

## Football team takes it to the limit

Written by Deb Egenberger  
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### Swedes finish 6-5 deep into state playoffs

High school football coaches often ask their players to leave it all on the field, especially late in the season when wins are necessary to continue playing.

Gothenburg's football coach never had to question whether his players were giving their all or not. He knew.

"I don't know if I've ever said this in all the years I've been coaching," said Craig Haake, "but I think this group of kids pretty much topped out."

Sure, there were games during the regular season the Swedes would have liked back. A one-point loss to Broken Bow after a failed two-point conversion and an overtime defeat by Chase County, to name a couple.

But the Swedes finished 6-5 in the third round of the Class C-1 state playoffs, one of the last eight teams to be playing.

"I think we took this team as far as we could go," Haake said. "It was a great group to work with and I think they had fun."

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Part of that fun, he said, came from an unselfish attitude among the players.

“We had numerous kids who stepped into roles they maybe weren’t expecting and embraced them for the good of the team,” the coach said.



For instance, senior Garrett James had filled a tight end position and saw little, if any, varsity playing time before moving to the offensive line this year.

Jake Matthies was another senior lineman that Haake said did his work in the trenches with little recognition.

And junior Skyler Kottwitz started in the backfield but he didn’t carry the ball much. He knew it was more important for him to block for teammates.

“They don’t get in the spotlight but the team and the coaches understand the job they’re doing. We all know we wouldn’t have had the same kind of success without it,” Haake said. “They say sports doesn’t build character, it exposes it. This group as a whole is a fine example of that.”

Senior Logan Sheets, a team captain, is the only one from this year’s team to make the school’s all-time Top 10 in football.

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Sheets rushed for 823 yards on 158 carries with six touchdowns this fall to rack up a total of 1,906 yards in his career to finish sixth on the list.

“Logan was a three-year starter,” Haake said, “and our long snapper as a freshman. He has been a steady player and he elevated his play so much this year.”

Sheets was the second leading rusher for the Swedes as a junior and figured out that opponents were going to key on him every game.

“He was willing to do whatever was needed,” Haake said. “Sometimes that meant he served as a decoy.”

Fellow senior Preston Franzen ended up Gothenburg’s leading rusher this year, passing Sheets by 58 yards for a total of 881 on 153 carries.

Sophomore Zach Wolf chipped in 389 yards on 82 attempts.

In the passing game, junior quarterback Blake Ristine completed 42-of-94 attempts for 637 yards and six touchdowns.

Senior Logan Koehler topped the Swedes with 15 receptions for 260 yards.



“Logan had a great season,” Haake said. “He went from a skinny tight end to starting both ways.”

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Wolf added 229 yards with 15 catches.

Defensively, Sheets led the way with 132 total tackles, including 27 solos.

Although the Swedes will lose nine contributors to graduation next spring, Haake is optimistic about the future.

“We will bring back some very talented underclassmen,” he said. “I hope they’ve figured out how to bottle the recipe for work ethic they’ve been shown by this group of seniors.”

