

# NW PREVIEW

## Bluejays to keep their hopes in air

At the beginning of last season, Lutheran football coach Jim Schlachter was hoping for a break-even season.

And although the Bluejays didn't quite make it — they finished 4-5 — Schlachter was still satisfied with the outcome of the campaign.

"We did as well or better than I thought we would," says Schlachter, who is starting his second year as Lutheran's grid mentor.

So what's the outlook for this season? "We're looking at .500," he says. "That would be a pretty fair year for us."

The Bluejays have only five seniors returning from last year's team, but two of them are Northwest League all-star candidates.

Defensive end Craig Buckingham, an all-league honorable mention choice last year, returns along with Dave Schumann, another all-league honorable mention who went both ways at tackle.

Dave Denson is back on the offensive line as is tight end Trent Anderson. But perhaps the most significant returnee is quarterback Jerry Olsen.

Olsen became the Jays' quarterback with the graduation of Steve Buuck and did an exceptional job, Schlachter says, prompting the Lutheran coach to insert a little more passing into this year's offense.

"Olsen has a year of experience behind him and that should help," Schlachter says. "Plus we have four or five kids who can catch the ball."

Besides Anderson, Olsen will be pitching to the likes of senior Nels Petersen, sophomore Joel Maier, junior Tim Brandt and senior Frank Ralph.

The running game will be built around Maier, who started last season as a freshman.

But the Jays aren't particularly strong in the line, and Schlachter says that means more passing.

On defense, Schlachter plans to junk his 5-3 alignment and go with a six-man front. "Our biggest problem defensively is we lost two cornerbacks and three linebackers," he says. "We're going to try and use our linemen to make up for the lack of experience at linebacker and in the secondary."

Lutheran's secondary suffered a tough blow when Dave Sievert, who played safety and was one of last year's co-captains, transferred to Madison.

The Jays open Sept. 5 at home against Central Linn, but don't open the Northwest League campaign until three weeks later, when they host league favorite Corbett.

"I think Corbett has the most talent of any school in the league, but it ought to be a very even year," Schlachter says.

At least that's what he's looking for from Lutheran.

JIM HAYS



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