**ALL IN**

***The Osbourn Park Yellow Jackets are ready to make big strides in 2018***

***By Sean O’Brien***

*Recently I got a chance to sit down with a handful of this year’s impact players (Luke Nitowski, Reilly Pettit, Anthony Smoot, Jordan Barnett) for the Osbourn Park Yellow Jackets to see their progress in the offseason, find out their goals and what the mindset is like before their season opener versus TC Williams.*

1. **How has your summer been?**

**Barnett:** I went to Jamaica. A different experience, a different culture. For the team we would go to Buffalo Wild Wings, Preston’s Pub and we’d hang out. We also built a lot of chemistry in the 7-on-7’s.

**Pettit:** It’s been good, but I have done nothing but workout and go to football practice. We had a dead week so I went to the beach. Even then I was still working out at the beach: running, swimming. Does eating count?

**Smoot:** My summer has been pretty good. I’ve been focusing on football and building connections with my teammates to make sure everyone in on the same page this year and is ready for the season.

**Nitowski**: Going to Shenandoah Valley to practice together for three or four days really brought the team closer together. I feel this year’s team has a lot more talent and we are bonding better and ready to surprise everyone this year.

1. **Did you do anything football-related on your own?**

**Pettit:** I wanted to be in the best shape for the season mentally and physically. I watched a lot of film and studying plays. I’ll watch other teams to get better. The best way is to watch those better than you and what they are doing. I try to incorporate new things.

**Barnett:** I worked on my footwork a lot. Last year was not good enough. I worked with my trainer and watched a lot of film on our opponents, too. I’ve also been running a lot so I can improve my endurance. Last year I wasn’t in the best shape.

**Smoot:** The biggest thing I have done to prepare for this season is making sure I am better than I was before I got hurt. I have been in the weight room a lot this offseason to get stronger and going to camps to play with the best competition. I’ve been doing speed training and I have been studying the game and watching film to be the best player I am capable of being.

**Nitowski:** I’ve been watching film all summer with my dad to break down my opponents. This week it was TC. That really helps and very excited to play them. My dad gives me technique tips and who I have to read to make the play as a linebacker since he was one. Mentally you need to know all the plays and where the running back is going to go, how I will react. Physically I want to get stronger and faster and feel I have done that.

1. **Do you feel more pressure to be a leader or does it come naturally?**

**Smoot:** I feel it comes naturally. All my senior friends last year were leaders and they helped me out last season. This season I feel it’s my job to help the underclassmen.

**Pettit:** I’m used to leading from last year. I don’t want to have an iron grip. I let the team lead itself and I give it a push every once in a while. I don’t have the biggest voice. I speak for the team.

**Barnett:** There’s more pressure but I am willing to deal with it.

**Nitowski:** As a senior it’s on my shoulders- but whether we win or lose we are all together. If we lose I’ll work to get better and make sure we are all on track.

1. **Off the field, what is the biggest difference?**

**Smoot:** The biggest difference this year is that players come to me for advice and I do my best to assist them.

**Pettit:** Other than that I am a senior and not a junior- not much.

**Barnett**: Grade-wise…last year was difficult as a freshman, but I look to have my feet under me this year and do better.

1. **Biggest takeaway from offseason workouts, practices?**

**Smoot:** You only get one senior year and you have to make the best of it. You never know when a play will impact the game, so go one-hundred percent on each play.

**Pettit:** If you’re going to be in- all in. You can’t be on the edge or halfway. You need to commit yourself. Our coaching staff preaches that- they’re a bunch of characters. We have a lot of changes with a whole new range of people and it’s an interesting time.

**Barnett:** ALL IN. Go a hundred percent every play. Give in to the program.

**Nitowski:** We have a whole new defensive coaching staff. I love them. They know everything and teach us so well. Coach Johnson is with us every day. We have a pre-practice and I feel prepared every time I step on the field. Coach Evans is a lot more focused on both sides of the ball. We are looking great with a new QB. He’s looking to win as are we.

1. **Goals for the season?**

**Smoot:** I want us to have a winning record and make the playoffs. My academic goal is to have a 4.0 GPA. Personally, I would like to have 1,000 yards receiving with at least 15 touchdowns and 7 interceptions.

**Pettit**: I want to stay above a 3.5 so I can get into a good college, even if not for football. I want to have a winning season and go to the playoffs. I want to get better than last year.

**Barnett**: I want to average a 3.0 and to make the honor roll. I also want to run for 1,000 yards and 15 touchdowns.

**Nitowski:** I need to make the best of it in the classroom. Education first- do well there and move on to sports and make it the best year I’ve had.

1. **Schools of interest?**

**Smoot:** The school I go to does not really matter to me. As long as I get the chance to play at the next level, I am extremely blessed.

**Pettit**: For academics, not really. But I have been looking at UVA, Richmond, Lafayette, Bucknell.

**Barnett**: I talk to Virginia Tech a lot. That’s my favorite school so far. I would want to be a lawyer.

**Nitowsk**i: CNU, Shippensburg, Hampton-Sydney. I’d like to study business and finance.

1. **Team goals?**

**Smoot:** We want to go 1-0 every single week with a winning season and make the playoffs.

**Pettit**: We want a winning record at home.

**Barnett:** We want to have a winning record at home and beat Colgan. That’s a big one.

**Nitowski:** What they all said, plus win a playoff game.

1. **Mindset heading into Friday versus Forest Park?**

**Smoot**: If it’s not wearing blue and gold and has a heartbeat- kill it.

**Pettit:** You got to hit them hard and hit them fast. If you don’t- they’ll put you in the ground. I want the fans to come out and cheer us on and we’ll be trying our hardest.

**Barnett**: Win. The fans need to come out and watch us beat TC.

**Nitowski:** We are going to win. It won’t be easy and we’ll put in all we have with 110% on each play. GO OP!

Keep it tuned to yellowjacketathletics.org for more on this year’s team including scores, game recaps, player profiles, players of the week and more.

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