

## Undaunted Huskies eager for Year 3

Written by Jim Ecker

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The members of the Cedar Valley Christian football team say there's more to playing the game than wins and losses.

There are intangibles and rewards for working hard, even if the scores don't show it.

The Huskies lost all nine of their games last season by lopsided tallies. The average final score was 75-12, and all told they were outscored by a whopping margin of 678 to 110.

Coach Ed Betsworth knows those scores are pretty ugly. "They were horrible," he acknowledged.

The Huskies, undaunted, are back for their third year of IHSAA eight-man football, facing another uphill climb with smile on their faces.

"It's a lot of fun," said senior McKeon Silver. "Personally, I didn't care about the scores. I just enjoyed playing.

"I love our sportsmanship," he added. "Everyone is good sports. When we hit somebody, we help them back up. We're a family. I love that."

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Cedar Valley Christian was overmatched in 2012, yet the Huskies did not complain, make excuses or stop trying. They hope that will pay off in the long run.

"It was definitely hard going in and losing," said senior Caleb Severson. "As a team, we're real close. I have a good time playing football. That's more important.

"We're really trying to get something going here," he said. "We're really close, like a brotherhood. I think that kind of sets us apart a little bit."

The Huskies had 18 players on the team last year, but eight seniors graduated and there were only 14 players on the roster last week. Betsworth hopes a few foreign exchange students and freshmen join the club. If not, he'll play with those 14 guys -- or 13 if Silver is not able to play due to an issue with concussions.



Silver and Severson are the only seniors on the team, so the Huskies will be young and inexperienced. "We're still building," said Betsworth. "We're still trying to learn skills."

Betsworth gives his players an "A" for effort. "They're coming along. They're learning," he said. "They're good kids. They're fun to coach."

The Huskies had an offseason weightlifting program for the first time this year. They'd also get together after school on their own and toss the football around, working on their skills and trying to improve for the new season.

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"I think it looks good," said Silver. "Everyone is working hard. I think it will be better than last year."

Betsworth was encouraged by the final game last year. The Huskies lost to Preston, 62-14, but it was 0-0 after the first quarter before Preston's size and strength proved to be too much.

Betsworth thought his players showed real growth. "There was brotherhood last year. There was love, there was caring," he said. "And it carried over to this year."

Betsworth appreciates the support the Huskies have received in the community. He appreciates being allowed to practice at St. Joseph's Catholic School in Marion and being able to play home games at LaSalle Middle School in Cedar Rapids. He said the Junior Saints football program has been a big help as well.

"I know there are some schools in our conference and our district that are wondering about us," he said. "We'll keep grinding away. Everybody is willing to hang in there and keep working.

"We're still way behind, but we're starting to climb," he said. "I think in a couple of years you won't be able to tell the difference (between the Huskies and other teams)."

The Huskies hope to make a big stride forward, despite the limited number of players. "Just keep moving forward. Don't worry about the score, just worry about getting better," said Betsworth.

"They're all tough kids," he said. "It takes a lot of courage and guts to come out and keep getting beat on. They believe they can win one or two games, and I believe they can."

Cedar Valley Christian will open the season on Friday, Aug. 30, against HLV at LaSalle.