

North Greene should take frequently to the air with new Coach Creviston

by John Hough, Sports Writer
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WHITE HALL - After a couple of rough seasons of North Greene football, hopes are running high for a rebound season in 2017 under a coach who plans a strong passing game.

Ever since reaching the IHSA Class 1A quarterfinals with a talented senior class of players, the Spartans haven't had much to cheer for. Their record through the last two seasons is 3-15, and it ultimately led to a coaching change.

Flashback to 2014 and Barry Creviston was guiding the New Berlin Pretzels through the always tough Sangamon Conference and a Class 3A second round playoff berth. He nearly defeated the vaunted Williamsville Bullets, but it was not to be. In 2016, Creviston resigned from New Berlin and eventually landed on his feet at North Greene. Now he's looking to take his success and turn the Spartans program around.

"The football is always the same for me you know it's just basically getting the kids in line and helping them to get organized," Creviston said. "Not that anything was unorganized before, but I want to get it organized the way that I like it. It takes a little bit of an adjustment. You know you just got to try and reach these guys, and they're a good bunch. We're just learning so I think it's going to be all right."

Turning things around won't be easy with a new coach bringing in a new system. Creviston is used to that though. A former coach at Routt, Johnsburg, and New Berlin, he likes to run the ball, but he's commanded teams that have racked up plenty of passing yards over the years. North Greene squads in the past haven't done a whole lot of passing. However, the WIVC and high school football, in general, is slowly seeing more teams come around to airing it out more often.

"My reputation precedes me but when you break down the numbers of what I've done it looks like I'm a passing team, but it's probably fifty-fifty. We're definitely not eighty-twenty run, but we'll pass to set up some runs and then if it's smart to run we'll run."

After going 1-8 in 2016 with a squad that had few seniors, the Spartans will be more seasoned, have more depth, but young at the same time.

"There are about 40 kids out here, and it's right where I thought we'd be in 1A football," Creviston said. "I'm happy."

Keaton Brown, a junior will be the new starting quarterback in the new system. He's unproven but has done well in the off-season and could very well emerge as one of the more productive quarterbacks in all of the WIVC by the end of the season.

Brett Whicker, a three-year starter at wide receiver will be one of Brown's favorite targets alongside Carter Hoseman and Jason Brannan.

Kaiden Heberling is the starting running back and has impressed Creviston this summer as well as his younger brother, Karter who is a freshman with plenty of potential. Brent Thompson is another one who will feature in the backfield for the Spartans.

Two key contributors at quarterback and wide receiver during the last two seasons were Jonah and Josh Hopper, but they left the team in the off-season and will focus on basketball this school year.

The offensive line for the Spartans is more of an unknown avenue at the moment overall. Juniors, Cade VanMeter and Lars Speaker, will be relied upon and showed Creviston, leadership.

"They were mainstays from last years team and had shown some leadership this year," Creviston said. "It's been a hodgepodge group regarding who's been here this summer. The line is kind of our question mark as far as how good we're going to be, and I'm sure everybody in 1A says that every year. We go as our line goes.

Taylor Scott and Brett Thompson will return as starting linebackers with Heberling, Whicker, Speaker, and Brady Brown will return on defense as well. Going back to the trenches, that will be another place of question mark going into week one.

"Our D-line could be a smattering of whoever is hot that minute. We got some really big guys and some big out of shape guys. It depends on how far they've come along," Creviston said.

"We're not at the point right now where we can line up 11 guys on both sides of the ball and beat people. We're going to have to play a lot of people, Creviston said. "We only have about four or five seniors. I would never say this is a rebuilding year because everybody wants to win now and I don't want to waste anybody's time. But, if we can have some success this year we can have a lot of success in the future building the program."

Although the game is at home, it seems fitting that the Spartans first game of the season is against Routt, the second school Creviston coached for. He was the head coach from 2003-2008 went 42-20 overall.

“There is not history between the two of us, but it’s just a quirky happenstance that the team I used to coach in the WIVC is the team we play first game,” Creviston said with a laugh. “They should be better, and it’ll be a tough game, good first opponent to see where we’re at.”

Throughout his years of coaching, Creviston has a track record of boosting up rosters and getting teams to the playoffs. In fact the last three years he coached at New Berlin they made the playoffs. At Routt, he guided the Rockets to the playoffs five times and then one time at Johnsburg in 2009. This season that’ll be difficult coming into a new program that has been down the past two seasons in a tough conference.

“As long as we keep improving week-to-week we’re going to be a tough team to beat. We’re going to set our goals high,” Creviston said. “You have to start talking about those things, and kids need to start believing in it to get those things accomplished. If and when I ask a kid, “what do you think we’ll do this year,” and he says 2-7 then I would say, “well tell me what seven weeks you don’t want me to coach because I won’t show up those weeks. That’s not how I coach. I coach every week like it’s the playoffs and to get our kids to think that way and they’ll have a better attitude and football IQ.”

