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exploreVenango

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The left guard and left tackle both tip the scales at more than 300 pounds.

The right tackle is nearly 290.

Even the tight end is huge. He's 6-foot-5 and 285 pounds. He has the blocking chops of a tackle, but the agility of a running back.

This isn't an NFL team. This isn't even a Division I college football program.

This is the Oil City High School offensive line.

And they are dominating.

"It's kind of crazy that I'm only the third biggest guy up front, weight-wise," said senior Cam Crocker, who sometimes shuttles between tight end and the offensive line. "I could feel we were going to be good after last year. We weren't getting the movement last year, but this year after watching people work in the weight room over the summer, it got me excited. They're coming out and showing it."

How good has this line been?

They've helped junior running back Ethen Knox to an already historic season.

Through four weeks, Knox has rushed for 1,575 yards (an average of 393.8 per game, which leads the nation) and 21 touchdowns.

His rushing yardage total is second in the country, just 20 yards behind Malaki Dowell of White County High School in Sparta, Tenn. Dowell has played one more game.

The guys up front for Oil City take a lot of pride in paving the way for Knox, who has three consecutive 400 yard rushing games.

"We love it," Crocker said. "And I gotta give him the credit, too, because he gives us props for every one of his touchdowns. When we're watching film, he'll point out what we're doing and say, 'Good blocks, guys.' He does a great job of letting us know that we're doing our job and not just being selfish about it. That's one of the great things about Ethen."

In fact, Knox has tried to show his appreciation in other ways.

"Actually after the Franklin game he said, 'I'll bring you guys doughnuts on Monday,'" Crocker said, chuckling.

“He’s a real nice guy,” said junior left guard Henry Milford. “That’s why we all work well together. Everyone on the team is really good friends. We have good chemistry. I have faith in our running back and he has faith in us that we are going to open up that hole for him.”

Knox is an exciting blend of size and quickness. At 6-1 and 175 pounds with sprinter’s speed, he can burst through any hole. And he’s had some big ones to run through thanks to that line.

Knox doesn’t pass up an opportunity to say how much he appreciates the big dudes up front.

“I definitely try to give credit where it’s due,” Knox said last week. “I try to help them out as much as they can for all that they do for me. They make me look like a superstar when they’re doing all the work.”

It isn’t just Knox reaping the benefit of the mauling offensive line.

Oil City has rushed for 1,973 yards and 28 TDs as a team. That’s seven touchdowns and nearly 500 yards on the ground per game.

Tanner Kightlinger is the youngest of the linemen and also one of the biggest. The sophomore weighs in at more than 300 pounds at left tackle.

Next to him is junior Henry Milford, who tops out at 310 pounds.

“Or 305, depending on what I eat that day,” Milford said, laughing.

The center is senior Jacob VanWormer. The right guard is senior Logan Suttle and the right tackle is junior James O’Dell, who is 280 pounds himself.

Then there’s Crocker, who has one of the most unique skill sets around.

He wears two jersey numbers: No. 88 when he’s at tight end and No. 52 when he moves onto the line.

There are videos on social media of Crocker participating in agility drills with the skill position players and keeping up with them nearly step for step.

“I’m definitely quick,” Crocker said. “But I wouldn’t say I am fast.”

Still, his size and athleticism are getting him noticed.

Crocker is being recruited by a slew of college programs.

“It’s exciting and stressful at the same time, but you gotta love college coaches,” Crocker said. “They’re all super nice. They do a really good job reaching out to you, making you feel good about yourself and keeping in touch.”

The offensive line also bonded over the summer while competing in big man competitions around the area.

They impressed at those events.

“We’re all pretty strong and those competitions were really good for us,” Milford said.

As eye-popping as the rushing numbers have been for Oil City, the Oilers are most proud of the 4-0 start.

Last year, Oil City was a disappointing 3-5.

This year, the Oilers are winning games by an average score of 57-13.

“It’s pretty satisfying,” Milford said. “We have a running back who is at the top of the nation in rushing yards and rushing touchdowns and all that stuff. And it’s pretty satisfying to score all those points and win by so much. Last year, we didn’t have the best season mainly because we weren’t very experienced.”

Crocker said even though the Oilers are riding high at 4-0, they aren’t satisfied.

Not by a long shot.

Oil City travels to 2-2 Northwestern and then on Sept. 30 faces undefeated Meadville at home in a Region 4 showdown in District 10.

“It’s sitting in all of our heads right now,” Crocker said. “I can guarantee you that. That’s gonna be a battle.”