

## 'Air Marion' could be taking flight

Written by Jim Ecker

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The Marion Indians ended the 2012 football season with a 28-13 loss to DeWitt Central in the second round of the Class 3A playoffs on Oct. 29.

Almost immediately, Marion quarterback Trevor Hardman began preparing for the 2013 campaign.

"I kept throwing, even though the season was over last year," Hardman said Tuesday afternoon. "I kept throwing and kept throwing. I really haven't stopped throwing since the fall."

That could be a harbinger of things to come for the Indians, who relied primarily on their running game the last three seasons.

"We will definitely not be what we have been the last three years," said Coach Tony Perkins. "With that big offensive line we had, we tried to out-physical people and did a nice job with that. But we aren't that type of team this year.

"We're definitely going to run and establish the run, but we'll be more balanced this year than we have been."

Marion ran the ball 499 times last season and passed 111 times, which meant the ratio was more than 4-to-1. Perkins did not promise a 50-50 split this year, but he definitely wants to take

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advantage of Hardman's accurate right arm and a bevy of quick receivers.

"We've got a lot of kids who can do a lot of different things," the coach said.

Hardman completed 55 of 110 passes (exactly 50 percent) for 860 yards, seven touchdowns and three interceptions last year when the Indians finished 8-3. They were mostly safe passes as he grew into the job, but Perkins likes what he's seen of his QB in camp this year.



"A lot of growth, a lot of maturity," said Perkins. "Last year we asked him to hand off the ball and make the nice bootleg pass when we needed it. This year, we're going to have him in more of a mature role.

"It will be a much more diverse offense this year," he promised.

Perkins has never been opposed to passing the ball. He's had good throwers in previous years and simply adjusts the playbook to fit the personnel.

"The system never changes," he said. "It just expands or contracts, depending on who you have."

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This year it will expand. "Anything that has ever been written down in a playbook, we're going to run it," he said.

Hardman and Quinn Cannoy, one of Marion's top receivers, attended a football camp at the University of Northern Iowa this summer to improve their skills. Hardman worked with UNI quarterbacks coach Mario Verduzco, who has developed a long list of top-notch passers for the Panthers.

"It was kind of cool," said Hardman. "It opened my eyes and really showed me other quarterbacks that are really good and how hard they work. They made me work even harder and better."

"It was fun," Cannoy agreed. "I had never been to a camp before this year. I decided to go to some to get my name out there a little bit and kind of prove myself. It definitely taught me a lot competition-wise, to never stop competing."

Hardman and Cannoy also attended camps at Iowa, and the 6-foot-4 Cannoy attended a camp at Iowa State. Cannoy is looking forward to playing pitch-and-catch with his buddy this year as the Indians make the transition from a power team to more of a finesse club with smaller, quicker running backs and blockers.

"In the past we've had big-built running backs like Logan Pickering, Colton Storla and Trev Biery," said Cannoy. "I think opening up the passing game will open up more stuff with the running game. If we balance it out more, I think it will keep more teams guessing."

"It's not like we have the big guys and we can just keep shoving it down their throat," added Hardman.

Perkins listed Cannoy and Derek Smith as the top wide receivers at this point in training camp. He listed Colton Mowry and John Carstensen as the top tailbacks, with Logan Fuller and Austin Brown as the top "2-backs" with quick feet and good hands.

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Dalton Gardner, Devin Quinn and Nick Kramer lead the tight ends. Jeremy Schneiders, Jack Serbousek and Jordan Comreid are the fullbacks. "There are a lot of kids that can catch the ball," said Perkins.

Perkins called Jordan Keeton and John Gorman a pair of "quality linemen." He said the Indians have good depth at linebacker with Schneiders, Drew Proksa, Comreid and Carstensen as middle linebackers, with Serbousek, Evan Kramer and Nick Kramer at outside linebacker. He also said there are six-to-eight good defensive backs.

The Indians have about 35 players on the team and Perkins thinks almost all of them will have a significant part to play in the team's success. "We try to get as many bodies on the field as we can so they have a role," he said.

Like most coaches, Perkins was not happy when the IHSA eliminated two-a-day workouts during preseason camp this year. In preparation, the Indians began offseason workouts as soon as school ended in June with weightlifting and conditioning drills.

"We are very far ahead of where we've ever been in the past, even without the two-a-days," he said. "Now I'm glad we don't have them now. They'd just be bored with two-a-days."

Hardman, for one, couldn't wait for the new season to begin. He worked diligently to get ready for a bigger role on the team. He studied film with the coaches and got himself mentally and physically prepared.

"The first week of camp for the younger kids we had to come in early, and the night before I was getting all hyped up and stuff and I couldn't get to bed," he said. "I'm ready for this year, but then again I'm not."

"This is my last high school football season. There are mixed feelings between the two. You want it to start, but you don't want it to end."

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Marion will host Mount Pleasant in the season opener on Friday, Aug. 30. The Indians will visit Decorah, the defending Class 3A champs, on Sept. 6.