

Cedar Valley tackled big boys this summer

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 18 August 2014 17:18 - Last Updated Wednesday, 20 August 2014 22:08



Cedar Valley Christian has suffered some lopsided losses during its three years of playing 8-man football, so why in the world did the Huskies voluntarily play Cedar Rapids Washington, Prairie, Iowa City West and Solon in a 7-on-7 passing league this summer?

It's simple.

Coach Ed Betsworth wanted his players to improve as quickly as possible against the best competition he could find.

"It was a good experience for us," he said. "It was a tough situation, here we are a little 8-man squad and we show up with 11 guys. We played Solon, Iowa City West, Prairie and Cedar Rapids Washington and they're walking in with 30 to 50 boys.

"It was a little bit of a learning experience there, but you know what? I'm pleased with what we did. We held our own.

"We didn't win any games, but gosh, we moved the ball down the field on them and we scored a few times," he said. "That's a good thing, that's a good feeling. We scored against schools that are three to six times bigger than us.

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"I loved it and the kids loved it, too. I'm proud of them. They did a really good job."

Cedar Valley Christian finished 0-and-9 last season and lost games by scores of 70-6, 91-0, 67-12, 59-14 and the like, but those days could be coming to an end.

The Huskies have 20 players on the squad this season, compared to 15 or 16 the last few years (and fewer than that at times). The Huskies have gotten a little bigger, a little stronger, a little faster and a little more experienced.

Betsworth loves having all those extra people on the team.

"It's nice," he said. "It's a nice thing to have a little more than normal. At least now when we scrimmage we have 8-on-8, instead of 8-on-5 or 8-on-4. That's going to give us a little better look."

Betsworth thinks Cedar Valley has a chance to win some games this year. At the very least, he expects the Huskies to be much more competitive.

"There are a few teams that we can probably play with this year," he said. "We're probably going to hit some bumps in the road, but there's other teams that we know we can compete with. And that's an exciting thing."

Betsworth listed Elkader Central, Turkey Valley and Springville as the "three heavyweights" on the schedule, but thinks some of the other opponents could be closer to CVC's level. The Huskies open the season at Harmony on Friday, Aug. 29.

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Cedar Valley has an experienced quarterback with senior Kenan Ulmer, who accounted for 13 touchdowns and 892 yards of offense last year. He passed for 566 yards and seven TDs and ran for 326 yards and six TDs.

Betsworth said Ulmer has improved after gaining valuable experience in 2013.

"He looks better with that year of maturity," the coach said. "The passing league did wonders for him. We were able to work on reading coverages, work on taking some leadership, work on his skills, getting some things down that he needed to do.

"As it (the 7-on-7 passing league) went along, he really picked it up. It's great. It's going to really help us."

Ulmer enjoyed competing against Washington, Prairie, Iowa City West and Solon.

"It was really fun," he said. "It wasn't as bad as I thought it was going to be, actually. We did a lot better than I expected. I think it taught us a lot and it was a lot of fun to be in that kind of speed of the game."

Ulmer thinks the team has made big strides since last season.

"I think it looks really good," he said. "I think we're on the right track and I'm really impressed with the way things are going right now."

Ulmer likes having 20 guys on the team.

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"It's really helpful that people can get rest now," he said. "It's not the same eight people going both ways. People can play just one way. That's going to help us so much this year.

"I think that we have a chance in a lot of games. I'm really excited about it."

2014 SCHEDULE

Friday, Aug. 29 - at Harmony

Friday, Sept. 5 - Clarksville

* Friday, Sept. 12 - at Central City

* Friday, Sept. 19 - Elkader Central

* Friday, Sept. 26 - at Lansing Kee

* Friday, Oct. 3 - Midland Wyoming

* Friday, Oct. 10 - at West Central

* Friday, Oct. 17 - Turkey Valley

* Friday, Oct. 24 - Springville

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* District Games