

NORTH SALEM VIKINGS



KEIZERTIMES/Derek Wiley

The North Salem Vikings return starters at quarterback and both the offensive and defensive line this season.

North Salem moves down to 5A

By **DEREK WILEY**
Of the Keizertimes

North Salem isn't guaranteed to find life playing football in 5A any easier than 6A.

But the Vikings will at least face teams closer to their own size.

While North Salem has nearly 2,000 students enrolled in its school, only 75-80 students play football, compared to around 120 at nearby 6A schools McNary and South Salem.

Those numbers make it difficult for the Vikings to field three teams—varsity, JV and freshman.

"That's always been an issue for us is the amount of kids we're able to get out," said head coach Jeff Flood, entering his 11th year at North Salem. "I think a lot of people just look at the amount of kids that walk through your front door everyday but that doesn't

really impact how many athletes you have or how many kids are actually participating in sports. I think our numbers are more equal to the teams we'll be joining."

The Vikings, which haven't won more than three games in any season over the last five years, weren't given any favors in the league they were placed in, which includes two other teams moving down from 6A, McKay and West Albany, as well as four squads that reached the 5A state quarterfinals last season—Lebanon, South Albany, Crescent Valley and Silverton.

"It's a tough league so football-wise I don't really think we catch a break," Flood said. "The last couple of years there's a lot of teams that have had success and teams that are used to going out and winning. It's going to be competitive every week. It's going

to be important for us to just look at who we're playing next and not worry about what level they are. It's new teams for these kids. The biggest thing is we don't know any of the kids we're playing."

North Salem returns the pieces Flood's Wing T offense needs to have a successful season—experience at quarterback and the offensive line.

"That gives us a solid foundation to build on since last season," Flood said.

Quarterback Zac Sullivan, a senior, will lead the offense for the second year in a row.

"He's really capable of running everything," Flood said. "That's comforting as a coach to know you have that."

Senior Andre Beall leads a line that also includes Zach Goodwin and Obbi Garcia.

"I really like

the kids we have up front and that's part of the strength of this program is to be able to rely on them to do the job for us and then the pieces around them will grow as the season goes on," Flood said.

While North Salem will miss fullback Rigo Padilla, the Vikings have at least half a dozen players who can carry the football—Zach Graham, Travis Hardy, Teyden Ysavage, Ian Carlos, Clint Pfeifer and Jason Carter-Varay.

"We had a pretty focused attack last year with the running back (Padilla) we had," Flood said. "It's going to take a lot of kids to replace the yards that he had but that's kind of the beauty of our system."

North Salem opens the 2018 season at Crescent Valley on Friday, Aug. 31.

SCHEDULE

- Aug. 31 at Crescent Valley
- Sept. 7 vs Corvallis
- Sept. 14 vs Dallas
- Sept. 21 vs Silverton
- Sept. 28 at McKay
- Oct. 5 vs West Albany
- Oct. 12 at Central
- Oct. 19 vs South Albany
- Oct. 26 at Lebanon



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The Titans return only two full-time starters on offense—Pugh at tight end and Gould at receiver.

Both will play at the next level as Pugh has committed to Air Force and Gould to Oregon State.

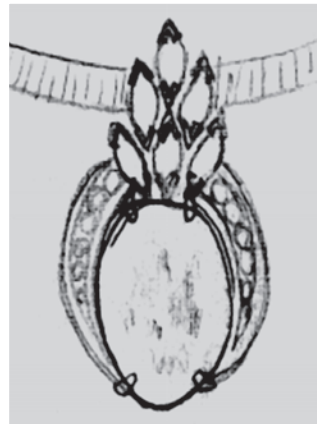
"Obviously people are

going to try to take him away," Stanley said of Gould. "We're lucky enough we have some other guys and we've just got to be creative with where we put him."

West Salem has one of the toughest schedules in the state, opening the season at Lake Oswego on Aug. 31 and then hosting Sheldon on Sept. 21.

"It's not going to be a

slow buildup," Stanley said. "It's going to be one of the best teams in the state week one, which I look forward to. We're going to find out a lot about ourselves, win or lose. I think they see it as an opportunity to play the toughest schedule we've ever played and we want to compete with the best and we definitely have two of them on our schedule."



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