

PREVIEW



Quarterback Mark Gering will be at the controls of Columbia's veer offense again.



Coach Roger Clark is optimistic this year.

Charger coach sees good season

Forget the 8-37 won-lost record the Columbia Chargers have languished through the past five seasons. Coach Roger Clark says the record will be set straight this year.

"This is the first season since I've been here that I've had a returning quarterback," Clark says. "I also have 16 seniors who are all serious about the season. This is probably the first group that fully understands their role of leadership."

So just how good are these guys?

"We have good things going for us," Clark says. "Our skill people are as good as anyone's and we'll never put our linemen in situations where they have to blow people away."

That returning quarterback is Senior Mark Gering (5-9, 165). He directed a that went 2-7 last year and will be back at the controls of the Charger's veer offense.

Clark says that means putting the ball in the air. Gering ranked ninth among passers in the old Wilco League last season, completing 30.5 percent of his passes for 413 yards and three touchdowns. He was intercepted eight times.

Gering and some of the Charger receivers went to a Washington State football camp this summer and found the wisdom of the short passing game.

"We've made changes in our passing game and we won't have to have heavy emphasis on the run," Clark says. "I'd like to see a pass-run ratio of 60-40 or maybe even 70-30. Generally the weakest part of a team's defense is its secondary. Why not go after it?"

Among Gering's targets will be seniors Trevor West and Colin Johnstone and a junior with good hands, Jeff McAnally. West (6-0, 175 lbs) caught 18 balls last year to rank ninth in the Wilco.

The passing game will be even more important for the Chargers because they graduated their four top running backs of

last year, including workhorse Dave Shepherd, who rushed for 708 yards and 11 touchdowns. Clark admits the backfield is a question mark but says he has four more kids who can do the job.

If the offense even gets close to the goal line, it can call on placekicker Scott Brockmueller, one of the top kick specialists in the state.

Brockmueller, also a standout soccer player, led the Wilco last year in punting (35.1 yards per kick) and kick offs (49.1) and made 12 of 14 conversion kicks.

But no matter how improved the offense is, Clark maintains defense will determine what the season holds for Columbia. And although last year's defensive backfield has been wiped out by graduation Clark says points will come few and far between for opponents.

"I have defensive ends and linebackers returning and I can fill in with other kids," Clark says. "I'll have probably the best athlete in school at safety in Don Godier."

Godier, (6-0, 180) is a ferocious tackler and runs the 40 yard dash in 4.6, Clark says. He was named second team all-league linebacker last season.

Columbia ranked sixth in total defense in 1981, allowing 11.5 points per game and 1,903 total yards.

But for all his weapons, Clark says the thing that will turn last year's 2-7 record around is attitude.

"The kids have made a commitment this year," Clark says. "We have about 80 kids out, counting freshmen, and nobody in the state works harder than we do. If we have a successful year maybe it will carry over and we'll get out of the doghouse and make some waves."

One more thing the Chargers have going for them is a little breathing room in the early

part of its schedule. Last year they opened with Reynolds, Gresham and Clackamas. Clark diplomatically says this year's opening trio — The Dalles, Parkrose and Mountain View of Washington — is beatable.

"We'll be a greatly improved football team," Clark continues. "We weren't a bad

football team last year. We lost four games by seven points or less. This'll be the best team we've had."

OPENING GAME: Friday vs. The Dalles at Mt. Hood Community College.

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