

Key players will return to football team next year

By Andy Heintz

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Colby football fans won't be spending their Friday nights watching football under the lights at Dennen Field or with their ears pressed to the radios as sportscasters Rich Epp and Jimmy Chavez call the action during road games.

The Colby High season came to an end on last week as the Eagles got whipped by Buehler High, 64-19. The combination of a fast running back and a group of massive linemen was too much for the Eagles, but the Crusaders are one of the best football teams in Class 4A, and the team has no reason to hang their heads about the loss.

Besides, one playoff game shouldn't take away from a successful season.

The Eagles went 7-3 this year, taking third in the Northwest Kansas League. If a couple of plays had gone differently, the Eagles may have ended up 9-1. Still, Colby's record represents an improvement from the previous season, when the team finished 6-4. If this trend continues, the Eagles should be 8-2 next season.

This was Colby's last year in the Northwest Kansas League. They will be playing in the new Great Western Athletic Conference next season. The other teams that will be a part of the new league are Hugoton, Concordia, Scott City, Goodland, Holcomb, Clay Center, Ulysses and Russell high schools — all Class 3A or 4A teams.

"Next year's schedule will be hard," said Coach Chris Gardner. "We have to raise our level of play. It will be a battle every week."

After taking a tough 28-22 loss to St. Francis in their first game, the Eagles ticked off four straight

wins over Goodland, Hoxie, Plainville and Phillipsburg. Colby's defense played well during the streak giving up only 22 points. At one point, the defense allowed zero points in 11 quarters.

Gardner said he thought his team's biggest win of the year was their 22-14 victory over Phillipsburg.

"A lot of people thought we wouldn't win that game," he said.

There was excitement in the air the week before the game with the mighty Smith Center Redmen. Many people thought this would be the year Colby would break the Redmen's fabled winning streak.

The Eagles stood toe-to-toe with Smith Center on the Redmen's home field, but they were unable to get a victory, losing 24-12. Gardner said he thought it was the team's toughest loss of the season.

"We had our chances in that game," he said. No one else has beaten Smith Center so far, either.

Junior wide receiver Corbin Stephens had a huge game against the Redmen, gaining well over 100 receiving yards and catching a 39-yard touchdown pass.

Unfortunately, Stephens was diagnosed with a torn meniscus in his knee to sit out for the rest of the year.

The Eagles managed to win all three of their district games despite the loss of their star wide receiver. They defeated Concordia 22-12, Smoky Valley 12-7 and Larned 36-13.

Junior quarterback Kale Amberger ran for two touchdowns on his 17th birthday to help the Eagles beat Concordia, and sophomore tight end Ryan Parker had two big catches to help his team defeat the Vikings.

Colby trounced the Indians as

snow whitened Dennen Field. The Eagles scored 20 points in the third quarter to secure the win. The boys overcame early deficits in all the games.

Some of the key figures on this year's team will be graduating, but a large number will be returning next season. The seniors include Ethan Stickel, Adam Weber, Dalton Garcia, Torey Taylor and Braden McKee.

Some players who saw substantial time this year who will be returning, include juniors Andrew Flanagan, Stephens, Rocque Russell, Josh Middleton, Logan Middleton and sophomores Justin Slavens, Christian Wilson, Nathan Quagliano, Jordan Baker, Dalton Snyder and Parker.

"We are really going to miss our seniors, but we really like what we have coming back," said Gardner. "The guys coming back are really good football players."

Stickel led the team in touchdowns this season with 10. Weber came in second with eight.

Amberger rushed for five touchdowns and completed five touchdown passes and Flanagan rushed for five touchdowns and caught one touchdown pass. Flanagan was the team's leading tackler going into the Buehler game with 115 for the year. Weber was second with 88.

Stephens led the Eagles in touchdowns catches with two.

Russell and Stickel led the team in sacks with four each. Russell accomplished this despite battling injuries throughout the season.

Gardner said he thought their would be high expectations for next year's team due to the large number of players returning.

"People are expecting a lot from us, but that's the way it should be every year," he said.

It's all in the wrist



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Colby eighth-grade basketball player Adam Giersch got ready to take a shot from the free-throw line, while Brady Colson (far left) finished a jump shot and Dylan Slavens got ready to shoot a three pointer during basketball practice Thursday at the grade-school gym. The junior

Eagles cross country runner finishes another strong season

By Andy Heintz

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Colby High junior Katrina Kaus' cross country season didn't end the way she wanted it to, but the standout runner says she's getting ready to focus on basketball for a while.

After running her way to the state meet for the third straight year, Kaus had to compete while battling a cold that had refused to go away for several weeks.

"It's frustrating, because you can't do anything about it," she said.

Kaus ended up taking 27th place with a time of 16 minutes, 46 seconds. It was a disappointing time for the Lady Eagles' runner, who went into the season with the goal of finishing in the top 10 at state.

The time was even more frustrating, because earlier in the season she had finished the same race in 16:11 at the Wamego Invitational, taking fourth. If she could have ran the same time at state, she would have snared 12th.

Coach Bob Mannebach said Kaus was right where she needed to be before she got sick. He said she had a great season, despite that bit of bad luck.

Kaus has accomplished a lot in her three years of

running, he said. She has been the Lady Eagles' top runner for the last three years. She took 16th at state as a freshman with a time of 16:13 and she finished 23th her sophomore year with 16:19. Her sophomore time would have been better, but she got a side ache in the middle of the race.

This season, Kaus took first at the Northwest Kansas League Meet for the third straight season, and she snared first at the Hill City Invitational. Her other accomplishments include finishing fifth at Class 4A regionals, third at the Oberlin Invitational with a season-best time of 16:04 and third at the Hays Invitational.

Mannebach said Kaus "will to win" has helped make her such a great runner.

"She's just a fierce competitor," he said. "She has that inner drive; it comes from within."

Despite her success, Kaus said she doesn't plan to run for a college team after she graduates from high school. She said she isn't ready to devote the time college cross country runners have to put into training.

Kaus said she would like to finish in the top 15 at state next season. With cross country over, she said, she will be concentrating on basketball this winter. Kaus was a starter on last year's team.



Katrina Kaus

Jayhawks offense ready for Nebraska

LINCOLN, Neb. (AP) — Nebraska defensive coordinator Carl Pelini says his players will need another strong performance if the Cornhuskers are to beat a Kansas team with multiple offensive weapons.

Pelini's comments came af-

ter the Huskers practiced for two hours in helmets and shoulder pads Wednesday.

The Jayhawks are scoring 31 points a game and have a quarterback in Todd Reesing, who's averaging 302 yards a game in total offense.

Pelini says the Huskers must contain Reesing on Saturday because of his ability to run and pass.

Pelini said the Huskers are playing defense at their highest level since the new coaching staff took over in 2008.

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