

## Swedes carry on tradition

Written by Deb Egenberger

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**Expectation of excellence remains from year to year.**

There was no easing into things this year for the Gothenburg football team.

With an all-new set of starters on the field, a group of players with little crunch-time experience and a senior class that had never been looked upon as leaders, it was a sink-or-swim season.

The Swedes chose to collectively dive in and paddle hard.

“A lot of them had to get their experience in the trenches,” said coach Craig Haake. “And honestly, I think this group surprised themselves.”

Coaches saw talent from the first day of conditioning, Haake said, but when they realized there was going to be 10 new starters on the field, they knew there might be some growing pains.

“One of the concerns coming into this season was leadership,” Haake said. “This group was so green.”

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But it wasn't long before the tradition of Swede football seeped into their souls and took over.

"The expectations never change," Haake said. "The boys get to know some of the people who came before them. They sit across the table from them at pre-game suppers. They understand the tradition here and no one wants to be the one who breaks that."

So the hard work in the weight room and on the field are a given, the coach said.

"We consistently graduate 14 or 15 seniors every year," he said, "and still we're able to reload."

And that's exactly what the Swedes did making it nine straight years into the state playoffs.



The first three games of the season were hard-fought wins against Ord, Minden and Kimball.

"We played some very good football early on," Haake said.

Five of the eight regular-season games were against teams that joined Gothenburg in the playoffs.

"These kids found ways to stay in games," Haake said. "They grew up and they did it in a hurry. They learned to fight through the hard times and how to persevere."

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The result was a 7-3 season that took the Swedes into the second round of the state playoffs.

“You always hope to go a little farther,” Haake said. “But when you look back, we didn’t realize at the time the caliber of some of our opponents.”

Sometimes coaches don’t realize the true talent of their players either until they wrap up the numbers when it’s all over.

Haake knew senior running back and return specialist Tannor Mroczek would carry a target after much success his junior year.

“He has tremendous break-away speed and has a chance to go the distance every time he touches the ball,” the coach said.

Mroczek missed the first game of the season due to of a summer ankle injury and opponents worked to limit his touches all year.

Still Mroczek had an outstanding season achieving four new all-time Top 10 marks.

With five kickoff returns totaling 129 yards and one touchdown, Mroczek’s average of 25.8 yards per return puts him at No. 5 all-time.

In two previous seasons, Mroczek earned the No. 1 and No. 7 spots in that category.

Mroczek also has three places on the punt return list taking No. 10 this year with eight returns for 115 yards or an average of 14.4 per return.

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The running back's rushing average of 7.33 yards per carry this year puts him in the No. 8 position on that list and he moves into No. 6 in career rushing yards with 1,817 total yards on 220 carries.

Joining Mroczek on the all-time chart is junior Tyler Aden.

Haake said the line backer and running back had a huge impact on the Swedes this year as he takes over

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