

Multiple weapons offer multiple problems

Written by Deb Egenberger

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Swedes move three players into new Top 10 positions.

With three explosive players in the backfield, Gothenburg football coach Craig Haake knew from the beginning that this year's Swedes could take a simple isolation play and turn it into a long-range score on any down.

Week in and week out, the Swedes used above-average speed and athleticism to break open big plays.

"Maybe we got to the point where we relied on that a little too much," Haake said. "Still, I wouldn't want to give that back."

Gothenburg finished the year 3-1 in the Class C-1 District 9 and 8-2 overall. Both disappointing losses came at the hands of Broken Bow.

"I think we all expected to go a little farther into the playoffs," the coach said. "We just ran into a team we couldn't beat."

Still, there is no disappointment in the season.

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Offensively the Swedes averaged more than 300 total yards per game as a team scoring an average of 30 points per game.

While seniors Landen Haake and Mark Hilderbrand combined with junior Tannor Mroczek to earn the majority of those yards and score most of the points, the coach is quick to point out that the three outstanding athletes did not do the job on their own.

“Our linemen performed tremendously,” Haake said. “While they don’t always get a lot of credit, nothing happens offensively without them.”

It was the line, the coach said, that opened holes on the running plays and allowed break-out runs with blocks up the field.

“Those kids on the line worked very hard to get better and better every week,” Haake said. “They may not get in the stat column but their work gets noticed.”

Both Mroczek and Haake gained offensive spots in the school’s all-time



Top 10 statistic chart thanks, in part, to the Swede linemen.

Mroczek now holds the school record for season rushing average with 8.9 yards per carry earning 863 yards on 97 attempts.

Mroczek also tied the school record for longest run from scrimmage and is in the No. 2 spot all-time for single game rushing, earning 273 yards on 15 carries against Valentine.

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Landen Haake moved into No. 3 all-time in rushing yards in a season with 1,180, his second consecutive 1,000-plus season.

He is also No. 2 in career rushing yards with a total of 2,940.

“Those were a couple of very busy kids,” the coach said.

Mroczek also has a school record in kick return average at 36.4 yards per return and in No. 5 all-time in punt returns with a 17.4 yard average.

Mroczek set the school record for punt return average yards at 23.8 last year.

“I don’t know why teams ever kicked to him,” Haake said of Mroczek, who led an outstanding special teams.

“I think that’s what really set us apart from other teams,” Haake said. “Our special teams had the capability of flipping the field at any time. They were aggressive and excited to be there.”

The specials teams also gave the Swedes an opportunity to build experience in younger players who only played on the return or coverage teams.

“They did a fantastic job of setting the tone for the game,” Haake said.

Defensively, the Swedes were solid as well, allowing less than 10 points per game while forcing 33 turnovers.

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“We were hitting people,” Haake said. “We didn’t have much for size but we could get to the ball. That’s one area of the game where we were consistent throughout the season.”



Hilderbrand is the only Swede to take a new spot on the all-time chart, tying the record for number of interceptions caught in a career with 12.

Others put up big tackle numbers that aren’t kept on the all-time list.

Brady Preitauer led the Swede defense with 71 solo tackles and 37 assists for 108 total.

Doran Johnson finished with 93 total tackles and Joel Teahon added 76.

As a whole, Haake said he may miss this group of senior boys as much as any he’s coached.

“They have intrinsic motivation,” he said. “They are such self starters that I just have to point them toward the field and they take care of the rest.”

With 14 graduating, Haake said there will be big shoes to fill, especially in leadership positions held by some seniors for three or four years.

“The junior class has shown some marked improvement,” Haake said. “I give the weight program a lot of credit and hopefully the expectations on this program will help boost some new kids into leadership roles.”

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The team won't be as fast overall next season but Haake said he expects to find new players to step into key roles.

"You just have to reload," he said.

[2009 Season Statistics/Top 10 Charts](#)