

Huskies march into first season with big hearts

Written by Jim Ecker

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Cedar Valley Christian football coach Ed Betsworth has not gotten around to measuring his players for the team's historic opener at West Central Friday night.

No heights, no weights.

He's been too busy teaching his inexperienced guys how to block, tackle and line up in the proper position, so he cannot tell you anyone's exact size.

Betsworth knows one thing, however. They have big hearts.

"I'm very proud of them," he said. "They've been working really hard. Their spirits are good."

This is Cedar Valley Christian's first eight-man football team in school history. Betsworth has only 14 players (he was hoping for 20), and he knows the odds will be heavily stacked against the Huskies in their first game Friday.

West Central went 7-3 last season, reached the eight-man playoffs and averaged 47.7 points per game. They scored 64 points against Olin, 56 against Dunkerton, 54 against East Central, 52 against Midland of Wyoming, 52 against Central City and 51 against Springville.

"I hope we can make it a competitive game," said Betsworth. "I know our guys are looking forward to it."

Betsworth has some good athletes on the team, but none of them have played a lick of high

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school football. One of their guys played in middle school, but that's it.

He has basketball guys and soccer guys, and eventually he hopes to have football guys, too. He said his players have worked hard this summer to get ready, keeping a positive attitude along the way.

"We're getting better," he said.

The Huskies have four seniors, four juniors, four sophomores and two freshmen on the team. Betsworth said he'll move them around and give everyone a chance.

The seniors for Cedar Valley's historic season are Luke Long, David Sperling, Joe Spina and Nick Henderson. The juniors are Jeremy Strutz, Michael Nuggent, Spencer Zielke and Arturo Melendez.

The sophomores are Alex Kennedy, Zion Brooks, Caleb Severson and Isaiah Sherman. The two freshmen are Tom Scroggs and Eric Gustafson.

Betsworth lists Long, Spina, Nuggent, Zielke and Sherman as linemen. Everyone else is listed as a back.

Cedar Valley does not have experienced players, but Betsworth is an experienced coach. He was the head football coach at Lincoln Community of Stanwood (1991-92) and Dunkerton (1993-96) and has been an assistant coach elsewhere.

Cedar Valley Christian is taking a pep bus to the game Friday, so the players will have people there to support them. But the fans won't help them tackle West Central tailback Michael Lincoln, who rushed for 1,225 yards and 17 touchdowns last year.

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The Huskies will play only four games this season before embarking on a full campaign in 2012. The other games are Sept. 2 at Dunkerton, Sept. 9 at Midland and Sept. 23 at Central City.

Kickoff Friday is scheduled for 7 p.m.