



By Travis McConnell
Sports Writer

There will be lots of new faces this year when the Wallace Wildcats kick off the 2009 football season at Wauneta-Palisade on Friday night.

Those new faces include Head Coach Derek Hutchison, Assistant Coaches Dean Franzen and Gregory Skeen, five starters on offense and six starters on defense.

“We have a good core group of athletes,” said Coach Hutchison, “but most of them are young and inexperienced, since we have no seniors on the team.” Two seniors who would have made major contributions, Kurt Trusty and Brendon Cline, will miss the entire season due to medical reasons.

Of the 18 boys listed on the roster, 12 are either freshmen or sophomores.

“Our juniors need to step up and be leaders,” said Hutchison. “Not so much as being vocal, but giving high effort and taking the underclassmen under their wings and helping them improve.”

When asked about team leaders, he said, “Their strong work ethic and willingness to learn will determine how the season goes.”

The Wildcats are coming off a 5-4 season that included a loss to Ansley in the first round of last year’s state playoffs.

If the Wildcats are to improve on last season and qualify for their eighth straight playoff appearance, they will lean heavily on their three returning letter winners, Sean May, Shawn Christensen and Alex Pacheco.

May, who is only a junior, has already started 20 games at quarterback for the Wildcats and will bring much needed experience. He combines great speed with a good throwing arm that will allow the Wildcat offense to keep opposing defenses off balance. May is also a returning starter on defense at defensive back.

Christensen will return for his second year as a starter in the back- field. Last year he was more of a blocker, but should see an increased role as a ball carrier this season. Christensen also will start at linebacker, where he is one of the most physical players on the team.

Pacheco is starting his second season at center, where he will be joined on the offensive line by junior Tyler McCoy and sophomore Hunter Franzen who moved to Wallace from Arlington.

Eric Koop, Tanner McCoy, Fernando Lopez and Lane Scott will be looked at to provide depth on the interior line.

Aside from Christensen, the other starting backfield position will come down to sophomore Ethan Scott, freshman Taylor Doell or Koop.

When the Wildcats look to pass, May will look to juniors Lane Swedberg and Ryan Sowle.

Both are big targets at 6-foot-1 and have good hands.

This season the Wildcats will compete in the D2-10 district that also includes Banner County, Hayes Center, Paxton and Potter-Dix.

“Hayes Center will be good again, they should be head and shoulders above everyone in the district,” said Coach Hutchison when asked about the district race, “but we should be able to compete with everyone else.”

As far as the entire schedule goes, the Wildcats should be competitive with everyone.

“Hayes Center and Garden County, who only lost one starter from last year, will be tough,” said Hutchison, “but if we can avoid injuries, which can be said for any D2 team, we can have a successful season.”

The Wildcats will start their season on Friday, Aug. 28 at Wauneta. Kickoff is scheduled for 7:30 p.m.