

Crockett teaches Lions how to win

By TIM HOSTETTER
Sports Writer

When Jeff Crockett accepted the head football coaching job at Minneapolis two years ago, he was taking on one of the biggest challenges in the state.

But that didn't bother the young, enthusiastic Crockett. He had learned his trade playing two years of football at Missouri Western State College before coaching as an assistant at Maysville High School in Missouri. He wanted his first head coaching job to be a rebuilding job.

"It was an ideal situation for me," Crockett said. "I wanted to build my own program. I had nothing to lose by coming here because they hadn't won in years."

Crockett inherited a Minneapolis football program which had gone just 5-31 in the previous four years. The building looked to be locked into a long-term contract.

But Crockett and his assistants, Mike Lott and J.D. Gallion, didn't think so when he evaluated their squad. Crockett saw talent. Talent that could win if it knew how.

Previous winners

1977 — Ed Buller, Clifton-Clyde; Clayton Williams, Beloit
1978 — Paul Dennis, Abilene
1979 — Jon Bingsesser, Sacred Heart
1980 — Larry Friend, Plainville
1981 — Robert Teeter, Victoria
1982 — Roger Barta, Smith Center
1983 — David Johnson, Osborne
1984 — Jeff Crockett, Minneapolis

Townspiece would have laughed if they had known Crockett's thoughts.

"That's the key," Crockett said, "...knowing how to win. These kids didn't know how. Against Belleville and Beloit last year, we were ahead and should have won, but the kids just didn't know how to go on and win. They were thinking of ways to lose it, and we did."

Crockett's first Minneapolis team went 3-6, including a momentum-building 7-6 win over Riley County to close out the season. Three wins were good for the Lions, considering past. But Crockett knew his players had more in them.

"After the season before, I thought we had accomplished some goals. The kids played hard, made good tackles and scored in every game," Crockett said. "With 12 starters back, I thought this team could be the cinderella team of the NCAA. It would take hard work, though."

Work is what Crockett demanded. It was the kind of work that Minneapolis kids hadn't been accustomed to, but they quickly saw Crockett's desire for them to win and soon gave their head coach the respect he had aimed for. Goofing off was out.

"The only way for me to gain their respect is for me to show them that I respect them. They saw that I did and played their hearts out," Crockett said.

Crockett not only got a hearty 8-2 record and a trip to the state playoffs from his supposedly inferior team, but is also this year's Salina Journal's football Area Coach of the Year.

"I never thought much about any coach of the year honors, but I'm very honored considering all the excellent coaches who have coached a long time in the area," Crockett said. "Most of the credit has to go to the kids. They played their guts out all year. They gained confidence early and discovered how good it felt to win."

Another key factor in Crockett's success this season was the effective way he utilized his skill players.

Taking a chapter from his college team's philosophy, Crockett put in a more balanced attack. He moved senior running back Todd Broughton to the line and put talented sophomore Jeff Allison in the backfield. He also called for quarterback Mark Harris to pass more to all-purpose runner Mitch Shea.

Allison responded by rushing for 90 yards a game — most of which came over the blocking of Broughton. Shea caught 31 passes for 650 yards and nine touchdowns, including four against Sacred Heart.

The Lions' only loss came to 4A power Ellsworth (26-0). Probably its best victory came over Sacred Heart (27-6).

The fact that there were no state championship teams in the area allowed coaching efforts like Crockett's to flourish.

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1984 All-Area Football

Tom Dorsey

Members of the 1984 All-Area football team are (front row, left to right) Gary Colson, Mankato; Mike Palmer, Abilene. (Middle row, left to right) Chuck Knapp, Concordia; Alan Heigle, Clay Center; Maurice Henry, Salina Central; Monty Zamecnik, Bennington; Roger Laubengayer, Ellsworth. (Back row, left to right) Coach of the Year Jeff Crockett, Minneapolis; Rod Chard, Plainville; Dan McCandless, Solomon; Duane Charbonneau, Clifton-Clyde; Joe Hoffman, Hays.

All-Area picks possess winning qualities

By TIM HOSTETTER
Sports Writer

This year's Salina Journal All-Area Top 11 Football Team blends a winning formula of size, speed, quickness and numbers.

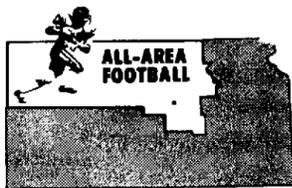
All of this year's squad members are seniors and winners. The combined record of the members' teams was 87-25, and seven of the players' teams made the playoffs.

For the first time in this team's nine-year history, two eight-man players were selected — Mankato running back-linebacker Gary Colson and Bennington running back Monty Zamecnik. Both had outstanding years and careers and led their teams to unbeaten regular seasons.

Abilene took over the area team lead for most players named on the squad in the nine years. Offensive guard-linebacker Mike Palmer was the Cowboys' eighth overall selection.

Quarterback-linebacker Dan McCandless was Solomon's first selection. Maurice Henry, who missed most of 1983 with a broken ankle, came back strong in 1984 with a productive season and was the lone Salina representative on the Top 11.

The rest of the team includes Plainville's Rod Chard, Clifton-



Clyde's Duane Charbonneau, Clay Center's Alan Heigle, Hays' Joe Hoffman, Concordia's Chuck Knapp and Ellsworth's Roger Laubengayer.

Here's a closer look at this year's Top 11.

• **DUANE CHARBONNEAU**, Clifton-Clyde, fullback-linebacker, 6-1, 183 pounds, senior. Hard-nosed runner between the two tackles for the single-wing running Eagles. Charbonneau rushed for 1,273 yards on 213 carries (6.0). Whenever the Eagles needed the big yards, this two-time all-Blue Valley Leaguer got the ball, and rarely disappointed his teammates.

"He's always been a tough runner for us," said Clifton-Clyde head coach Ed Buller, "and most of his yards were the tough variety."

Perhaps Charbonneau's best effort this season came in the BVL championship game with Linn when

he rushed for nearly 200 yards and scored five touchdowns in leading the Eagles to a big win.

Defensively, Charbonneau also has been a two-time all-leaguer. He had 81 tackles and two fumble recoveries in leading the Eagles to the sub-state championship game against Pittsburg-Colgan.

• **ROD CHARD**, Plainville, tailback-linebacker, 6-1, 205 pounds, senior. Another hard-noser. Chard's 4.8 speed, combined with his excellent size, created problems for opponents the last two years in the Mid-Continent League.

Despite hobbling on a badly-sprained ankle for the first three games, Chard still rushed for 1,130 yards on just 187 carries and scored 18 touchdowns in helping Plainville to an unbeaten regular season and No. 1 state ranking. Chard also caught six passes for another 95 yards and had 53 tackles and four interceptions on defense.

"Rod is a real tough and dedicated runner," said Plainville head coach Larry Friend. "His quickness allows him to run outside, but we used him primarily inside because he had that bad ankle early in the season and couldn't cut. Defensively, he pursues so well. We used him at defensive end in some situa-

1984 All-Area Top 11

Player, School	Hgt.	Wgt.	Yr.	Position
Duane Charbonneau, Clifton-Clyde	6-1	183	Sr.	RB-LB
Rod Chard, Plainville	6-1	205	Sr.	TB-LB
Gary Colson, Mankato	5-8	170	Sr.	RB-LB
Alan Heigle, Clay Center	6-1	185	Sr.	TE-DE
Maurice Henry, Salina Central	6-1	190	Sr.	RB-LB
Joe Hoffman, Hays	5-10	165	Sr.	TB-P
Chuck Knapp, Concordia	6-2	195	Sr.	OT-LB
Roger Laubengayer, Ellsworth	6-1	200	Sr.	OT-LB
Dan McCandless, Solomon	6-0	170	Sr.	QB-LB-P
Mike Palmer, Abilene	6-1	190	Sr.	OG-LB
Monty Zamecnik, Bennington	5-10	170	Sr.	RB-FS-P

tions this year, and he's so quick, that he dropped into the flat and intercepted three passes."

Chard's best performance of the year came against unbeaten Ellinwood in the district championship game when he rushed for 190 yards and led the Cardinals into the state playoffs.

• **GARY COLSON**, Mankato, running back-linebacker, 5-8, 170 pounds, senior. One has to see this guy play to appreciate his talents and his credentials to be on this elite squad.

Colson was the heart of Mankato's 10-1 team that also reached the sub-state final before falling to eventual state champ Midway-Den-

ton.

He gained 1,350 yards — again, primarily tough, up-the-gut yards — on 204 attempts (6.6) and scored 20 touchdowns. Defensively, he was the Cougars' "monster" and played like one in making 77 solo tackles and 54 assists. He had five interceptions and seven sacks.

Colson's value to Mankato's team was priceless. His determination was genuine. He played the last half of the season with a broken wrist and strained knee ligaments, and suffered a concussion in the Midway game early in the third quarter. Mankato was leading by a