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Krecisz keeps Vikings focused despite struggles

By Ryan Nagelhout Niagara Gazette

— — Eddie Krecisz can point out every scuff and chip on his white Grand Island football helmet and name the school that gave it to him. The wins haven't come this season, but the hits sure have.

"We can all say that our season was disappointing because we didn't get the wins," Krecisz said. "A couple plays here and there could have changed the ballgame for us, but I'm not going to say it was a totally unsuccessful season for us. We accomplished a lot as a team."

Like most high school players, football is about more than just winning for Krecisz. Improving yourself and gaining respect doesn't show up on the scoreboard, but Krecisz has done both in coach Dean Santorio's eyes.

"Eddie's been great for us," Santorio said. "I think the thing with Eddie is that he has a great work ethic, and even though he had a great junior year, catching 24 balls for close to 400 yards, he put in a lot of time in the weight room and got himself to be stronger and quicker. His hands kept improving because he worked at it and he's just a big threat for us and a guy we know we can count on."

Krecisz has had a strong senior year at wideout for the Vikings, but it could have turned out much differently after an injury against Starpoint.

"I had an injury and wasn't able to play in the North Tonawanda game. It was definitely upsetting, but I actually thought it was going to be worse than it was," Krecisz said. "I thought I was going to miss my entire season but I ended up only missing a week and coming back strong and having a good game against Will. East."

The injury bug has hit the Vikings hard, with a pair of linemen missing extended time with concussions and running back Danny Blocho out since early this season. With the running game struggling, Krecisz has had an even bigger role in the offense this season.

"Obviously our injuries have been a big factor all year," Santorio said. "We probably haven't run the ball as well as we'd like so we have thrown it a little more because we felt we needed to, and luckily we have a guy like Eddie that's come through."

Krecisz saw the field as a junior but played in shadow of then-senior Nick Kellner.

"Last year I was behind the animal, Nick Kellner, that's what they called him," Krecisz said. "I'll tell you what, that guy, he was crazy. He was really athletic and I learned a lot from him. Coming into this season knowing that I was the No. 1 receiver, I just wanted to

show everyone that I could be as athletic as him, I could accomplish as much as him, maybe even more. (I wanted to) show coach Santorio and the rest of my teammates that when the game is on the line I could come through.”

Santorio said his route running and attention to detail on the field have made him indispensable in the offense, especially as he took Kellner’s place as the top receiving threat for the Vikings.

“He took that role on and wanted to be that guy,” Santorio said. “A lot of our success on offense has been because of us being able to get him the ball and him being able to do things after the catch.”

Krecisz wants the ball when the game gets tight, and he wants his team to know he can come through in those moments.

“For me, it’s making that big catch and getting a first down,” he said. “Fourth down and however many yards you need, coach calls a route to my side because he believes I can get it. And for me, that’s just as good as scoring a touchdown and doing any of that.”

For all the scrapes and bruises the 2-4 Vikings have endured this season, playoff football won’t be in the cards for Grand Island. After Saturday’s game against McKinley the Vikings will be consolation bowl-bound, but Krecisz hopes staying with Sweet Home for most of a 38-21 loss can give his team a boost in the high school football scene.

“I think we proved against Sweet Home that we should have some more respect than we’ve been getting,” Krecisz said. “I just want to go into these last two or three games and take them seriously. And just really enjoy these last two-and-a-half weeks with my teammates and do what I can to make sure we win.”

