

High hopes for Hornet football

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The Hornet Football team has had a long offseason to game plan for the upcoming season, though they've had as much time as everyone else, they're a team in search for some validation.

The six-seeded Hornets finished last season with a win in The Golden Empire Bowl against College of the Canyons, but the season was a bit disappointing. They finished the season well, but the Hornets (6-4, 3-2) fell apart in close games.

In games decided by seven points or less, the Hornets only won once in five games.

Even through victory, as fans poured out of the stands after the final game of the year, the huddled masses could agree on one thing, they wanted more.

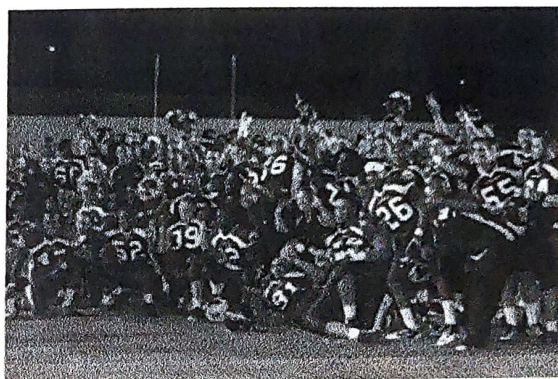
The Hornets combined for a total of fifty-eight touchdowns. With such a high-powered offense, five of their wins came by thirteen points or more.

If they proved one thing over the season, they were an offensive machine. The Hornets lost their starter at quarterback, Darius Banks, and two primary receivers, Willie Downs and Lavon Downs.

They'll look to their depth and returning talent to counter those three big losses. The high-powered offense is led by All-American tailback Kelvin York, who averaged 130.5 rushing yards per game last season and finished as the top rusher in the division with 1435 yards, a 6.3 average per carry.

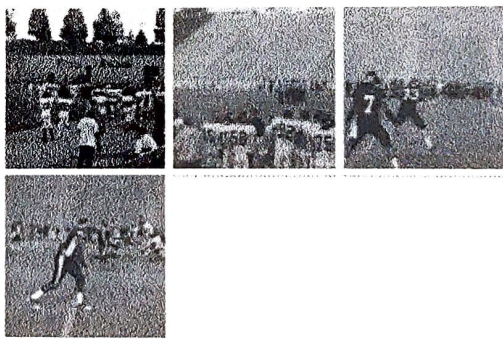
"We're going to give him the ball. We expect to do him to do big things. He's probably of the best kids I ever coached." Head coach Tim Byrnes said about their top option, York.

York has verbally committed to play at USC and will sign in February 2012. The Hornets rushing attack will continue to be solid, but their passing attack will need to step up this season, too.



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The Hornets summer camp has been headlined by a battle for quarterback between last year's back-up Matt Goggans and freshman Conor Bednarski, from South Pasadena.

"The quarterbacks are young and inexperienced." Coach Byrnes said.

Though Matt Goggans played in a couple of games last year, he has competition nearby in Bednarski who Coach Byrnes said, "[Bednarski] is still a true freshman, but should be a superstar a year from now."

Although the quarterbacks will start this year with very limited experience, so will the receiver core. The team lost Willie and Lavon Downs, who had combined for 1,369 yards and nineteen touchdowns last year.

Fullerton's backup receivers to fill in the spots vacated will be sophomores Roy Reid, Willie Clark and Dylan Bradley.

As for tight end, Dakota Mosley will start, who transferred from the University of Auburn in Alabama, where he red-shirted for the national championship team.

On defense, the linebackers lost 5 out of 6 starters from last year. They still have all-conference middle linebacker Brandon Guerrero, who will lead the linebackers, more commonly known as "The Hit Squad."

Linebacker's coach Dustin Sober said "Brandon is a very smart player, who puts himself in position to make plays." They also bring in linebacker Mark Wilson, who transferred from Troy State in Alabama. The offensive line will compose this year by 2009 starter Mike Saenz who missed all of 2010 due to shoulder surgery.

The rest of the line consists of Brock Holbert, Cody Clay, Nate Fierson and Alex Rodriguez. On the defensive line, five players return for this season. Known as the "Trenchdawks," they will look to lead the team with just as much experience and poise as they did in 2010.

Their best option is 2010 preseason All-American candidate Laone Gault who had 22 tackles and 2.5 sacks in his freshman year.

The rest of the line consists of Tre Vault, Dorian Watters, Tony Feo and Alton Brown, who assistant coach Tom Deep said, "They are very talented freshman and will help us win this year."

The secondary lost one defensive back, Aaron Garbutt, who went to Ole Miss University, but have talent to replace Garbutt. Assistant coach Crooks said "[Adrian Lopez] is a very instinctive player who is always around the ball. He will be one of the best safeties in the state, if not the country."

Lopez leads the secondary, but the safeties are deep with talent. Adrian Gallegos, Brendan Haskins, Chris Manassero and Travon Garrett all look to compete for playing time and add depth.

The Hornets look to win deep into the season, with the two toughest matchups in the final two

weeks of the season where they will face Mt. San Antonio at home on November 5 and Saddleback on the road, November 12.

"We want to win all of our games, not only bowl games, but conference and hopefully a state championship. We have high expectations for ourselves," said Coach Byrnes.