

Swede football team has 'big' ideas

Written by Deb Egenberger

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Gothenburg squad larger, stronger.

The 14 senior football players who left the Swede team after last season's 8-2 finish earned numerous accolades throughout their careers and no doubt left some big shoes to fill.

But with players spilling over a 200-pound average on both sides of the ball this fall, those shoes might not have enough room.

"We're big," said Gothenburg coach Craig Haake of the 2010 squad. "Extremely large. In fact, I'd say this is probably the biggest group overall I've ever coached."

Hard work in the weight room over the summer helped the boys pack on muscle.

Sophomore Dillon Gartner and junior Dane Ehlers are each over 6-feet tall and weigh 265 pounds and 255, respectively. They'll anchor the line of scrimmage for the Swedes on both sides of the ball.

Add Tre Ostergard (6-0, 205), Paxton Gruber (6-2, 255) and Kyle Demoret (the smallest one at 5-11, 175) and Gothenburg has a formidable wall.

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"They're big, they're strong and they're moving," Haake said, adding that beefing up hasn't hindered team speed.



"We might be just as fast as last year," he said.

The rest of the Swedes are bigger, faster and stronger as well.

Levi Walker, Brannon McMichael, Korey Ahlenstorf, Tyler Aden, Logan Sheets and Dillon McMichael add mass to the field. Aaron Lauer, Dane Wilson, Tanner Schwanz and Cody Ostergard bring quickness.

Then there's Tannor Mroczek, the senior return man who ran the fastest 40-yard dash time in the state at 4.37 seconds during high school combine testing last spring.

"He's definitely a weapon," Haake said of the 6-foot, 170-pound running back/linebacker who has medaled in the 100-yard dash at the state track meet three years straight.

But Mroczek starts the season injured, nursing a broken ankle he suffered during a football camp this summer.

"We want him back and we want him healthy," Haake said.

Gothenburg will offer the same in-your-face style of football the Swedes have played for years. Only the personnel has changed.

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Haake said senior Jack Dudley and junior Jackson Graham will likely share time taking the calls as quarterback.

"They're inexperienced as far as the varsity game goes," the coach said.

That's true for the majority of this year's team, though.

The good thing is, Haake said, Gothenburg will still put quality athletes on the field.

"This is one of the least experienced groups I've had in a very long time," he said, "but there's talent there. We've seen it."

The Swedes open their season at home against Ord Friday evening.

"Ord has been young the past two years but they're not anymore," Haake said of the Chanticleers. "It's going to be a tough opener but it's at home."

Other non-district opponents on the two-year schedule set by the Nebraska School Activities Association are

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