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Defense may carry rebuilding Irish offense

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Cathedral High School football coach **Rick Streiff** believes it could take a while for his offense to find its rhythm this year with several players assuming new roles.

Fortunately, for the defending Class 4A state champions, an experienced defense with 10 senior starters should more than help keep the Irish in games until the offense can get up to speed.

"Our defense is our strength," Streiff said. "We've got a good group of kids that run to the ball and play real hard. I think our defense will carry us a little while until the offense catches up. Once we get going, I think we'll have a chance to be a pretty good team."

Evan Pulliam returns at defensive end with **Michael Mitsch** back at nose tackle; **Jacob Peebles**, **John Zupancic** and **Quincy Giles** return at linebacker; and **Tyler Willis** and Notre Dame recruit **John Turner** are back in the secondary.

The Irish return some key players on offense:

Anthony Corsaro, tight end.

Jacob Bailey, a 6-foot-4, 275-pound

tackle who has committed to Indiana.

Will Ash, tackle.

Mickey Roessler, center.

Gino Gillum, running back.

Alec Bitar, receiver, who had 47 catches for more than 800 yards with 14 touchdowns last year.

John Roby, receiver who caught 33 passes for 350 yards and three touchdowns.

Roby is the brother of former Indiana University standout receivers Brandon Walker-Roby and Courtney Roby.

The most intriguing position battle could be at quarterback, where senior **Corey Babb** has earned the starting spot -- for now. Streiff said junior **Connor Rice** is not far behind and he wouldn't hesitate to use the younger quarterback.

"There may be a situation where we play

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two quarterbacks," Streiff said. "Our offense is going to need to get a little confidence. They have work to do. Just gaining experience and confidence there will be important so we can get a good rhythm going."

On special teams, Streiff believes senior kicker **Jack Fleck** is one of the best in the state.

Cathedral opens its season at 7:30 p.m. Aug. 20 against Ben Davis in the Payback Classic at LucasOilStadium. The Irish's schedule features some of the best teams in -- and around -- the state, including Ohio's Centerville on Sept. 5 and defending Louisville 6A state champion and perennial power Trinity on Sept. 23.

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