

Aug. 8 College Football: Quartucci ready to put redshirt lessons to use



Former Hamilton West standout Frank Quartucci (left) battles fellow offensive lineman Caleb Ruch during today's practice session (Photo by Thomas Ciszek/Rutgers Athletic Communications).

Hamilton grad Quartucci getting a look at center by Rutgers this year

By Rich Fisher

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Aug. 8: Tom Hoglen will be glad to know that, two years after the fact, Frank Quartucci finally agrees with him.

After red-shirting his freshman season at Rutgers last fall, the former Hamilton West All-Conference standout was moved from offensive tackle to center this past spring. He has come into pre-season camp looking to move up from third on the depth chart at that position.

It is his first time lining up in front of the quarterback, except for a few Hornet practice sessions.

“In high school, coach Hoglen had me snap a few times,” Quartucci said at Sunday’s Media Day. “He always warned me about the possibility of it happening.

“I guess I should have listened more,” he added with a grin.

The 2010 West graduate was a first-team All-Colonial Valley Conference pick on the offensive line in both Trenton papers and helped lead Hamilton to 210 rushing yards per game in 2009. He committed early to Rutgers and was able to enroll early and participate in spring practice during what should have been his senior year.

After watching and learning about life in college and Division I-A football in general last year, Quartucci was shifted to center during his second spring season.

“They said it would be a better opportunity for me, because there’s a lack of depth there,” Quartucci noted. “There’s more of an opportunity to travel, make the two deep roster.”

Rutgers biggest problem in 2010 was an offensive line that allowed an NCAA record 61 sacks. Three O-linemen were in their first year after switching over from defense, and all are back this year.

But as Quartucci noted, center is anything but stable as sophomore David Osei has become the starter after junior college transfer Dallas Hendrikson suffered a knee injury in the spring.

“I definitely feel like I’m getting more comfortable at center” Quartucci said. “The crazy part of it is, you have to worry about the ball every single play. I feel more comfortable there, but it’s just a work in progress right now.”

Quartucci comes into camp a lot more at ease after using last year’s redshirt season as sort of a football classroom.

“You learn the ways of Division I football,” he said. “You’re not in the mix but you still get to learn the system so there’s not as much pressure on you. You get to get bigger and stronger by doing the non-travel workouts. So yeah, I’m definitely grateful I was able to do that.”

He has bulked up to 6-foot-4, 300 pounds and is now getting on-the-job training.

“I just want to learn the offense more and make more improvements,” Quartucci said. “I want to try and get into the two-deep. I’ve seen spots of it, but I want to get a permanent spot there and contribute to the team any way I can.”

Rutgers is coming off its first losing season in six years as it went 4-8 and missed a bowl game for the first time since 2004. After the offensive line drew much of the criticism for a unit that

ranked 114th in total offense in the nation, coach Greg Schiano brought in highly acclaimed Frank Cignetti as the offensive coordinator.

Cignetti has returned Rutgers to a more pro style attack dependent more on the running game. The new system should help the linemen as well.

“I see the positives of it ever since the spring,” Quartucci said. “It looks like a really good offense. It gives us the ability to use our best weapons, utilize them all instead of just using one. We use everything we have out there.

“I think it’s fairly easy to learn. Obviously with any offense it’s gonna take time, but it’s not too bad.”

Anything will be an improvement over last year, although Quartucci would rather not dwell on that.

“We’re just focused on the 2011 season,” he said. “What happened last year, that’s all in the past. We’re focused on making this our year. That’s all we’re focused on, two-a-days and how we’ll do this year.”

Although some guys are focused on a little bit more.

Like learning a new position.