

Skyline Eagles 2009 preview

By John Coon
Deseret News

Tradition at Skyline dictates the Eagles are perennial state title contenders. It is the way things have developed from the time Roger Dupaix began building up the Eagles football program more than two decades ago.

Those championship expectations have not seen fulfillment since 2005. Given how accustomed Skyline grew to winning state titles throughout the 90s, a three-year drought feels like an eternity.

Coming up short only fuels desires to return the Eagles to the pinnacle of 5A football. This year's senior class understands their path to a championship hinges on what they do as early as week one.

"Everyone's goal is a state championship," senior defensive back **Brian Orr** said. "But we've got to get there first by looking at it one step at a time."

Skyline already has a good start just by returning some solid playmakers at different positions. **Algernon Brown**, a three-year starter, returns to lead the backfield once again. The senior, who has committed to play for BYU, will

Skyline at a glance

Coach: **Roger Dupaix**, the architect of Skyline's football dynasty, is entering his 24th season at the school with a record of 226-61. Overall, he is embarking on his 33rd season as a head coach and sports a 281-99 record.

Key Players: Skyline will get a big boost just by returning senior fullback **Algernon Brown**. Injuries limited Brown a little during his junior season, but when healthy he is hard to stop. **Chase Dunford** had a successful run as the JV Quarterback in '08 and now takes over the position at the varsity level. Devin Filipe and **Brian Orr** are both returning starters on defense.

Strengths: Things could not look better for Skyline on defense and in the backfield. Those areas always need to be at peak level for the Eagles to dominate and that certainly looks to be the case this year. Depth, talent and experience are in abundant qualities in both areas.

Concerns: Passing has never been a big element in Skyline's offense, but it will need to have more than a token role when the 5A tournament rolls around. If Dunford can make plays through the air as needed, it will keep teams from keying on the run game alone.

Predicted Region 2 finish: Second.

Postseason Possibilities: Skyline reached the 5A semifinals a year ago and with the amount of returning talent, another semifinal berth is not out of the question. While a trip to the finals or even claiming a state title might be less likely, it is never wise to count the Eagles out.



Dupaix

be focal point for most opposing defenses as they seek a way to contain the Eagles' option attack.

Brown is a tough customer when it comes to stopping him. He missed some games because of injuries as a junior, but still managed to rack up 840 yards and 10 touchdowns while averaging 6.4 yards per carry. If Brown stays full healthy, it's not hard to see him eclipsing the 1,000

yard mark as a senior.

"He should have a great year," Dupaix said.

That prediction could just as easily cover **Andy Rounds** - Brown's running mate in the backfield. The junior made a name for himself as a sprinter on Skyline's track team. Rounds finished fourth in the 400 at the 5A state meet with a time of 48.50 seconds.

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Rounds should offer a speedy option to contrast Brown's power running style.

A third element in the option offense will be **Chase Dunford** - the incoming senior quarterback. Dunford led the JV team last season and Dupaix thinks what he did there has prepared him to step up to the next level. Dunford understands expectations will be heightened for him in that role since a good quarterback is essentially the lynchpin for the whole offense.

"Skyline has always had a great tradition at quarterback," Dunford said. "It feels like an honor to be one of them. Hopefully, I can rise up to the expectations a bit and succeed."

As good as things look on offense, they look even better on defense where multiple starters and contributors return across the board. **Devan Filipe** and Orr are returning starters on the defensive line and in the secondary respectively. Joining Filipe in the front seven are seniors **Vincent Fonua**, **Garrett Battaglia** and **Mitch Larsen**.

The secondary has plenty of depth alongside Orr with **Taylor Daily**, **Carson Hymas** and **Jared Hultquist** all slated to contribute there.



Skyline players gather around to celebrate a victory during the 2008 season. The Eagles were expected to finish second in Region 2 in 2009.

Experience isn't the only defensive asset for Skyline. The Eagles also possess a degree of tenacity that should make life tough for offenses on Friday nights.

"Our motto is 'wolf pack'," Larsen said. "It's just our mentality on defense. We always swarm to the ball. Get as many jerseys on the other guy as we can."

Besides a Region 2 changeover that reunites Skyline with some traditional rivals, the Eagles will also see

the return of an important non-league rivalry. Olympus and Skyline agreed to resume the Battle for the Rock this fall for the first time since 2005. Ex-Titan coach Mark Smith halted the annual series a few years ago because he did not think he had enough numbers to be competitive with the Eagles.

That decision proved unpopular at both schools and both teams are glad to have that bit of tradition restored.

"We've circled that date on our calendars," Orr said.