

Piasa Southwestern Football Ready To Improve Upon Last Year's 5-5 Campaign

by Bradley Piros, Reporter
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PIASA - "Last season was kind of an odd year," Piasa Southwestern head football coach Pat Keith said after a Saturday morning practice, one that was the team's first full-padded one of the season.

Last year, the team set off on a great 4-0 start defeating the likes of Staunton, Wesclin, Litchfield, and Greenville before running into the absolute powerhouse that was Pana. The Piasa Birds were shut out 55-0 that game on the road. Pana ended the regular season undefeated and finished the year off going 11-1.

After that Southwestern dropped games to Carlinville, Vandalia, and Hillsboro to drop back to 4-4 on the season. They ended up beating Gillespie in their last regular-season game to gain an overall positive record and earn a post-season berth, something that Keith was proud of his team for.

They eventually took on Benton and were defeated 42-0 in the first round of the Class 3A Football State Championship bracket.

Going 5-5 is better than most and still an achievement. Coming off of a 3-6 campaign in 2019, the Piasa Birds finished the shortened 2020 season off 5-1.

Coming out the other side of all that though, they still managed to grab a .500 record and earn a postseason appearance.

"It's obviously a step in the right direction," Keith said.

"But, I hope our guys aren't content on that one season. Hopefully, we're going to build on that and keep on improving."

This year, the Piasa Birds have an incoming freshman class of seven. While that might not seem like a lot, most of the team is returning from last year.

Keith said that they have enough players to field both a varsity and a JV team, but it would be ideal to have that third freshman team in action. He already plans on having a good freshman class next year based on the number of eighth graders playing right now.

"The most important thing right now though is week one," Keith said.

Southwestern will open their season on August 26th at 7 p.m. when they play Staunton on the road. Their first home game will be the following week against Virden North Mac, their only non-conference game of the season.

Keith mentioned that the South Central Conference is a tough one, saying that "every week is a battle for us."

"We have some good senior leadership, but it's not going to be easy," he said.

After weeks of training, practices, and tryouts, the Piasa Birds are ready to pick up where they left off last season and try to improve upon what they have.

The photo gallery below was taken on Saturday, August 13th at practice.