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## Ross grad now setting records at U of Toledo

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TOLEDO -- Once in a while, if he's lucky, a football coach gets a player that he knows is destined for greatness.

Derek Kidwell met one of those players on the first day he was Fremont Ross football coach. It was Aaron Opelt.

"The first time I saw him throw a football, I knew he was a big-time quarterback the way the ball came off his fingers," said Kidwell, himself a former Ohio Mr. Football at quarterback. "Not a lot of seniors had that strength and skill, let alone juniors."

Opelt rewrote the Little Giants record book as quarterback, and now he's having his way with the University of Toledo record book. A four-year starter for the Rockets, Opelt's currently third in the nation in passing with 742 yards and is leading the nation in average total offense with 437 yards per game.

For that, he credits everyone but himself.

"Give a lot of credit to those guys," Opelt said, talking about the offensive line and his cadre of running backs and wide receivers. "They're letting me make the plays."

Like a 70-yard touchdown pass in the first quarter of last Friday's game against the University of Colorado and a 61-yard run that left them, well, buffaloed.

"I didn't know I could still run like that," Opelt said. "I got out in the open field and it shocked me a little bit."

Opelt's running a new offense -- a familiar occurrence for him at Toledo. This year, new coach Tim Beckman has implemented an offense that put up more than 600 yards of total offense last week and averaging more than 42 points per game.

And Opelt's been having fun as a big part of the offense's success. For two weeks in a row, he was named the Mid-American Conference's West Division Offensive Player of the Week. This week, he was also named National Performer of the Week by the College Football Performance Awards.

The Rockets will be put to the test again Saturday, when they take on Ohio State at Cleveland Browns Stadium in what is supposed to be a home game for the Rockets.

Opelt went to one Browns game in Cleveland while he was in high school. On Saturday, he'll take to the field there himself.

"I never thought I'd be playing on that field," he said.

But it doesn't surprise Kidwell, who thinks Opelt's got more than a puncher's chance to get into an NFL training camp.

There are factors stacked against him, though. Although the Mid-American Conference has been regarded lately as the cradle of quarterbacks, Opelt is only 13-20 as a starter for the Rockets. And to really wow scouts, Opelt will have to stay healthy.

But if any team would want to take a chance on him, Kidwell thinks they won't be disappointed.

"He's got a strong arm," Kidwell said. "There's probably not 10 quarterbacks in the NFL with as strong an arm."

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Toledo quarterback Aaron Opelt is tripped up by Colorado's Will Pericak during last week's game at the Glass Bowl. Toledo won 58-34. (J.D. Pooley Associated Press)