

Football set for UCAA title defense behind UCAA Player of the Year Swanson

As the Statesmen prepare for the 2003 campaign, the program's 110th, they'll be focused on breaking their recent trend.

What trend could a team that's won three of the past five conference championships, earned a spot in the NCAA Playoffs in two of the past three slates, and compiled a five-season record of 33-13 overall, be trying to break?

Hobart's Upstate Collegiate Athletic Association Championships: 1998, 2000, and 2002. Hobart's NCAA Playoff appearances: 2000 and 2002.

This year, the Statesmen would like to try something odd, as in odd numbered years.

The purple and orange are aiming to defend their UCAA Championship, a feat the '99 and '01 squads were unable to do, not that odd numbered years have been entirely unkind to the Statesmen. Under two-time UCAA Coach of the Year Mike Cragg's leadership, Hobart has not had a losing season since 1995, a run of seven straight seasons. The last time the Statesmen posted seven in a row on the plus side of the ledger was 1971 through 1977.

Hobart has some lofty standards to live up to, thanks to the success of the 2002 Statesmen. Last year, Hobart won its first seven games, the program's most wins to start a season since the 1954 squad posted a perfect 8-0 mark. The streak included a 14-6 win at Union, marking the sixth straight year that the visiting team has taken home the victory between the two league rivals; a 59-point performance at Rochester, two shy of the school's modern record; an exhilarating, come-from-behind, overtime win at home against Alfred; and a 17-6 win over Ithaca, marking the second time the Statesmen have upended the Bombers in the past three seasons after posting a 1-22 record in their first 23 meetings.

While St. John Fisher escaped with a 17-14 win on their home field ending Hobart's hopes of perfection, the Statesmen rebounded the following week with a 34-27 win over Rensselaer to secure their first undefeated season on the UCAA circuit.

With an 8-1 regular season record, Hobart was invited to the NCAA Tournament, but drew the 11th-ranked John Carroll Blue Streaks. The intimidating draw didn't seem to faze the



SETH SIDITSKY

A finalist for the Gagliardi Trophy last year, senior Craig Swanson became the first Hobart player to pass for more than 2,000 yards in a season (2,209) and also broke the single season (21) and career (32) touchdown pass marks.

Statesmen in the early going, as Hobart took a 7-0 lead on a 20-yard pass from Craig Swanson to Rick Piñero. The Statesmen were poised to take a two-touchdown advantage midway through the opening frame, but a fumble on fourth and goal from the one turned into a 97-yard touchdown return for the Blue Streaks. It was all John Carroll from that point on.

A disappointing end to an otherwise exceptional season, the Statesmen reaped the rewards when the postseason awards were announced, none more than Swanson.

The 2002 UCAA Offensive Player of the Year and a Verizon Academic All-District first-team selection was one of 10 finalists for the

Gagliardi Trophy, the Division III Player of the Year award. Heading into his final season, Swanson already holds several school records, including passing yards in a game and a season and passing touchdowns in a game, a season, and a career. Additionally, the Jamestown, N.Y., native ranks second in seven other categories.

Cragg was named the AFCA Regional Coach of the Year and the UCAA's top boss, while his charges earned 14 first-team All-UCAA selections, four All-ECAC Northwest awards, and five All-Region selections.

Many of those all-stars return to Boswell Field this season, but there will be some sizeable shoes to fill. The graduation of Hewlett-Packard honorable mention All-American guard Adam Tumilowicz, All-UCAA tight end Jeremy Archer (13 rec, 166 yds, 5 TD), tackle Nate Milne, and center Pat Nozdrovicky leaves a gaping hole in Hobart's offensive line.

On the defensive side of the ball, the loss of All-UCAA linemen Brad Griffith (56 tkls) and Chris Hanly (52 tkls, 3.5 sacks), alone would be considered a significant loss, but the Statesmen will also feature three new starting linebackers following the graduation of D3Football.com honorable mention All-American and UCAA Defensive Player of the Year Tim Booth (58 tkls, 2 sacks, 2 INT), All-UCAA second-teamer Everton McLean (45 tkls, 2 sacks, INT), and Matt Daley (33 tkls, 3 sacks).

With six starters on offense and six starters on defense returning and a talented crop of underclassmen eager to prove themselves, here's a position-by-position look at how the Statesmen are expected to shape up this season:

QUARTERBACK

It all begins and ends with the right arm of Swanson, but Hobart has never been blessed with the talent and depth that the 2003 roster will feature.

Classmate Brian Goehle (2-1-0, 10 yds, TD) opens the season No. 2 on the depth chart, a very capable backup, but he'll be pushed from day one by an exceptional recruiting class. First-years Dan Matuzak (Locust Valley HS) and Shawn Mizro (Newark HS) are both coming off prolific scholastic careers.

A captain and All-County selection in football, basketball, and baseball, Matuzak holds

the Falcons' single season record for passing yards. He is only the second Locust Valley player to score 1,000 career points on the hardwood, and was named All-State in baseball as a pitcher.

The Offensive MVP for the victorious East squad in the Eddie Meath All-Star Game, Mizro is one of the most productive quarterbacks in Section V history. He holds the Reds' and Section records for touchdown passes in a game (7), touchdown passes in a season (31), and passing yards in a season (2,336). Mizro ranks 15th in New York State history for career passing yards, just behind No. 14 Jay Fiedler, the current starting quarterback for the Miami Dolphins.

RUNNING BACK

In 2002, junior Ty Godinho rushed for 958 yards (4.2 yds/carry) and 12 touchdowns, the most by a Statesman since Keith Brandon '01 rushed for 1,052 yards in 1999 and 15 touchdowns in 1998. The first-team All-ECAC Northwest selection is a slashing speedster, who's not afraid to lower his shoulder and plow through the line when necessary. A triple threat out of the backfield, Godinho is also an exceptional pass catcher (24 rec, 200 yds, 2 TD) and a strong pass blocker.

Classmate Jack Holleran will get a fair number of carries as Godinho's top back up. Over the past two seasons, Holleran has averaged 5.2 yds/rush (129 att) and boasts a pair of 100-yard games. He's also a key member of Hobart's special teams (15 tkls).

Sophomore Brian Bach also could see some quality minutes at tailback. He was third on the team last season in yards per carry (4.1).

FULLBACK

Senior Ricky Spidalieri returns for his second season as a starter. A punishing blocker, he was a reliable target out of the backfield, catching 10 passes for 34 yards and a touchdown. Spidalieri is a multidimensional athlete, organizing Hobart's club hockey team and playing water polo in the Empire State Games.

Sophomore John Hennekey and first-year Chris Whipple (West Genesee HS) will battle for the second spot on the depth chart. Hennekey is a converted linebacker who made 10 tackles a year ago, while Whipple was a recipient of the Wildcats' Offensive MVP Award.

WIDE RECEIVERS

While Swanson drew rave reviews for his record-breaking season through the air, he couldn't have done it without a talented and deep corps of receivers.

Junior Renaissance man Dan Suozzi returns healthy and ready to put together a record-setting season. Despite missing two games and a significant chunk of another, he was named to the 2002 All-UCAA first-team at THREE positions: receiver, punter, and kick return specialist! Suozzi's 44 receptions were the most by a Hobart receiver since Luke Gutelius '98 matched that total in 1997, while Suozzi's 703 receiving yards is the highest total since 1996 when Nico Karagosian '97 posted 740 yards in

10 games. A healthy 2003 could put 2002 Hobart Hall of Fame inductee Scott Geise's 20-year old record for single season receiving yards (1,029) in jeopardy.

While last season's other starter, Joe Pirozzolo '03 (35 rec, 433 yds, 4 TD), will be missed, junior Rick Piñero should step in without missing a beat. He led the team in yards per catch last season, averaging 18.8 yards per reception (24-450), and shared the team lead with Archer for touchdown receptions (5).

Sophomore Colby Feane will come in off the bench to spell Suozzi and Piñero and in three receiver sets. A talented two-sport athlete, he was a back up kicker last season and the starting point guard for the Hobart basketball team (8.2 ppg, 2.3 apg).

The final spot on Hobart's two-deep is up for grabs. Sophomores Rich Keefe, Jonathan Ladd, and Kevin Sullivan, as well as a speedy group of first-years will battle for the job.

TIGHT END

Over the past three seasons, Hobart's tight end job belonged to Archer and Ryan Adams '03 (11 rec, 69 yds), but this year someone new will toe the line. Senior Tony Perillo (6-2, 225) is the early favorite to win the starting nod. He has been a solid special teams player and has waited patiently for his chance to start. 2003 will be the Geneva native's chance to shine.

Perillo's primary competition for playing time will be junior Marcus Eriksson (6-3, 225). The Syracuse native is a dogged blocker and a big target for Swanson to pick out of traffic. First-year Mike DePersi (Johnson City HS) could also figure into the mix.

OFFENSIVE LINE

While the offensive line graduated three starters, including an All-American, the Statesmen will still be blessed with a veteran line with all-star caliber talent, built around *Football Gazette* preseason All-American Alex Bell and All-UCAA honorable mention classmate Jeff Bruckman.

At 6-foot-3, 330 pounds, Bell is a punishing run blocker and has developed outstanding footwork, giving the passing game time to work. He'll start his third consecutive season at guard.

Bruckman came to Hobart as a defensive lineman, but the 6-foot-5, 275-pounder made a seamless transition to the o-line last year. The coaching staff expects the left tackle to continue to develop now that he has a year of experience under his belt.

Senior Matt Kehoe (6-2, 265) will line up next to Bell at tackle. He's put in countless hours in the weight room over the summer, adding 25 pounds in preparation for his final season.

Junior Josh Van Auken is expected to take over at center. An intelligent student-athlete, both on and off the field, the UCAA All-Academic selection will be in charge of calling out Hobart's blocking assignments at the line.

The player with the biggest shoes to fill offensively, is left guard Matt Montroy. The 6-

foot, 265-pound junior is being called on to replace Tumilowicz, a three-time All-UCAA first-team honoree. Fleet of foot, Montroy has the skills, if not the experience, to make an impact this year.

Brennan Bezon (Albion HS) and Nino Giambrone Jr. (Pioneer HS) are the most talented linemen in the Class of 2007. Bezon (6-2, 275) was a first-team All-State selection last year, while Giambrone helped lead Pioneer to three consecutive Section VI championships. Both players have the potential to steal a starting role before the season is through.

After the starting five, Hobart's prospects are largely untested, leaving some question marks if the Statesmen are hit by the injury bug.

Defensively in 2002, the Statesmen led the UCAA in rushing defense (117.6 yds/g), scoring defense (14.9 ppg), total defense (325.4 yds/g), and turnover margin (+9). Whether the 2003 Statesmen can continue to dominate opponents will depend on how well Hobart's underclassmen learned from Booth, Daley, McLean, and Co.

DEFENSIVE TACKLE

Senior Ally Mosiello and junior Walt Bennett are expected to toil in the trenches for the Statesmen this season. Bennett earned a starting nod last season, recording 35 tackles, including 1½ sacks. Mosiello (12 tkls) has always been on the cusp of a starter's job, and with this his final season, he's eager to rise to the challenge.

First-years Steve Camerota (Loomis Chaffee School) and Ryan Rapaport (Frontier Regional School) will provide depth in the middle. Camerota, a prep All-New England selection, helped the Pelicans to back-to-back New England Championships, while Rapaport was his league's Lineman of the Year.

DEFENSIVE END

Junior captain Chris Purtell returns to his starting job on the strong side, while senior Lawrence Moultrie will be asked to start on the weak side. Purtell was limited to seven games last year due to injury, but still managed 29 tackles, including a pair of sacks and two forced fumbles. Not one to shy away from work, Moultrie is a double major and a double minor, in addition to being a dedicated student of the game. He made 19 tackles, including a sack, in 10 games last season.

Sophomore Zach Young will battle for time on the weak side, while talented first-year Andy Purdie (Victor HS), the East Squad's Defensive MVP in the 2003 Eddie Meath All-Star Game, will compete for time on the strong side.

The depth of talent at defensive end could precipitate someone moving to linebacker.

OUTSIDE LINEBACKER

Due to the graduation of Booth, the biggest shoes to fill on defense will be at the strong side outside linebacker. In Hobart's system, the strong side OLB must be big enough to take on offensive linemen and stuff the run, and yet fast and athletic enough to drop back in pass coverage.

This year that responsibility should belong to Andrew Sweet. The 5-foot-10, 195-pound sophomore saw action in seven games last season, including two starts. He's a tough run stopper and very quick in coverage.

First-years Nolan Robinson (Johnson City HS) and Kyle Martin (Onondaga HS) are expected to compete for the starting job on the weak side. Robinson (6-0, 200) is a tough-as-nails punishing hitter, who earned All-Metro honors on the gridiron and All-State accolades as a wrestler, while Martin (6-2, 215) is an exceptional three-sport athlete (football, basketball, lacrosse). He earned All-State honors twice in football, helping the Tigers to a pair of state championships.

INSIDE LINEBACKER

The lone starter returning to the linebacking corps is senior David Szentesy. He has led Hobart in tackles in each of the past two seasons, entering his fourth season with 160 career tackles, including 7½ sacks. "Mr. Right Place at the Right Time" last season, Szentesy recovered a team-high six fumbles, only two fewer than the entire defense picked up in 2001.

The other inside spot will likely belong to sophomore Tony Clemente (6-1, 215). An impact player from the start, he made 20 tackles and forced two fumbles last season.

First-year Mark Lawrenz (Brockport HS)

will battle Clemente for playing time. Lawrenz was a three-time all-county selection and made more than 250 tackles for the Blue Devils.

DEFENSIVE BACK

Hobart featured a junior, a sophomore, and a first-year in its starting secondary in 2002, and while that group was looked upon as the weak point of a strong defense, the experience they gained will be invaluable. All three starters—senior Pat Lester, junior Skip Grantling, and sophomore Jimmy Gradis—return.

Lester has played in all 30 games during his career, the last two seasons as a starter at free safety. The two-time All-UCAA selection boasts 17 pass breakups and seven interceptions, as well as 73 career tackles.

Also a two-time All-UCAA honoree, Grantling missed only one game with an arm injury, returning to the lineup the following week against Union wearing a cast. That didn't stop him from recording 47 tackles and an interception.

Gradis finished fifth on the team in tackles (50) and is the top returner in interceptions (3). A second-team All-UCAA selection, he was named the team's Rookie of the Year.

The Statesmen also welcome back Dyshaun Washington, following a two-year hiatus. As a first-year in 2000, he set the Hobart record for longest kickoff return, going 97 yards for a

touchdown against St. Lawrence. A dogged coverman, he led all rookies that season with 31 tackles, including 22 solo, an interception, and six pass breakups.

Sophomores Ryan Smith (12 tkls, 3 PD) and Jamie Anderson (2 tkls, PD) are expected to serve as the top reserves at the corners.

PLACE KICKER

Junior Eric Ampuja, a two-time All-UCAA first-teamer, has his eye on the records book. Already the career record holder for PATs, he needs just 25 points to break Shawn Fazio's (Class of '81) record for career points by a kicker, and is more than halfway to Fazio's career field goals made mark (19).

PUNTER

In addition to his reliable hands, Suozzi has a strong leg, which gives the Statesmen's punt coverage team plenty of hang time. He averaged a UCAA best 35.4 yards per punt last season, dropping 17 inside the opponent's 20-yard line.

KICK/PUNT RETURN

Suozzi and Piñero led Hobart to the top of the UCAA in both kick return (19.3 yds/ret) and punt return (9.1 yds/ret) average last season. Suozzi averaged 21.7 yards/KOR and 9.5 yds/PR, while Piñero posted 21.3 yds/KOR and 10.5 yds/PR. Both players have explosive speed and the ability to find a seam, turning a small return into something special.

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