

Beyer is 'Mr. Everything' for Kennedy

Written by Jim Ecker

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Keep your eye on Shaun Beyer during Kennedy football games this season. He'll be moving around a lot.

He'll be a tight end, wide receiver and quarterback on offense. He'll be the "Bandit" on defense as a hybrid defensive end and linebacker, free to hunt the ball and cause as much havoc as possible. He'll be the punter and he also might sell hotdogs at halftime.

Beyer is a superb athlete at 6-foot-5 and 210 pounds. He's big, strong and fast - and a 6-foot-6 high jumper. The whole idea is to get him the ball as much as possible and turn him loose on defense.

"He can catch the ball. He can go up and get it," said Kennedy Coach Brian White. "And if all else fails, we can put him at shotgun and snap the dang thing to him and just let him go, because he's tough to tackle. He's a big part of what we want to do."

Christian French, now a defensive end at Oregon, played the "bandit" position for the Cougars a few years ago. Beyer led the Cougars in tackles last season at linebacker, but now opponents will have to look around to see where No. 2 will line up next.

"This off-season we've been trying to find ways to make him more of a weapon on defense," said White.

All of this is music to Beyer's ears, who is looking forward to filling all his roles. And it's one of the reasons Iowa, Iowa State and Nebraska are still recruiting him, even though he's already committed to North Dakota State, the FCS powerhouse which has won the last four national

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titles.

The Hawkeyes, Cyclones and Cornhuskers are still chasing him.

"I'm still on their radar," he said. "They're still after me a little bit. They want me to come to some game-day visits and stuff like that. They're still in contact, so we'll see how it goes."

Beyer fell in love with North Dakota State on his official visit, but concedes he could change his mind if Iowa, Iowa State or Nebraska offers a scholarship.

"It would get interesting if one of them offered, probably. I don't know," he remarked. "It would be a tough decision. But I definitely love everything about NDSU."

Beyer led Kennedy in receiving and tackling last season as a junior. He caught 35 passes for 471 yards and eight touchdowns at tight end and made 73 tackles on defense. He also played a little quarterback, but Sammy Lizarraga (now pitching fastballs at Iowa) took most of the snaps last year.

The Cougars lost their first six games of the season last year and finished with a disappointing 3-8 record, but the Des Moines Register has them ranked No. 9 in the Class 4A preseason poll and White thinks the Cougars can do some damage in his second year as head coach.

"The second year into it, it seems like we are about two steps faster offensively than we were last year, just because we know the system," he said. "We're definitely ahead of where we were last year and we've got a good group of kids."

Tyler Dralle, a hard-nosed tailback, is back after rushing for 915 yards and eight touchdowns.

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And both of the new quarterbacks, senior Tyler Kadolph and junior Nick Duehr, have looked good in practice, according to White.

The Cougars have four returning starters on the offensive line with Dalles Jacobus, Jackson Coker, Austin Kerska and Mason Jacobs. They needed one more blocker for a full house and found him when Jackson Behn, a two-year starter at Millard South in Omaha, returned to Cedar Rapids last winter. Behn is 6-foot-3, 265 pounds and fits right in.

"That's perfect," said White. "We had one opening and he moved in."

The Cougars caught another break when Johnson Mator, a talented linebacker, moved to Cedar Rapids this year from Pennsylvania. Mator started for his high school team in Pennsylvania last season as a sophomore.

"I started getting e-mails from him in February," White revealed. "He said, 'Coach, I'm coming to play football in Cedar Rapids.' And I said to myself, 'Yeah, whatever.' We get these all the time.

"In April he sends me his video and says, 'I'll be here June 1 to play for you, Coach.' And I saw his video and I thought, 'Holy Moly, this kid can play.' And he is dynamite.

"He is the real deal at linebacker. He is quick and he makes plays. And he's a great kid."

The Cougars lost a good player when Drake Brewster, who caught 27 passes last year as a sophomore, left the team to concentrate on his career with the Kennedy basketball team.

Kennedy has the same tough schedule as last year, but the Cougars are determined to get off to a better start. They reached the playoffs last year despite the 0-and-6 start, but that's not the game plan this season.

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"It was definitely tough," said Beyer. "Losing those first six games is not what we wanted. That's not how we plan on it this year."

Kennedy hosts Iowa City West in the season opener Thursday night at Kingston Stadium. The Cougars lost to the Trojans in the season opener last year when Iowa City West threw a touchdown pass on fourth-and-long in the final minutes of the game.

"We would just like to win our first game," said White. "That's what we're focused on right now."

But make no mistake about it, White likes his club.

"This is a great group to coach," he said. "And they have so much talent and so much experience. And they're just really good kids."

"They come to practice and work their tails off every day, because they want to get better and they want to be successful. And they're going to be successful. To what extent, we'll see."

SCHEDULE

Aug. 27 - Iowa City West
Sept. 4 - at Washington
Sept. 11 - North Scott
Sept. 18 - at Pleasant Valley
Sept. 25 - Jefferson
Oct. 2 - at Linn-Mar
Oct. 9 - Waterloo West
Oct. 16 - Cedar Falls
Oct. 23 - at Waterloo West