

TRI-COUNTY ATHLETIC LEAGUE

Gilroy boasts talent and an innovative offense

From the Believe-It-Or-Not department comes this note: Gilroy High School football has not had a winning league record in six years.

That's something of a T-CAL mystery for a school that has beaten such perennial playoff teams as Burlingame, Woodside and San Lorenzo Valley in non-league and has had one of the top rushers in the area in each of the past three years.

But maybe Gilroy has an excuse. It may be a good team, but its opponents are usually just a tad better.

Consider this: All six Gilroy losses last year came against playoff teams.

Among those was a four-point loss to Woodside; an eight-point loss to Hollister; a 14-0 loss to Palma, which scored its

second touchdown on a 72-yard run with 27 seconds left in the first half; and worst of all, a 29-22 loss to Alisal in a game Gilroy led 22-0 at halftime.

Unfazed, Gilroy will play all four of its non-league games this year against CCS playoff teams. Such is the confidence level this year for the Mustangs.

"This will be, hands down, the most talented team I've ever been around," said Gilroy coach Rich Hammond, who knows a good team when he sees one.

Before coming to Gilroy he was an assistant coach at Hollister for four years and head coach at Santa Clara for two.

To better prepare for this season, Hammond and his coaching staff visited the University of Arizona for four days during spring practice.

Mustangs schedule

- Sept. 7: Mountain View, 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 14: Oak Grove, 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 22: At Serra, 3 p.m.
- Sept. 28: At Salinas, 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 5: Alvarez, 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 12: At Pacific Grove, 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 19: At Alisal, 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 26: Palma, 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 2: N. Salinas, 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 9: At Hollister, 7:30 p.m.

During their stay, they were able to have long talks with offensive coordinator Sonny Dykes, who installed a record-setting passing attack while at Texas Tech.

"We were the only high school coaches there," Hammond said. "We were able to watch film, ask questions and attend the coaches' meeting. If we had a problem with anything, they were able to answer

our questions."

Plenty of promising players

Now it's just a matter of putting what they learned to work, and it should be something to see.

"We're going with a no-huddle offense 95 percent of the time," Hammond said.

It's enough to make Hammond believe Gilroy could capture its first league title in 25 years.

"We have a ton of talent and a chance to be real good," he said.

The Mustangs seem to have a definite playmaker in running back Travis Reyes, whose 390 rushing yards were second on the team last year.

But the best Mustang on the field could turn out to be Marshad Johnson, a 6-5, 215-pound tight end, who led the team in catches last year with 26 for

320 yards and four touchdowns.

Gilroy also returns running back Danny Contreras, who rushed for 352 yards last year.

And if that's not enough, Leland Gettys, the MVP of the Mount Pleasant junior varsity team last year, transferred to Gilroy.

Jaime Jensen, a 6-3, 205-pound junior and basketball standout, is projected as the starting quarterback.

The interior of the Gilroy line consists of 6-foot, 250-pound Filemon Bobadilla; 6-foot, 265-pound Gerry Rodriguez and 6-1, 245-pound Raymond Gonzales.

On defense, Hammond has high hopes for defensive back Ryan Costa; 5-11, 210-pound linebacker Michael Cano; 6-1, 270-pound Luis Padilla; and 6-1, 265-pound transfer Josh Yassini.

Hollister refuses to rest on its past achievements

Hollister coach Chris Cameron doesn't take losing easily.

When the Balers struggled through a 5-5 season in 2002, Cameron sent letters to every parent of a varsity player spelling out what his demands were going to be and the consequences if players failed to attend at least 90 percent of the workouts and didn't show up for spring practice.

The message was clear: If you don't show, you don't play.

And even though he called last year's Balers a bunch of over-achievers — only a muffed punt in a loss to Bellarmine and a fourth-quarter interception return for a touchdown against Palma prevented Hollister from an unbeaten regular season — Cameron is still rankled about how last year ended.

The No. 1 seed Balers fell 21-14 at home in a first-round playoff

game to Piedmont Hills.

It was the effort, more than the score, that upset Cameron.

"I could tell before the game we were going to get our (butts) kicked," Cameron said. "You could see it in their eyes and their mannerisms. From the first play of the game the onslaught was on."

His message was obvious.

When you've been to a CCS title game six times in the previous seven years, the standards at a school such as Hollister are higher than most anywhere else.

One of section's elite programs

There's no room for complacency.

"We work to get better," said Cameron, who has taken the Balers to the playoffs 12 times in his 13 years as coach. "We don't ever want to stay the

Haybalers schedule

- Aug. 31: Milpitas 35, Hollister 12
- Sept. 8: At SLV, 2 p.m.
- Sept. 14: At Wilcox, 7:30 p.m.
- Sept. 21: Bellarmine at San Jose City, 7 p.m.
- Sept. 29: At Alvarez, 2 p.m.
- Oct. 5: Bye
- Oct. 12: North Salinas, 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 19: Palma, 7:30 p.m.
- Oct. 26: At Alisal, 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 2: At Salinas, 7:30 p.m.
- Nov. 9: Gilroy, 7:30 p.m.

same. When we walk out the door, we want to be better than we were when we walked in."

A rigorous off-season workout routine and a demanding commitment during the season have made Hollister one of the elite programs in the section.

"We practice hard, and I mean hard, every day," Cameron said. "During the season we meet four days a week at lunchtime, watch video and do a walk-

through. We want to make things flow on Friday night."

Nearly 200 players are expected to fill the three Hollister teams.

"This is the first year I've had to call and order more pads," Cameron said.

Helping this flow smoothly this year will be returning quarterback Ronnie Fhurong, who combined for more than 1,000 yards rushing and receiving last season.

"He's more mature, more motivated and asking to take on more responsibility," Cameron said.

The leading returning rusher is Abel Jacquez, a senior starting his third year on varsity who carried 60 times for 288 yards and four touchdowns.

Hollister, which has produced several T-CAL defensive players of the year, has another candidate in 6-foot, 225-pound

junior Sam Doty, the league's Sophomore of the Year in 2006.

Doty's two older brothers earned all-league honors and Cameron considers the younger sibling better than his brothers at the same stage.

Three-sport standout Kevin Burley, a 220-pound, second-team, all-league defensive lineman, also returns, as does second-team all-defensive back Zach Canez and 200-pound nose guard Robby Sanchez.

There's plenty of muscle up front on the offensive line with 6-2, 245-pound Zach Johnson and 6-5, 220-pound Wade Jacobson.

Hollister could start as many as three sophomore linebackers.

If there's any questioning Hollister's strength, consider this: Palma is 120-1-1 against Monterey County teams since 1988, but only 5-5 against Hollister.



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