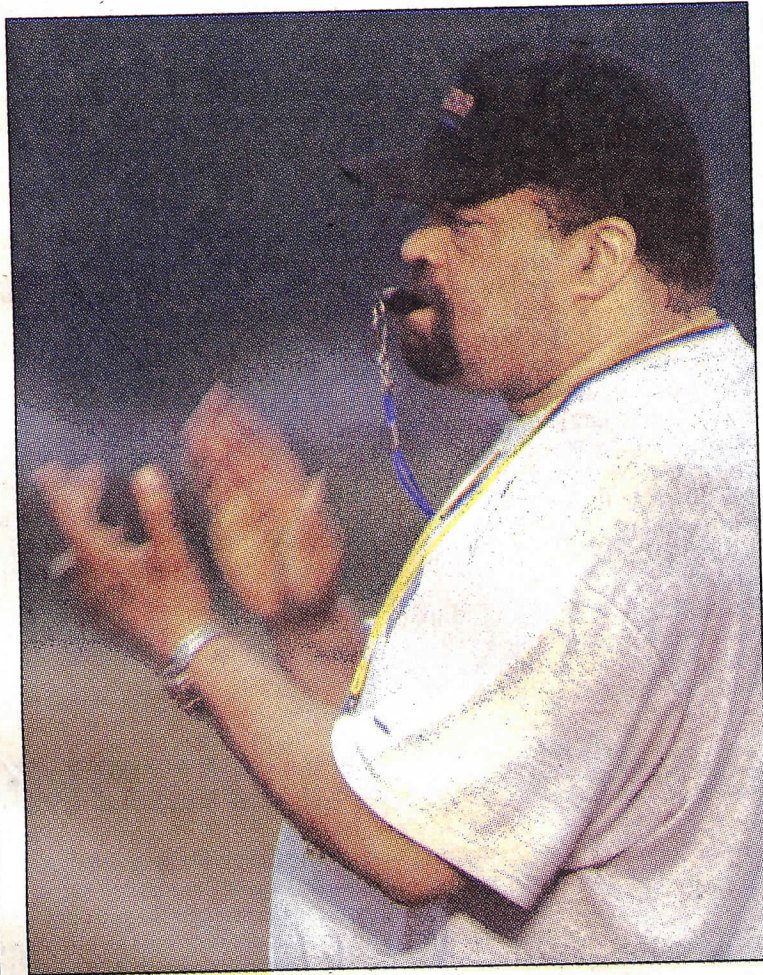


"I think our defense will be one of our strengths. It looks pretty solid in most areas. If the newer guys come through, we could have a very good defense."

OILERS HEAD COACH ED PENN, BELOW



Expectations are high for Oilers

■ A nice blend of newcomers and veterans sparks hope as Randolph prepares for the Eastern Football League season.

By Win Bates
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

RANDOLPH — The Randolph Oilers ended last season with a disappointing loss to the Rhode Island Prowlers in the quarterfinals of the Eastern Football League playoffs.

And they'll begin this season Friday night facing the same team at Randolph High School to begin what they hope will be a successful season in the EFL.

"We're definitely looking forward to Friday," said third-year Oilers head coach Ed Penn. "We beat Rhode Island twice during the season last year, but they got us in the playoffs. We're looking forward to playing them again."

The Oilers start the year with three straight home games, and they have a lot of young players mixed in with a few veterans of EFL play.

"We have more younger guys this year," said Penn. "Last year, we had a little more of a mixture. Some of the veterans that we had have gone on to other things, either their businesses or some other facet of their lives, but I still think we'll have a good team. The guys came in in good shape, and I think we'll be ready for Friday."

One important player Penn hopes to have for much of the season is former Brockton High standout Anthony Comer. The versatile Comer has played several positions for the Oilers, and when he has him, Penn has eyes on Comer seeing action at running

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PHOTOS BY CHRIS MEYER/THE ENTERPRISE

GABE BOATWRIGHT OF BROCKTON takes a drink during a break from practice with the Randolph Oilers.



JAMIE HAMILTON OF EASTON, left, listens to instructions during a break in the practice session for the Randolph Oilers football team Tuesday evening. CHRIS MEYER/THE ENTERPRISE

Expectations high for Oilers

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back, linebacker and defensive end.

Comer has been playing in Arena2 for the New Haven Ninjas, but the team has a bye this week so Penn expects to have Comer on the field Friday night for the opener.

"It's gonna be good to have him out there whenever we can," Penn said of the former Boston College standout. "We hope to have him for a lot of the games. He can do a lot of things out there for us."

The Oilers expect to have Mike Lear at quarterback to start the season. Lear played quarterback for the Hockomock Colts a few years ago, and has seen action at other positions. Penn hopes to use his skills to fuel his offense.

"He's a good athlete who can do a number of things well," said Penn. "He has played receiver in the league, but he has looked good in our preseason camp at quarterback. He is not so much a pocket quarterback. We can roll him out or bootleg him, and his throwing has been improving the more he plays."

When Lear throws the ball, he will look for Gabe Boatwright, brother of former Brockton High star Eric Boatwright, the No. 2 quarterback at Boston College behind Brian St. Pierre, and speedy Chris Williams.

"Gabe Boatwright is a very good receiver, and he is good on special teams," said Penn. "Chris Williams was a track star at Emory College in Atlanta, and he runs the best patterns on our team."

Tight end Brian Burr, one of the Oilers' captains, can catch the ball and block, and Penn says he might use him on the offensive line as well.

Charles Williams, who has played receiver, will see most of the work at tailback this season.

"He's a slasher type with good speed," said Penn. "We don't have the big back that we had last year with Calvin Bryant. We also have Mike Greene, who played for the Hyannis Hurricanes last year. He has good speed and good strength."

said Penn.

He will count on his brother, Jerome, playing his 20th season in the EFL at 40 years old, to hold down the right tackle spot. Jamie Hampton moved from left guard to center and veteran Jim McLaughlin will play left guard.

"They're all good pass blockers, but we like to establish the run and they'll be the guys we'll be running behind the most," said Penn. "You need to be able to run the ball in this league, and that's always been our style, anyway, to run first and pass second."

The defense is in the capable hands of coordinator John Gates, who also coached the New England Storm of the Women's Professional Football League.

"I think our defense will be one of our strengths," said Penn. "It looks pretty solid in most areas. If the newer guys come through, we could have a very good defense."

Sam Pearson, nephew of former Dallas Cowboys receiving great Drew Pearson, is a standout at strong safety. Co-captain Tony Vanaria, in his eighth season in the EFL, can play either linebacker or on the defensive line. Brockton's Larry Tagger is a fixture at defensive end, and Penn is counting on newcomer Mobby Lee to help the defense at middle linebacker.

Another strength will be the placekicking of veteran Dave Canavan.

"This is his ninth year in the league, and he has been an all-league kicker in the past," said Penn. "He's pretty reliable inside 40 yards and pretty much automatic inside 25 and on extra points. We work a lot on the kicking game because we know how important it is. Field goals and extra points can determine whether you win or not."

Penn said the EFL to be as strong as it has ever been.

"Our neighbors, the Quincy Granite, were awesome last season and should be very good again," said Penn. "We have a good rivalry going with them. We also have a good rivalry going for a long time with the Middleboro Cobblers."

Randolph Oilers clinch spot in EFL playoffs

for Ed Penn

■ Randolph rides the running of Calvin Bryant to beat the Rhode Island Prowlers.

By Dick Roche
ENTERPRISE CORRESPONDENT

RANDOLPH — Calvin Bryant rushed for a career-high 135 yards and two touchdowns to lead the Randolph Oilers to a 27-14 win over the Rhode Island Prowlers Friday night.

With the victory, the Oilers clinched a spot in the Eastern Football League playoffs after a one-year absence.

"Making the playoffs was our first goal. Now we've got to get a higher seeding," said Randolph coach Ed Penn, who team is 4-2.

Oilers	27
Prowlers	14

"Once you're in the playoffs, everybody starts even. It's nice to make the playoffs so you can look at your squad and see how you stack up."

"I thought Calvin did a great job finding the holes tonight. We came in looking to get the ground game going. We knew we were up against a tough defense. I thought the offensive line did a great job of opening some holes for Calvin."

Bryant's two touchdowns came in the second half and were the only scores for the Oilers after intermission.

His first TD was set up by a 55-yard punt return by Anthony Comer, who pulled up at the Rhode Island 22-yard line with a hamstring injury, preventing him from going all the way into the end zone.

"Anthony had a great return," said Penn. "He got us going in the second half offensively. Once he went down (and couldn't play the quarterback position), we didn't want to throw the ball at all."

With Comer sidelined, Bryant carried the ball four times for 22 yards, capping it off with a 6-yard run up the middle to give the Oilers a 21-8 lead.

Bryant's second TD, which put the game away

with 9:17 left, came on a 4-yard run. It was the 10th play of a 58-yard drive in which Bryant picked up 37 yards on five carries.

Bryant's TD came after Rhode Island had gotten back into the game with a 17-play drive in which quarterback Brian Amaral scored on a 6-yard keeper, making it 21-14.

The first half was dominated by the Oilers on both sides of the ball, but two personal foul penalties late in the half let the Prowlers off the hook.

The Prowlers capped a 13-play, 80-yard, drive with seven seconds left before the break when Amaral connected with Eric Lewis on a 6-yard scoring pass.

Cardinal Barton tacked on the 2-point conversion to make it 14-8 at the half.

The drive was kept alive by two major penalties on the Oilers that provided the Prowlers with a pair of crucial first-and-10 situations.

"Penalties really hurt us tonight," said Penn, whose team was flagged for 130 yards. "We've got to stop making those mistakes. Penalties and turnovers will kill you. Tonight, we didn't have the turnovers, but we sure did the penalties."

The Oilers scored the first two times they had the ball.

The first drive midway through the opening quarter covered 77 yards in eight plays. O.J. Powell culminated the march by barreling in from the 6. Dave Canavan booted the conversion.

Bryant rushed for 40 of the 70 yards on just four carries. Comer also picked up a key first down by sprinting 28 yards on a keeper.

The next time Randolph assumed possession, it took the Oilers only one play to expand the lead.

Comer hit wideout Chris Williams on a 66-yard scoring play. Canavan's PAT made 14-0 just a minute into the second quarter.

Later in the period, Randolph threatened again, marching from its own 46 to the Prowlers' 26, but Lewis picked off a fourth-down pass in the end zone to snuff out the threat.



VETERAN RANDOLPH OILERS KICKER Dave Canavan, right, breaks the special teams huddle during a recent practice. J. KIELY JR./THE ENTERPRISE

Oilers eye end reverse

■ Randolph aims to finish what it starts this season in hopes of earning a national title shot.

By Glen Farley
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

RANDOLPH — Ed Penn is looking to write a different script this Eastern Football League season.

"We lost a lot of close games last season," said Penn, the fourth-year head coach of the Randolph Oilers. "We were in a lot of games. We were competitive. We just couldn't finish games off. We lost three or four by a field goal or a touchdown. That has to change."

Just how close were the Oilers last season?

Consider this: Despite a 3-7 record that placed them in a tie with Charlestown in the cellar of the EFL's Eastern Football Conference, the Oilers outscored their foes, 193-190, during the regular season.

Also consider this: With no league playoffs to compete in at the end of the EFL season,



RETURNING OILERS CAPTAIN Jerome Penn, right, has held up his end of the offensive line since 1988. J. KIELY JR./THE ENTERPRISE

"If the national tournament is the NCAAs, the Northeast Challenge is the equivalent of the NIT. Winning it was nice, but that's not what we're looking to do here."

ED PENN

NCAAs, the Northeast Challenge is the equivalent of the NIT. Winning it was nice, but that's not what we're looking to do here."

Just what are the Oilers looking to do?

Reversing their fortunes from the first

vide the opposition when the Oilers kick off their 2001 schedule at Randolph's Memorial Field Friday night at 8.

"We can't wait to get started," said Penn. "At this point, we're just waiting for the kick."