

Coaching the Randolph Oilers is a family affair

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RANDOLPH -- When the Randolph Oilers coaching staff huddled on the sideline Friday night during their Eastern Football League season opener in Pawtucket, R.I., it was a family reunion.

The head coach is Bob Turner, who has returned after a year's hiatus. The offensive coordinator is Jim Turner, his son. The defensive coordinator is Billy Turner, another son. And also on the coaching staff is Fred Turner.

No, he is not the head coach's son. He is Bob Turner's brother.

"Yeah, during the off-season when we get together, we talk a lot of football," Bob Turner said.

Turner, 59, a retired Boston Globe pressman, was persuaded to become a coach in the EFL in 1988 by team owner Peter O'Kane.

Right away, the Oilers had a successful year. In 1990, they went on to win the EFL crown and were ranked among the top semiprofessional teams in the nation.

Bob Turner was selected the EFL coach of the year in 1989, 1990 and 1992.

"But it was getting to me," said Turner. "I needed some time off." He quit before the 1994 season and enjoyed himself.

"I just relaxed," he said. "I went to a few games. I really liked it. I saw the game from a completely different viewpoint."

So, this year, when the coaching position opened again, Turner happily rejoined the team and his brother and sons.

His brother Fred works for Stop & Shop in Hyde Park and is an old football warrior. After his days at Hyde Park High, he played sandlot football and coached youth football before joining his brother.

Jim Turner, 30, is a former player for the Oilers. He was a defensive back and wide receiver, and a good one. During the National Football League players' strike in 1987, he was a replacement player for the New England Patriots. When he is not playing for the Oilers, he, like his father before him, is a pressman at the Globe.

Billy Turner, 35, was a defensive lineman for the Oilers. He is a union carpenter when he is not along the sidelines for Randolph.

This year, the Oilers will be a team in transition. They have a few new players who will make an impact, most notably running back Anthony Comer and Germaine Woods. Both played at Boston College, and Comer was a high school All-American at Brockton High School.

Comer will use his appearance with the Oilers as a showcase, hoping some National Football League scout will see him and sign him. While this is the first year for some players with the Oilers, it will also be the final year for a few, who have given notice that they will hang up their spikes.

Jay McGee, who has been a star running back for 11 years, is calling it quits after this year. He is on track to reach a milestone before it is over. All he needs is 125 yards to reach 5,000 yards rushing.

Another player who says it is his final year is Bubba Pina, an all-star linebacker for 17 years for Randolph.

Mike Waithe and Norm Eliason, perennial all-stars, are also scheduled to hang it up after the 1995 season.

"It will be difficult replacing those players," said Bob Turner. "It will be the end of an era."

The Oilers have been filling holes in the lineup with the likes of Comer and Woods. Last year, lineman Ben Bullen joined the squad. "He is a team leader," said Turner. "He is a vital asset. With a few more players like him, we could be among the elite semipro teams in the country."

The Oilers were the last team to hold the EFL crown before the Marlborough Shamrocks took the title in 1991. In the last four years, no one has been able to unseat them.

One team that came the closest to unseating Marlborough was the Mitchell Memorial Club of Middleborough. The Cobras have the record for continuous play in the Eastern Football League.

Next to four-time champion Marlborough, Middleborough is the most successful team in the EFL. Last year, coach Norm Tardiff ran off nine straight wins before the team lost its 10th and final game of the season to Marlborough. In the league playoffs, Middleborough was ousted by the Shamrocks.

This year, there will be several changes in the Middleborough lineup. "We have a lot of new faces, and we're inviting anyone who would like to try out for the league to call us," said Tardiff.

The Eastern Football League is the oldest amateur league in the country. Since 1961, 65 cities and towns from Maine to New Jersey have sponsored teams. It has sent a number of players to the National Football League, including kicker Tom Dempsey, who played for the New Orleans Saints, and Lance Olberding, who played for the Cincinnati Bengals.

This year, the league will continue the two-division format started last year.

Other teams in the league are the Merrimack Valley Outlaws, the Boston Cowboys, the Charlestown Townies, the Ocean State Buccaneers and the Medway Tigers.

