UNITY CHRISTIAN CRUSADERS

2025 RECORD:
12-2 OVERALL
5-0 OK GOLD (1ST place)
PLAYOFFS-State Finals

Unity Christian Head Coach
Craig Tibbe: 24th year (145-99)

Coaches' Comments: "We have a lot to sort out yet. This group will get tested early and will find out how badly they want to dig right away. Very uncertain as to what this group will look like at this point."

Key Returnees: Carter Scholten (Sr. OL/DL), Josh Bremer (Sr. FB/LB), Austin DeJong (Sr. DE/TE)

Returning Starters: Offense(2), Defense (2)

Key Newcomers: Jeff Portenga (Sr. FB/OL/LB), Willem Haveman (Sr. OL/DL), Hudson VanBennekom (Sr. OL/DL), Luka Shaarda (Sr. OL/DL), Rocco Martini (Sr. C)

2026 Crusaders Football Schedule

Fri. Aug. 28	Divine Child	A
Thurs. Sept. 3	Hammond, IN (Hope)	
Fri. Sept. 11	Zeeland East	A
Fri. Sept. 18	South Christian	H
Fri. Sept. 25	Univ. Prep. @ Holt	
Fri. Oct. 3	FH Central	H
Fri. Oct. 10	Zeeland West	H
Fri. Oct. 17	Wyoming	A
Fri. Oct. 24	Portland	A

WEST MICHIGAN OKSPORTS

UNITY CHRISTIAN LOOKS TO DEFEND OK GOLD TITLE AND AVENGE PLAYOFF DEFEAT

Unity Christian Football Preview

Unity Christian will be in an unfamiliar position as it begins the 2026 season as they try to replace 18 starters from their Senior laden team which ended one point shy of winning the D4 State Title in 2025. Unity Head Coach, Craig Tibbe, has molded the Crusader program into a perennial powerhouse, and to maintain that status this year, he will need his young group to grow quickly versus what may be the most difficult conference in the OK Leagues.

Questions abound on the offense as Unity needs to replace its offensive line and almost their entire backfield. The lone returning ball carrier, looking is Senior, Josh Bremer at Fullback (AC '25) who had an outstanding campaign in 2025. Also back on offense is TE, Carter Scholten (AC '25), and TE, Austin DeJong. These three will provide the base for the newcomers on the OLine that help drive the Crusaders Wing-T attack. Seniors, Willem Haveman, Hudson VanBennekom, Rocco Martini and Luke Shaarda all show promise up front, and Jeff Portenga will split time between OL and FB.

Defensively, Unity is in the same boat as they only return two starters there as well. Scholten and Bremer will lead the way here as well at DE and LB, respectively. Portenga will also be expected to provide stops from LB.

One key to looking at expectations for the Crusaders upcoming prospects is that with their 41 point per game scoring average last year, many of this year's players received significant playing time as juniors, even though they were not part of the starting group. With that being the case, Coach Tibbe may not just be replacing this season, but reloading as the Crusaders look to continue their winning ways in 2026.