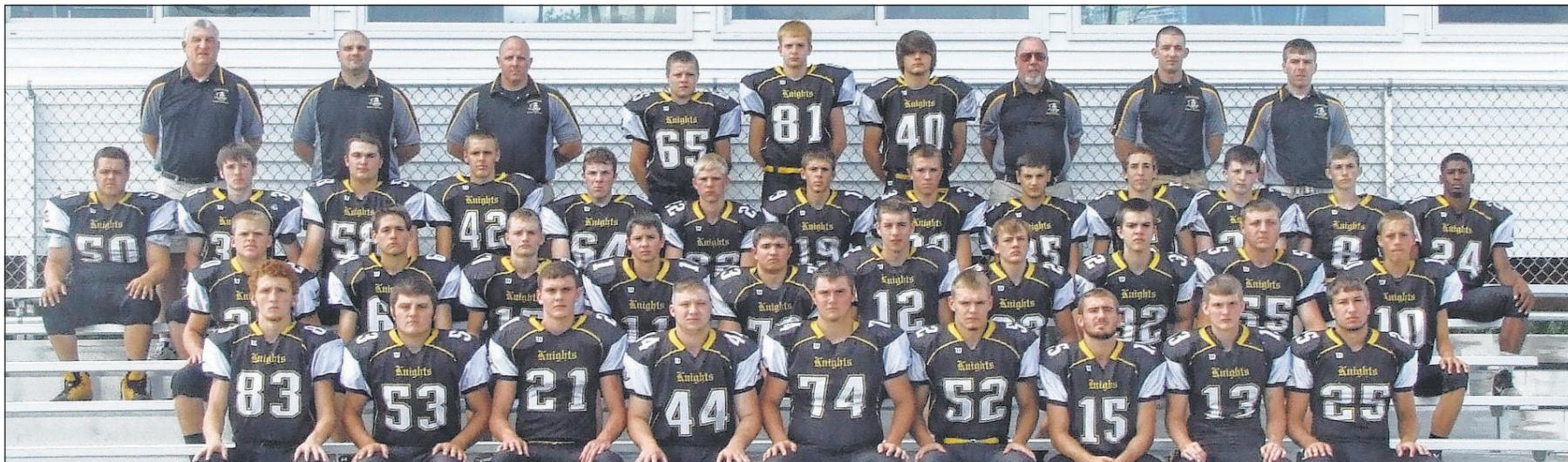


2015 FALL SPORTS PREVIEW



A special supplement to the Morrow County Sentinel



Northmor's
2015 football
team

Rob Hamilton |
Morrow County
Sentinel

Northmor Knights look to continue winning

By **ROB HAMILTON**
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The Northmor Knights turned the corner last year under B.J. Trainer. While the coach, entering his sixth year as the head of the program, has an overall record of 13-37, he earned nearly half of those wins last year as the Knights posted a 6-4 record.

Now, the challenge will be to maintain and improve on that sort of performance moving forward. Making that a challenge will be the loss of a large senior class. Lane Foster, Mason Jardon, Trevor Pryor, Mitchell Whisler, Andrew Fissell, Austin Yeater, Brice Trimble, Kameron Smith, Lucas Earhart, Korbyn Huston, James Ross and Devin McIe all graduated, leaving the coach with a number of holes to fill.

"We will be very young and do not have the experience of a lot of other teams," he said. "Our depth may also create some problems if there are any injuries."

The coach does have a number of letterwinning returnees to help ease the loss of those graduates. Aaron Vitte, Jake Farley, Jordan Wiseman, Demetrius Johnson, Gunnar Lilly, Kaleb Williams, Brayden Erhard, Jacob Walker, Ben Singer and Frank Keller are back. Unsurprisingly, Trainer will be looking at some of those athletes to provide leadership.

"We are going to rely heavily on our athletes that have 'heavy' in-game experience," he said. "Those athletes are Jake Farley, Gunnar Lilly, Jacob Walker, Brayden Erhard, Kaleb Williams, Frank Keller and Jordan Wiseman. We also

have several new faces that we expect to contribute."

Trainer noted that those athletes have set a good example as far as creating a good work ethic for his team.

"The athletes have a familiarity with our offense," he said, in discussing team strengths. "They have put in additional time in the weight room in the offseason, have improved their speed and are working hard at executing our offense and defense."

For his team to improve record-wise, Trainer said they need to work towards improving in all facets of the game.

"As a team, we are looking to improve in a number of areas, including knowledge of fundamentals, execution of game plan, team strength, competitiveness and continuing to improve our program's

standing in the MOAC," he said. "We must control the ball, eliminate turnovers, minimize mental mistakes and develop a desire to succeed."

Being able to do those things consistently will be key, as the coach looks at the Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference's Blue Division as a place where many teams will have a shot at a title.

"The Blue Division will be very competitive this year," he said. "I believe that Highland, a perennially successful team, will be very tough. Centerburg and Fredericktown have obviously established themselves with playoff pedigrees. Finally, I believe that Mount Gilead will be very tough as they return a number of very talented players from a year ago."

Rob Hamilton can be reached at 419-946-3010, ext. 1807. Connect with him on Twitter at @SportsMCS

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Highland's
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Highland Scots hoping for big year on gridiron

By **ROB HAMILTON**
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With 13 returning letterman, including seven offensive starters and six defensive, Highland football coach Chad Carpenter is hoping a tough non-conference schedule will prepare his squad for a potential Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference Blue Division title.

"We play a very tough non-conference schedule," said the coach. "We open up with Loudonville, followed up by Heath and River Valley. Conference play should be very competitive this year, as many of them have a lot of returning players."

Carpenter was able to point at a number of his guys as having important roles this year. On offense, he mentioned Jacob Ware, Jacob Christman,

Steve Hylton and Jordan Alexander will man the line, while Jared Limings and Andrew Stillwell will see a lot of carries at running back. Max Schreiber will see action at quarterback and throw the ball to receivers Dylan Tuggle, Alex Wright, Kaden Bunting and Garrett Mentzer.

On defense, the coach pointed at Zack Baker, Christman, Alexander and Ware as linemen; Andrew Davis and Austyn Albanese as backers and Stillwell, Logan Veley and Alex Wright as backs.

When it comes to his squad, Carpenter feels he has a lot of speed and experience, but worries about overall depth.

"We have team speed and many players received playing time last year and should be able to contribute towards our team success this year," he said. "The lack of depth at many positions is always

a concern. We could have some new faces this year seeing some playing time for the first time."

In the conference, the coach looks at Fredericktown and Northmor as being

teams to beat if his squad is to claim the Blue title.

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Indian FB has experience returning

By **ROB HAMILTON**

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After 2014's 3-7 campaign, Mount Gilead football coach Jason Ross is hoping for improvement behind a large number of returnees.

"We want to build on the fact that we played a large number of younger players last year, most of whom return," he said. "Our goal is always to get a little better every day."

In order to improve, the team will have to replace a few graduates, as while last year's senior class wasn't particularly large, some of its members did make big contributions. Joseph Elson (1195 rushing

yards, 15 touchdowns, 46 defensive tackles) and Cody Mitchell (74 tackles, four receiving touchdowns) both were named second-team players in the Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference, while Ben Bryson, Jalynn Cahill and Dylan Conant also made contributions.

However, the Indians also return a number of important players. Seniors Michael Mollohan (OT/DT), Deondre Cook (QB/DB) and Alex Ferguson (LB/TE) all were first-team MOAC picks, with Mollohan also being named special mention All-Ohio. Junior Danny Williamson (C/DT) was an honorable mention pick in the league.

Seniors Jacob Robinson (OL/DE),

Connor Philpot (OL/DE) and Zack Foster (FB/LB); and juniors Jonah Barnett (LB/RB), Anthony Clark (DT/FB), Austin Vanderkooi (WR/DB) and Hunter Creech (LB/FB) are also considered key returnees by Ross.

"We had a good offseason in our strength and conditioning program and many of our players had success in other sports," said Ross. "Our seniors are proving to be very good leaders and our junior class is very mature. Our coaching staff is also much more experienced this year. We must overcome our lack of recent success."

In order to do that, the coach feels his team will need to both stay healthy and find a way to overcome the loss of Elson's

offensive contributions.

"Like anyone, we need to stay healthy," he said. "We have a number of players returning that played significant time and we are looking to build on their experience. We have to play faster on defense and find a way to modify our offense to replace Elson, who rushed for nearly 1200 yards."

In the league, Ross looks at Fredericktown, Centerburg and Highland as teams to beat, noting that they've established themselves as the class of the Blue Division in recent years.

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Cardington looking to move up in league

By **ROB HAMILTON**

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After his Cardington Pirates finished 4-6 last year in his first year as head coach, Jerry Williams has his sights set high for his second season.

“As it is for every season, our goal is to be Mid-Ohio Athletic Conference Blue Division champions,” he said. “This squad will bring a different level of competitiveness. The key is to stay healthy.”

Williams returns a lot of athletes from last year's team, including four who earned postseason recognition. Senior LB/RB Trey Williams was a first-team pick in the league and Central District and took third-team honors as an All-Ohio player. Junior quarterback Luke McCarrell was an honorable mention pick in the league and district, while both senior WR/DB Devin Fridley and sophomore RB/SS Daniel Kill were honorable mention Central District selections.

Also returning are seniors David Cain, Johnny Levings, Jake Foor, Jarrod Fair, Tyler Castle and Brock Shade; juniors Devin Pearl, Skyler Bowling, Christian Huffman and Scott Osborne and sophomore Tyler Vilella.

The team did graduate a few key players in Cole Hess, Mike Taha and Cole Blackwell. Hess was a second-team MOAC pick, as well as a first-team mention in the district and honorable mention in the state, as a wide receiver, defensive back and special teams returner.

The coach is expecting a number of players to step up this year, though, citing Ethan Stambaugh (OL/DL), Pearl (WR/DB), Vilella (OL/LB), Clayton Clark (WR/DB) and Tyler Patterson (OL/DL) as guys he's looking for big contributions from.

In the conference, Williams cites Highland, Centerburg and Fredericktown as the top teams in the Blue Division. He also mentioned Northmor as a potential sleeper team.

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