

Ozaukee
PRESS

2026 HIGH SCHOOL

FOOTBALL

Preview



RLO
FOOTBALL





Port Washington
Pirates

65

Players in the Program



John
Bunyan

14th season
69-67 overall
6-8 postseason

Favorite board/card game: Cribbage.
Candy: Red Twizzlers. **Concession stand item:** I'm a big-time burger guy (cheese lettuce, tomato, ketchup). **Hobby:** I don't mind woodworking. I've done trim work in my house, put in doors.

2025 Recap: After an 0-2 start, Port rattled off wins in seven of its final eight games. Port finished 6-1 and in second place in the East Central Conference to 7-0 Plymouth. The Pirates' postseason run was halted by Whitefish Bay in round 2 on a last-second touchdown pass. It was the third straight season that Port went 1-1 in the playoffs.

On the cover:

Top row from left:
Kiya Sullivan, senior, running back, linebacker
Candy: Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. **Energy drink:** White Monster. **Sports drink:** Strawberry BodyArmor. **Pets:** Cody, 10-year-old black lab.

Kade Kintop, senior, wide receiver, safety
Candy: Milky Way. **Energy drink:** C4 Bombsicle. Crunch. **Sports drink:** Fruit punch BodyArmor. **Pets:** Teagan his "evil twin" cat and Bella the cat.

Jack Bunyan, junior, quarterback
Candy: Skittles. **Energy drink:** Strawberry C4. **Sports drink:** Mamba Forever BodyArmor. **Pets:** Hokie (after Virginia Tech mascot) the cavapoo.

ThiLar Goodman, senior, wide receiver, def. end
Candy: Red Twizzlers. **Cereal:** Raisin Bran. **Sports drink:** Strawberry banana BodyArmor. **Pets:** Snorlax (Pokemon) the cat, Peanut the chihuahua and Mika the long-haired shih tzu.

Port's offense to press the pace

■ *Pirates heads to new league with returning quarterback and three quick widouts*

By MITCH MAERSCH
Ozaukee Press Staff

The Port Washington High School football team is going to have the wind in its sails this season.

Starting quarterback Jack Bunyan, coach John Bunyan's son, returns after being named to the East Central Conference first team, and he has a slew of top targets.

Senior Kade Kintop leads the group after being named ECC Wide Receiver of the Year. He had 33 catches for 392 yards and six touchdowns after being moved from quarterback to receiver early in the season.

Senior Kiya Sullivan is back after making 21 catches for 272 yards and three touchdowns, and Aedyn Brownmiller caught 15 balls for 242 yards and two scores.

Bunyan went 107-for-178 passing for 1,750 yards and 20 touchdowns with six interceptions, and he's looking sharp again.

"We looked explosive," coach Bunyan said of his offense at last week's home scrimmage. "We've got a lot of speed at the receiver spots."

Having a quarterback with nearly a full year starting under his belt also puts the Pirates ahead of the game.

"Light years. He's definitely improved this year as far as some decision making," Bunyan said. "We feel really good and confident going into the year just because the way Kade had such successful year at wide receiver and Brownmiller and Kiya being back."

Kintop will play in the slot and Sullivan and Brownmiller will be on the outside. All run 4.6-second 40-yard dashes, Bunyan said.

"I think we're way ahead of where we were last year," Jack Bunyan said. "I've gotten a lot more comfortable. Being in the role last year was good. I think this year it should really pop."

His teammates are also optimistic. "In my four years here, I've never seen a team better than this," senior ThiLar Goodman said.

"I think we have the best athletes in the conference," Kintop said. "At practice, we're getting better every day so it's looking good for us."

"I think we're better than we were last year," Sullivan said.

Port lost Da'vion Igess, who earned ECC honorable mention after 14 catches for 298 yards and three touchdowns, to graduation.

Tight end

Sullivan's brother Eyob takes over for ECC second-teamer Aiden Mitchell, who graduated. Mitchell caught 16 balls for 291 yards and three touchdowns and was voted Port's most valuable player.

Running back

Port's battering ram, first team ECC selection O'Neil Wright, graduated after racking up 1,166 yards and 15 touchdowns on 202 carries.

Senior Mason Schwanz (5 feet, 8 inches tall and 180 pounds), who was second on the team with 112 yards rushing and two touchdowns, takes over the halfback spot.

"He's perfect for our offense. He's smaller, strong and explosive," Bunyan said. "Our identity has changed a little offensively, we're going to spread the ball a little more."

Junior Max Zillman, who missed last season due to a knee injury, will be the backup.

Offensive line

First-team tackle Logan Walker graduated, but three-year starter and ECC second-teamer Jackson Hatfield (6-1, 205) is back.

Others may mix into the position. Senior Jacob Kent (6-1, 210) worked his way into the position, Bunyan said. Others include seniors Nate Differt (6-1, 220) and LRoy Pinkston (6-1, 205).

Junior Konner Krueger (6-0, 220) will play center.

Junior starting guard Gio Jacque (6-1, 205) is back, and junior Carson Hill 6-0, 205) will play on the other side.

"We're not overly big but we're athletic. They're explosive in that regard," Bunyan

said. "We're not necessarily gong to overpower you, but we've got some good feet and some good movement."

Defensive line

ECC second-teamer Goodman will play one defensive end after making 60 tackles last season, tying for second on the team.

Senior Jacob Kent is slated to play on the other side.

For tackles, Port lost ECC Defensive Lineman of the Year and three-year ECC first-teamer Garrett Kawczynski to graduation. The two-time state champion wrestler used leverage and skill to his advantage at nose guard, racking up 60 tackles.

Krueger and Jacque will mix into the spots inside, as well as Hatfield, Bunyan said.

Linebackers

On the inside, Port has senior Austin Knapp taking over for ECC first-teamer Izaiah Scheftgen, who had 52 tackles last season before graduating.

On the outside, ECC first-teamer Kiya Sullivan and honorable mention Eyob Sullivan will use their speed to annoy the offense. Eyob had 59 tackles last season and Kiya had 49.

Pinkston, Hill and senior Brody Goeden will also see time at outside linebacker.

Bunyan will try to platoon — have players only play offense or defense — as much as he can.

"With the speed we're going to go, we're going to need guys to take a rest," he said.

Defensive backs



JACK BUNYAN (left) and Kade Kintop are two of Port Washington's weapons this season.

Brothers Joe and Zeke Rico are at the corners.

"They like to hit and be physical," Bunyan said.

Kintop will play safety. He made 30 tackles last season.

Port lost ECC first-team defensive back Colton Struckman and ECC honorable mention defensive back Ashton Steinert, who led Port with 96 tackles, to graduation.

"We've got a ton of seniors on the defensive side of the ball. I'm really excited about that potential," Bunyan said.

Special teams

Senior Grayson Allen will be the kicker, and senior Max Tatarek, a first-team ECC punter last year who averaged 31.5 yards on 22 punts, is back.

Kintop and Kiya Sullivan are slated to return kicks.

Coaches

Three coaches decided to step away from the team this year. Port is picking up a couple of former Pirates.

Patrick Lippe, who played wide receiver at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, is joining the staff, as is his former teammate Ever Armendaris, who was a lineman at UW-Stevens Point.

Port also returns Offensive Coordinator Zac Moeller, who was named ECC Assistant Coach of the Year last season.

Conference outlook

Port enters a new conference — the Glacier Trails — filled with teams the Pirates have played before. Grafton, West Bend East and West, Plymouth, Kewaskum, Nicolet and Kettle Moraine Lutheran have been foes from the North Shore Conference or ECC.

Plymouth went 7-0 and won the ECC last season. Port was second at 6-1.

This season, "We're really focusing on us and just trying to get better game in, game out," Bunyan said.

SUPPORT YOUR PIRATES

Coach: John Bunyan

PORT-WASHINGTON PIRATES		
2026 REGULAR SEASON GAME SCHEDULE		
Fri Aug 21.....	SHEBOYGAN NORTH.....	7:00 PM
Fri Aug 28.....	MOUNT HOREB.....	7:00 PM
Fri Sep 4	NICOLET UNION	7:00 PM
Fri Sep 11.....	@ KEWASKUM	7:00 PM
Fri Sep 18	WEST BEND WEST.....	7:00 PM
Fri Sep 25	@ KETTLE MORAINELUTHERAN	7:00 PM
Fri Oct 2.....	@ GRAFTON	7:00 PM
Fri Oct 9.....	PLYMOUTH	7:00 PM
Fri Oct 16	@ WEST BEND EAST.....	7:00 PM

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D3 champions are starting anew

■ *This year’s Grafton team aims to put its own mark on the successful program*

By MITCH MAERSCH
Ozaukee Press Staff

Grafton High School football coach Jim Norris faces a challenge only six other coaches in the state have any given season. How does he carry the pride and winning experience of his team’s undefeated state championship last year while keeping this year’s Black Hawks hungry for another? “It’s a balancing act. You look at last year. Last year was last year,” Norris said. “Once the calendar turned over to 2026, everyone was 0-0 again. A month after we won. In 2026, there will be different state champions.”

After spending a final moment with the team at the Hawk logo on the 50-yard line upon returning from Camp Randall with the gold ball, Norris released the seniors to give them time to be together one last time in the locker room. “And I talked to the underclassmen — I said look around, this is who we have. This is who we are,” he said. “It’s very much a program accomplishment, but the seniors have to write their story for 2026.” The Black Hawks are replacing 23 seniors who helped the team to four straight Woodland Conference titles, a state runner-up finish in 2023 and last year’s title.

It’s not as big of a worry than it sounds. Quarterback Nick Schiller barely played the position before last season, and running back Jack Nelson hadn’t seen much time on varsity before last year either. Grafton has more than 90 players in its program and plenty of talent in the pipeline to succeed.

Quarterback

Junior Hunter Klippel takes over for Schiller, who graduated. He was named

to the Woodland Conference second team. Schiller went 151-for-260 passing for 2,233 yards with 28 touchdowns and seven interceptions last season. He also threw the 1-yard game-winning touchdown pass to beat Catholic Memorial in overtime in the state semifinal and led the Hawks on a 14-play, 49-yard championship-winning drive capped by a Graysen Bollech 35-year field goal with six seconds left to beat Reedsburg, 17-15. “It was great last year learning from Nick Schiller, a state championship quarterback, and he taught me a lot,” Klippel said. “He and coach (Riley) Hill, our offensive coordinator, have done a really good job putting their heads together, figuring out what works best for both of them,” Norris said. Klippel, he said, can run or pass, depending on what the defense does.

Running backs

Nelson returns for his senior year after rushing for 1,931 yards and 26 touchdowns last season and earning a spot on the WC first team. He answered any and all questions Grafton had about its halfback after all-time leading rusher Tommy Lutz graduated two years ago. “He’s done a really good job, similar to Hunter. There are some different things that we’re doing offensive-wise. We’re getting him up to date on what we’re doing,” Norris said. “I think the team is really good this year. The strength numbers and speed numbers are up from last year,” Nelson said. “I think this room has more talent than last year so I’m excited to see how the season goes.” Norris cited other backs who might see time, including juniors Owen Deer and Zach Nuberger and sophomore Mason Meyer. “Our running back room is incredibly deep,” he said.

Tight end/fullback

Rising sophomore Hank Doyle, who Norris said stands all of 6 feet, 6 inches, is taking over for W C

first-teamer Ian Cornelius, who graduated. Doyle, who runs the 40-yard dash in 4.6 seconds, already has six Division 1 college offers, Norris said. “He’s done a really good job for us. That room is pretty deep too,” Norris said. Others include junior Hudson Miller, who earned WC first team at utility last year, and juniors Vince Schiller and John Boesch.

Wide receivers

Tyler Deer, who set single-season school records with 80 catches — most in the state — and 1,227 yards last season, graduated. But senior Parker Shaw, who caught five passes on the championship-winning drive after Deer got hurt, is back. “He’s been a staple in the offense since really his sophomore year. He had really good receivers in front of him,” Norris said. “I’m excited for him to step into that role as a senior.” Shaw, he said, can play in multiple spots. “He understands all skill positions in the offense. We can plug and play him anywhere we want,” Norris said.

Senior Malik Cain will see time at receiver, as will Klippel’s twin Hayden, sophomore Luke Benter and junior Andy Tran.

Offensive line

Grafton lost WC Offensive Lineman of the Year Miles Muilenburg to graduation, along with WC first-teamer Colton Boehlke and honorable mention Noah King. But WC honorable mention Sam Heerey, who qualified for state in the shot put, is back at guard, as is Max Nellis, who started as a sophomore last year.

Sam Benter may also see time there. “He’s a kid who really changed his body and got some things figured out in the weight room,” Norris said. Junior Luke Schubert and sophomore Caleb Drake are the Hawks’ tackles. “Both are 6-4 and very athletic,” Norris said.

There’s a competition for center. Norris said 6-3 junior Kelsen Siemann is looking good and would have started at other schools. Sophomore Liam Tendrup is also playing well at center, he said.

Defensive line

Grafton has a collection after WC Defensive Lineman of the Year and all-state honorable mention Max Glab and WC first-teamer Boehlke graduated. Norris likes junior Caleb Butler-Schultz, who he said was nipping at Glab’s heels to play. “He’s very, very quick and explosive off the ball,” he said.

Schubert and sophomore Khaleb Drake-Gray will also play, and Norris said junior Braeden McCarville has been showing excellent technique. At tackle, Grafton is deep, Norris said. Heerey and Nellis will rotate in, and seniors Sam Benter and Logan Oberheu will play.

Senior Spencer Shoemaker (6-2, 310 pounds) “has taken a lot of people by surprise. He plays with really good effort,” Norris said. **Linebackers** Two-time WC Defensive Player of the Year and all-state honorable mention Tyler Heinle graduated, as did WC second-teamer Payton Wissmueller.

But junior Cooper Ehr is “He has incredible instincts, is very fast downhill and does a great job in space in the pass game. He’s the absolute leader of that defense,” Norris said. Ehr said work on this season began long ago. “The season started back in December after the championship. It was a little shaky at the start, a bunch of new guys in new roles we haven’t had before. We were able to take it pretty well after a couple of months and it’s been smooth sailing since,” he said.

Senior Jason Grunwaldt has been chomping at the bit to play, and Boesch may play as well. On the outside, WC first-teamer Jayden Smith-Kaylor and second-teamer Jack Marti graduated. Miller may split time at the spot with Schiller, and junior Wes Jaeger and senior Chase Tendrup may play depending on the situation. Meyer is also splitting time between outside linebacker and safety.

See *Hawks* on page 13A



Grafton
Black Hawks

90+

Players in the program



Jim
Norris

Ninth season

69-21 overall

15-7 postseason

Favorite board/card game: Cribbage at cabin up north. **Candy:** Anything chocolate peanut butter. A solid Butterfinger is hard to beat. Close second is peanut M&Ms. **Hobby:** Being outdoors. Duck hunting. Fishing. It’s my way of kind of getting back to zero. **Fast food meal:** Dave’s Hot Chicken, Qdoba steak burrito.

2025 Recap: Grafton objectively had the best season in program history. They won the most games, 14, and the school’s third state title. They came back from a 28-7 fourth-quarter deficit to beat Catholic Memorial, 34-31, in overtime in the state semifinal and drove for the game-winning field goal with 6 seconds left to beat Reedsburg, 17-15, in the title game.

On the cover:

Second row from left: **Jack Nelson, senior, running back** **Board game:** Monopoly but my parents don’t like playing it with me because I take forever with it. **Candy:** Frozen Snickers. **Pets:** Champ and Lucky, little dogs. **Cereal:** Froot Loops.

Hunter Klippel, junior, quarterback **Candy:** Skittles. **Pets:** Gunnar the vizsla. **Cereal:** I am a cereal guy. It’s not that healthy, but Cinnamon Toast Crunch. **Sports drink:** Fruit punch Gatorade.

Cooper Ehr, junior, linebacker **Candy:** Peanut M&Ms. **Pets:** Goose the mutt. **Energy drink:** White Monster. **Sports drink:** Strawberry Banana BodyArmor.

Hudson Miller, senior, FB/TE, LB, long snapper **Candy:** Swedish Fish. **Hobby:** I love cooking — coq au vin to enchiladas. I like to learn new things. **Cereal:** Lucky Charms. **Energy drink:** Ruby Red Monster.



Sam Heerey and Jack Nelson will play big roles for Grafton’s football team this season.

SUPPORT YOUR BLACK HAWKS

Coach: Jim Norris

GRAFTON BLACK-HAWKS

2026 REGULAR SEASON GAME SCHEDULE

Fri Aug 21...@MOUNT HOREB/BARNEVELD..7:00 PM
Fri Aug 28.....SLINGER 7:00 PM
Fri Sep 4 WEST BEND EAST..... 7:00 PM
Thurs Sep 10 ..@ NICOLET UNION 7:00 PM
Fri Sep 18@ KEWASKUM 7:00 PM
Fri Sep 25@ WEST BEND WEST..... 7:00 PM
Fri Oct 2PORT WASHINGTON 7:00 PM
Fri Oct 9KETTLE MORAIN LUTHERAN 7:00 PM
Fri Oct 16@ PLYMOUTH..... 7:00 PM



1545 Wisconsin Ave., Grafton
262-377-3338



Cedar Grove-Belgium
Rockets

45

Players in the program



Dan
Schreurs

12th season
95-28 overall
17-11 postseason

Favorite board/card game: We're a cribbage family. **Candy:** Sour Patch Kids. **Hobby:** Hunting and fishing. **Concession stand item:** The famous Saukville slushy at youth sporting events. He combines red and blue. "They've got a great concession stand."

2025 Recap: The Rockets (9-5 overall) didn't repeat as Big East Conference champs but finished 6-1 and in second place, qualifying for the playoffs for the 23rd straight season. They advanced to round 3 of the Division 6 playoffs for the second straight season. Carter Schmitz broke two school records in one game — six passing touchdowns and seven overall scores.

On the cover:

Third row from left:
Noah Teunissen, senior, left guard, def. end
Candy: Reese's Peanut Butter Cups. **College mascot:** Sparty (great uncle Mark Vander Jagt, school's leading all-time scorer with 1,904 points, played basketball at Michigan State). **Pets:** Cody, 10, black lab. **Cereal:** Krave.

Griffin Knight, senior, wide receiver, safety
Candy: Sour Skittles. **Pets:** Newfoundland mix Piper and black Lab Rowdy. **Energy drink:** Alani cotton candy. **Ice cream:** Rainbow sherbet.

Josh Anzia, senior, middle linebacker
Candy: Whoppers. **Pets:** guppies Gus, Optimus and Bluey. **Energy drink:** Triple Berry Breez'r Bubl'r. **Cereal:** Krave.

Austin Knapp, senior, running back, outside LB
Candy: White chocolate Reese's. **Pets:** Bruno the Boston terrier and Stella the German shorthair pointer. **Energy drink:** C4 Bombsicle. **Cereal:** Fruity Pebbles or Reese's Puffs.

Rockets have many happy returns

■ But team that regularly qualifies for the postseason has some big holes to fill

By MITCH MAERSCH
Ozaukee Press Staff

Cedar Grove-Belgium High School's numbers are up and the Rockets return 16 starters to a football team that last season finished second in the Big East Conference and reached the third round of the playoffs.

The few losses, however, were special players playing key positions.

On the list of graduates on offense are Big East second-team quarterback Carter Schmitz (106-for-200 passing, 1,067 yards, 21 touchdowns), second-team receiver Owen Gulke (20 catches, 490 yards, 4 touchdowns) and kicker Landon Altheimer (40-for-40 extra points, 3-for-4 field goals).

Senior running back Ira Hilbelink (130 carries, 795 yards, 11 touchdowns), named the Big East Offensive Player of the Year as a sophomore, and honorable mention last season, is forgoing football to focus on baseball. He was named the Division 3 Player of the Year in Wisconsin and has committed to play for the University of Minnesota.

Senior catcher Connor Waters, a defensive back and running back, is also focusing on baseball.

On defense, Big East Player of the Year Jonah Banton (75 tackles, one fumble recovery) graduated, as did 300-pound first-team tackle Vadim Misiura (53 tackles, 10 for loss).

"Definitely some studs that we've got to replace," coach Dan Schreurs said. "We always talk about we reload and don't rebuild."

The Rockets have 45 players in the program, up five from last season.

Eight starters return on both sides of the ball. Senior middle linebacker Josh Anzia said that helps.

"We're already ahead of the game. We're looking into some difficult stuff you've got to be mentally strong for and you've got to know what you're doing," he said.

Senior running back Austin Knapp said the offense is progressing.

"We're learning new stuff. I think we're at a good pace and looking good," he said.

Quarterback

Junior Evan Halleman is the new field general. He will provide a run-pass option similar to what speedster Michael Navis did in 2018.

"He's not Carter. He's talented in his own way. Carter is 6 feet, 2 inches and can throw the ball 40 yards. Evan is 5-8 and can run 40 yards very quickly," Schreurs said. "I love Evan's style and his aggressiveness."

Running backs

The Rockets will feature three backs. Knapp, weighing about 195 pounds, returns after running for 168 yards and two scores.

"He's fast and strong," Schreurs said.

Senior Griffin Knight, a Big East second-team receiver last year who led the team with 40 catches for 626 yards and 10 touchdowns, will also get the ball.

"He's probably the fastest on the team," Schreurs said.

A national champion will also get carries and lead block.

Alex Geib, an honorable mention offensive lineman last season who considered skipping football to focus on weightlifting — he recently won a national title for his age group — was convinced to play full-back.

"He fell in love with it," Schreurs said. Geib weighs 195 pounds and stands about 5-8. His squat, bench and deadlift numbers eclipse 1,400 pounds, well beyond Schreurs' goal of 1,000.

At the Rockets' scrimmage at University School of Milwaukee last week, Geib broke off a 40-yard touchdown run.

"He's a bowling ball," Schreurs said.

Tight end and receivers

Seniors Adair Herrera and Austin Hope-man will rotate and run play calls into the huddle. Schreurs said some officials didn't like Schmitz walking to the sideline last season.

"They're identical in stature and play," he said of the pair. "They both can catch, block and are relatively fast."

Junior Daxton VanderBeek, a two-way player on junior varsity last year who saw some time on varsity, will split out wide.

"He's one of the best athletes on the team. He reminds me a lot of a young Griffin Knight," Schreurs said.

Knight will also catch passes again.

Offensive line

Four-year starter Noah Teunissen (6-2, 230) is back at guard and already pancaked an opponent on the first play of the scrimmage. He was the Rockets' only first-team member on offense last season and voted the top lineman in the Big East.

"He has offers on the table from Division 3 schools already," Schreurs said.

Sophomore Asher Aleff (6-2, 220) is the other guard. He filled in well for Geib against Howards Grove last year.

"He has shown huge progress. He grew and put on a ton of weight. I'd love to know his numbers in the weight room," Schreurs said.

Senior Malachi Lukens (6-2, 195), named to the Big East second team last season, is back at tackle. Sophomore Nolan Meinen (6-1, 240) is the other tackle.

Last year's starting center Dylan Bley (6-2, 220) returns and "is a lot more knowledgeable," Schreurs said.

The top two reserves on the line are Anzia and sophomore Isiah Teunissen.

Defensive line

First-team defensive end RJ Griffin comes off of making 53 tackles, including 12 for loss and four sacks with two fumble recoveries and returning a blocked punt for a touchdown.

"RJ slimmed down this year. He became exceptionally fast," Schreurs said,

Noah Teunissen, who can lock the other side down and also move, Schreurs said, is also back.

Players will rotate at tackle. Geib and sophomore Nolan Meinen will start. Bley and Aleff will play as well.

Linebackers

Anzia, a Big East-second-team inside linebacker who led the Big East in tackles last season with 81, returns to continue the family tradition at the position. His brothers Ben, Justin and Cole all excelled at

the spot in the past.

"Thank goodness we've got one last year with one of the Anzia brothers," Schreurs said.

Anzia's cousin Nolan, whose father was Schreurs' teammate on the Rockets' 1996 squad, also plays inside. Nolan is a junior and shorter than Josh but is "a very good tackler and very aggressive," Schreurs said.

Knapp, a first-team outside linebacker, was third in the Big East in tackles with 65 and blocked two punts last season. He is a three-year starter who might move inside, Schreurs said.

"It's really, really fun to have him around. He brings a side of laughter and excitement to practice, is high intensity and never stops," he said.

Some freshmen may play outside linebacker if need be.

Defensive backs

Noah Peterson returns after earning Big East honorable mention, making 29 tackles and one interception.

VanderBeek will play on the other side after stepping into the role midway through last season.

Knight, a first-team safety, is back after making 35 tackles, seven interceptions and two fumble recoveries despite playing with a broken collarbone much of last season.

Special teams

Peterson, the Big East first-team kicker, is back for his senior year and already drilled a 47-yard field goal with no wind, Schreurs said. He also has been booming 60-yard punts.

Knapp, Knight and VanderBeek will return kicks and punts.

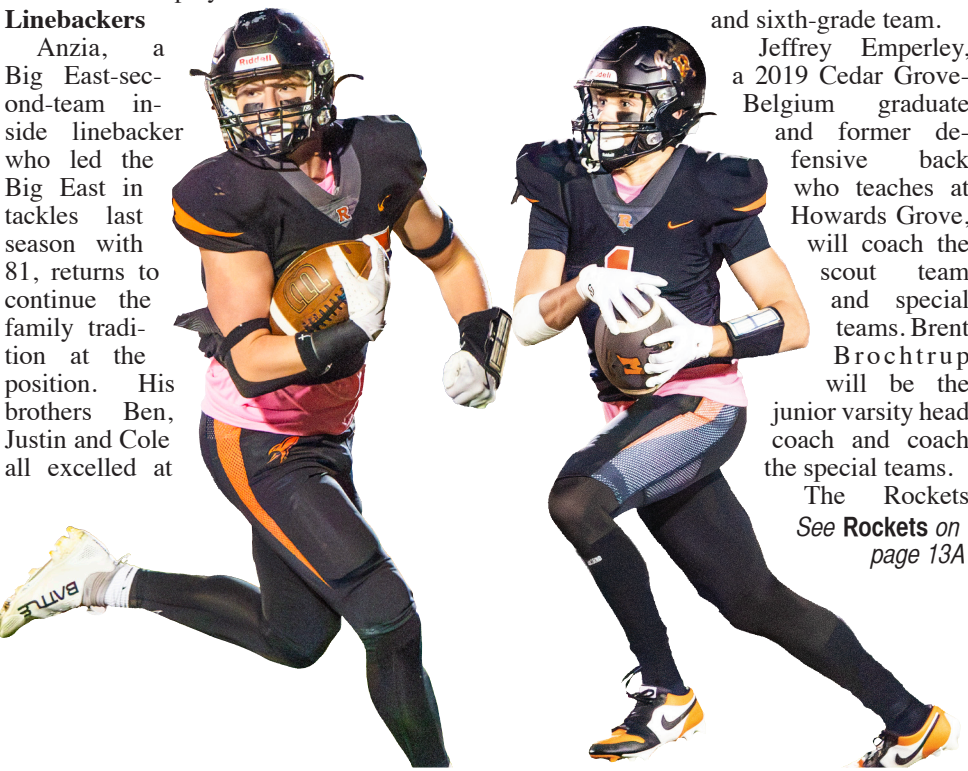
Coaches

The Rockets picked up a couple of new assistant coaches. Mike Hilbelink went to coach his son and Ira's brother on the fifth

and sixth-grade team.

Jeffrey Emperley, a 2019 Cedar Grove-Belgium graduate and former defensive back who teaches at Howards Grove, will coach the scout team and special teams. Brent Brochtrup will be the junior varsity head coach and coach the special teams.

The Rockets
See Rockets on
page 13A



AUSTIN KNAPP (left) and Griffin Knight will be two of the Rockets' top ball carriers this season.

SUPPORT YOUR ROCKETS

Coach: Dan Schreurs

CEDAR GROVE-BELGIUM ROCKETS 2026 REGULAR SEASON GAME SCHEDULE

Fri Aug 21.....	@ MAYVILLE	7:00 PM
Fri Aug 28.....	KENOSHA ST. JOSEPH.....	7:00 PM
Thur Sep 3.....	@ MANITOWOC LUTHERAN.	7:00 PM
Fri Sep 11.....	HILBERT	7:00 PM
Fri Sep 18.....	@ OOSTBURG	7:00 PM
Fri Sep 25	RANDOM LAKE/OZAUKEE ...	7:00 PM
Sat Oct 3	@ MISHICOT	7:00 PM
Fri Oct 9.....	HOWARDS GROVE.....	7:00 PM
Fri Oct 16	@ REEDSVILLE.....	7:00 PM

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Strength in numbers carries RLO

■ *More players make for more competition, improved practice intensity for Bison*

By **MITCH MAERSCH**
Ozaukee Press Staff

Numbers are finally in the Random Lake/Ozaukee high school football team’s favor. One year after cutting the season short due to so many injuries to key players, setting up freshman lineman giving up more than 100 pounds to their opponents, the Bison have recovered. The team has 43 players in the program this year. “Much better numbers. We have a big freshman class, so that was cool to see,” coach Cole Large said. “They had a lot of success in youth football and some of them came in looking pretty good, pretty advanced for freshmen.” Large is able to line up 11 quality players against 11 more at practice “You get some serious looks and some good competition every day,” he said. And Large doesn’t have to play everyone all the time during games. “The rest is huge,” he said. Players have noticed the larger number of teammates and the advantages that brings. “It’s better for scout team and it’s better for our varsity guys in case somebody goes down with an injury. It gets more reps for everybody, more experience for the younger guys,” junior nose tackle Otto Schmitz said. “Practice is a lot easier with more guys because you get a look at players. In the past, we had coaches playing in practice due to injury,” junior running back and defensive end Gage Berndt said. The Bison only lost two seniors — run-

ning back and linebacker Payton Storeck and fullback and safety Dan Zimdars — and return nearly all of the rest of the team. Despite many of the same players, the squad has moved on from last season. “I feel really good about how the culture held up and how the team responded to adversity last year,” Large said. “The past is in the past. I don’t think people will recognize what we look like. It’s exciting to see how they responded and the energy they have for the game. But we’ve got to go out and do it at this point.” There’s one other big change this season. The Bison are playoff eligible after being penalized for two seasons by the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association for creating the co-op in an off year. Reaching the postseason is one of the team’s targets. “We’re not shy about it. That’s a goal of ours,” Large said. **Quarterback** Junior Jeffrey Stefanich is back at quarterback after missing last season with an injury. He played in seven games as a freshman, going 49-for-99 passing for 476 yards and a touchdown with 12 interceptions. This season, he is healthy and had qualified for the Division 3 state wrestling tournament at 157 pounds. He will be a dual threat, Large said. “He’s a really talented runner and a good athlete, but he’s a really good thrower too,” he said. **Running backs**

Junior Colton Dybul, who filled in at quarterback last year, is back to his natural spot at running back. “He’s not huge but he runs really hard and he’s got really good agility in the inside. He makes people miss and runs through tackles,” Large said. “He plays the position as good as any back we’ve ever coached.” Berndt is the fullback who will also get some carries.

“He put on weight. He’s a power guy,” Large said. Sophomore Jack Upson is also in the mix at running back. **Tight end and receivers** Sophomore Cooper Arndt, who started at center last year, is at tight end, which is a more natural fit, Large said. “He’s a really good athlete. He catches the ball really well. He’s got the blocking skill set from playing line and he’s very athletic,” he said. Sophomore T.J. Dieringer may also see time at tight end. The Bison will rotate players at wide receiver. Junior Owen Uselding is on the outside. Others include sophomores Chase Malloy, Jaxon Crawford and Max Smallish, and juniors Colter Zimdars and Jake Delleree. “Jaxon is the fastest. Malloy has really good hands and runs really crisp routes, and it’s the same with Colter. Owen has good hands and is smart. He knows what everyone is doing on every play,” Large said. **Offensive line**

Senior Luke Hamm and junior Murphy Brown are the tackles. Hamm brings size (6 feet, 1 inch, 258 pounds) and Large said “Murphy has really grown quite a bit. He’s a little over 200 pounds and he plays really physical.” RJ Leider, a Big East Conference honorable mention lineman, is back at guard and will use his 6-2, 271-pound frame to move opponents. Senior Tegan Hall, who Large said is a “blue-collar guy and pretty physical,” is at the other guard spot. Sophomore Drew Keller, “a weight room warrior in the offseason who changed his body and strength,” Large said, is at center after playing it for the second half of last season. **Defensive line** Dieringer, who started as a guard as a freshman, is at one side as defensive end. Berndt and Brown are in the mix on the other side. The Bison will rotate between five and four-man fronts. Schmitz (5-8, 168) is small “but he’s really strong and very fast off the ball,” Large said. Hall and Leider will also play tackle, along with sophomore Max Tesker. “He has taken that role and played it really well,” Large said. Freshman Jaxon Beth will likely rotate in, as well as Keller, Hamm and eventually Luke Habeck, a 6-5, 286-pound senior who will miss a few weeks with an injury sustained during wrestling season. **Linebackers**

At inside linebacker, Dybul returns after earning Big East honorable mention last season. Large said Dybul would have likely received higher recognition, but the shorter season meant he could only nominate one player on each side of the ball for honorable mention only. Arndt and Upson are mixing in at inside linebacker as well. Stefanich will play outside linebacker, which doubles as strong safety in the Bison’s defense. **Defensive backs** Crawford, Smallish, Delleree and Zimdars are battling for two corner spots. Uselding will play free safety, and Zimdars, “a Swiss Army knife,” Large said, may also play there. **Special teams** Stefanich will do the punting. Freshman Carter Abegglen is leading the competition for kicker. Dybul, Crawford and a few others are in the mix to return kicks and punts. **Coaches**

RLO added Jeff Stefanich and Charlie Ruege to coach the offensive and defensive lines. Last year’s assistant coach Ben Rozewicz is now a youth coach. Large said he expects Big East defending champion Manitowoc Lutheran to be the favorite to win the league. RLO is scheduled to play all its home games at Random Lake since the Ozaukee track is being reconstructed.



**Random Lake/
Ozaukee Bison**

43

Players in the program



**Cole
Large**

**Sixth season
11-30 overall
0-2 postseason**

Favorite candy: Anything chocolate.
Concession stand item: Brat with ketchup.
Fast food meal: McDonald’s 10-piece McNuggets. “I’m actually a no-sauce guy.”
Hobby: Fishing in the area and spending time with his wife after getting married in June.

2025 Recap: RLO picked up its first victory in program history in the first game of the season last year, 47-7 at Kingdom Prep Lutheran. But several injuries took the team down to about 20 players, some not at the varsity level which would have created dangerous match-ups on the line. RLO (1-5) forfeited the rest of its varsity season.

On the cover:

Bottom row from left:
Colton Dybul, junior, running back, linebacker
Candy: Starburst. **Energy drink:** Monster Pipeline Punch. **Sports drink:** Blue Gatorade. **Fast food meal:** Culver’s chicken sandwich.

Gage Berndt, junior, running back, def. end
Candy: Skittles. **Energy Drink:** Bucked Up Rocket Pop. **Sports drink:** Green Apple Gatorade. **Fast food meal:** Taco Bell Chicken quesadilla.

Otto Schmitz, junior, nose tackle
Candy: Sour Strips. **Energy drink:** White Monster. **Pets:** Trigger and Harlow, 12-year-old golden retrievers. **Fast food meal:** McDonald’s quarter pounder (no onions or pickles), fries and medium drink.

Owen Uselding, junior, free safety
Candy: M&Ms. **Energy drink:** Blackberry lemonade Gorilla Mind. **Pets:** Jazzy, 6, orange/white cat. **Fast food meal:** Dairy Queen chicken strip basket.



GAGE BERNDT (left) and Colton Dybul will carry the ball for Random Lake/Ozaukee this season.

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Fri Sep 4	OOSTBURG	7:00 PM
Fri Sep 11.....	REEDSVILLE.....	7:00 PM
Fri Sep 18.....	MANITOWOC LUTHERAN	7:00 PM
Fri Sept 25	@ CEDAR GROVE-BELGIUM.	7:00 PM
Thur Oct 1.....	@ HOWARDS GROVE	7:00 PM
Fri Oct 9.....	MISHICOT	7:00 PM
Fri Oct 16	@ HILBERT.....	7:00 PM

Coach: Cole Large

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The Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association Board of Control in spring 2025 approved a conference realignment plan for high school football that affects all four local teams.

Port Washington and Grafton join the newly formed Glacier Trails Conference. Port was in the GTC for non-football sports last year, and Grafton will join it in non-football sports starting in 2027.

Grafton had been in the Woodland Conference since 2021. The Black Hawks planned to shift to the Woodland from the North Shore Conference in 2020, but that league decided to play a spring season due to the pandemic. Grafton played in fall and instead joined the Parkland Conference for one season.

Port Washington has been in the East Central Wisconsin Conference since 2020.

Before that, both teams were in the North Shore Conference and before that were Braveland Conference rivals.

Nicolet also joins the Glacier Trails from the NSC, which eliminates the GTC teams from playing a crossover game with the Badger Small Conference. Last year, Port Washington drove two hours to Portage for the

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Manitiowoc Lutheran and Kettle Moraine Lutheran high schools

crossover game.

Grafton and Nicolet replace Beaver Dam and Watertown in the GTC, making for shorter drives for all teams involved. Beaver Dam moved to the Badger Small School Conference. Watertown went to the Badger Large School league.

The GTC also includes West Bend East and West, which have announced they will combine starting in 2027.

Port and Grafton are familiar with Nicolet and the West Bend teams from their days in

the NSC. Port faced Kewaskum, Kettle Moraine Lutheran and Plymouth in the East Central.

In the Big East Conference, Mishicot comes over from the Packerland Conference. That makes the Big East an eight-team league again, reaching the WIAA's goal of eight-team conferences for football. The Random Lake/Ozaukee co-op had left it at seven for a couple of seasons.

Cedar Grove-Belgium beat Mishicot, 35-14, last season. RLO didn't play Mishicot.

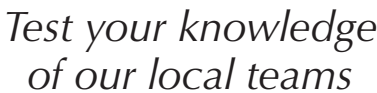


Grafton High School football coach Jim Norris hoisted the gold ball in jubilation at Camp Randall Stadium in Madison after the Black Hawks won the Division 3 state championship last season.

Press file photo

Test your knowledge of local high school football

High school football crossword puzzle



Across

2. Port RB led state in rushing in 1971 with 1,901 yards
4. Port Washington concession stand
7. Last name of three Grafton brothers who played for UW-Madison
8. Grafton football field is named for
10. Ozaukee alum who played TE in the NFL
12. Courageous conference Port and Grafton used to compete in
13. Ozaukee and Random Lake rival trophy
15. Coach Cedar Grove-Belgium Concession stand is named for
17. CG-Belgium single-season state record holder for receiving yards
19. This coach played defensive tackle for Northern Michigan
22. Kicker who hit the 35-yard winner in the D3 title game last year
24. Port Washington beat this team, 21-6, for the title in 1985
25. School that offers delicious combo meals at its concession stand
27. Grafton football motto
28. Wind once blew umbrella onto the field from the hands of this coach's wife

Down

1. Grafton stadium name
2. Grafton RB led state in rushing in 2019 with 2,338 yards
3. CG-Belgium WR received state's Al Toon Award in 2021
5. Cedar Grove-Belgium stadium name
6. Port QB/RB who was third in the Heisman Trophy voting in 1936
9. Ozaukee RB with 447 yards and 6 TDs in one game in 2011
10. Most catches and yards in history of Ozaukee High
11. Local coach who got hitched in the past year
14. Port DE who at Air Force sacked Notre Dame's Joe Theisman
16. This coach won national titles as an offensive lineman at UW-Whitewater
18. Port lineman named North Shore Conference 2016 Offensive Player of the Year
20. Single-season passing yards and TDs state record-holder
21. Port Washington football field name
23. Grafton's all-time leader in rushing yards and touchdowns
26. Grafton coach in the state and national Hall of Fame

Puzzle made on
CrosswordLabs.com

Answers

- The Nest
The Launching
Pad
Pirates Galley
Al Urness
Josh Weiss
Tommy Lutz
Roger Sandee
Kip Cramer
Ted Kellner
Mitch Jacoby
Cream Bucket
Devon Linzen-
meyer
Joey Giorgi
Jack Wallisch
Grayson Bollech
Reid Hillbink
Sam Pfeiffer
Ray Buivid
Braveland
Menomonie
Cole Large
Mike Richter
Benzschawel
Mark Ewig
Tyler Beach
Ozaukee
Pound The Rock
Dan Schreurs
John Bunyan
Jim Norris
Grayson Bollech

Hawks: *Joining new conference*

Snapshot of football playoff history

FROM PAGE 8A

Chase Tendrup may play depending on the situation. Meyer is also splitting time between outside linebacker and safety.

Defensive backs

WC first-teamers Tyler Deer and Nick Schiller are gone, as is honorable mention DJ James.

Owen Deer is part of a solid competition to step into his brother’s shoes, Norris said. Schaefer is also solid, “probably pound-for-pound one of our strongest kids,” he said. Tran has also worked his way into the mix.

Meyer is at safety, and others include Hayden Klippel, Isaiah King, Luke Benter and senior Caden Francek.

Special teams

Norris plans to name a kicker on Thursday to replace the clutch Bollech, who graduated. Reed Schaefer is doing the punting and could kick, as could sophomore Ronan Byrnes.

Returning kicks and punts remains a question. King, Deer, Benter and Cane may fill the roles.

Coaches

Norris was named Wisconsin Football Coaches Association Coach of the Year, and Mike Seefeld was named WC Assistant Coach of the Year.

Offensive coordinator Luke Menzel left to spend time with his young family, and Hill has filled the role.

He played wide receiver for LaGrange College in Georgia and has experience coaching wide receives, special teams and the offensive line at the college level. He was most recently quarterbacks coach at Brookfield Central.

“Riley Hill has done nothing less than a phenomenal job. He is relentless in his pursuit of greatness, takes pride in what we do and brought new and fresh ideas into the program,” Norris said.

New conference

Grafton joins the Glacier Trails Conference this season, its fourth in the nine years Norris has been at the helm. Most GTC teams — Port Washington, West Bend East and West, Nicolet and Plymouth — the Hawks are familiar with.

Grafton has been bumped up to Division 2 for the playoffs through the Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association’s competitive balance initiative.

“Nothing what we do changes because we’re in a new conference or division,” Norris said.

He accepts having the target of a state title on his program’s back.

“It’s a great problem to have. We’re very happy with where this program is at and what this program has become over the last nine years,” he said.

Cedar Grove-Belgium 23 appearances, 29-24 record State title: None Runner-up: 2008, 2016 Years and record: 1995 (0-1), 1996 (2-1), 2003 (0-1), 2004 (0-1), 2005 (0-1), 2006 (2-1), 2007 (0-1), 2008 (4-1), 2009 (2-1), 2010 (0-1), 2011 (3-1), 2012 (0-1), 2013 (2-1), 2014 (0-1), 2015 (1-1), 2016 (4-1), 2017 (3-1), 2018 (1-1), 2019 (1-1), 2020 (0-1), 2021 (1-1); 2022 (1-1); 2023 (1-1); 2024 (2-1); 2025 (1-1).	Ozaukee 20 appearances, 7-20 record State title: None Runner-up: None Years and record: 1986 (0-1), 1989 (0-1), 1990 (0-1), 1997 (0-1), 1998 (0-1), 1999 (0-1), 2000 (0-1), 2002 (0-1), 2003 (0-1), 2010 (1-1), 2011 (0-1), 2012 (0-1), 2013 (1-1), 2014 (1-1), 2015 (0-1), 2016 (2-1), 2018 (0-1), 2019 (0-1), 2020 (0-1), 2021 (0-1).
Port Washington 24 appearances, 24-24 record State title: 1985 Runner-up: 1979, 1983, 1990 Years and record: 1978 (0-1), 1979 (1-1), 1983 (2-1), 1984 (0-1), 1985 (3-0) , 1987 (2-1), 1988 (1-1), 1990 (3-1), 1992 (1-1), 1993 (0-1), 1998 (0-1), 1999 (2-1), 2000 (0-1), 2001 (0-1), 2003 (0-1), 2006 (1-1), 2007 (1-1), 2008 (2-1), 2016 (0-1), 2017 (0-1), 2018 (0-1), 2021 (1-1); 2022 (2-1); 2023 (1-1); 2024 (1-1); 2025 (1-1).	Grafton 14 appearances, 22-12 record State title: 1981, 1982, 2025 Runner-up: 1977, 1984, 2023 Years and record: 1977 (1-1), 1979 (0-1), 1981 (3-0) , 1982 (3-0) , 1984 (2-1), 1995 (1-1), 1996 (0-1), 1997 (0-1), 2018 (1-1), 2019 (1-1), 2020 (0-1), 2021 (0-1); 2022 (1-1); 2023 (4-1); 2024 (2-1); 2025 (5-0) .

Rockets: *Team knows winning*

FROM PAGE 9A

have qualified for the playoffs 23 straight seasons, and this year’s team has the same winning attitude. Many of the players were on the Division 3 championship baseball team, Division 3 runner-up wrestling team and some advanced to the individual state wrestling tournament and earned medals. Some were also on the basketball team that advanced to the sectional final two years ago and sectional semifinal last season.

“They know how to win,” Schreurs said of his players.

He said he regularly communicates with baseball coach Tom Race and basketball coach Jake Hock.

“I consider all of us player-first coaches. That goes a long way with our athletes,” he said.

The Rockets lost to Big East champ Manitiwoc Lutheran twice last season — during the regular season and playoffs — and Schreurs said they are the team to beat again.

The Rockets’ first four games are against teams all ranked in the top 10 in their divisions. Mayville and Kenosha St. Joseph won state titles last season. Then comes Manitiwoc Lutheran and Hilbert, which has a top running back.

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