



NEWS RELEASE

NEW FOOTBALL COACH HELPS PIMA MAKE CLIMB FROM 1A TO 2A

PHOENIX, AZ (August 14, 2009) – Pima High’s football program was a powerful force during its two stays in Class 1A. The Roughriders won eight state championships in the eight-man format and was runner-up eight times.

Now the team is back for a second tour of duty in Class 2A, and that will prove to be a significant challenge for first-year coach Travis Masten.

Masten replaces John Bryant, who led the team to 1A titles in 2005 and 2004 and runner-up finishes in 2008, 2007 and 2003. Bryant now is the coach at Joseph City, a 1A title contender from the North Region.

Pima, which last played 2A ball in 2000, now is in the 2A East Region with Benson, Bisbee, Tucson Desert Christian, Morenci, Thatcher, Tombstone and Willcox.

“The move was difficult to consider at first, but most of the boys have responded,” said Masten, who will celebrate his 39th birthday one day before the team’s Aug. 28 opener against San Carlos. Pima’s second game will be against Tempe Prep, another school moving from 1A to 2A.

Things are now more comfortable after a summer of conditioning and passing drills.

“Our coaching staff grew up playing 11-man, so it’s not like we won’t know what to do,” Masten said.

He had a lot of playing experience, first at Kingman High in northwest Arizona, then on two teams while serving in the U.S. Marines. Imagine the toughness required to fit that profile.

Pima has had a lot of well-rounded athletes in the past and will have some again this season. But the most pressing issue will be inexperience. The Roughriders will have just four seniors and 15 freshmen on its roster of 36.

The team was involved in passing drills with Willcox and had other field work, “and we adjusted faster than I anticipated,” Masten said.

Games in Class 1A can feature a lot of scoring. Example: Heber Mogollon’s 66-34 win over Pima in last year’s state championship game. Masten figures that type of score won’t often be seen in 2A.

“You can pass the ball in 1A, and when you run it, you can score as well because there isn’t an extra set of safeties back there. Once you get to that point, you’re gone,” he said.

Masten was a varsity assistant for about three years and coached at the junior-high level. The familiarity with the players has allowed him to be a step ahead of someone else who might have come in from another area.

“Our boys are excited about going to 2A, especially the underclassmen because we will get to play teams like Thatcher,” Masten said. “The fans are warming to the idea. I don’t think they were sure about this at first, because we had so much success in 1A, but now they are starting to grasp it.

“It’s not going to be easy and we are going to have to work harder. I am confident that we will be very competitive. We’re going to have to play ‘ironman football’ because a lot of players will play both ways, but that’s OK.”

The team leaders are senior quarterback Dillon Goodman, senior fullback Evan Crockett and junior halfback Justin Judd.

Masten said Goodman showed a great deal of improvement over the summer. Goodman was the state champion last spring in the 100-meter and 300-meter hurdles. He split time last season between quarterback and split end.

Crockett was slowed by leg injuries late in the season, according to Masten, but should be back near full strength when the football season begins.

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