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Area Can Boast Its Share of Stars

Another season is drawing near as the 1977 high school football season gets into full slate this weekend all over Cattaraugus County, with the fans bringing out the dusty seat pads and the heavy jackets to be ready for the long season ahead.

This year, as in many years past, fans will be watching some excellent, hard-fought games that the schools have been waging each and every season.

With four hard weeks in training, schools all over Cattaraugus County, and Western New York for that matter, will enlighten the crowds with quarterbacks connecting with their pass receivers for long gains, or running backs sprinting all the way into the end zone, or a secondary man picking off a pass which could have meant a first down.

It's a giant step from a high school bus ride, secondary practice fields and dank high school locker rooms to the fantasies of the professional football field, but maybe to some it isn't that large of a step.

Three men who have taken that giant step from this area to the professional ranks are Chuck Crist of Salamanca, member of the New Orleans Saints; Marv Hubbard of Randolph, a running back for the Detroit Lions; and Bill Bergey of South Dayton, with the Philadelphia Eagles.

Crist, as you may remember, faced a dire situation during his early pro career. The then three-year veteran with the New York Giants had just been cut by the club in the pre-season and still felt he had some left in him to continue his career as a pro football star.

After contacting every team in the National Football League, he was finally taken by the Saints organization in 1975, midway through the season.

Last season with the Saints, Crist was known as a fiery competitor, starting all 14 games in the 1976 season. He led the Saints secondary with 88 tackles, 50 unassisted, deflected 15 passes, recovered four fumbles, intercepted one pass and blocked one kick.

Crist, who was first signed by the Giants as a free agent, had no college football background as he started as a basketball player at Penn State. He was the team's MVP as a junior and was captain as a senior. Chuck holds a degree in Education and has been teaching some high school in Salamanca.

He attended Salamanca High School, which was the last time he played football before joining the pro ranks. Chuck lives in Salamanca in the off season with his wife, Patti, and their two children – Scott and Nicole.

Crist in a telephone conversation recently, commented about his team, “We have the confidence now. We are progressing in pretty much the same stages as we did last year but we are a relatively young club and we need to instill the winning attitude. We have had a year to adjust to the coach, the staff and each other and now we just have to adjust to winning. We are not the pushovers we once were and the winning sets the tone of what is to come in the season ahead. We can see that light at the end of the tunnel (the end of the pre-season) and then can settle down to the real thing.”

“We are a young team in terms of playing together,” he went on, “and are very optimistic about things to come.”

In a pre-season game against the Buffalo Bills, Crist had two interceptions, but one of them was called back because of a New Orleans penalty. His safety partner, Tom Myers, also picked off a Bills pass.

“It’s one of those things,” he said of the one he did intercept. “We were baiting the Bills to throw into our coverage and they just threw into what we called.”

After his steal of the pass, Crist gave the football a twirl and sent it spinning on the AstroTurf at the Superdome in New Orleans.

“Maury Spencer started that after his fumble recoveries last year, and it was just a spur of the moment type deal. It looks classier than a spike,” said Crist. “Most of us have caught on to it and is just our way of doing things a little bit differently.”

Hubbard, a native of Randolph, completed seven big seasons with last year’s Super Bowl champion Oakland Raiders, but was dropped by the team this year and since then has been picked up in a cash deal by the Detroit Lions, after being put on waivers, by the Raiders.

Hubbard missed all of the 1976 season due to a shoulder injury during the preseason. He did not get to play in the Super Bowl game against the Minnesota Vikings.

In 1973, Hubbard gained 903 yards to move into second place on the Raiders all-time rushing list behind Clem Daniels. He ran in six touchdowns and averaged 4.7 yards a carry.

For the 1975 season, he gained 294 yards rushing to help the Raiders rank third in the NFL in rushing. He cracked the 1,000 yard mark in 1972 and has a career total of more than 4,300 yards rushing.

Hubbard was an outstanding halfback at Colgate where he rushed for 1,891 yards in three seasons. A great junior year with 897 yards rushing and 88 points was the sixth best figure in the country in 1966. Hubbard gained 194 yards in a game against Rutgers.

Bergey, born in South Dayton and a former Pine Valley high school star, is in his eighth season of professional football. His career began when he was a number two draft choice of the Cincinnati Bengals in 1970 and continued to the Eagles where he was traded to in 1974.

Bergey went to Arkansas State where he was a Little All-American selection. He played in the College All-star, North-South and Senior Bowl games.

The 6-3, 253 lb. linebacker was acquired by the Eagles on July 10, 1974 for number one draft choices in 1977 and 1978. Bergey was a consensus all-pro in 1974 and was selected as the Eagles MVP in 74. He was also selected as an all-pro by the Associated Press and All-NFC by AP and United Press International in 1975. He played in the Pro Bowl after the 1974 season. Bergey ranks with Chuck Bednarik as the best middle linebacker in the Eagles history.

Eagles head coach Dick Vermeil shored up his defense, headed by Bergey the NFC's finest middle linebacker. The defense stats people counted 234 tackles Bergey made during the campaign. That was more than Bednarik made in his prime, when the Eagles won the championships.