

Yorktown Huskers

Huskers rebuild in 2009

By Isaac Case

On offense: Like a hurricane-ravaged city, the Huskers will be faced with the ultimate rebuilding project in 2009.

For starters, Yorktown's "three-headed monster" is no more, as fullback Nana Anyane-Yeboah and halfbacks Brett Gabriele and John Fennessy graduated. The talented trio was the Huskers' offense in '08, scoring 24 of their 29 rushing touchdowns and compiling 2,325 of the team's 2,732 rushing yards.

More concerning, however, is the decimation of a road-grading offensive line. All five starters — highlighted by all-section left tackle Eric LaPorta — have moved on.

The capper?

Brendan Brunelle, last year's starting signal caller, is up at Marist College with a lax stick in his hands.

Head Coach Mike Rescigno isn't blind to the challenge that lies ahead, fully recognizing the giant pink elephant on the turf.

"We lost a lot on both sides of the ball," said Rescigno, a former offensive lineman at Hofstra University. "We lost our core guys, but we are concentrating on moving on. We are con-



Photos by Isaac Case
Yorktown quarterback Justin Mabus breaks away from the Brewster defense Thursday.



Above: Yorktown wide receiver Matt Fedro looks to break a tackle in a scrimmage against Brewster.
Left: Yorktown Head Coach Mike Rescigno returns for his fifth year on the sidelines.



centrating on what we have and what is coming up."

Competing for the starting quarterback job are Justin Mabus and Mike D'onghia. Mabus, a standout lacrosse player, started for the JV last season, while D'onghia served as Brunelle's backup.

At 6-foot, 175 pounds, Mabus has decent size and a long stride to break runs in Yorktown's Wing-T offense. He flashed his skillset in a scrimmage against Brewster Thursday, breaking off a 35-yard TD run up the gut.

With starting wide receiver Matt Fedro and starting tight end Nate Suhadolnik returning, Mabus and D'onghia will have two experienced targets in the passing game.

Fedro, a precise route runner with deceptive speed, was Yorktown's leading receiver in '08, hauling in 16 catches for 235 yards and two touchdowns. Suhadolnik, meanwhile, was an absolute terror in the red zone. He only caught nine passes for 95 yards, but four of them went for touchdowns. "I've not good chemistry with both of them," Fedro said of Mabus and D'onghia. "Whoever gets the job will do just fine."

The running game will feature a handful of players, including Ty Schultdt (HB), Alex Terry (HB), Brandon Trager (FB), Rob Weigel (FB) and Dom Scherpf (HB).

Schultdt, a shifty player on the lax field, brings that same athleticism to the gridiron. Terry is a speedster who can find daylight around the edge. Weigel and Trager are both bruisers, expected to grind out tough yards in between the tackles.

Kujtim Lajqi, a 6-foot-4, 290-pound returnee at right tackle, anchors Yorktown's offensive line. Danny Graham (6-1, 200 pounds), Mike Brescia (6-3, 255 pounds), Dylan Rampa (6-1, 230 pounds), Steven Brandt (6-1, 220 pounds), Steven Martimucci (5-9, 170 pounds), Andrew Ricci (5-4, 150 pounds) and Arben Lajqi (6-3, 245 pounds) will round out the line.

According to Rescigno, there is a lot of pressure on the newly formed offensive line.

"We are back to square one," the coach said, "so we are making sure the fundamentals are getting done. As coaches, we have been all over that."

Despite the glaring losses, Rescigno is keeping the same offensive philosophy intact.

"It remains to be balanced and to open up the fullback game by establishing the perimeter game," he said.

On defense: Not surprisingly, the rebuilding theme carries over to the defensive side of the ball, too.

Yorktown's strongpoint will be its secondary. Returning safeties Tom Falcone (SS) and Fedro (S) will be the glue to the unit. Terry, Schultdt, D'onghia and Scherpf are all vying for time at cornerback.

Joe Cardone, a physical run-stuffing presence, returns at middle linebacker. Trager, Tyler Fahey and Mike Moriarty are also penciled in at linebacker.

The defensive line will be composed of the same players as the offensive line. Defensive ends Suhadolnik and Weigel will have the chore of replacing the terrorizing duo of Mike Nasti and John Fennessy. Nasti and Fennessy combined for a robust 22 sacks last year.

"Nasti and Fen are extremely hard to replace," Rescigno admitted. "They were amongst the best in the section. Right now, we are looking to pick up where we left off. I think Weigel and Nate can do that."

Fedro — though not ignoring the losses — is still confident in the unit's ability. "We should be pretty good defensive-

ly," he said. "We are returning only three to four starters, but the new guys are filling in, learning their roles and doing just fine."

On special teams: With a stable of speedy halfbacks, Rescigno said the roles of kick returner and punt returner will be fluid. Fedro flashed returning punts last season, so he's more than capable of handling the job.

The graduation of ace kicker Zack Curtin leaves Yorktown in a definite bind.

"Right now, the kicker is still a question mark," Rescigno said. "It's a spot that needs to be replaced."

Terry, D'onghia and Eric Cooley are all trying their luck at it.

X-factor: "Multiplicity," Rescigno said. "I'd like to think we have multiple weapons. We can lean on a couple different people and change up scheme based on a couple of guys that can get the job done."

Strengths: While the crop of young talent is certainly inexperienced, Rescigno chose to look at it from a glass-half-full vantage point.

"I think the fact that we have kids coming up that are hungry is big," he said. "A lot of teams might say, 'hey, they are a young team,' but I embrace that idea. We had that two years ago and then made it to the playoffs [Yorktown lost to New Rochelle in the first round of the Class AA playoffs in '07]. I'm hoping that we can coach them up and do that as well."

If either Mabus or D'onghia can settle in, Fedro and Suhadolnik have the potential to tear it up in the passing game.

Weakness: The youth and inexperience across the board is impossible to ignore.

Team vitals

CLASS A CENTRAL

How they finished last year

7-2, lost in heartbreaking fashion to Ossining, 45-44 (OT), in the Class A sectional semifinals.

Head Coach

Mike Rescigno (fifth year)

Schedule:

- Sept. 11 vs. Harrison - 7 p.m.
- Sept. 17 vs. Peekskill - 7 p.m.*
- Sept. 25 @ Hendrick Hudson - 7 pm.*
- Oct. 2 @ Somers - 7 p.m.*
- Oct. 9 vs. Panas - 6 p.m.*
- Oct. 16 @ Lakeland - 7 p.m.*

Key returnees

Matt Fedro, senior (WR/S); Nate Suhadolnik (TE/DE); Tom Falcone, senior (HB/SS); Joe Cardone, senior (LB); Kujtim Lajqi, senior (OT/DT); Mike D'onghia, senior (QB/CB); Dom Scherpf, senior (HB/CB)

Key newcomers

Justin Mabus, junior (QB); Ty Schultdt, junior (HB/CB); Alex Terry, junior (HB/CB); Brandon Trager (FB/LB); Rob Weigel, senior (FB/DE); Danny Graham, senior (OL/DL); Mike Brescia, senior (OL/DL); Dylan Rampa, junior (OL/DL); Stephen Brandt, junior (OL/DL); Steven Martimucci, junior (OL/DL); Andrew Ricci, junior (OL/DL); Arben Lajqi, sophomore (OL/DL)

GO HUSKERS!

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