

Mariners, Agates Prepare for Grid Seasons

By John Sandstrom

The Silver Bay Mariners had a successful season in 2020, sharing the league championship with Mt. Iron. The challenging part of the story is that they said goodbye to seven graduating seniors. Their nine man squad is expected to have about seventeen players this year in grades 9-12.

Coach Ward Kaiser, in his eighteenth season with Mariner football and fourteenth as the head coach, says a team small in numbers has to be in great physical shape so that is his first focus. "We have to get ready to play and we can't afford to get too worn down during the game. We have to work hard before the season begins. There are a number of players who will be changing positions as there are every year, and that is another factor. Finally, we have some younger players who will have to step into varsity roles, so we need to get them ready to play."

The Mariners will feature three seniors this year: Elijah Blanck, Manor Ollman, and Kaleb Krech. Kaiser is assisted by Jamie Otterblad, Bryan Carpenter, and Ward Wallin.

The Mariners participated in a football camp at UMD this summer and the players have been lifting weights, so Kaiser expects them to be ready to play.

Silver Bay will open its season at Northeast Range on Friday, September 3rd.

Agates Loaded with Experience

Tom Nelson is entering his twenty-second season as head coach of the Two Harbors Agates. He states he has been fortunate to keep the same core group of assistants. Nelson coaches the offense and Bill Anderson leads the defense. The remainder of the coaching

staff includes: Derrick Hietala, Jason Jordahl, Scott Libal, Jim Anderson, Steve Fosness, and Ryan McIntyre.

This season, the Agates will feature fourteen seniors among the expected forty players in grades 9-12. This year, the Agates have paired with Duluth Marshall. As a result, Nelson expects about eight players to join his squad, primarily freshmen and sophomores.

During the first two weeks Nelson says, "We try to build conditioning into our activities. We want our players to keep moving and keep the practice up-tempo. We focus a great deal on special teams and we hope to have most of our systems in place. There will be a great deal of time spent on perfecting basics, such as stances, timing and technique."

The Agates open the season at Barnum on Friday, September 3rd.

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