

Eastern High School football Head Coach John Dablow hesitates to call this a rebuilding season for the Musketeers.

At the same time, however, he is a realist and knows that many of the kids he and his staff will depend on this year don't have varsity experience.

Anytime you enter a season with youth and inexperience, the only way to know what is going to happen is to play the games.

"We are young," Dablow said. "I do think we have some guys who can play on Friday nights, but we'd like to have more. We're kind of young and thin on the varsity level. We've got 50 guys on the roster, but of that, close to 35 are either freshmen or sophomores.

"Coach Mo (Salem Head Coach Mo Moriarity) used this last year, but we looked out in the parking lot and we had four cars in the parking lot because so many of our players are too young to drive!"

Even with youth and depth being an issue, Dablow isn't using that as an excuse.

"We feel good," he said. "We had a good camp and the kids are working hard. The seniors that we do have are very capable of getting the job done."

Eastern has nine seniors on the roster. They are, Carson Newcomb, Jacob Hornung, Jordan Huntley, Kaleb Nicholson, Steven Raisor, Justin Thomas, Luke Terry, Dakota Newbolds and Jordan Omerso.

Dablow said a few of those upperclassmen have varsity experience, but not a lot.

"A couple of those guys were hurt last year," he said. "They probably would have been starters for us, but they were injured and didn't get a whole season in. Out of our group of seniors we have one who maybe played a full varsity season. Even the guys who have been here for a while don't have a lot of experience. They are good players and they've been with us for a while, but they lack experience. That will come real quick this year."

Besides the seniors the players fans can expect to hear from include sophomore starting quarterback Austin Roberts.

"We are going to start throwing the ball more," he said. "We've been kind of one dimensional the last few years. We need to get past that and spread it around more. We feel like we have a quarterback who can throw it and we look forward to watching him to see how he does."

Dablow said Terry will play fullback for the Musketeers, but said that position will see a lot of players get carries.

Carson Newcomb, Caleb Nicholson, Mike Hall, Thomas Gray and Scott Ames will all get carries in the EHS offense.

"This year we don't have the Trey Albertson or the Ryan Tandy, like we've had in the past who was more like our every down back," Dablow said. "We think we have a more balanced group. Everyone of them can play and give us a different look. It might be a little different because in the past we've been a one-man show, but this year we will spread the ball around more."

Dablow said those ball carriers will have a talented group of linemen blocking for them.

He said that unit looked solid in last Friday's scrimmage against Tell City.

"I didn't think that group did bad at all," he said. "I was pleased with how they played."

Jacob Timmons, Hornung, Raisor, Ethan Watson, Newbolds and Brayton Brading will play in the offensive line rotation.

Watson is a freshman and while Dablow usually likes to avoid playing ninth-graders on Friday night, he said this case is different.

"I don't like to play freshmen on varsity and I try to avoid it all costs if I can," he said. "Ethan has worked really hard this summer. It will be hard for him because the game moves at a different speed. He is a kid who will be able to adjust. He is quick and has a high football IQ and he has the kind of body that can take the physical play."

On the defensive side of the ball, Eastern's down fall against Tell City was giving up the big play.

"We thought coming in that our defense would be our strength because we have the most guys returning," Dablow said. "We tried some different looks in the scrimmage, but what killed us was giving up the big play. We got beat over the top in the passing game two or three times and we had a couple of big runs against us where we didn't make the tackle or pursue."

Some of the players who Dablow will rely on defensively, include Hornung, Newcomb, Huntley, Thomas, Nicholson, Nick Jenkins, Ames, Hall and Gray.

Ryan Arnold will play nose tackle for the Musketeers. Timmons and Raisor will play the ends and Terry will rotate in and out as well.

After starting 1-19 as a varsity program, Eastern brought Dablow in as head coach.

He guided the Musketeers to three wins during his first season and they have posted five wins the last two seasons.

Accomplishing five wins with so many young players this year would be a good accomplishment.

Dablow said he isn't sure about wins and losses and he has heard the talk that many think the program will struggle this year.

"We've challenged the kids," he said. "People aren't expecting much from us this year. We think we have a couple who can play on Friday nights. We think we have a team who we think can compete like we have in past years. We just have to challenge them to step-up and play football on Friday nights.

"I don't like the term, 'rebuild' but we are going to try to go out and compete and get better every week, which has been our goal since the inception of the football program."

The Musketeers open the season this Friday in Campbellsburg against West Washington.

Eastern beat the Senators 18-7 last year, but are just 1-4 since they started playing varsity football.

Friday's game is set to begin at 7 p.m.

A great forecast is called and fans are encouraged to get there early as a large crowd is expected.