

Thoreau readying for 2016 gridiron season

Written by By Bernie Dotson Sun Correspondent
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Hawks hope to fly high in 4A

With a new coach in tow, the Thoreau Hawks hope to outdo themselves come Aug. 26, when they open the 2016 football season against the Tohatchi High School Cougars. The Hawks, who have 10 seniors on this season's roster, beat the Cougars 32-16 last year in a game played at Tohatchi.

"We're ready," new Head Football Coach DeJong DeGroat said this week. "We have a great bunch of guys."

DeGroat was the head volleyball coach last year at Thoreau. He was also an assistant coach in football under former Hawks Head Coach Roger Willie, who left the job after a 5-5, 3-2 season. Under Willie, Thoreau ran a single wing offensive scheme that featured the quarterback.

"We will diversify," DeGroat said. "We have enough players where we can do a lot of things on offense."

DeGroat, who is originally from Mariano Lake, said he intends to employ a balanced offensive attack, saying the Hawks will put it up when necessary, and run and take what's given to them when it comes.

Last year, Hawks' defense gave up 50 or more points to both Kirtland Central High School and

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Bloomfield High School in what turned out to be blow-out losses. Thoreau lost 56-6 to Kirtland and 53-0 to Bloomfield.

“We’ll be very balanced,” DeGroat said. “You have to have that balance in the league.”

There are 48 players on the 2016 roster, and according to the coach, a starting quarterback has yet to be named.

District 1-4A has undergone a statewide realignment. Kirtland and Bloomfield have moved up to 5A and Zuni High School is now a part of 3A. The Navajo Preparatory School Eagles, who consistently have highly ranked quarterbacks on a national scale, move from 3A to 4A. Prep also recently promoted long-time volleyball and girls basketball coach Rainy Crisp to athletic director.

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