



Andre Williams

## CONSISTENCY KEY TO PETERS TOWNSHIP'S SUCCESS

text and photo by  
ELEANOR BAILEY

**PETERS TOWNSHIP HAS ELIMINATED** the word "erratic" from its vocabulary. No longer is it acceptable to upset a favorite one week then fall to a lesser opponent the next as the Indians did in 2016 while compiling a mediocre record in the WPIAL Class 6A Southeastern Conference.

"We want our guys to be consistent," said TJ Plack, who enters his second season at the helm. "It's definitely a goal to win a conference championship, but you have to take that one game at a time. We can't have a real good win and then turn around and not win a game that we are supposed to. We need to be the best we can be every day because every game is very important."

To play at their best, the Indians need to do the little things – perfect the practices and execute during weight training. And, it starts with the players, says Plack.

"With good teams, coaches take care of attendance like in the weight room. Great teams," Plack emphasized, "the kids do that. The kids police themselves. It's not all that you see on the outside in the game and on the field. It is inside, all the workouts, all the reps. It's a mindset."

Senior Jake Cortes has set the example for this year's club. "Jake's a leader on and off the field. He's here every day," Plack said. "He's a quality student, experienced, very intelligent and a tremendous kid. We expect him to continue to grow and take more onto his shoulders."

In 2016, Cortes, who is being recruited by Patriot and Ivy League colleges, passed for 2,036 yards and 19 touchdowns.

"We expect Jake to be productive," Plack said. "He's very valuable to us on offense."

So are seniors Conor Pederson and Andre Williams and junior Gabe Maloni. They are veteran receivers and top targets for Cortes. Pederson, a transfer from Seton-La Salle, is a "viable option." Plack noted Maloni has good hands and is "tough." Williams is expected to have a breakout year because his body weight has caught up to his height. That should help him on defense as he starts at cornerback.

After that, Plack said there are a lot of unknowns regarding the team. The Indians hope to get a good year out of the tailback spot as they audition players. No starters return at the line positions.

"We have to see people in action," Plack said. "Fullback is up in the air. We have to see who can block. While we had two guys who were spot starters on the line, we have to look at where they will play and what works as far as their skill sets for who is better for guard, center or tackle. We are looking for the five toughest kids that we have and we want them to mesh together as one unit."

Senior Tanner Scott and junior Seth Luksik battle sophomores Adrian Williams and Ryan Magiske for the tailback spot. Angelo Quarture has shown signs of being a great blocker at fullback or tight end and will be a defensive end.

Meanwhile, Bryan Beller and Nick Merandi spearhead the line as the most experienced players. Shane O'Connell, Logan Clark, Ian Chaudhari and Rob Corrado are juniors who are being

sorted out for spots on the line along with talented sophomores.

O'Connell, Clark and Quarture all started last year on the defensive line and will be anchored there along with Jakob Cervenak, a junior. The Scott brothers, Clayton and Tanner, are experienced linebackers and winners, having played on PT's WPIAL championship lacrosse squad.

The Indians will rely upon juniors, including Corey Hines and Luksik, as well as newcomer Luke Mary, in the middle of the defense. A wrestler, Mary has impressed because of his speed and quickness.

The secondary features veterans Aidan McCall, Pederson, Adrian Williams on the corners. Andre Williams is a free safety while Magiski and Maloni fill the strong safety spot.

"Defensively, we have experience at linebacker. We're athletic and we have kids that you like to have at that position," Plack said. "We have experience on the line but those guys were so young last year. They're still young."

The Indians will have growing pains on the line, particularly on offense.

"Games are won and lost in the trenches," Plack said. "We've got to improve on the O-line. That will be on our mind all season because of the young guys, who are not experienced players. But, I'm anxious to watch them grow and gel."

Plack anticipates they will also grow into contenders. Opponents like conference champion Mt. Lebanon and runner-up Bethel Park are where the Indians want to be. ■

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