

FALL SPORTS PREVIEW

Indians

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over my career here at Juniata and he's only a junior. We have to take advantage of his skills — he has a strong arm, great runner.

"I'm happy with our offensive backs," he continued. "We've got some good speed, some good talent. If we stay healthy back there in the backfield that's going to be one of our strengths."

Chad Eberle, who played end last year, is moving to tailback. And Bodley may be an occasional tailback, which means Eberle will take the snaps. Scott Sneath is counted on to play a role in the backfield as well.

"Then we have a couple fullbacks, too," Klingensmith said. "At the ends, Steve Zearfus, he's a veteran. He'll surprise you — he's a small boy, just 135 pounds, but he's 135 pounds of football player."

Despite having more returning starters on the other side of the ball, Klingensmith jokes that "Our plan for defense is just to hold on to the ball."

In reality, he notes, five starters return and they have solid experience, anchored by Bodley, a three-year starter at linebacker. Klingensmith said he also looks for a solid performance from his speedy secondary.

On the kicking game, Chad Eberle will again handle the extra points, and be the punter, too. Dakota McNemar will probably be the kickoff man," he said. Eberle will handle returns.

Changes on the field will be small compared to the big one that took place during the offseason — Juniata returned to the Tri-Valley League, which it departed two years ago, and the TVL itself brought foot-

ball back into the folk after a nearly 20-year absence. Three Twin Valley Conference clubs will be in the league as football-only members to make up for the TVL schools that do not sponsor the sport.

"I'm glad we're going back to the Tri-Valley League — I never wanted to leave in the first place," Klingensmith said. "I think it's a better league for us. It would be tough for us to compete in the Mountain League year in and year out. I think the reason we had some success the last two years in the Mountain League is because we had some big lineman, a really strong football team.

"The Tri-Valley League has given us all the competition we could use over the years. I think it's more suitable for Juniata."

The change also means the two schools in Juniata County will meet for the first time in more than a decade. East Juniata and Juniata have not played one another since 1996. It's the first time the two will meet since East Juniata became a co-op with Midd-West.

"East Juniata going with Midd-West gives them much more to choose from. They should be, on paper, much stronger than they had been in the past," Klingensmith said. "I'm disappointed with the numbers that they have that they couldn't field a junior high team this year. We had scheduled to play them

twice. That's the only drawback I can see to being in the Tri-Valley League — some of them don't have junior high, and they elect to go only JV."

With the new TVL slate, only one open date stands on the schedule for each team; Juniata kept a Mountain League opponent in Penns Valley, where the Indians will travel to open the season.

The Indians remain in District 6, where the post-season will be somewhat easier to attain this year as District 5's three Class AA football schools will form a subregional tournament with District 8, rather than playing in through District 6.

"I think we have a good team and I think we can contend for a championship in the Tri-Valley League and that's our goal," he said. "Last year it was difficult to get into the playoffs because they joined District 5 and 6. This year with the new configuration of District 6 I feel if we have a winning record we will make the playoffs."

One thing hasn't changed: Even after close to half a century, Klingensmith hasn't lost his passion for football.

"Well I'll tell you, it beats sitting around working crossword puzzles," he said. "I still find it real challenging. I like the feel of the chase on Friday nights. I can't think of anything better I can do."

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