

Oilers set to defend crown

The Randolph Oilers will quickly find out if they have the stuff to defend their Eastern Football League championship.

The Oilers open defense of their EFL crown Friday night against the Marlboro Shamrocks, the team the Oilers defeated last year to win the title, at the Randolph High field at 7:30.

"We're looking forward to opening with such a top team," said coach Bob Turner. "It should be a good one for the fans, a great Eastern Football League game between two fine teams."

The Oilers went 12-0 last year en route to the league title. Their three toughest tests were against the Shamrocks. Randolph won 7-2 and 21-18 during the regular season. The Oilers prevailed, 27-21 in the playoffs on a 57-yard TD pass off a reverse from wide receiver Mark Harding to wide receiver Ricky Witt.

"We had three great games with them," said Turner. "They have a great tradition in Marlboro and they are always very well-coached."

The cornerstone to Randolph's championship season was its defense which gave just 45 points in 10 league games. The Oilers will be hurt by the retirement of defensive tackle Bill Turner, a minor-league national all star, but Bob Turner likes the people he has returning.

"We'll miss Bill a great deal," he said. "But we have some good people back and we have new people who can step in. We have the potential to have a fine defense."

Defensive tackles Bob Burr (6'4", 265 pounds) and Pat Hart (6'6", 290 pounds) supply strength and experience up front.

The strength of the defense is at linebacker. Leo Cooney, a league all star, is a terror at outside linebacker while Bubba Pina and Art Cohen return at the inside slots.

"Leo is the type of player who is all over the field. He makes things happen," said Turner.

Cornerback Tom McLaughlin and safety Tom Donahue return in the secondary.

Last year the Oilers featured a wide-open passing attack with Bobby Witt throwing to a brilliant corps of receivers for 18 touchdown passes. This year, Randolph may showcase the run a bit more thanks to the presence of former Brockton High star Jay McGee at tailback.

"Jay has looked great so far," said Turner. "I think you might see us run a little more this year."

Harding, a league all star, and Ricky Witt are dangerous wide receivers and Ron Cassford, the best tight end in the league last year, supplies blocking and clutch receptions to maintain possession.

"Our receivers are one of our real strengths," said Turner.

Tackle John Bonner and guard Norm Eliason are proven performers on the offensive line.

The Oilers played in the league jamboree June 29 and lost 8-7 to the Middleboro Cobras. Turner came away impressed with the quality of play. "I think the league as a whole will be much tougher this year. The Shamrocks and the Worcester Tigers look very strong," said Turner.

It all starts Friday at 7:30 p.m. in Randolph and the opener should be a treat.