



Taking another step with experience on their side

• Another year older and another year stronger, Pacific will lean on their experience to take another step up the Northwest Conference ladder

By Blake Timm

The win-loss record does little to tell the story of how much Pacific football grew in its second season back on the field.

The Boxers' 1-8 record did reflect the first win for the young program, an exciting 44-25 victory over Puget Sound on homecoming weekend. But the win-loss record does little to show the growth the coaching staff observed in experience, confidence, maturity and strength.

"Our goal was not to finish at the bottom of the Northwest Conference last year. We accomplished that," said third year Head Coach Keith Buckley. "Now we want to continue to improve as a football team."

That sophomore season record also didn't reflect how potent of a passing game that Buckley and his staff have developed in just two years. The Boxers ranked 23rd among Division III teams with 282 passing yards per game and 65th with a pass efficiency ranking of 134.63.

And with another year of experience under the belts of the team's 90 returners, there seems to be no place to go but up. "Across the board, the level of play is improved," Buckley said. "Physically, our juniors are at an improved level both in terms of strength and experience.

Wide receiver Jordan Fukumoto was Pacific's first All-NWC First Team selection since 1984. Jaime Valdez photo.

Because of that, we have been able to push farther and faster in terms of installing our schemes."

Along with that experienced group of 90 returners comes a class of 65 freshmen that enters as the most talented since the restart of the program in 2010. The experience in the returning group allowed the coaching staff to be more targeted in recruiting, shoring up weaker areas and further strengthening others.

But what Buckley thinks will help Pacific climb another step up the ladder in the junior year is the dedication that the junior and sophomore players have shown to not only improving themselves, but to improving the team overall. That has made the team hungrier not only for more on field success, but also for playing time.

"You could tell on the first day of camp that the guys put the work in to come in as strong as they could be, in shape as they could be and ready to compete," Buckley said. "This is a competitive model and those juniors know that they have sophomores and freshmen on their heels and chasing them for their jobs. We have guys that are physically ready to play now and will contribute significantly."

QUARTERBACKS

While Honorable Mention All-Northwest Conference quarterback T.C. Campbell has

started 17 of 18 games in the new era of Pacific football, Buckley is still convinced that they can be successful with a two quarterback system that gives the team two distinctly different looks.

Campbell's numbers speak volumes for the potency of the Pacific passing game. He set a school single season record by completing 59.4 percent of his passes and ranked 41st among Division III quarterbacks with an efficiency rating of 141.08. He tied his own school record by throwing for five touchdowns in the breakthrough win over Puget Sound.

When Campbell didn't have a good game with his controlled style, P.J. Minaya made things happen with his scrambling style. He nearly threw the Boxers to a come-from-behind victory in the season finale at Pacific Lutheran, completing 23 of 34 passes for 223 yards and three touchdowns.

"P.J. has had a tremendous camp," Buckley said. "He is a good ball thrower and a tremendous competitor. On the flip side, T.C. is a game manager and a tough player. He will things to happen.

"There's a debate as to whether you can have two quarterbacks and be successful. I think that we have two very talented guys that give us a chance to win games."

Warner Shaw will apprentice under his two Hawaii teammates with a bright future ahead. Shaw passed for over 2,000 yards as a senior on



Pacific will benefit from an extra year of experience in the running game, anchored by Gunther Schultze (left), and a more mature offensive line with the likes of tackle Sean Dalton (middle). John Lariviere photo.

his way to earning conference offensive player of the year honors.

RECEIVERS

Without question, Pacific's receiver corps continues to be the team's deepest position and it's biggest strength. The receivers accounted for 18 of the Boxers' 22 touchdowns in 2011 and their 282.3 yards per game was 23rd best among all Division III teams. Of the 11 returners at the position, seven saw significant time on the field.

The dynamic Jordan Fukumoto became Pacific's first All-NWC First Team selection in nearly 30 years thanks to an innate play-making ability. Fukumoto led the Boxers and finished fourth in the NWC with eight touchdowns and finished second in the league with 844 yards and 93.8 yards per game.

What impresses Buckley is not only Fukumoto's ability, but his desire to continue improving. "There is no resting on his laurels," Buckley said. "He continues to work on his game and work on himself, which only raises the entire level of our receiving corps."

Kelson Kawai contributed both on offense and special teams, finishing third for the Boxers with 299 receiving yards and second on returns with 226 yards on 12 return attempts. Blake Anthony made quite a splash in his freshman season, finishing with 275 yards and an average of 13.8 yards per catch.

Caleb Roher was also an impact contributor on both offense and special teams. He led the Boxers with 363 return yards on 20 carries, but also finished with 188 yards receiving and two touchdowns.

Jakob Lawrence, Brandon Selvey and

Cameron Yip all saw limited touches during 2011, but stand to earn more playing time in 2012.

Complementing the play-making abilities of Fukumoto will be the return of Darin Kamealoha, who played just two games in the inaugural 2010 season before having to sit the next year and a half with injuries. Taylor Hickson also returns after missing 2011 as he recovered from an injury suffered during the 2011 track and field season.

RUNNING BACKS

For the Boxers to experience greater offensive success in 2012, they will need to see significant improvement in the running game. The Boxers averaged just 1.2 yards per carry in 2011, seventh in the NWC, while the team's opponents averaged five yards per carry against the Boxers.

Buckley points out that a more solid running game will help the receivers perform at an even higher level. "For the receiving crew to be as successful as they can be in the grand scheme of full team success, we have to be able to run the ball," he said. "In the first two years, we were nowhere near the level we wanted to be. That had to do with the physical maturity in both our running backs and offensive line. Now that we have the physical capabilities to move some people around, we should have more success."

Gunther Schultze is the team's top returning running back, netting 124 yards on 54 carries and averaged 2.3 yards per carry. Buckley lauded the junior for his preparation during the summer. "He is trying to take on some leadership components," Buckley said. "He had worked hard on his game and on his abilities, and we

think he came be very serviceable."

Bobby Ladiges and Deven McKinney (will both compete for time after gaining some size over the offseason. Ladiges saw limited action in his freshman campaign, while McKinney played a significant role on special teams with 179 yards and an average of 19.9 yards per return.

Bronson Barretto, Kamana Pimentel and Jon Dober lead the list of newcomers with the great potential for playing time. Barretto was an all-state selection at the position in Hawaii, running for 584 yards as a senior. Pimentel earned Second Team Hawaii All-State honors with his 964 yards and 11 touchdowns while Dober earned all-conference honors at Forest Grove High School.

TIGHT ENDS

Brian Taylor and Will Marchbanks stand at the top of the depth chart at tight end. Taylor started all nine games in his sophomore campaign and finished with 141 receiving yards and three touchdowns. "Brian is the epitome of that growth that has happened over the first couple of years," Buckley said. "He has put on about 25 pounds since he walked in the door. That has allowed him to progress from just a pass-catching tight end to a versatile tight end."

Marchbanks played in eight games last year, playing an effective role in blocking. Buckley said that he has also benefited from increased size and experience. "It has all clicked in camp," Buckley said. "It is all starting to come together in terms of blocking."

Charlie Reed-Dustin and Taylor Schad both stand to see more playing time as sophomores thanks to strong showings in camp. Both saw limited action during their freshmen seasons. Jack Michels has also shown promise in camp after an all-conference prep career in Washington.

OFFENSIVE LINE

The change in the offensive line has come not with an infusion of new players, but rather through the hard work of the returners. All five starters are back, having put in aggressive summers in the weight room.

Aaron Victorino returns as the starting center, as do guards Nikk Novero and Eric Gietzen and tackles Sean Dalton, a 2010 Honorable Mention All-NWC selection, and Kevin Peterson. All five players started all nine games in 2011.

While the experience certainly helps those five, the starting lineup is far from set thanks to some young talent right behind. Brandon Sattelmeyer saw action in seven games last year and has benefited from a summer in the weight room. Will Ulrich saw spot time as a freshman, but has put on 25 pounds since then.

Taylor Mack has been impressive to the coaching staff as well and could vie for time after an all-conference prep career.

DEFENSIVE LINE

Much like their offensive counterparts, the improvement on the defensive line is thanks



Devin Lagorio's breakout season on the defensive line earned the Stockton, Calif., native Honorable Mention All-Northwest Conference honors. John Lariviere photo.

primarily to hard work by returners in the offseason.

Devin Lagorio showed great promise after starting eight games last year, coming up with 27 tackles and 3.5 tackles for loss. Buckley believes the 2011 Honorable Mention All-NWC selection is on the cusp of a breakout year. "He has put a ton of work in," Buckley said. "He is big and explosive and has finally begun to understand the nuances of the position and has the chance to be dynamite."

Lagorio will again be coupled with Landon Aano on the interior positions. Also a starter in eight games, Aano finished with 23 tackles, led the team with three sacks and was tied for the team lead with 6.5 tackles for loss.

Eddie Carrillo stands a good chance for a starting tackle role after an impressive freshman season. He had 13 tackles and 1.5 sacks while seeing action in all nine games, including one start. Mike Smith and Irae Hosea also stand to be tackle candidates as they return from injuries.

At the ends, Sean Bangs and Chrystian Johnson return as steady mainstays. Bangs earned the start in all nine games last year, finishing with 13 tackles and a sack. Johnson also started in all nine games and racked up 15 tackles, including two for loss.

Jayson Manning and Brandon Hand are both candidates for increased playing time after strong offseason improvements. Alex Pate is also in the mix after a prep career where he was an all-conference selection on both lines.

DEFENSIVE BACKS

The defensive back unit returns Pacific's most experience on the defensive side of the ball with the return of a pair of All-NWC selections and

three starters.

Bryan Mills was an Honorable Mention All-NWC selection at safety. He led the Boxers with 62 tackles, placing him 10th among the league's defensive players. His 35 solo tackles and his 6.9 tackles per game ranked seventh in the NWC. His sophomore season will be best known for a special teams play, though, where he returned a blocked extra point kick 100 yards for a defensive two-point conversion that landed Pacific on SportsCenter.

Josh Brinkworth started at safety in five of his nine games and was an impact player as a freshman. He finished third for the Boxers with 42 tackles, made three for loss and tied Mills with two forced fumbles.

Buckley is excited to see where a solid off-season of work will take them. "I was thrilled with the focus and shape they came in with," Buckley said. "They took their off-season very seriously and came in playing from day one at a different level than they ended at last year."

Kamu Morita was just as effective, finishing with 31 tackles while seeing action in eight games. Joey Michael will also vie for time thanks in part to his 6-foot-3 frame.

Craig Bailey showed that the learning curve to adjust from wide receiver to cornerback was a short one. An Honorable Mention All-NWC selection on the corner, Bailey finished with 18 tackles and led the conference with 11 pass break-ups. "Craig survived for a while purely on his athleticism, but now he has become a very smart and savvy corner," Buckley said. "We are looking forward to a great year from him."

A quartet of players will compete for the starting role at the opposite cornerback. Brandon Harms played in all nine games as a

freshman, coming up with 15 tackles. "Brandon is one of the smartest guys I have ever been around at that position, which gives him a heck of a chance to make plays because he is processing it faster than anyone," Buckley said.

Andy Harris made an impression in his five games as a freshman and will stand a chance to compete thanks to his 6-foot-3 frame, which can cover taller receivers. Kasey Dukes will see a role after missing most of the 2011 season with an injury while Jaquari People has also shown great natural talent that will make him a candidate for playing time.

LINEBACKERS

Pacific will benefit from an experienced crew at linebacker that sees all three regular starters return. Tim Hastie started all nine games at middle linebacker, finishing second for the Boxers with 56 tackles and share the team lead with 6.5 tackles for loss. His 23 assisted tackles ranked 11th in the NWC.

Shane Feuerbach also started all nine games on the strong side, finishing with 24 tackles. Chris Santiago completed a successful transition from safety to weak side linebacker, starting all nine games while racking up 30 tackles.

Hunter Dassonville, Jack Perez and Justin Revilla will all compete to back-up Hastie in the middle. Dassonville played in the final six games of the season, finishing with nine tackles, including three for loss. Perez was a California all-region selection on defense while Revilla had a successful prep career in Hawaii.

Alen Suklje returns after a medical redshirt season in the shape to compete for time at strong side linebacker. Gabe Flory and Austin Brown will compete for time at weak side linebacker after seeing limited action in 2011.

KICKERS

For the third straight year, Pacific stands to score from a strong kicking game. Moses Villareal-Gomez became the second straight Boxers' place kicker to earn Honorable Mention All-NWC honors.

After a rough start that saw him miss four of his first five field goal attempts, Villareal-Gomez came back to make five straight to end the season and connect on 17 of 19 point-after attempts. He finished ranked second in the NWC with his six field goals made and fourth with his 35 points scored. "He became very steady and once he gained some confidence, he became a very good kicker," Buckley said.

Nathan Suyematsu also stands to do some kicking and slated early for kickoff duties after earning Oregon all-state honors last year as a kicker.

Aaron Koford returns for his third season as the Boxers' primary punter. The junior worked hard on his consistency in the off-season after a year where he finished fifth in the league in average and third with 13 balls inside the 20-yard line. Tyler Gilmore has also shown a strong leg in camp.