

Greenfield poised for a breakout

It may have taken longer than expected, but this could finally be the breakout year for football at Greenfield High School.

For a team that has struggled to score — the Bruins have been shut out 17 times during their eight-year history — and never had so much as a .500 season until last year, Greenfield appears poised to make a run at the playoffs.

“I think so, I really think so,” Greenfield coach Bill Riddell said after being asked if the Bruins are a Central Coast Section playoff contender. “We’re pretty excited about this year.”

Rightfully so for a program that has a career record of 18-60 and never won more than three games in any season until last year’s 5-5 record.

The 2006 record looks even better considering how Greenfield finished the season. After blowing a 14-0 halftime lead at home to rival King City in a 23-14 loss, the Bruins rebounded to win their final three games.

If those three wins weren’t enough to get Greenfield eager to start this season, there are these three players: Chris Breaux, Aaron Zamora and Jesus Briseno.

The trio of running backs combined for 10 100-yard plus games last year.

Only once did all three play in the same game.

Breaux, the younger brother



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Greenfield High running backs from left, Jesus Briseno, Chris Breaux and Aaron Zamora pose for a portrait during practice last month.

of former Greenfield 1,000-yard rusher Andrew Breaux, went down with a knee injury in the third game of the season and didn’t return until two games remained to be played.

After rushing for 743 yards as a sophomore Breaux, a projected 1,000-yard rusher himself, ran for 390 yards and averaged 6.7 yards per carry.

The a 5-10, 205-pounder, was replaced by the 6-foot, 190-pound Zamora, who averaged better than 10 yards per carry while running for 477 yards before breaking a fibula against

Pacific Grove halfway through the season.

But all that did was give Briseno, a 5-7, 150-pounder, the chance to become probably the surprise player of the year in the MTAL, if not the entire county.

Despite a rough start — he fumbled twice in his first game and rushed for only 66 yards in the first four games — Briseno had the most productive second half to the year of any player in the county.

He turned on the jets to become the league’s rushing champion by rattling off games

of 128, 221, 120, 237, 271 and 182 yards.

Briseno finished with 1,224 yards and 17 touchdowns — 14 in the final three games — and came from nowhere to be crowned Offensive Back of the Year in the MTAL.

The three backs combined for more than 2,100 yards and 27 touchdowns.

This year, they’ll all be in the backfield at the same time.

“It’ll put a lot of pressure on the defense,” Riddell said. “We’ll have to spread it around to keep the defense honest.”

The hope at Greenfield is that

Bruins schedule

Sept. 7: Coast Union (Cambria), 7
Sept. 15: Harbor at Soquel High, 2:30 p.m.
Sept. 21: At Tranquility, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 28: Pacific Grove, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 6: At Stevenson, 2 p.m.
Oct. 12: At King City, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 19: Gonzales, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 27: At Carmel, 2 p.m.
Nov. 2: Wilson Prep, 7:30 p.m.
Nov. 9: Soledad, 7:30 p.m.

its offensive line is up to the challenge.

“We lost most of our offensive line,” he noted. “But we like the guys we have coming back.”

The hole punchers up front are 6-1, 220-pound Frank Telles, 210-pound Sal Trujillo and 225-pound Casthelani Florez.

Not only does Greenfield have all its running backs returning, but also its quarterback in junior Juan Sanchez.

As a sophomore, Sanchez completed 42 of 90 passes for 379 yards.

The Greenfield defense is keyed by returning first-team all-leaguer Noe Alvarez, a 6-2, 230-pounder. He’ll be joined on the line by nose guard Sergio Tamayo.

Not only does this year look promising for Greenfield, but so does the future. According to Riddell nearly 100 students showed up for football this year, nearly 30 more than last season.

Gonzales knows anything’s possible

Even if it takes a miracle to resurrect the Gonzales High School football team, folks at the south Monterey County school have faith it can happen.

They know by now almost anything is possible.

They witnessed it firsthand last year when the Gonzales High boys soccer team, seeded 16th and last in the Central Coast Section Division II playoffs, staged one come-from-behind win after another during a heroic run to become the first team in school history to claim a section crown.

“Every sport thinks because they (boys soccer team) did it, why can’t we do it,” Gonzales football coach Joe Pacheco said.

Some of those soccer players who performed the “Miracle on Grass” will be on the football team this year.

“We hardly have ever had any soccer players go out for football before,” Pacheco said. “It’s too bad, because they are such good athletes.”

Maybe that little extra kick will be just what a school with one of the richest football traditions in the county needs to get going again.

Gonzales was one of the Monterey County powerhouses in the 1970s (five straight titles from 1971-75) and after struggling in the 1980s, began a resurgence in 1995 that lasted for another eight years.

But things hit rock bottom in 2005 when the Spartans had

Spartans schedule

Sept. 7: Santa Maria, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 14: Alisal, 7:30 p.m.
Sept. 21: Open
Sept. 28: At Pajaro Valley, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 6: At Carmel, 2 p.m.
Oct. 12: Soledad, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 19: At Greenfield, 7:30 p.m.
Oct. 26: At Pacific Grove, 7:30 p.m.
Nov. 2: Stevenson, 7:30 p.m.
Nov. 9: King City, 7:30 p.m.

their first winless season in school history, and they followed that with a 1-8-1 season last year — Pacheco’s first as head coach.

Pacheco, who has been at Gonzales High for 24 years as an instructor, is trying to upgrade a team at a school where enrollment took a big hit when Soledad and Greenfield high schools were added to the south Salinas Valley eight years

ago.

“We went from about 1,500 students to 625,” Pacheco said.

It made for a better classroom environment, but it didn’t do much for the athletic program.

“The first practice we had last year, we had 10 kids,” Pacheco said. “This year we had 35.”

Things are looking so much better that Gonzales is planning to add a freshman team for the first time since the south county school expansion.

“I think the community is starting to come around,” Pacheco said. “We’ve been meeting with parents of the freshmen, we talked to kids after eighth-grade graduation,

and there seems to be more hope. More kids are interested.”

Gonzales returns quarterback Ryan Moline, the first Spartan to throw for more than 1,000 yards in four years.

David Castro, who led the Spartans in receiving yards with 304 and was a second-team safety, is also back.

Newcomer Isaiah Jimenez could be one of the featured running backs, while Carlos Perez and Ricky Amador are returning linemen.

“We competed well in the first half in most our games last year,” Pacheco said.

“Only we tired at the end. But we’re moving forward with the program. We have more players and should be more athletic.”