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HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL: Greencastle-Antrim looks to reload in 2016

GREENCASTLE — The cycle of high school athletics doesn't play favorites. Graduation is part of the varsity landscape, causing annual turnover essentially every season.

The question becomes, does a program reload or rebuild? That dynamic looms large as Greencastle-Antrim prepares to open its varsity football season Friday night at Chambersburg.

Coming off back-to-back 6-4 campaigns, the Blue Devils return just one starter after losing 27 seniors, creating a slew of opportunities across the field.

"The guys coming up, it's their turn," G-A head coach Chuck Tinninis said. "They've been in the program and know how we do things. Several of them would have played earlier, but they were behind a senior-heavy class. Now, it's next man up."

OFFENSE

Leading the transition is quarterback Cade McDowell, who saw varsity time at the end of last year following an injury to starter Spencer Meyers. Still only a junior, McDowell brings intelligence and dual-threat capabilities to the position, earning the nod as one of three G-A captains.

"McDowell really is the key for us offensively," said Tinninis, who enters his 29th season at the helm. "He's smart and just a natural leader. We want keep defenses honest, so he's going to have to make some throws. But, we're very confident with what we've seen from him."

Headlining G-A's ground game will be versatile running back Demetrius Burton, complemented by Kyrin Zimmerman at wing and Caleb Schaeffer at fullback.

Burton, who is the Blue Devils' lone returning starter, finished with a team-high 693 rushing yards and eight touchdowns a season ago. Assuming a larger role this year, Zimmerman has emerged as a solidified leader, joining McDowell in being selected a captain.

Tanner Bain is projected to share snaps at wing while Cade Marshall, Antwoine Carter and Marcus Strauser are all penciled in at split end (receiver).

"I feel like we have more speed than before," Tinninis said. "We don't have that bruiser out of the backfield, but we have a lot of guys that are fast. Speed is definitely one of our strengths."

Up front, Ethan Van Scyoc will anchor the offensive line at center with Blake Mills and Daryn Holdsworth supporting the interior at guard. Having missed last season due to injury, Jacob Hockman is back as a highly-touted, two-way tackle, rounding out G-A's trio of captains. Jacob Reid is slated to start at left tackle with Brayden Black and Reese Kyler rotating at tight end.

"There's average size up front," Tinninis said. "We're not small, but we're not huge either. The nice thing is they know what they're doing and have worked well together."

DEFENSE

Shifting to a 4-3 scheme, Tinninis wants to be more aggressive defensively.

"It's simpler, more of an attacking-style," he said. "This way we can play more downhill and get after it. We're also more confident on the back end with our speed in the secondary."

Hockman is expected to be a force in the middle, surrounded by Mills, Holdsworth and Cole Bonebrake along the line. Kobe Jones-Green, the lone freshman on the roster, will also be utilized at defensive end.

At linebacker, Brad Shear, Logan Shifflet, Hayden Rowe, Micah Miller, Schaeffer and Kyler are all listed on the depth chart, presumably sharing the workload in specific situations.

In the secondary, Bain and Seth Eberly will roam as safeties, shadowing Carter and Isaiah Peck at corner. Burton, Marshall and Strauser could also see time in coverage. Ideally, the fewer guys playing both ways, the better.

On special teams, Ian Gelsinger will handle the kicking duties.

"There's a lot of talk about us replacing 21 of 22 starters," Tinninis said. "We believe in our program and that the coaches at the lower levels will have these guys ready. I like our chances against anybody, we just have to stay healthy."



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