



Rodriguez is also expected to get significant touches in the Saxons backfield.

South Salem graduated two of their top pass-catchers in receiver Treyden Harris and tight end Diego Fuimaono — both of whom received all-league recognition last season.

However, Dufault has a crew of five to six receivers, led by returners Gabe Johnson and Zach Webster, that he expects to step up on the outside.

“These kids have been battle tested and they are coming back a lot more confident. We’re in a much better place than we were last year at this time,” Dufault said. “We’re doing pretty well from an experience standpoint on the offensive side of the ball.”

But where South Salem lacks experience is at the quarterback position. With the graduation

of last year’s signal-caller Elijah Enomoto-Haole — who received an honorable mention nod in 2018 — the Saxons will be calling on 15-year old sophomore Griffin Gardner to take control of the South Salem offense this season.

Gardner was the freshman team quarterback last season and has shown over the summer that he has what it takes to play at the varsity level.

“(Gardner) has been a good leader. Our kids voted him captain as a 15-year old. We feel pretty good about him,” Dufault said.

South Salem will also have some question marks on the defensive side of the ball.

While the Letisi brothers, along with Montiel-Gomez, will also see action on the defensive line, Dufault is hoping he can find more depth at that position.

“We can’t play them 90 snaps a game. We’re going to have to find some guys to play there. We’re still trying to identify those guys because the more guys we can play up front on defense, the better,” Dufault said.

The Saxons will also have the difficult task of replacing Josh Raynak at linebacker — Raynak was the only first-team all-leaguer on the South Salem defense last year.

Rickman, along with Parker Johnson and Dustin Kunze will be heading up the linebacking core for the Saxons this season.

Dufault feels pretty comfortable with Gabe Johnson and Zach Case, who is the backup quarterback, at the two safety spots. However, the Saxons are still deciding what their cornerback rotation will be heading into the first week of the season.

“We’re young on the back-end, which is a tough place to be young. But if they develop, I think we will be okay,” Dufault said.

South Salem comes into 2019 with an outside chance at a playoff opportunity, especially since their four toughest games — Oregon City, Sunset, West Salem and McNary — are all at home. But Dufault knows that some of his younger kids will have to step up in order to make that happen.

“I feel pretty good coming into this season. I don’t know what we’re looking at as far as wins and losses, but it would be great to compete for a league title and make the playoffs, and I think we have the capability to do that, but we have some people that need to develop first,” Dufault said.

SCHEDULE

ALL GAMES START AT 7 P.M.

- Sept. 6 at Newberg
- Sept. 13 vs. Sunset*
- Sept. 20 at McMinnville
- Sept. 27 at Sprague*
- Oct. 4 at Bend
- Oct. 10 vs. West Salem*
- Oct. 18 vs. Oregon City*
- Oct. 25 at Summit
- Nov. 1 vs. McNary

*game will start at 7:15 p.m.



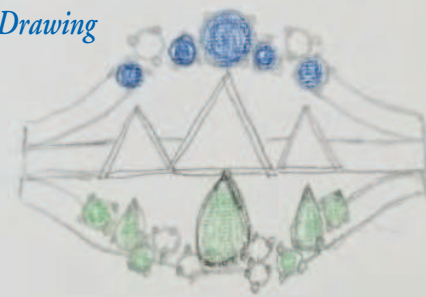
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