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St. Francis tries to change its style from flashy to physical

Failure to execute the spread offense or field a defense to contain the trendy formation led St. Francis football coach **Chris Lindquist** to make wholesale changes.

Instead of relying on his quarterbacks to throw on target, Lindquist wants his offensive linemen throwing their weight around in the running game. Rather than dropping back to cover the pass, Saints defenders will focus on crowding and controlling the line of scrimmage.

"I don't see those spread-type athletes coming up that you need to be competitive," Lindquist said. "We're more interested in building our program based on what football is -- being aggressive and physical. Our spread athletes didn't do that effectively against superior teams."

The ultimate goal is to improve the program. St. Francis' last winning season -- a 5-4 mark in 2005 -- was its second in 18 years. The Saints went 1-8 last season.

With a more productive running game and the ability to better defend other teams, Lindquist hopes to keep games closer and give his players a chance to win. And he has not ruled out a return to the spread offense someday, provided the program can turn around.

"In the spread, you need depth and skill at

receiver, and we don't have enough to go four or five wide," Lindquist said. "I think those kids are in the building, but when you lose they are not interested in coming out."

He has noticed a difference in the players who did come out this season.

"The first week of camp was the best I've had in 14 years," Lindquist said. "There was good energy and excitement and a lot of teaching and learning. I think it's due in part to simplifying things and being more aggressive."

Out of the frying pan

Already struggling to compete against the large Class 5A football schools in the Northwest Suburban Conference, Park Center successfully petitioned to drop down to Class 4A for the playoffs. The Pirates are the only NWSA team in Class 4A, but the playoff lineup will still present a huge challenge. They were assigned to Section 6 with the likes of Orono, Spring Lake Park and Totino-Grace.

Intriguing non-league games

Three of the top North Suburban Conference teams will again test their mettle against quality opponents outside the conference. Becker visits Totino-Grace on Sept. 25, Benilde-St. Margaret's goes on the road to St. Michael-Albertville on Oct. 14 and Irondale closes its regular-season schedule by playing host to Hopkins on Oct. 21. Pride is at stake. All three NSC teams lost their

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nonconference game last season.

Pumpkin Bowl set

The 62nd annual Pumpkin Bowl game pits host Anoka against Elk River at 7 p.m. on Wed., Oct. 14, at Goodrich Field. The Tornadoes are 1-1 in Pumpkin Bowl games against the Elks, including a 42-35 victory in 2003. The game started in 1948 to create another source of pageantry for Anoka, the self-proclaimed "Halloween Capital of the World."

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An advertisement for QuickLawn. The background is a close-up of green grass. On the left, there is a yellow-bordered box containing the text "QuickLawn" in large bold letters and "Gardeners' Choice" below it. To the right of this box, the text reads "An Evergreen Lawn all four seasons of the year!" followed by the website "www.quicklawnsale.com/deal". On the far right, there is a large orange circle containing the text "Starts GROWING in just 5 Days".

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