

EFL set to open season

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Hard to believe with major league baseball, golf and tennis all dominating the local sports scene of late, but the Eastern Football League will be celebrating its 31st season this coming weekend with all 10 teams in action.

The feature game pits the defending champion Randolph Oilers against the Marlboro Shamrocks. The Friday night kickoff is slated for 7:30 at Randolph's Memorial Field.

The Middleboro Cobras and Hockomock Colts will also be in action this Friday.

The Cobras will be entertaining one of the league's two new entries, the Methuen Outlaws, at Batis Field.

The Colts will journey to Charlestown for a clash with the Charlestown Townies. Both games begin at 8 p.m.

Rounding out this weekend's schedule, Hyde Park will be at Worcester and newcomer Maine is at Rhode Island.

Coach Bob Turner's Oilers waltzed through the 1990 campaign with a perfect 12-0 record, including a last-second 27-21 win over the Shamrocks in the title game.

Nationally, the Oilers placed fourth in the final national power ranking of minor league teams with the Shamrocks placing 10th.

"We've certainly got a tough opener," explained Randolph general manager Peter O'Kane. "The pressure is going to be on us. Both teams have most of their players back from last season."

Leading the parade of returning offensive veterans for Randolph are quarterback Bobby Witt, receivers Mark Harding, Ricky Witt, Ron Cassford, Greg Martello and Jim Clifford, running backs Mike Waithe, Terry Branch and Sean Crowley, and linemen George Fopiano, Kirk Curcuru, Norm Eliason, John Boughner, Tony Rhee, Jerome Penn and Tony Monaco.

Defensively, Tom Kirlis, Bubba Pina and Leo Cooney are among those back for another year.

Doing the placekicking will be Ray Almeida, who booted two win-

The Oilers will also be bolstered by several newcomers, including offensive linemen Lance Olberding (6-7, 306 pounds) from Iowa and Fayetteville (N.C.) State's Jay Clark (6-4, 290), running back Brian Heffernan (6-2, 235) from Brown, wide receiver Mike Walsh via Whitman-Hanson Regional High School and Boston College, plus defensive linemen Nick Olsen (6-5, 275) from Maryland and Ohio's Chuck Jones (6-3, 295), a former Parade Magazine All-American.

"We've added Jim Rourke to our coaching staff and he's done a great job bringing in new players who are looking to keep the NFL hopes alive," said O'Kane of the former Kansas City Chief and Cincinnati Bengal offensive lineman from Abington.

Marlboro, which has won the league crown five times since 1983, will once again be spearheaded by running back Frank Fay, the EFL's leading scorer for the past two seasons.

In last year's championship game, Fay ripped off an 85-yard fourth-quarter touchdown that lifted the Shamrocks into a 21-20 lead before the Oilers rallied for the triumph.

"Everyone is expecting one heck of a game Friday night," concluded O'Kane.

Middleboro, one of oldest teams in the league, is always a strong competitor. The Cobras, owners of five championships, have compiled a 114-76 record in their 18-year history.

Third-year coach Norm Tardiff is optimistic with many key veterans back as well as the addition of several new players, and feels his team should improve upon its 5-5 record of a year ago.

Hockomock, which plays out of Mansfield, got its feet wet last year as a newcomer, posting a 1-9 mark.