

SJAA: Toughest Around From Top To The Cellar

By far, the strongest prep football league in the district the past two years has been the San Joaquin Athletic Association. And that should hold true one more time around.

Expected to be at or near the top of the heap when the final gun sounds will be the Stagg Delta Kings and Tracy Bulldogs (see separate story). Ready to take charge in case either of the two falter are the Lodi Flames, Tokay Tigers, Lincoln Trojans and Edison Vikings.

In 1978, six of the eight SJAA clubs had overall records of 5-0 or better and were 13-2 in non-conference outings. Last fall, the same six teams (mentioned above) were again all at least 1-0 and compiled a 15-3 record in the non-leaguers.

The majority of the league's coaches agree the SJAA will again be highly competitive.

"It'll be stronger from top to bottom," says Lodi skipper Jim Sowers. "Every team has

improved."

"Strong as usual," claims Frank Cardo, starting his second year at the St. Mary's helm.

"There aren't any weak teams this year," says Edison's player mentor, Charles Washington.

"Stronger than last year," are the feelings of Lincoln's coach Ken Kuhlman. "It's an extremely well-balanced league."

"It's tough, just as it is every year," states Paul Preen of Tokay, who recently resigned his position to accept the line coach job at San Joaquin Delta College in Stockton.

"It's as strong as before—possibly even stronger," adds Tracy's Wayne Schneider.

STAGG—The Delta Kings the winningest team in the eight-year SJAA (58-9-2), have the area's top quarter-back, Randy Washington, back to lead the offense. A legitimate game-breaker, Washington

toiled the ball for 865 yards (57 completions in 111 attempts) and 15 touchdowns in 1979 while suffering only two interceptions. At 5-foot-11, 180-pounds, he is equally dangerous keeping the ball.

Joe News, the long-time basketball coach at Edison, is the new Delta Kings football coach.

LINCOLN—With 23 letterman back including eight starters, the Trojans are confident of their chances for a winning campaign and improving their fall 5-3 mark.

The defense is headed by two-year All-SJAA back Tim Sharrock. An All-Irwin season last season, The 5-10, 170-pound senior will also double as the Lincoln quarterback. And most of his head office figure: you go to tailback Mark Salado (5-11, 180), a starter the past two years on 46-8-0.

"Trying to make life easy for the offense," says Lincoln senior tackle Greg Rea (6-4, 205) and Reggie Carter (6-2, 215), both last year's starting linemen. Carter is guard is Rick Saragoza (6-0, 265).

Serving as Lincoln's top receiving threat is senior split end Jim Trotter (5-11, 175) while the defensive line is anchored by senior Robert Ford (5-10, 200).

EDISON—"We're very green this year," says Washington, the crafty Viking grid general. "We have no super stars this year, just hitters."

Expected to make life miserable on opponents are tight end Zachary Liggett (6-2, 265), halfback Ray Smith (5-11, 185), and halfback Tony Martin (5-10, 200), who last fall helped Edison become the best running team in the league, tackle Mike Morales (6-3, 230) and the backblocking tandem of Jeff Harris (5-11, 215) and Dale Walker (5-10, 190).

Junior Mike Mottoli (5-11, 175) has apparently won the battle for the quarterback spot. Specifier Kevin White (6-8, 160) is back at split end.

Lodi—A dozen returning lettermen, most of them at key

positions, are why head coach Sowers believes his crew can match last year's 7-3 mark, but the Flame skipper warns it won't be easy.

Heading the list of returnees on offense is quarterback Lee Anderson, a muscular 6-2, 205-pounder, who is also the club's starting middle linebacker. Certainly not every day-two-way role.

Lodi should be able to compete with anyone in the trenches. One of the tackle spots will be manned by Wes Sibble (6-5, 250) while at the guard spots are two-way starters Todd Pua (6-0, 200) and Scott Weber (5-10, 180). Running out of the back formation is halfback Rick Kneafust (5-11, 180).

The defense is headed by junior secondary acres Walt Harris (6-0, 175) and Sean Hayes (5-8, 155) both teamed with a year of varsity competi-

tion under their belts.

TOKAY—Lack of varsity experience is the biggest problem facing the Tigers. Only the seven lettermen are back from last year's 6-4 squad.

The quarterback duties fall on the shoulders of junior Perry Manley (5-7, 160) while fellow 110-pounder Dan Chasid (6-4, 205) moves in as the starting light end and defensive tackle.

The Tokay defense should keep the club close in most games. Leading the charge are linebackers Ron Hittle (5-11, 180), Rob Stevens (6-1, 181) and Jerry Barnhardt (5-11, 180).

ST. MARY'S—The Rams are still looking for the touch that made them a Valley Oak League power for many a year, but Cardo, who came to the Stockton school last fall by way of Los Angeles, has them pointing in the right direction.

"The execution is not yet good," said Odiusho, whose Devils open play Sept. 30, hosting Napa College. But we are just getting through with the Sacramento personnel and we're still experimenting.

In fact, Odiusho is still looking for starters in many positions, including quarterback, where a four-way battle is being waged, including 1979

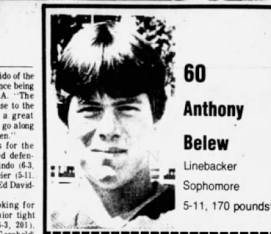
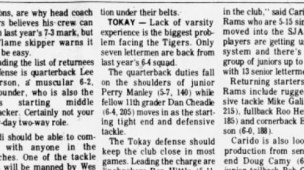
in the club," said Cardo of the Rams who are 3-3 since being moved into the SJAA. "The players are getting use to the system and there's a great group of juniors up to go along with 10 senior lettermen."

Returning starters for the Rams include rugged defensive tackle Mike Gaidino (6-3, 215), fullback Roo Heier (5-11, 180) and cornerback Ed Davidson (6-0, 180).

Cardo is also looking for production from senior tight end Doug Calk (6-3, 201), junior tailback Bob Garabaldi (5-9, 178), junior quarterback Bill Giffen (5-11, 175) and junior linebacker Chris Fanning (6-4, 200).

FRANKLIN—Bogged by back-to-back winter seasons, the Yellowjackets will be trying to snag the drought and improve the SJAA cellar. At last report, head coach Gary Womack had only some 30 players to choose from.

THE PROTECTORS—Three of Hmar's offensive linemen from last year's Southern League championship team will return this fall to anchor the trenches. From left Wade Whitson, Anthony Machado and Allen Babeale seem to be inviting defensive lines to try anything.



60 Anthony Belew
Linebacker
Sophomore
5-11, 170 pounds



43 Mike Ireland
Free Safety
Junior
5-8, 145 pounds

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MC Finds Self In Underdog Role

It's hard to believe that a team that has gone 1-3 over the past two seasons can envision itself as an underdog, but that's the exact picture Merced College is painting this year.

In a new league and with a handful of freshmen, Merced's head coach, Don Odiusho, is sounding like each of a National Football League expansion team rather than one of the most successful junior college coaches in the state.

"We'll fulfill our schedule and, if the players develop well and stay away from injuries, we should be competitive," he said recently. "We're in a very tough league, but I tend to be optimistic about our chances."

The Blue Devils have joined the division I (large schools) Central Valley Conference, a new league, after being a dominant force in the division II ranks over the past years.

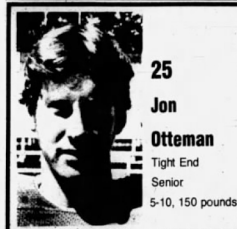
The majority of the players are as new to junior college football as the MC is to division I. The Devils have the presence of just six returning starters, three each way, from last year's 9-3 square.

Sam Zanatta, a sophomore out of Atwater High School, is trying to lead the charge of a trio of battling freshmen.

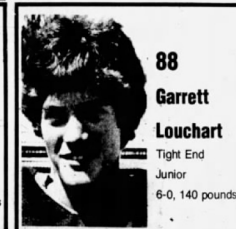
"They're all good athletes and, actually, there's not much difference among them," said Odiusho.

Whomever is chosen will be throwing in some formidable receivers in wideman David Thompson and Terry Daniel, both of Merced High, and end Jimmy Heiler of Atwater.

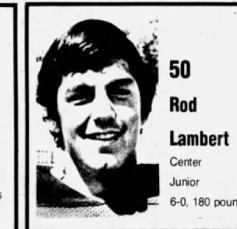
Jeff Eastman, another MIS product, has virtually nailed down the small back position after a two-year averaging 1979



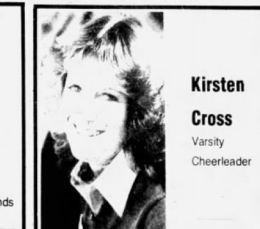
25 Jon Otteman
Tight End
Senior
5-10, 150 pounds



88 Garrett Louchart
Tight End
Junior
6-0, 140 pounds



50 Rod Lambert
Center
Junior
6-0, 180 pounds



Kirsten Cross
Varsity Cheerleader

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