

## PLAYING FOR THE RANDOLPH OILERS IS A FAMILY AFFAIR- JOE, KEVIN THE LATEST CALLAHANS ON THE TEAM

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RANDOLPH - When Kevin and Joe Callahan suit up Saturday for the Randolph Oilers in the Eastern Football League opener, they will be continuing a family tradition.

The extended Callahan clan has been involved in Randolph football for years, going back to their uncle, John Callahan, a three-sport star at Randolph High School and a member of the school's Hall of Fame. A panel of Randolph sports fans selected Callahan and Phil Carlino as the top two athletes in town history.

Callahan's four sons all turned out to be football players, too. John, Mike, Steve, and Tim Callahan followed their father to football fame.

John Jr. was the defensive MVP of the Randolph Town Team, the forerunner of the Oilers. Mike was a standout, too, who played for Ferrum College in Virginia before joining the Oilers. At Ferrum, his team won the national junior college championship. Steve earned all-Eastern Football League honors during his stint with the Oilers. Tim was one of the best punters in team history.

Russell Callahan - the elder John's youngest brother and father of Kevin and Joe - was a standout for Randolph, too, and once caught eight passes in a game.

Throw into the mix a cousin, Jim Callahan, who was an All- Scholastic football player at Archbishop Williams High School and a record setter at Salve Regina College. He played for the Oilers, too.

Kevin and Joe Callahan vividly remember going to Memorial Field in Randolph as youngsters to watch the Oilers. "That was back in the day when the Oilers were champions," said Kevin.

"Even back then we thought about some day playing football for the Oilers."

That day has arrived, with the two brothers making their debut Saturday against the Massachusetts Mayhem in North Reading.

The Eastern Football League, formed in 1961, is the oldest continuous semiprofessional football conference in the United States. Although it is called semiprofessional, nobody makes any money in the league. The teams are filled with twenty- and thirty-somethings who simply want to continue playing football.

The Oilers joined the EFL in the 1974, and John Callahan was one of those behind the scenes who helped Peter O'Kane pull the franchise together. The heyday for the Oilers was 1990, when Randolph won its only championship.

This year, the league has 12 teams, including franchises in Quincy and Middleborough. The regular season consists of a 10-game schedule that begins in mid-July and finishes in mid-September. Playoffs determine which team advances to a national tournament.

The Oilers, like most EFL teams, draw from a local talent pool, picking from high school and collegiate players from the area.

Kevin Callahan, 26, a defensive end, was a standout at Holbrook High School and later played at Fitchburg State College. "Fitchburg hasn't had much of a winning tradition. I don't think they had a winning season for many years, but during my junior and senior years we had winning records," he said.

Since graduating from Fitchburg State two years ago, Callahan has not played football.

"I was busy setting up a business and I devoted all my energies in that direction," he said. "Furthermore, I couldn't risk getting injured."

But now that his electrical business is going well, he has time to play.

Joe Callahan, 20, is a wide receiver. He played for Holbrook-Avon and had more touchdown receptions than any other player in the state his senior year. After graduating from Holbrook High School two years ago, he began a career in automobile repair.

This year, the Oilers were looking for a quarterback, and coach Ed Penn secured the services of Ryan Myers, who threw all those touchdown passes to Joe Callahan in high school. So Joe Callahan decided to give the Eastern Football League a try.

"It's funny - I was at home and told my brother Kevin I was going out for the team, and he said that he was going out for the Oilers as well. We both came to the same decision without talking to each other," Joe Callahan said.

The two spent the last six months going to the gym together and working out in preparation of the upcoming season.

And now, they are going to continue the family tradition.