

Patrick, Dobbs pack punch for Wash

Written by Jim Ecker

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Thunder & Lightning hope to cook up another storm for the Cedar Rapids Washington football team this year.

Thunder is 220-pound running back Johnny Dobbs, who powered his way for 17 touchdowns and 838 yards last season when the Warriors went 13-1 and reached the Class 4A championship game.

Lightning is 165-pound scatback Tavian Patrick, who scooted for 1,191 yards and eight TDs. Between them, they ran for 2,029 yards and found the end zone 25 times during a magical campaign.

Dobbs and Patrick normally traded spots in the backfield last year. When one of them was in the game, the other rested, keeping both men fresh. That could be changing this season with both of them even bigger, stronger and faster as seniors.

"I'm going to let you know that there's a little secret," Patrick said slyly Tuesday before practice. "You're going to find it out later in the season."

"When we got down to the goal line and we brought Johnny in, it was obvious we were going to run. So we're going to switch it up and make it unnoticeable and see what happens."

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The Warriors plan to use their weapons as much as possible.

"You might see me and Tavian in the backfield or you might see only one of us, depending on what the game-plan is," said Dobbs. "It could be split backs, or I could be the fullback with one us in a slot and going in motion."

In other words, it could be just about anything.

Washington powered its way to the 4A finals last year with a versatile club that excelled on offense, defense and special teams. The Warriors lost several outstanding players to college programs with guys like Connor Vincent, Julian Good-Jones, Royal Silver, Landen Akers and Reid Snitker moving on, but they also have lots of talent this year.

Vincent was a premier linebacker, while Good-Jones and Silver were premier linemen.

"We lost Julian and Royal on the O-Line," said Patrick. "They're pretty big, but we're going to make up for that with athleticism. We still have good players and great playmakers, so we're going to get them the ball and our O-Line is going to be pretty good."

Isaiah Nimmers is a top-notch receiver who caught 21 passes for 409 yards last year. He's being recruited by Division I colleges and is a major threat.

TJ Vogel, who gained valuable experience last year, replaces Snitker at quarterback and has a good arm. The Warriors will feature Patrick and Dobbs, but they might throw the ball a little better this season with Vogel at the helm.

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The Warriors have lots of fond memories from last year's campaign, but one game in particular stands out for Dobbs.

"Probably our game against Iowa City West in the playoffs when we both ran for 100-plus yards," he said. "It just felt like everything was working."

Patrick ran for 177 yards and scored one touchdown against the Trojans in that game in the 4A quarterfinals. Dobbs powered his way for 121 yards and three TDs, giving them 298 yards and four touchdowns in a 44-19 conquest.

The Warriors topped Bettendorf, 28-17, in the semifinals, then lost to Dowling in the finals 49-14. They've been working hard for another shot at the title.

"I've been running hills all summer, getting ready for the pounding I'm going to get," said Patrick. "I feel way stronger than I did last year."

Dobbs is five pounds heavier and stronger, too.

"Johnny's a big boy," said Patrick. "He's gained a little bit of weight, but he's gotten faster too. Watch out when he's running full speed at you."

Washington opens the season against Jefferson on Friday, Aug. 28 at Kingston Stadium.

2015 SCHEDULE

Aug. 28 - at Jefferson

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Sept. 4 - Kennedy

Sept. 11 - at Iowa City West

Sept. 17 - Linn-Mar

Sept. 25 - at Muscatine

Oct. 2 - at Ottumwa

Oct. 8 - Prairie

Oct 16 - at Iowa City High

Oct. 23 - Burlington