

Betsworth pumped up for 8-man football

Written by Jim Ecker

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Ed Betsworth is working on his playbook for the Cedar Valley Christian Huskies football team this season, but the veteran coach doesn't have as many X's and O's to worry about.

In fact, he's got three less X's and three less O's than normal, because the Huskies are going to play eight-man football in 2011 with a brand-new program on the southeast side of Cedar Rapids.

Betsworth, 46, is currently the athletic director at Holy Catholic Middle School, but he was the head football coach at Lincoln Community of Stanwood (1991-92) and Dunkerton (1993-96) and knows how to run a program. He's also been an assistant high school coach and has worked with Xavier's grade-school program.

Betsworth has four children in the Cedar Valley Christian school system (K through 12) and is excited about starting a new program from scratch. Cedar Valley is a small school with approximately 80 students in grades 9 through 12, but Betsworth thinks there are enough talented boys to pull this off.

"There's athletes there. The talent is there. Our pool isn't dry," he said. "But, it's going to be a learning experience for them and for me and my coaches. We have to keep it simple, because a lot of these kids haven't played football.

"We might get a couple of wins," he said. "Then again, we might not."

Betsworth has seen eight-man football games and he's spoken with other coaches of eight-man teams for input. There are five players on the line of scrimmage and three in the backfield on offense in the eight-man game, compared to seven on the line of scrimmage and four in the backfield in the 11-man version.

"It's definitely more fast-paced," he said. "The field is smaller, but the game is a little more fast-paced and high scoring. I guess it comes down to what kind of quality athletes you have."

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Cedar Valley Christian considered adding sports for several years and will join the boys and girls state associations for the 2011-12 school year. Betsworth led the effort to add football.

"I volunteered to start researching it to see if it was possible," he said. "That led to one thing and another."

He found donors to fund the program, raising enough money for several years, "and the ball just went rolling from there."

Twenty boys have signed up for football, the school is putting a schedule together for 2011, Betsworth has ordered equipment and he's found some assistant coaches. They're still looking for a practice field and will play all their games this season on the road.

The Huskies probably will play only six varsity games this year, then play a full nine-game schedule in 2012 when they become eligible for the state playoffs.

"It won't be a full season, and that's OK," he said. "The state (association) went out of their way to step in and get us the games, which was really good."

Betsworth said he feels "really good" about having 20 boys on the team and is looking forward to the season.

"I think eight-man football is getting a little more respect," he said. "It's just like 11-man. You block, you tackle, there's just a few less people on the field."