

### Hugoton Seniors will Lead Eagles

Hugoton wants more in 2009. Last year the Eagles turned in a 6-3 season but missed the playoffs after a loss to Ulysses. Fourth year head coach Clint Merritt has 36 players out for football at the 4A school, but 16 are seniors. There are seven starters back on offense and six return defensively. Merritt, the former Osborne coach and Smith Center native says his team gets it. "We feel like we're farther along right now than we've been in the past," Merritt said. "We can start focusing on some of the little details and the intricacies in our offense and defense because some of these kids will be four year starters. We really are proud of where we're at."

His senior qb/db Zach Dunlap agrees with his coach that the Eagles are ahead of the game. "This year we are so far along in our offense with motions and things like that," Dunlap said. "The playbook is not just our base plays. We've been able to throw different formations out there quickly because we understand what to do."

Hugoton returns one of the top fullbacks in 4A. Senior fb/lb Caleb Gifford returns after rushing for over one-thousand yards and 11 touchdowns in 2008. "We're all hard working," Gifford said. "We don't have the biggest guys but we're pretty fast and we get the job done."

Gifford, senior rb/lb Keithen Martin, and senior rb/fs Bubba Beltz lead the defense. Beltz, who had six interceptions last year says the experience and a move in will help. "We've got another year of experience under our belt," Beltz said. "We had a big move in (David Hawk) who will help us out a lot this year."

David Hawk is the state powerlifting champion lineman who move to Hugoton from Liberal. Senior lineman Brian Skinner will help anchor the line.

Senior Keithen Martin suggested the players get mohawks to start the season and 20 of the 36 followed through. The Eagles hope that show of unity carries over to the gridiron on Friday nights. Merritt and the Eagles were featured during the Sportsguys Tuesday morning on Talkradio 1270 and kscb.net.

### 2009 Schedule

Sep. 4 @ Stanton County

Sep. 11 vs Lakin

Sep. 25 vs Southwestern Heights

Oct. 2 vs Cimarron

Oct. 9 vs Holcomb

Oct. 16 @ Pratt

Oct. 23 vs Kingman

Oct. 29 @ Ulysses

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