

'Cats to get idea of how far they've come in facing Gateway

To open WPIAL Quad-A South Conference play

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Ray Reitz isn't ready to say Greater Latrobe has arrived.

But he would like to get an idea of just how far the Wildcats have come in a little more than a year since he took over as the team's head football coach.

There's one way to find out.

And Reitz says he and his players will do just that when Gateway (0-2) — winless and all — comes calling Friday (7:30 p.m.) at Memorial Stadium in the WPIAL Quad-A South Conference opener.

"I think this is going to tell us where we're at," Reitz offered. "This is a measuring stick for us.

"They're a tremendous program," Reitz said of the Gators, "and have been for several years now. They're still a very good football team.

"They're still dangerous. And I'm sure they're going to come in here mad."

Reitz is referring to Gateway not only being winless, but having scored just one touchdown — one — in two games. And he also was quick to point out that the Gators were shut out (23-0) by the top-ranked team in the state in Class AAA, Bishop McDevitt, and lost (18-7) last week to always-strong Penn Hills.

Gateway, which has been to the WPIAL championship game in each of the last three seasons,

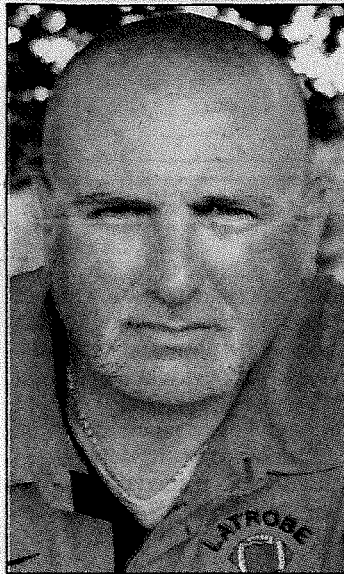
is trying to break in a sophomore quarterback with the graduation of a four-year starter (Rob Kalkstein) who threw for more than 6,000 career yards, along with three skill-position players who received NCAA Division I scholarships. On top of that, the Gators lost wide receiver Dondi Kirby back in June to a torn ACL.

Taking over at quarterback for Gateway is Thomas Woodson, a 6-foot-1, 170-pound sophomore. His 23-yard toss to wide receiver Wayne Blye (6-1, 160, Sr.) against Penn Hills has accounted for the Gators' one and only touchdown thus far this season.

But Gateway isn't without talent. The Gators have a number of players who are being recruited by Division I schools, most notably wide receiver/linebacker Armstead Williams (6-2, 205, Sr.), fullback/defensive end Demond Haynes (5-10, 205, Sr.), running backs Brian Jones (5-10, 170, Jr.) and Darin Franklin (5-9, 165, Soph.), and defensive end Sascha Craig (6-2, 225, Sr.) while lineman Jason Crystol (5-10, 250, Sr.) is also a returning starter.

As always, Gateway has the speed to go with it. And that's the one thing that teams have trouble trying to simulate in practice, although Reitz says he

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— Ray Reitz
GL head coach

230, Sr.). The Wildcats also limited Canon-McMillan to just 53 yards rushing and 156 total in a 27-0 shutout.

"I thought we played well on both sides of the ball," Reitz observed. "You need both to win.

"I thought we played a little more physical. The big thing right now is we're attacking people and getting after them.

"I think what's happening is that the kids aren't thinking as much. They're just playing football."

Gavin Finley (5-10, 180, Sr.) became the third GL running back in two games to rush for more than 100 yards, finishing with 129 and a touchdown that went for 53 while quarterback D.J. Lonigro (6-2, 190, Sr.) had two one-yard scores as the 'Cats established control of the line of scrimmage right out of the gate with a 15-play, 60-yard TD drive against Canon-McMillan.

really doesn't attempt to.

"I think when you play against speed, you have to attack it. You have to go right at it," Reitz suggested.

"We're not going to outrun them. We all know that.

"We have to make them play our game instead of us trying to chase them all over the field. We have to try to make it real physical and go right at them.

"That's what I'm saying about what type of football team we have. We're going to find out

about where our team is right now."

That's the way Greater Latrobe (2-0) played last week, pushing around Canon-McMillan to the tune of 332 yards and a 6.9 average per attempt behind its starting offensive line of center Scott Critchfield (5-10, 240, Jr.), guards Jake Stewart (6-0, 250, Sr.) and Dylan Colucci (6-5, 285, Jr.), and tackles Carmen Sylvania (6-0, 250, Sr.) and Will Redinger (6-1, 245, Sr.) along with tight end Ean Jury (6-1,

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to the football."

That's what the Wildcats will have to do in dealing with Gateway's speed. But, again, Reitz is hoping to turn it into a different type of game.

"Defensively, I think we have some kids who can run with them," Reitz suggested. "I'm not saying that we have as much team speed as they do, but I think we're quicker than they are up front.

"You can't give up the big play against them. You've got to make them drive the ball.

"I've already heard that, 'Well, you're playing Gateway now, so it's over.' Well, we'll find out.

"To be honest, I don't even know if they respect us," Reitz said of the Gators. "But all I care about is what our kids think.

"It's a tremendous challenge," he continued. "Now we're going to see how we respond.

"It's not even about winning. It's about competing the entire game.

"This is a big game. It's nice that we have a chance to play in a game like this. Now, let's see if we accept the challenge. We're going to find out whether we're a contender or pretender.

"I think it's going to be fun. This is why you play the games.

"We're not where we want to be as a program, but I think we're going in the right direction," Reitz concluded.