

BEE'S BEST

No. 14 Christian Brothers has reasons to believe in breakout season

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The Sacramento Bee will unveil our Top 25 football rankings from No. 25 to No. 1, at least a team a day, right up to the Aug. 20 kickoff.

NO. 14 CHRISTIAN BROTHERS

City: Sacramento
School opened: 1876
League: Capital Athletic
Division: III
Enrollment: 1,150
2021 spring record: 3-3
Coach: Larry Morla
Christian Brothers is one of those football teams. Look at it any way you want and you'll find what you're looking for.

Do you want to believe they're a powerhouse? That's justifiable. The Falcons beat up on league rivals and they return two high-flying offensive threats. Do you want to believe they're a paper tiger? That's a possibility as well, as the Falcons have a new coach and an entirely new offensive



We know this much: Christian Brothers will be entertaining. The offense features D.J. Crowther, one of the region's most explosive running backs. He averaged 9 yards a carry en route to scoring 12 rushing touchdowns in a six-game spring season. He also averaged 50 yards of receiving a game and had three touchdowns in the air.

Coach Larry Morla, who has been on the football staff for six years, knows Crowther will make eyes pop this fall.

"He's one of the best football players that have

Christian Brothers High School football players work out last summer. The Falcons have their top offensive weapons back and are ranked No. 14 by The Bee.

gone through CB," Morla said. "I've seen some good ones, he's one of the best. He's very elusive, he makes one, two, sometimes three people miss, he has a 4.0 GPA. ... That's what you look for in a captain. He gets it done in the classroom. ...

"He just keeps his feet moving, doesn't give up. His determination is unmatched. His attitude is to get into the end zone every

time."

It's enough that an opposing coach might be tempted to stack the box with nine players and tell them all to hit Crowther. That's where senior quarterback Jake Elorduy steps in. The co-captain averaged 257.7 yards per game passing last spring and had 14 touchdowns.

But there's a catch. His top receiver, junior Jet Wiley, left Christian Broth-

ers to go to school in Alabama this summer. And Elorduy will be working behind five new starters on the offensive line. The new-look offense will have to gel quickly, but Morla doesn't seem worried.

"(Elorduy is) the hardest worker on our team," Morla said. "He gets into sprints with (Crowther) and all the fast kids. He wants to get better every time."

The defense should be steady, anchored by lockdown cornerback Avante Lee, an All-Metro selection from spring. He's a lanky speedster and expects to pair with the top receiver every week.

Jackson Burleson and Zeke Jackson will help out as defensive backs; Jackson made 21 tackles last spring.

Landon Howard, a junior fullback whom Morla calls the strongest kid on the

team, will anchor the defensive line while Dustin Regino leads the linebackers after starting as a sophomore last spring.

Will it be enough? We should get an idea in Week 2, when No. 14 Christian Brothers faces No. 15 Pleasant Grove.

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