

MONROE FOOTBALL

MHS eyes RVC title, deep playoff run



Strong senior class hungry after stunning end to '21 in D3 state semifinal



Times file photos

LEFT: Alex Hernandez (31) celebrates a touchdown in a homecoming win over Edgerton in 2021. Hernandez, a senior, led Monroe in rushing yards last season as a fullback. **ABOVE:** Senior linemen Isaac Bunker (64) and Austin Fuchs (62) will look to clear open running lanes for their vaunted group of running backs.

By Adam Krebs
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MONROE — A year ago the Cheesemakers took the playoffs by storm early on — scoring upsets against Whitnall and top-ranked Greendale before fending off Rock Valley Rival Jefferson at home in Level 3.

In the WIAA Division 3 state semifinal game, Monroe let a 14-point halftime lead disappear, losing to eventual state champion Pewaukee 28-14.

The sting of that loss resided in the minds and hearts of the underclassmen due to return this fall. A senior-laden team, the Cheesemakers are ready to get back onto the field and take care of business — first with defending its Rock Valley title, and then looking to make another deep run in the postseason.

Back for Monroe is a slew of seniors, including quarterback George Brukwicki, running backs Alex Hernandez and Keanin Sweeney, and linemen Isaac Bunker, Sean Rufenacht, Austin Fuchs and Nathaniel Baker. Junior lineman Taylor Herbst is also back, as are skills players Drew Indergand, Charlie Wigel, Kaden Kuester and Tony Wolf, who all saw valuable snaps in the latter part of the season on offense.

Defensively, linebacker Tucker Markham will direct traffic, with Wigel, Kuester, Fuchs

and Indergand all returning. Seventh-year head coach Toby Golembiewski said his team's strength will reside in its linemen. Bunker, a Navy recruit, anchors the offensive line and was the Rock Valley Lineman of the Year in 2021.

Fuchs was also a first-team all-conference selection, while Baker earned second-team honors. On Defense, Rufenacht, Markham and Indergand were first-team All-RVC picks, with Kuester earning a second-team selection at nose tackle. Hernandez can also play on the defensive line, while Sweeney can help make a difference in the secondary.

Markham was second on the team in total tackles last year behind fellow linebacker Liam Hermanson, who has since graduated. Markham also led the Cheesemakers with 10 tackles for a loss. Rufenacht had six sacks and eight TFLs, while Kuester had five sacks, eight TFLs and forced two fumbles. Indergand led the team with four interceptions and two forced fumbles.

Offensively, Sweeney rushed for 1,370 yards on just 143 carries last year — a 9.6 yards per carry average. He scored a team-high 19 touchdowns. Hernandez led the RVC in rushing with 1,378 yards on 233 carries from the fullback position, an average of 5.9 yards per tote, scoring 14 touchdowns.

The two paired with current Wisconsin

Badgers tight end JT Seagraves (1,294 yards, 16 TDs) in a 3-headed monster attack. Kuester, Markham, and sophomore Ben Gatdula are among those in the mix for touches at running back.

Monroe sustains a run-heavy offensive attack in the triple-wing. The Cheesemakers' 4,706 total rushing yards last year were the second most of any school in the state, with only Coleman (4,928) gaining more yards. On the flip side, Monroe completed 17 of 42 passing attempts (34.7%) for just 292 yards with three TDs and three interceptions. Seagraves accounted for 11 catches, 212 yards and two touchdowns.

Monroe outscored opponents 411-148, losing just twice in 13 games — an overtime loss in Week 2 at Mount Horeb, and in the state semifinal game at Pewaukee.

The key for the Cheesemakers was a quick offensive attack, followed by a stop on the defensive end. Monroe's scoring was balanced nearly the entire game on average last year, scoring 104 points in the first quarter, 109 in the second, 103 in the third and 89 in the fourth quarter (with six in the overtime loss). Opponents, meanwhile, scored 41 points in the first quarter, 44 in the second, 42 in the third

and 21 combined in the fourth quarter and overtime.

Golembiewski said his team is ripe for success this season, so long as they stay focused, driven and healthy.

"We need to win each day and take it one game at a time," Golembiewski said. He said there is two big, "heavy hitters" in the non-conference schedule, and after that, it is back to the Rock.

"We certainly think we can compete for the top, but there will be others also," Golembiewski said of the conference forecast.

Madison Edgewood is no longer in the conference, having moved to the Capitol. The Crusaders knocked off Monroe in a head-to-head win in the regular season finale, only to

— Toby Golembiewski, Monroe coach

See MONROE, Page B5

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