

MEL football beginning new era with Pomerrenke at the helm, coach remains optimistic

by Brent Feeney, Sports Writer
September 5 2017 7:00 AM





EDWARDSVILLE – There have been a lot of changes in Metro East Lutheran's football program for 2017.

The most notable of the changes this season is that the two-year coop the Knights had with Madison has come to an end; both the Knights and Trojans will be fielding their own teams this season – in Madison's case, they'll be playing football on their own for the first time since 1992.

The Knights also have a new coach at the helm this season; Micha Pomerence is taking over the program from Matt Tschudy, and Pomerence comes to the MEL program from a stint coaching at St. Louis-area power Lutheran North.

One-time coop partners Metro East Lutheran and Madison clashed on the football field Saturday morning, with the Trojans – playing their first season on their own since the program was disbanded in 1992 – defeating the Knights 56-0 at Sam Dymas Field at Madison High School. MELHS falls to 0-2 with the defeat.

The two schools had a coop program for the 2015 and 2016 seasons.

Alphonso Rice had touchdown runs of 14 and 18 yards for the 2-0 Trojans while Artavius Stepney had a 60-yard interception return for a score and a 45-yard TD run;

Carl Moore had a 65-yard TD reception, Deangelo Briggs a 53-yard TD catch and Malcom Conway a 52-yard pick-six.

Pomerenske still has great optimism for the Knights for the future.

“I come from Lutheran North in St. Louis, with a storied tradition, a championship-caliber team,” Pomerenske said. “I’ve played in a championship game every year I’ve coached high school football and I’m hoping to bring some of that over here and bring a new culture, new attitude, new view of the game of football over here to our school.

“I really am encouraged by our team and our attitude and efforts they’ve put in, so I’m feeling really good.”

Pomerenske hails from Nebraska, graduating from Lincoln Lutheran High School in Lincoln, Neb., then played at Concordia University in Seward, Neb. With the end of the coop with Madison (who the Knights will visit Sept. 2), finding players hasn’t been the easiest of tasks for Pomerenske. “We have a good core of kids, like 13-14 kids who have totally bought in and have been at everything and have been incredibly loyal,” Pomerenske said. “I’m not going to say it’s been easy, but it’s just part of the culture that’s not here yet that I’m hoping to build.

“I feel really good about our core and I’m confident that we’ll compete and do well.”

Pomerenske’s football philosophy is simple. “Carl Reed (Lutheran North’s football coach) has been a really unbelievable mentor for me. You run what your players can run, so my philosophy is winning. Whatever I can get me to win, I’m going to run. At Lutheran North, we ran a spread offense, but this year, they’re going to run a Delaware Wing-T this year because they don’t have the same kind of offense.

“Our team is going to be the best when we can control the football, run the football and slow the game down. We don’t have the depth that other teams have; we do have a lot of talent with our numbers, so we’ll slow the game down, run the football and we’ll try to play hard-nosed defense.”

With the numbers the Knights have, expect most of the players to play both ways this season. “Endurance is going to be a key thing in our games,” Pomerenske said. “If we can control the game, play our style, we’ll have a shot.”

MEL’s schedule is much different this season; the Knights are no longer part of the Prairie State Conference and they’ll be facing teams from all over this season. They opened the year Aug. 25 at Fisher in east-central Illinois, then played Madison and head to northern Illinois to take on Polo in Week 3 before their home opener against St. Louis

Central Home School Sept. 15; in fact, from Week 4-8, the Knights will be at home against Crossroads on a Saturday afternoon, entertain Blue Ridge in their Sept. 29 Homecoming game and host Winfield and Principia before heading to Blue Ridge for their Oct. 20 season finale.

“We're going to put some miles on the bus to start the season,” Pomerenske said with a laugh.

“I'm expecting some good things; I'm looking forward to seeing what (Class) 1A football in Illinois is all about,” Pomerenske said, “and really putting an imprint in there and starting to build a winner; everybody loves a winner. I'm getting great support now, but I can imagine they'll come out if we can start winning some football games here.”

