



# on the gridiron

## AFTER 17 YEARS, TROJANS RETURN TO TITLE GAME

The wait is finally over. The team steps off the bus and heads inside. Sixty guys crowd the locker room, putting on their all-green uniforms. Hand in hand, they walk through the tunnel and suddenly the field comes into view. It's game time at the UNI-Dome.

"I was extremely excited to play in the Dome for the first time," wide receiver Traevius Buchanan '18 said. "It was a really cool atmosphere and we were on a big stage. But my main focus was getting the win and staying on schedule for our 13 game season."

The Trojans started out their season with early wins against Southeast Polk, Muscatine and Cedar Falls.

"We go into every game with the mentality we are going to get the win," center Guy Snow '18 said, "because our coaches prepare us well and we spent so much time in the off season getting ready."

But the team hit a bump in the road, losing in the Battle of the Boot to City High on Homecoming night and to CR Prairie the following weekend.

"It was a real low point after the City and Prairie losses," safety Cole Mabry '19 said. "We had a choice to either give up on the season or put our heads down and get to work, and that's exactly what we did."

Perseverance helped the team regain confidence and turn their season around. They made it to the first round of the playoffs against Bettendorf on Oct. 28.

"I remember last year, Oliver and I were sitting on the stairs crying next to each other, and the feeling we got walking into the locker room to see all the seniors crying," Devontae Lane '17 said. "I told myself that there was no way we were going to lose to them again and have them end our season again."

After defeating Bettendorf, the Trojans avenged a loss to CR Prairie. West led the entire game and won, 38-21, earning a spot in the semi-finals at the Dome.

"We have a lot of guys who really understand the game," quarterback Evan Flitz '18 said. "We hit our stride at the right time and had a lot of big victories for the program overall."

Even after some early fumbles and being down 0-7 in the first quarter against CR Washington, the Trojans came back to win, 35-7, making it to the State championship game for the first time since 1999.

"We gave it our all and got to beat one of the teams that had knocked us out of State in years before," Kevin Hanson '17 said. "It wasn't the win that gave the best feeling. It was celebrating in the locker room with everybody and singing *Row, Row, Row Your Boat* at the top of our lungs together."

Trailing 0-13 to West Des Moines Dowling, West scored their first points from a 85-yard kickoff return by wide receiver Oliver Martin '17 in the second quarter. A 26-yard field goal by kicker Lucas Karwal '18 made it 10-16 at the half.

"I still had hope and I knew none of us were going to give up," running back Andre White said. "There was a whole other half left, and we have a lot of talent and drive to win."

But another Dowling touchdown and West unable to convert on fourth downs led to a final score of 10-23, making the Trojans state runner-ups.

"I'm really proud of the guys. They fought hard all season and improved every day," coach Garrett Hartwig said. "I'm going to miss the seniors a lot. They should all be proud of a great season."

—By Ally Bauer

**BREAKING THROUGH**  
Wide receiver Oliver Martin '17 breaks through the line in the third quarter against Cedar Falls.



### FACE TO FACE

Defensive end Tyler Yoeger '17 blocks in the second quarter against Southeast Polk on Aug. 26. "The team is like a brotherhood," Yoeger said. "We go out there and get 'er done."

### HUT, HUT, HIKE!

Center Guy Snow '18 snaps the ball to the quarterback in the first quarter against Cedar Falls on Sept. 9. "It's a team sport," Snow said. "I think about what I need to do to put us in the best position to win."



### IN THE POCKET

Quarterback Evan Flitz '18 prepares to throw the ball against Cedar Falls on Sept. 9. "[Being quarterback] there's a lot of responsibility to help everyone know their jobs for every play," Flitz said. "The key is to prepare well so that when game time comes, we can trust ourselves and relax."



ALL PHOTOS BY ALLY BAUER

### SMASH 'EM

Defensive tackle Josh Van Roekel '17 tries to get past a City High opponent Sept. 16. "The team has really bonded between the junior and senior classes," Van Roekel said. "It has helped us really work together as one team."



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