

## Cedar Valley looks to keep improving

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 24 August 2015 17:03 -

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The Cedar Valley Christian football team suffered a series of lopsided defeats in the early stages of its development with scores like 93-16 and 91-0, but the Huskies hung in there and kept plugging away.

Then came the reward.

Cedar Valley began the 2014 campaign with a 30-20 victory at Harmony for the first victory in school history. They did not win another game last year and finished 1-8, but the Huskies feel things are looking up as they head into Year 5.

"We're going for four wins. Four or five," said senior Drew Gustafson, who began playing for the Huskies as a freshman. "We have a lot more athletes than we had the last couple of years.

"The freshmen who came up this year are big, strong guys who have played football before, unlike past years."

The Huskies had some 98-pound weaklings on the squad when they began the 8-Player game in 2011, but those days are basically gone thanks to an offseason weight program and a better influx of athletes.

"We're looking good," said senior Colin Heeren. "A few iffy spots here and there, but we're getting everything worked out."

Cedar Valley Christian opens the new season against Harmony this Thursday night at the

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LaSalle Middle School field at 7 p.m., the same team they beat in the opener last year in Farmington.

That victory made for a very happy ride back to Cedar Rapids.

"It was definitely something big," said Heeren, who joined the team last year after transferring from Mount Vernon. "I was happy I got to be a part of that and help them with it. Everyone was so excited and pumped."

The Huskies list 19 players on the roster this season, so Coach Ed Betsworth has enough players for a real scrimmage with a few guys left over. That's much better than the early years, when it was sometimes a struggle to find eight able-bodied players to take the field.

The Huskies have been severe underdogs in many games, but they've never let that damper their spirits. They simply like playing the game and representing their school.

"It's fun," said Gustafson, a two-way lineman. "I've played football all my life."

Gustafson's older brother, Eric, was one of the top players on the team last year before graduating. His younger brother, Kyle, is a sophomore on this year's club, making the Gustafsons one of the leading families for Cedar Valley football.

Heeren caught 20 passes last year and scored four touchdowns. He'll be working this year as a receiver, linebacker and kick return specialist and might get some time at running back and quarterback. He thinks the Huskies have a chance to be successful.

"I think they're pretty high, as long as we stick to it and keep our minds on it," he said. "Definitely a lot of hard work and determination, just the willingness to go the next step."

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The Huskies need a new quarterback to replace Kenan Ulmer, who passed for 1,545 yards and 16 touchdowns last season. Eric Gustafson led the Huskies last year with 38 catches for 539 yards and was the leading tackler with 154.5 in nine games. Tom Scroggs also graduated from last year's squad after scoring six touchdowns.

### **SCHEDULE**

**(Home Games at LaSalle Middle School)**

Aug. 27 - Harmony

Sept. 4 - at Clarksville

Sept. 11 - Central City

Sept. 18 - at Elkader Central

Sept. 25 - Lansing Kee

Oct. 2 - at Midland

Oct. 9 - West Central

Oct. 16 - at Turkey Valley

Oct. 23 - at Springville