

PREVIEW



Stautz opens new era at Gresham

Gresham High School starts a new era in its football program this year.

Well, sort of.

Gary Stautz takes over the head coaching reins from Dick Flood, who resigned last March after eight seasons and became the school's vice principal.

But if you're figuring on any major changes with the Gophers this fall, forget it. Stautz was one of Flood's assistants for four years before moving up to the top spot in the program and as such, was one of the main architects of the team's offense.

"As far as looks go, we won't be different from the past," says Stautz. "We looked at what has been successful for us. We condensed some things and added some things."

One of the things Stautz has added is what he hopes will be an improved passing game. In recent years, Gresham has been a grind-it-out, five-yards-and-a-grass-stain team. While that approach added up to impressive figures in rushing yardage and the win column — a 31-10 record over the last four seasons and two state playoff appearances — it has also made the Gophers just a tad predictable. Stautz is hoping a little more passing mixed in will change that.

"We'll be able to run the ball if we want to but one of the things we've learned is that we have to throw, too," he says.

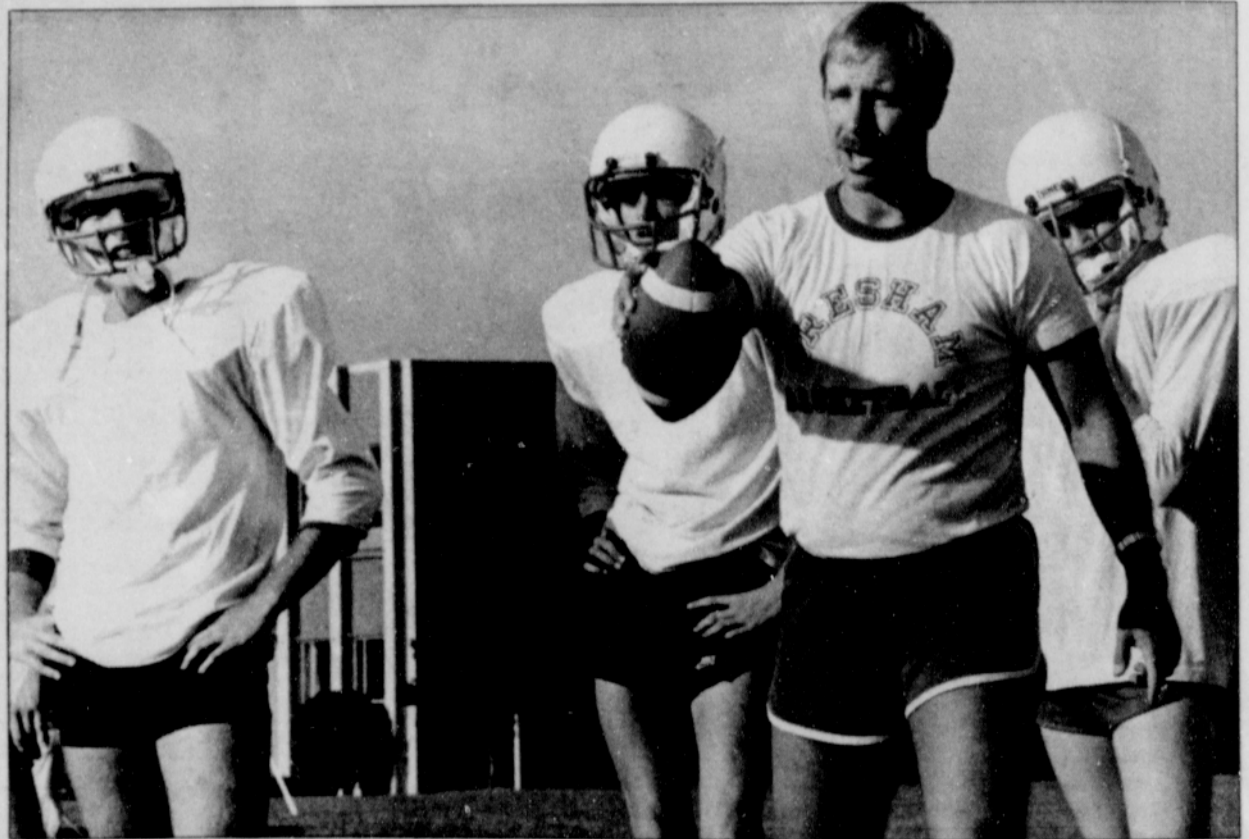
To that end, Stautz has the personnel on hand, especially at quarterback. Mike Palmer (Jr., 6-1, 170), last year's starter, is back and so is Tom Eubanks (Sr., 6-3, 175), who was expected to start last year but suffered a broken thumb on his throwing hand that limited his playing time to short stints at defensive back. Both are talented and, perhaps as important, neither is lacking in intelligence, as evidenced by their honor roll status as students.

Todd Nagel (Sr., 5-9, 160) gives Stautz a third alternative at quarterback.

On the receiving end in Stautz' passing scheme will likely be Gabe Gomez (Sr., 5-8, 155) and Steve Belmore (Sr., 6-1, 170), both of whom have experience.

Of course, every Gresham team can be expected to have an authoritative ground attack and this one is no exception. Brian Hargood and Darin Humphreys are expected to fill two of the running back spots with junior Shawn Sitzman a candidate, also. Stautz will also go with a fullback, but hasn't settled on a candidate for that spot.

Whoever starts in the Gresham backfield will have a bulldozer of an offensive line to run behind. At tackles are



Staff photos by Cheryl Blankenship

Gopher coach Gary Stautz has taken over the head job after four years as an assistant.

Rich Haggerty (Sr., 6-2, 230) and Kirt Voss (Sr., 6-5, 242), both mobile. Other line candidates are only slightly smaller — guys like Steve Mick (Sr., 6-2, 210), Vic Rixe (Sr., 6-0, 195), Mike Shade (Sr., 6-0, 215), Adam Eyer (Sr., 6-1, 195) and Pat Williams (Sr., 6-3, 218). Jim Gosnell (Sr., 5-11, 180) will probably be the Gophers' center.

Gresham led the Wilco League in total defense last year, allowing only 3.3 yards per snap and 66 points for the season. Those totals may not be equaled by this year's team, but the Gophers have the potential to do it.

Hagerty and Humphreys started for last year's defense and Eubanks and Brian Hug (Sr., 5-11, 180) saw action in the secondary.

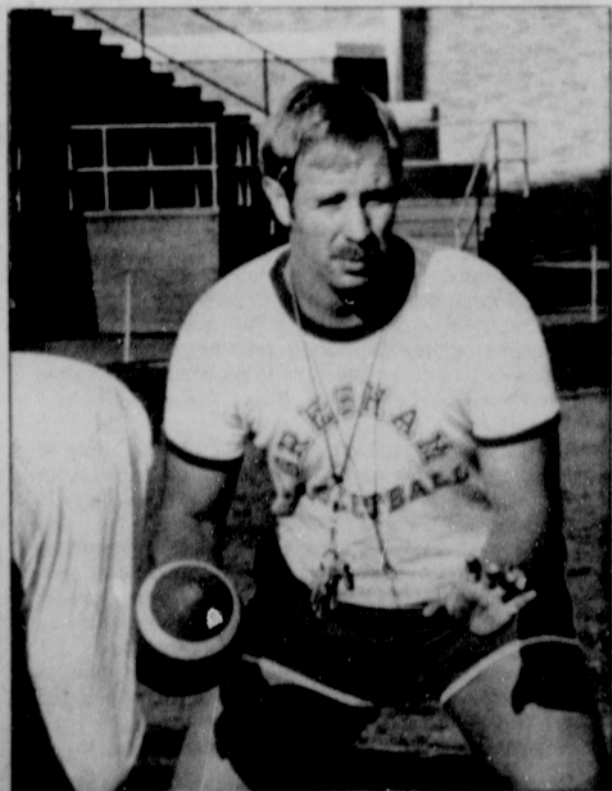
Up front, Stautz didn't have his personnel set, but figure Voss, Mick, Rixe, Shade, Eyer, Williams and Gosnell to be in there somewhere.

Stautz also has plenty of capable players populating his secondary. Besides Hug and Eubanks, Palmer and Nagel may also turn up along with Jeff Keller, Cary Gaylord and Troy Wolf, a transfer from Sandy.

"We do have some depth," Stautz says. "One of the keys to our season will be how well we mesh defensively. But we won't be doing much of anything different."

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