

# Flowers' busy summer has him prepared for senior season

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CARROLLTON - What do you do when you take a beating in the fall from football, and then a mental grind in the winter with basketball, and get your heart broken in baseball?

Hunter Flowers doesn't give himself much time to reflect and recharge his batteries.

A year ago, after having surgery on his shoulder, Flowers put his left arm and his body to massive production during his junior year. He helped the Carrollton Hawks win

another WIVC South championship and get into the playoffs again while earning his second Illinois Football Coaches Association All-State award. In baseball, he was a key part of Carrollton's 26-9 season where they won their fifth straight regional championship and a game in the sectionals in which he got the game-winning hit.

Now he's back preparing for his senior campaign of football for the Hawks, and he's had a busy summer going to several combines and quarterback camps.

"The mega camps are more of a showcase to show them what you can do, but the Carbondale camp that I went to was more of a learning camp," Flowers said. "You do drills, and that's where I learn. I've improved because of them."

He's participated in the Lindenwood Mega Camp, SIU-Carbondale QB Camp, Chicagoland Showcase, Wisconsin Camp, and Southeast Missouri Camp. He is due to take part in camps at the University of Indiana, Minnesota State, North Dakota, which will involve a lot of cross-country driving.

"I've been to Colorado a couple of times. It's like 13 hours. It's going to be a long drive with just me and my dad most of the time," Flowers said.

Playing in the Western Illinois Valley Conference, which is a predominantly Class 1A conference, teams usually showcase big, physical play as opposed to blazing speed. Flowers had to quickly adjust to throwing to fast-paced receivers guarded by equally athletic defensive backs.

"That's where the difference comes in," Flowers said about going to college combines. "I'm used to my receivers, and then I go to these camps, and I get all these guys that are a lot faster. There are really good defensive backs that are on them, and you have to make a lot of better decisions. Some of the routes the receivers run are not like the ones I was used to. They were all trying to juke and make the DB's miss. The cool part about it was how many different types of receivers there were. A lot of short guys that were really quick and then you have tall guys that catch almost anything you threw up to them."

The 2018 season saw Flowers' role expand beyond to just being a quarterback. Because of his 6-foot-3, 180-pound frame, he played defensive end and was also the leading rusher on offense 133 carries. All of those expanded duties wore him out by the end of the season.

“Running all that much and getting hit and going on defense. That was hard. I was beat up by the end of the year,” Flowers said. “We’ve got a couple of guys in mind for running back, and if they can step up and do the job, then I won’t have to run as much. I will still be running because we can incorporate that and do a lot of different stuff.”

Flowers says the toughest physical game he’s ever played was back in his sophomore season against the Tuscola Warriors in the quarterfinals. That was Flowers’ third-ever game playing on both sides of the ball, and the Hawks lost 48-20.

Another game from his sophomore year he recalls was his second ever start at quarterback against the Beardstown Tigers. That time, Carrollton came out on top in a memorable 29-23 victory and remains one of the most rewarding games Flowers says he’s been a part of.

“Tuscola were so big and physical it was hard to do anything,” Flowers said. “I was also physical, but that game came down to the wire, and all of our guys were dead. They somehow pulled through, and that was one of the most fun games too.”

Recounting last year, it involved Beardstown again, which was also a humbling experience for Flowers and the Hawks. They were dominated by the Tigers overpowering offensive and defensive line and lost 40-6, which is their biggest defeat to a WIVC team since losing to Brown County 62-12 in 2010.

“It was super tough. We put everything into the first quarter and had nothing left for the last three. That first quarter killed us. We had our starters trying to take themselves out, but we didn’t have any subs for them, so they were just dead,” Flowers said. “I was so big and rotated with their linemen. It was just hard.”

Despite the heavy workload, he still put up big numbers with 2,701 passing yards with 29 touchdowns and 13 interceptions. He completed 60% of his passes and finished with a 103.2 QB rating.

Heading into his senior season, Flowers has a chance to end up in some elite company in the state record books. He’s thrown for 5,251 yards, 65 touchdowns, 23 interceptions, and completed 341 passes. He’s averaged 32 touchdowns, 2,625 yards, and 171 completions through two seasons. If Flowers can match those averages for his senior year, then he will finish in the top ten all-time for most passing yards, passing touchdowns, and passes completed, in Illinois history.

However, Flowers isn’t worried about those stats determining his legacy. He wants to make his final season a memorable one for the rest of his team.

“If it happens, it happens. It’s all in the game plan and what the game does. That would be awesome,” Flowers said. “I’m more worried about 9-0 and see what we can do in the playoffs. This year we should be better than last year with all the younger talent that’s going to step up. They’re in the weight room every morning and will be fun to watch.”

What Flowers won’t have at his side this year will be Nathan Walker, who is statistically Carrollton’s best wide receiver and is a big reason as to why Flowers has been a successful quarterback. Although, he’ll have capable returning and upcoming targets, Walker was a special receiver and teammate to Flowers.

“I really enjoyed Nathan,” Flowers said. “My sophomore year, he was incredible. He caught everything. Last year he got double and triple-teamed every game. I enjoyed him in not just football, but every sport. He was right there with me the whole time. I’m going to miss him for sure.”

Since he played baseball this year, Flowers dropped some weight as opposed to last year when he was able to stay football shape. However, because of that, it’s allowed him to enhance his speed. At the Chicagoland Showcase, Flowers 40-yard dash was clocked at 4.70 seconds. No doubt will that add to his rushing and scrambling ability as well as enhance his dual-threat ability.

“I think I’ll be faster this year than I was last year because I don’t have all of the weight that I did last year for my surgery. I’m a lot lighter,” Flowers said.

Flowers has already established himself as one of the best quarterbacks in Carrollton and WIVC history. Flowers has been awarded All-WIVC and All-State honors in each of his two varsity seasons to go along with his aforementioned stats. He wants to be remembered as a positive role model to future Hawks and to fulfill his goals for 2019.

“I want to be like Cody Leonard, Cole Brannan, and Jacob and Jerrett Smith that everyone talks and gives examples about. I want to be up on the wall of records that people look up to.” Flowers said. “That’s what I want to be known for. It’s a goal of mine to be one of those respected players. I don’t know if I’ll do as well as Jacob because he made it all the way to state and he was apart of the only team that did that.”









