

Oilers offense hinges on new quarterback

By Scott Flaherty
Mariner correspondent

Twenty-six Randolph Oilers football players will return to the gridiron July 17 as the team kicks off its 1987 season.

The first game will begin at 7:30 p.m. Friday, July 17 at RHS Memorial Field against the Hyde Park Cowboys.

The team expects to have a 45-man roster as the season begins, according to Peter O'Kane, franchise general manager.

The key rookie this season is expected to be Bob Witt, a former Rockland High School quarterback. While on the school-boy gridiron, Witt led the Rockland Bulldogs to the state Superbowl. He then played at Bridgewater State College after graduation.

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"He's a threat in both the running and passing games," O'Kane said. "He likes to scramble, so he will be hard to defend against."

O'Kane adds that he has the potential to take over the Oilers' offensive effort for this season.

However, the team needs depth, especially in the offensive and defensive lines, he added. "You've got to have size up front to move the ball and to stop other teams' offensive efforts."

O'Kane said the team is looking at several tough opponents in the action this year — the defending-champion Marlboro Shamrocks, the Cowboys and Middleboro.

The Shamrocks have taken the league title for four years running, and undoubtedly want to extend that record to five seasons, he said.

Hyde Park, now under the direction of a new head coach, Paul Costello, have exceptional talent, and O'Kane says the Middleboro Cobras have been an "up-and-coming" squad for several years "and will be a force to be reckoned with" as Curry College QB Bob Barrett joins the team this year.

"Everyone in the league seems to have improved for this year," O'Kane added, so the team is looking forward to gaining strength throughout the season to earn a playoff berth.

Jim Brodie, last year's Oilers Unsung Hero and the unofficial "old man" of the team, will fill an outside linebacker post with Mike Tosone, an all-league defender and team MVP.

Mike Nye and Ted Clinkscale will be looking to hold their own in the defensive backfield; both are quite fast and play with a watchful eye for interception opportunities, O'Kane said.

Two of the hardest hitters in the league are Mike Issler and Tom Kirlis, the backbone of the Oilers' defense in the all-important inside linebacker slots. Both are veterans who are more than capable of stopping the running game.

The offensive front line will be led by Ken Hall, Pat Merrick, Randolph native Steve Garrod; Norm Eliason, Kirk Curcuru, John Boughner, Rich Palin and Jack Mitchell.

QB Witt "has a great attitude and is a hard worker," O'Kane said. "He's going to be a big factor this year and into the future."

The Oilers should have a strong ground game thanks to the hands of running backs Paul Cavallo, Tony Cavallo, Ron Cassford and Jon Larkin. Sean Crowley, Jim McGee and Skip McGee will be looking for weaknesses in opposing defenses.

Rollie Locke represents the squad's biggest offensive weapon as its kicker, O'Kane said.

The team's schedule has them at home for six — and possibly, seven — games of a 10-game season.

The players can look forward to more individual attention with the addition of assistant coach Paul Killinger, an ex-Oiler who also coached in the late 1970s.

Coach Ed Casabian, who heads Bridgewater-Raynham High football and lists experience at the helm of the Bridgewater State program, is also back for another year.

Tom Pileski, who will take over as Brockton schools AD this year, will be the head coach for the Oilers. Pileski's credentials include stints at Northeastern University, Curry College and BSC, as well as coaching the Brockton High football and baseball teams.

Results of all games will be published here, and two unsung heroes will be chosen from each game. Look for the team's home schedule next week.