

## **William Jewell**

# **Cards optimistic after 1982 marks**

Ask a football player at William Jewell if his team is in a rebuilding season and his reaction probably will range from laughter to disbelief.

The Cardinals return 42 lettermen and 15 starters from last year's team which came within one game of winning the NAIA Division II national championship, losing to Linfield, Ore. in the NAIA finals.

Yet Jewell gridders readily admit losing some key individuals to graduation, that the current schedule includes two NAIA Division I schools, and that the quarterback slot is unsettled.

Senior defensive tackle Jan Redmond explained his team's confidence. "It's not a rebuilding year when you have 36 seniors," Redmond said. He noted that the loss of all-conference quarterback Kelly Groom, all-American defensive tackle Guy Weber and other notables must be reckoned with. "But to make up for losses in key positions, everyone is trying to go 100 percent, all of the time," he said.

Head coach Vic Wallace, who has led the Cardinals into the Division II playoffs in each of his three seasons at Jewell, has a positive outlook. "From last year's team we have 15 returning starters. Where we have lost seven starters, we have 15 people that return a year more mature and a year stronger," he said.

"Actually we have progressed as a team."

Senior offensive guard Mark Mundell was equally-optimistic. "This year the seniors are more together in terms of leadership," he assessed. "Everyone is asking for input from everyone else. When you have tight leadership, it makes for a better team."

Strategists will point out that it will take more than being "tight" to beat opening opponents Evangel and Missouri Western. Both are Division I teams and additions to the schedule. They increase last year's slate of nine games to ten, replacing Doane College.

"But we feel we are ahead of this time last year," Wallace said. "Our seniors have been coached by the same staff for three years. Of course we start against the Division I schools, so we need to be ahead."

Putting all high hopes aside, the Cardinals were dealt a blow when senior quarterback Andre Nelson was lost for the season with a broken ankle. Nelson, Groom's probable successor according to Wallace, will opt for graduation over trying a comeback next season.

However, defensive line coach Rodger LaBeth emphasized strength at quarterback. "The slot is open, but we have two seniors who were understudies to Groom in Paul Troth and Scott San-

dridge," LaBeth said. "They've been tutored by the best and I think they can step in there." Troth lacks Groom's experience at reading defenses, but is a better thrower, according to Wallace.

LaBeth is confident Troth or Sandridge can bring the Cardinals a repeat Heart of America Conference title. As for the NAIA playoffs, LaBeth said "only time will tell."

Sophomore Mike Smith is much more optimistic. "If any year, this would be the year we'd win the national championship," Smith opined.

Coaches and returning players are talking most about this year's freshman class. "I'm very much impressed with them," LaBeth beamed. The kids overall are getting bigger and stronger. This group is one of the best I've seen in a long time."

Redmond added "it's easy to sell the program when you tell a high school senior you've been to the playoffs three years in a row and to the championship game last year."

Senior defensive end Art Davis explained "when you win, everyone wants to jump on the bandwagon, and that's good. Winning is fun, and when the guys come out, they're out to have fun."

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