

2014 could be 'Year of QB' in Metro

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 25 August 2014 19:09 - Last Updated Wednesday, 27 August 2014 12:01

The 2014 high school football season could turn into the "Year of the Quarterback" in the Metro area this fall.

Just about every Metro team has a QB who is capable of racking up big numbers. A few of them have already done it and a few others appear on the verge of establishing themselves as big-time passers.

It could be tough to pick the All-Metro quarterback when the season ends in November, but maybe one of them will distinguish himself above the others.

Reid Snitker at Washington, Ryan Schmidt at Linn-Mar and Trey Beckman at Prairie established themselves last season. Sammy Lizarraga at Kennedy and Bryce Schulte at Xavier appear to have great promise as new starters.

And then there's Jesse Furrow, who moved into the Jefferson district from Indiana this year. He has a rocket arm and could turn out to be the best of the bunch.

Marion is starting over with Hayden Meister and Gage Kray at quarterback, while Cedar Valley Christian hopes to start winning games with Kenan Ulmer at the controls.

There could be five or six Division I athletes at the quarterback spots in the Metro this season, although not all of them will be D-I football players.

Beckman has committed to play baseball at Nebraska and plans to join the Cornhuskers next year. Lizarraga, a promising pitcher and catcher, also could become a major college baseball player.

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Schmidt passed for 1,716 yards and 12 touchdowns at Linn-Mar last year as a junior. He's 6-foot-4 and has a big-time arm. He toured a dozen college camps this summer and the phones at Linn-Mar have been ringing.

Snitker passed for 1,479 yards and ran for 545 yards last year at Washington. He's a terrific athlete, but at 5-foot-11 his future could be as a defensive back in college.

Schulte began the 2013 campaign with the freshman team at Xavier, but he was promoted all the way to the varsity during the season as just a ninth grader. He'll take control of the Saints this season and at 6-foot-4 is an imposing figure on the field with a strong arm.

Furrow, the newcomer at Jefferson, threw for 2,147 yards and 20 touchdowns at Pendleton Heights High School in Indiana last year as a junior. He throws 40-yard darts, has quick feet and is a natural leader on the field.

Furrow is the "real deal," according to Jefferson Coach Brian Webb, but the trick could be finding enough receivers who can catch his passes. If they do, watch out.

Furrow, Schmidt, Snitker, Beckman, Lizarraga and Schulte could put some big numbers on the board. Lizarraga, who did not throw a pass as the backup QB in 2013, could have the time of his life under new head coach Brian White, who has scrapped Kennedy's power running attack in favor of a balanced offense that will feature Lizarraga's right arm.

The fun starts Friday night with a full slate of games.

Schulte is facing a tough assignment with the Saints playing Dowling Catholic on the road in a rematch of last year's Class 4A championship game. The Saints are rebuilding in Class 3A and Dowling has reloaded in 4A, so it probably will not be fair to judge Schulte on that contest.

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Kennedy opens at Iowa City West, Washington and Jefferson tangle at Kingston, Linn-Mar visits Prairie, Marion visits Mount Vernon and Cedar Valley Christian plays at Harmony of Farmington.

Let the fun (and the passing) begin.