

- Dan Cappellazzo/Staff Photographer **VIKINGS ON OFFENSE:** Grand Island running back Dan Blocho and quarterback Quinn Corrao practice at the school for Saturday's season opener against Kenmore East at home. --



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REVAMPED VIKINGS

Grand Island looks to overcome inexperience

By MIKE MEILER Niagara Gazette

Niagara Gazette — Like many of his peers, Grand Island football coach Dean Santorio will be looking at a smaller roster that has undergone a lot of turnover when his Vikings step onto the gridiron this year.

That doesn't mean the 12th-year coach isn't expecting his team to be competitive. After failing to make the playoffs last season but clinching the Chuck Funke Memorial Consolation Bowl Class A championship with a 14-13 win over McKinley, Santorio said his team would like to get back to the postseason.

“We’re a little less experienced as far as varsity game experience,” he said, “but every year’s a new year and you set your goals high and go for them. We don’t dwell on what we had or what we lost, we just go out and try to win games with who we have.

“Obviously, we would love to get back to the regular playoffs this year. We feel we have a good group of guys and if a few guys step up we can get some wins.”

The Vikings will go with a 36-man roster to start the season, about 10 players less than Santorio said he normally has had.

The team lost many key seniors, including center Zach Smith, lineman Sam Oursler, wide receiver Eddie Krecisz, defensive tackle Chuck Grunzweig and tight end/linebacker Ryan Hughes. In fact, only five players returning played full-time roles on the varsity team last season. Fullback/linebacker Anthony Zogaria, tight end/linebacker Chris Connors and guard/defensive end Dominic Tripi each play both ways, while Danny Blocho and Paul Sukmanowski both play running back.

“(A small roster) is not always a bad thing,” Santorio said. “Sometimes it keeps morkids involved in practice and not as many kids end up sitting out. It might hurt if you get banged up, but it’s something you learn to deal with.

“We have some kids that are seniors that didn’t get a chance to start last year that are looking pretty good, and a couple of seniors that didn’t get a chance to play varsity are getting a chance to play.”

Two of those seniors, Cyle Alcorn and Mark Hughes, will play key roles on both sides of the ball as starting wide receivers and defensive backs. Santorio also said he’d look to a few juniors, including quarterback Quinn Carrao and linemen Dominic Petrilli and Tom Doctor, who will both play offensive and defensive tackle.

“(Petrilli) is a 300-pound kid who’s done a really good job coming around for us in practice,” Santorio said. “All three of them started JV last year and have done a pretty good job so far this season.”

The Vikings kick off their season at 2 p.m. Saturday with a home game against Kenmore East.

Head Coach: Dean Santorio (12th year) 2011 Record: 5-4-0 Key Players: Anthony Zogaria, Chris Connors, Dominic Trippi, Dan Blocho, Quinn Corrao, Paul Sukmanowski, Cyle Alcorn, Dominic Petrillo Key Losses: Eddie Krecisz, Zach Smith, Chuck Grunzweig, Sam Oursler, Ryan Hughes