

White installs new offense at Kennedy

Written by Jim Ecker

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Brian White had some big news to share with Sammy Lizarraga last February.

First of all, White was going to become the new head football coach at Kennedy High School. And second of all, the Cougars were going to throw the ball a lot more this season.

Make that A LOT more.

Lizarraga, a promising quarterback with a strong arm, was all ears.

"When I got the job, he was one of the first kids I went up to and started talking to," White said this week. "I said, 'Hey, things are going to change a little bit for you, Sammy,' and his eyes lit up."

White, 43, spent eight years as an assistant coach at Kennedy and moved into the top job when Tim Lewis resigned to become the head strength and conditioning coach at the school.

The Cougars finished 8-4 last season and reached the third round of the playoffs with their Stack-I power rushing attack behind a big offensive line, running the ball 500 times and throwing it only 126 times.

That's a ratio of nearly 4-to-1, but that's about to change.

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Lizarraga was Kennedy's second-string quarterback behind Derek Jacobus last year but never threw a pass in limited action. Now he's the starter and White plans to put his strong right arm to use.

"He does want to throw the ball," said White. "He does have a big arm. He can fling it. And he throws bullets. Sometimes they're a little tough to catch, he throws them so hard."

Lizarraga is an all-state pitcher and catcher for the Kennedy baseball team. Now he'll be pitching for the Kennedy football team as well.

Shaun Beyer, another talented athlete, is the No. 2 quarterback this year and could be used in running situations when he's not working as a wide receiver.

"Shaun can run. And he loves to run," said White. "He's a phenomenal athlete. He can go up and catch the ball, too. He's got great hands."

"He's going to be on the field non-stop offensively and defensively. We just don't know where you're going to see him all the time. He's a great asset for us."

"It's kind of nice having Sammy and Shaun," White said.

White plans to have a balanced attack this year with Logan Wedo, Terrance Hall and Jay Blank the primary ballcarriers. The emphasis will be on speed with fast players and a quick tempo.

"Our offense is going to be completely different from last year," said Hall, who has fully recovered from a broken arm and gained 20 pounds of muscle to 205.

"The kids are catching on fast," said White. "They're playing fast. The big thing that I really

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stress is play fast.

"I want kids flying to the ball on defense, and offensively we want to sprint off the ball. We're trying to get off the ball in a hurry and just play fast."

Kennedy's offensive line is not as big as it's been the last few years, but White thinks he has a group of promising blockers who will get the job done.

Blank is the top returning receiver with 10 catches, but White is confident he has a group of talented receivers who will flourish once the Cougars start putting the ball in the air.

Blank likes what he's seen of the new offense so far. "It's looking really good," he said.

White figured he'd spent the rest of his coaching career as an assistant at Kennedy, but that changed when Lewis decided to step aside.

"Last summer Tim dropped the bomb on me," said White. "One day he called me up and said, 'I'm done.' And I said, 'Done what?' He said, 'This is my last year.'"

White was not convinced, but Lewis did not waver and announced his resignation after the season. White spent 11 years as an assistant coach at Washington and eight at Kennedy before becoming a head coach in his 20th year in the profession.

"It's exciting and I look forward to being out here every day," he said. "It's something I always wanted to do. It was a goal, and when you reach your goal it's very rewarding."

Hall, a linebacker and running back, is confident the Cougars will have another successful season.

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"I don't think anything less than we did last year," he said. "I think we can get back there again (to the quarterfinals of the playoffs) if not go further."

Kennedy opens the season on Friday, Aug. 29 at Iowa City West.

2014 SCHEDULE

Friday, Aug. 29 - at Iowa City West

Thursday, Sept. 4 - Washington

Friday, Sept. 12 - at North Scott

Friday, Sept. 19 - Pleasant Valley

* Thursday, Sept. 25 - Jefferson

* Thursday, Oct. 2 - Linn-Mar

* Friday, Oct. 10 - at Waterloo East

* Friday, Oct. 17 - at Cedar Falls

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* Friday, Oct. 24 - Waterloo West

* District Games