

August 2019

PIGSKIN PREVIEW

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE ST. CLAIR TIMES

**Team Pre-
Game Previews**

Football Team Photos



**VARSITY
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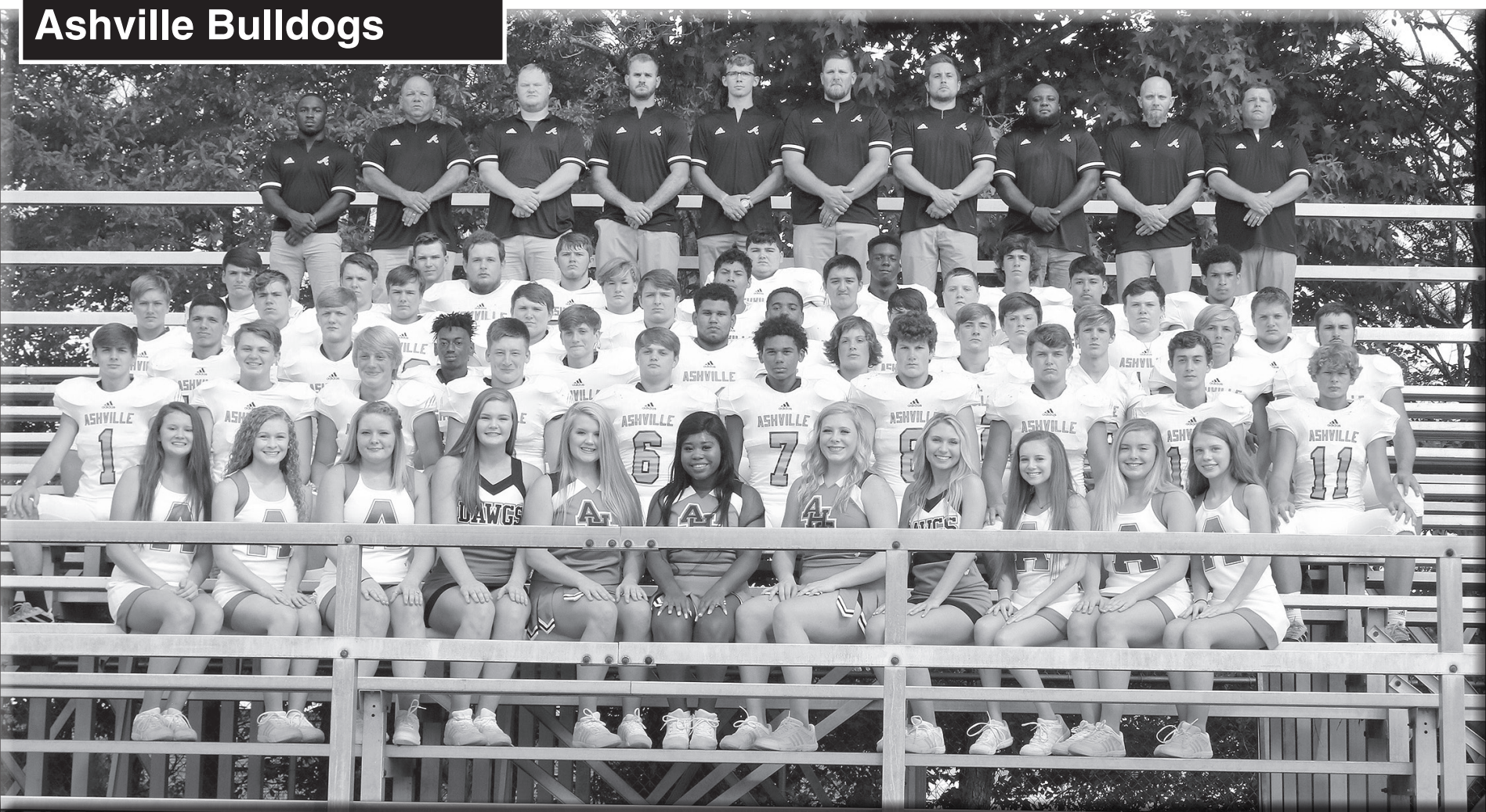
HIGH SCHOOL BAND PHOTOS

GAME SCHEDULES

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Ashville Bulldogs



Ashville looking to spread things out offensively

By GARY HANNER
Times Editor


The Ashville Bulldogs enter the 2019 football season under second-year head coach Barry Simmons looking

to spread things out offensively.

Simmons said towards the end of last season, they were much better offensively when they started spreading it out.

“We worked very hard in the offseason installing a

new offensive system,” he said. “And if you watch our spring game, we had 32 plays that averaged over 10 yards per play. So, yes, we are going to spread it out this upcoming season. It’s going to be exciting, up-tempo type of football. Fans will definitely see the football in



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the air more.”

Simmons said they want to go fast on offense, but they also want to control the tempo of the game.

Region 6

The Bulldogs are in Class 4A, Region 6 along with Anniston, Cherokee County, Cleburne County, Hokes Bluff, Jacksonville, Oneonta and White Plains. Simmons said the region, top to bottom, is very tough.

“In my personal opinion, I think Ashville is the team to beat,” he said. “I think Anniston may be the surprise team in the region.”

See **Bulldogs**,
Page 4

**ASHVILLE
2019 SCHEDULE**

Aug. 23	Ragland	H
Aug. 30	Springville	A
Sept. 6	Jacksonville	H
Sept. 13	White Plains	A
Sept. 20	Oneonta	H
Sept. 27	OPEN	
Oct. 4	Hokes Bluff	H
Oct. 11	Cherokee Co.	A
Oct. 18	Cleburne Co.	H
Oct. 25	Anniston	A
Nov. 1	Vincent	A



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Bulldogs

from page 3

Making the state playoffs last year from this region were Oneonta, Hokes Bluff, Jacksonville and Anniston.

After beating Ragland 15-6 in the season opener, the Bulldogs lost eight games in a row before beating Vincent 56-12 in the finale to finish the season 2-8. The 56 points scored in a single game were the most since the Bulldogs defeated White Plains 59-0 to open the 2015 season. They were 0-7 in region play last year.

What to expect

Simmons said they have a young quarterback in sophomore Dylan Harris who can really throw the ball.

"We want to put the football in Dylan's hands so he can get it to the receivers and let them make some big plays," he said.

Defensively, Simmons said they are making a transition from a three-man front multiple to a four-man front multiple.

"It will be a little bit different style of play," he said. "We will be going from three linebackers in the middle to two linebackers, which will put more pressure on the two inside linebackers."

Simmons said Hunter Hirsh has really blossomed this spring from his inside linebacker role.

"He has turned into one of our best linebackers and I am excited about what he brings to every game," Simmons said. "He brings a physical style of play with him and he also has increased his speed and agility."

Key players returning

Simmons said key players returning include senior running back/linebacker Ty Armstrong; senior wide receiver/safety Nathan Phillips; senior wide receiver/corner Derek Walker; senior guard/defensive end Cam Tillman; junior safety/running back Luke Harris; junior wide receiver/safety Adrienne Hernandez; and

sophomore quarterback/safety Dylan Harris.

Goal

Simmons said the goal is just like every season – make the state playoffs.

"Asheville has not made the playoffs in several years, so that is our number one goal this year," he said. "We are going to continue to grind. We are not backing down from anyone, and we will continue to raise the bar. We are definitely in a tough region, but I think this Asheville team is very capable."

Keys to a success

Simmons said they must stay injury-free and keeping players healthy.

"We do have more depth now than in times past,"

See **Bulldogs**, Page 6



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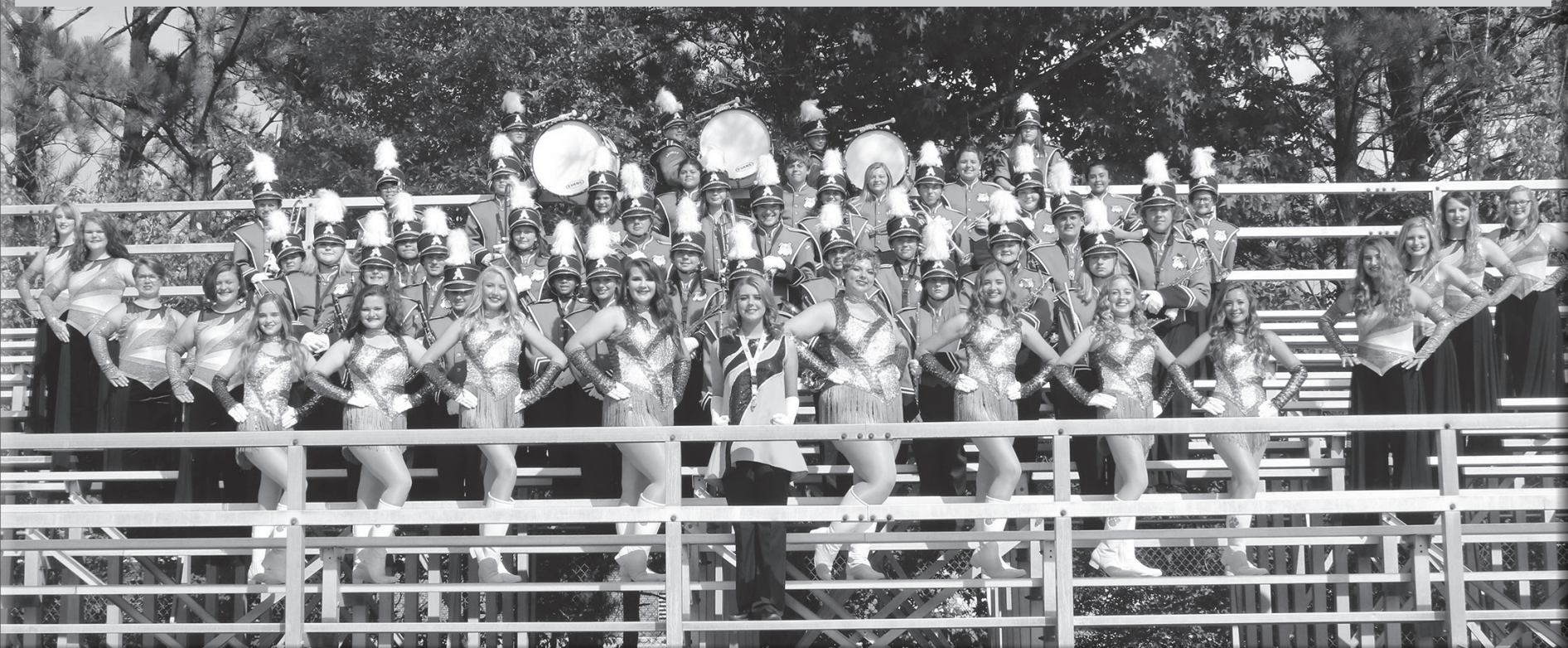
Childersburg

Moody

Alexander City



Bulldogs from page 4



he said. "The players are working harder, so we must be able to keep the depth level where it needs to be."

Simmons said if they can play 20-23 players instead of 12-15, it is going to make a significant difference in the second half.

"We are really excited about the depth we have," he said. "Our kids played hard last year, and I think they just didn't have enough to finish the game. This year, I am excited about how the spring ended, excited about what took place in the weight room, excited about the depth and the excitement of these kids."

Ashville plays two county rivals, Ragland and Springville, back-to-back to open the season. Friday

night, Ashville will host the Purple Devils at Kin Logan Stadium.

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Leeds Green Wave

Jerry Hood looking to get Leeds back in the playoffs

By GARY HANNER
Times Editor

Chalkville. His overall record is 103-52 in 13 years. He led Clay-Chalkville to the 2014 Class 6A state title as the Cougars went 15-0.

“I am very excited about being at Leeds High School,” he said. “It’s going to be a tremendous opportunity, and the guys have worked hard the first three weeks I have been there. We are still getting to know each other. I am totally pleased with the city of Leeds and the Leeds

The Leeds Green Wave will open the 2019 season under new head coach Jerry Hood, who was hired less than three months ago.

Hood is no stranger to being on the sidelines of high school football in Alabama, and no stranger to winning a state title.

Hood previously was head coach at Oak Mountain and Clay



schools.”

When Hood went to Clay-Chalkville in 2009, the Cougars were coming off back-to-back losing seasons, the first in school history. Leeds went 3-7 last year.

“I know Leeds is coming off a tough season,” Hood said, “but I also know Leeds

is a place where football is important. There is a lot of good tradition here. It’s just a matter of getting back on track, and encouraging the kids to be reinterested in football.”

Hood said he wanted to focus on his players.

“If they appreciate and like what we and the

coaches are doing there, Leeds will be successful,” he said. “The character and work ethic of these kids is unbelievable. They allowed us to come in and practice them a different way. We are doing some

different things with them that we think will enhance our chances of having a winning season. They embraced that right away and have done everything we’ve asked them to do. We hit the ground running,

See **Green Wave**, Page 8

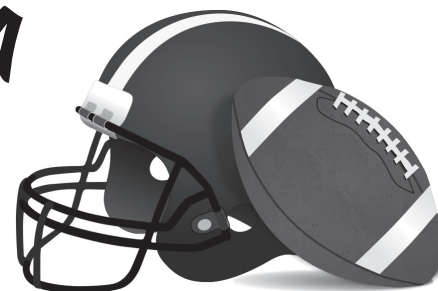
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Green Wave

from page 7

and we are all having a lot of fun right now. What we have to do is figure out what the kids can do, and put them in the best position to do it, and play as many kids as we can.”

Region play

Leeds is in Class 4A, Region 4 with Childersburg, Elmore County, Handley, Holtville, Lincoln and Talladega.

When asked who the team has to beat in the region, Hood said he had no idea.

“But I do know that Handley, Lincoln and Elmore County can beat you at any time,” he said. “Childersburg and Talladega have some great athletes.”

Hood said he thinks it will be a competitive region all season.

“With hard work, I think we can think about slipping in under the radar when it comes to the state playoffs,” he said. “I tell the kids every day that the wins are going to come. It may be this year or next year, whatever. But just work right, and try to be better today than you were yesterday. I will love them for that, and we will move on down the road.”

Key to success

When asked what

See **Green Wave**,
Page 10

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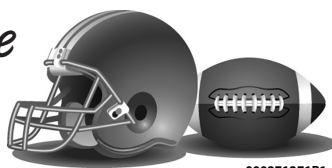


David Miller

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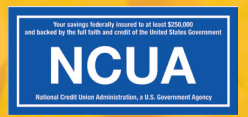


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Green Wave

from page 8

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2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	Sylacauga	H
Aug. 30	John Carroll	A
Sept. 6	Elmore Co.	H
Sept. 13	Lincoln	A
Sept. 20	OPEN	
Sept. 27	Ohatchee	A
Oct. 4	Talladega	H
Oct. 11	Holtville	A
Oct. 18	Handley	H
Oct. 25	Childersburg	A
Nov. 1	Pleasant Grove	H

would be the key to a successful season, Hood said for players to be there, get better, and learn a little bit more about football.

"Every day before practice, I will meet with all the coaches," he said. "I tell them exactly how it is going to go on the field because we do not want to waste a second. We want to get our work done and make the kids better at whatever skill we are working on. When you get it down to that level, eventually all the wins and fun are going to come."

Championship caliber

Hood knows Leeds has won four state championships since 2008. When asked what it would take to get Leeds back to the state title picture, he said the same thing Leeds had before.

"You need really great

players that care about each other, that do the little things right," he said. "There are a lot of great players that are on some great teams, but they don't do the little things right, and they end up just being playoff guys all the time. The teams that do the little things right will exceed

their own expectations."

Hood said he believes the parents are excited about having a program where their kids are loved and taught well to be successful on the field.

Leeds will open the season Friday, Aug. 23, at home against Sylacauga.

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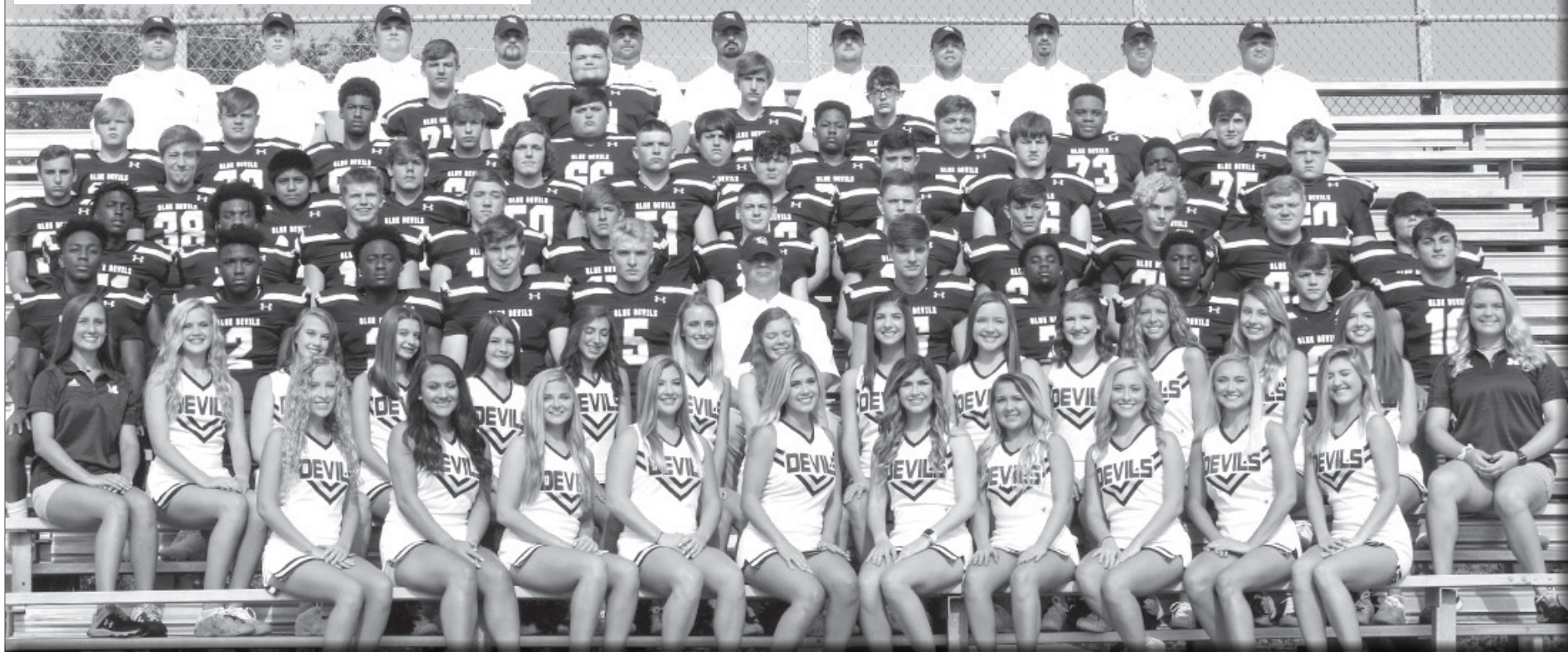
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Moody Blue Devils



Wallace looking for Moody players to get 1 percent better each day

By GARY HANNER
Times Editor

Adam Wallace starts his second year as head football coach at his alma mater – the Moody Blue Devils. He said the week after the last game last year, he and his team wanted to get stronger and faster. Why, you ask? Because they want to improve on the 1-9 season they experienced last year.

“What could we do to improve that record?” he asked. “This team has really answered what we’ve asked them to do. We have a hard-working group of kids who are not scared to get out and lift

weights, run and do the things we ask them to do. That will transfer over into better success in the football season.”

Wallace said they encourage student-athletes at Moody to be multi-sport athletes.

“We have a lot of kids who play baseball, basketball and are on the wrestling team,” he said. “They have been working hard and killing it in the weight room, running, etc. It was a busy summer for us.”

Class 5A, Region 5

The Blue Devils are in the same region with

See Blue Devils, Page 14

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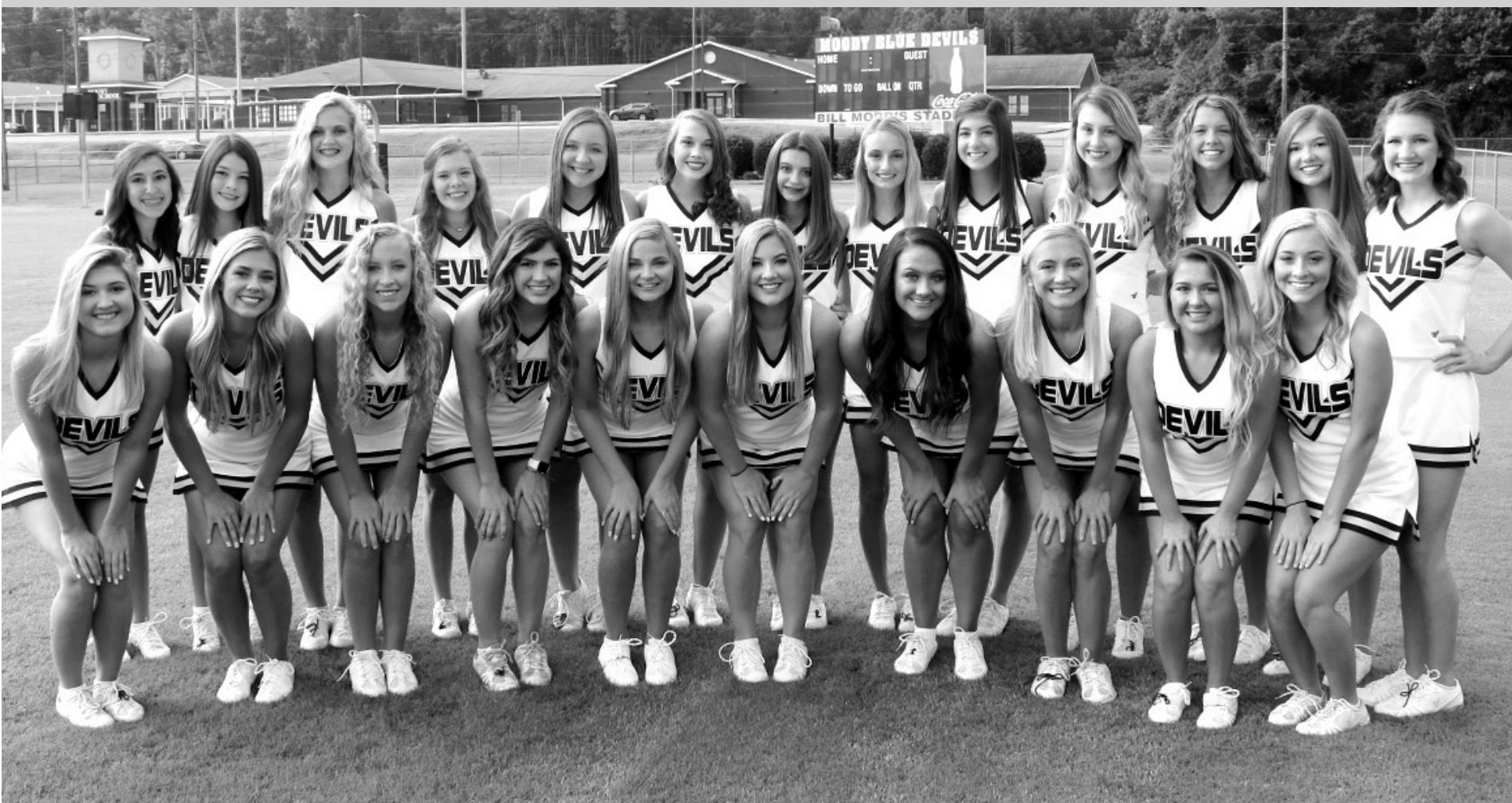
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Blue Devils

from page 12



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Center Point, Central Clay County, Mortimer Jordan, Munford, Springville, St. Clair County and Sylacauga. The lone win for Moody last year was a 41-20 region win over St. Clair County High.

The Class 5A champion came from this region as Central Clay County overcame a 3-3 start after six games, and went on to win nine in a row, including a 43-42 victory over Vigor in the state title game at Auburn.

Wallace knows the team to beat in the region is Central Clay County.

“They are unreal,” he said. “We have two or three teams in our region that are strong. Clay had to beat Mortimer Jordan to get to the state finals last year. Center Point has so much talent. Sylacauga is always right there in the mix. Our region is loaded from top to bottom. In order

for us to compete in this region, we have to do everything better than we did before.”

1 percent better

Wallace has challenged his players to get 1 percent better each day.

“The group of guys we have are willing to take that challenge, and will not back down from it,” he said. “What we do right now in the summer will determine the results in the fall. All of the work we put in during the off-season and now in the summer will determine whether we win or not this season. Right now, I am pleased where we are and what we have accomplished. I would say that we are ready.”

Wallace said last year’s team was young, so he is depending on last year’s junior class to be leaders this year.

“Many will be asked to play both ways. I believe we are in shape and strong enough to hold up for four quarters,” he said. “I do believe the injury bug caught up with us some last year. Hopefully, we can stay injury-free this upcoming season.”

Key players returning

Wallace said key players returning include Terrence Moore and Christian Archer, senior running backs/ linebackers; Aiden Calvert and Mason Shockley, senior fullbacks/linebackers; Connor Rush, senior quarterback; Joel McCormick, senior tight end/defensive end; Grayson Isbell, senior offensive tackle; Will Grames, senior wide receiver/free safety; Logan Cole, junior wide

See Blue Devils, Page 16

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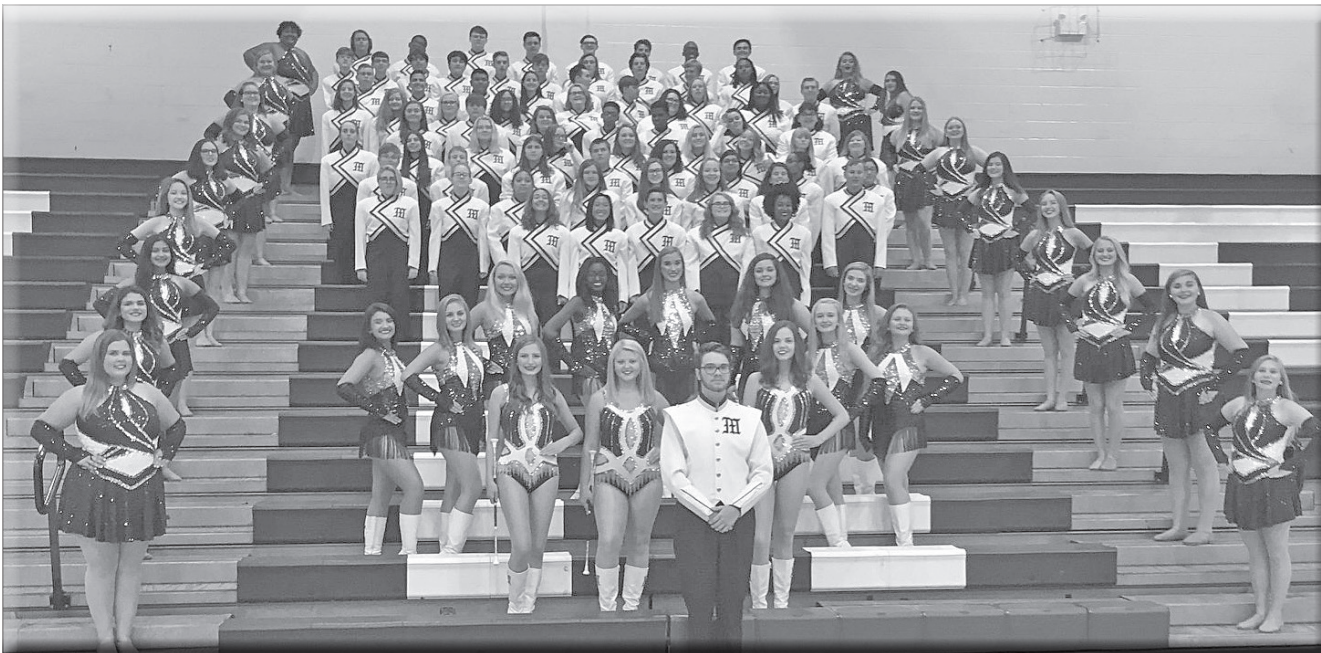
Blue Devils

from page 12

receiver/cornerback; and Alijah Daniel, senior fullback/defensive end.

After having a bye in the opening week, the Blue

Devils will open the season Aug. 30, at Bill Morris Stadium as they host Etowah.



MOODY 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	OPEN	
Aug. 30	Etowah	H
Sept. 6	SCCHS	A
Sept. 13	Sylacauga	A
Sept. 20	Central Clay Co.	H
Sept. 27	Shelby Co.	H
Oct. 4	Munford	A
Oct. 11	Springville	H
Oct. 18	Center Point	H
Oct. 25	Mortimer Jordan	A
Nov. 1	Talladega	A

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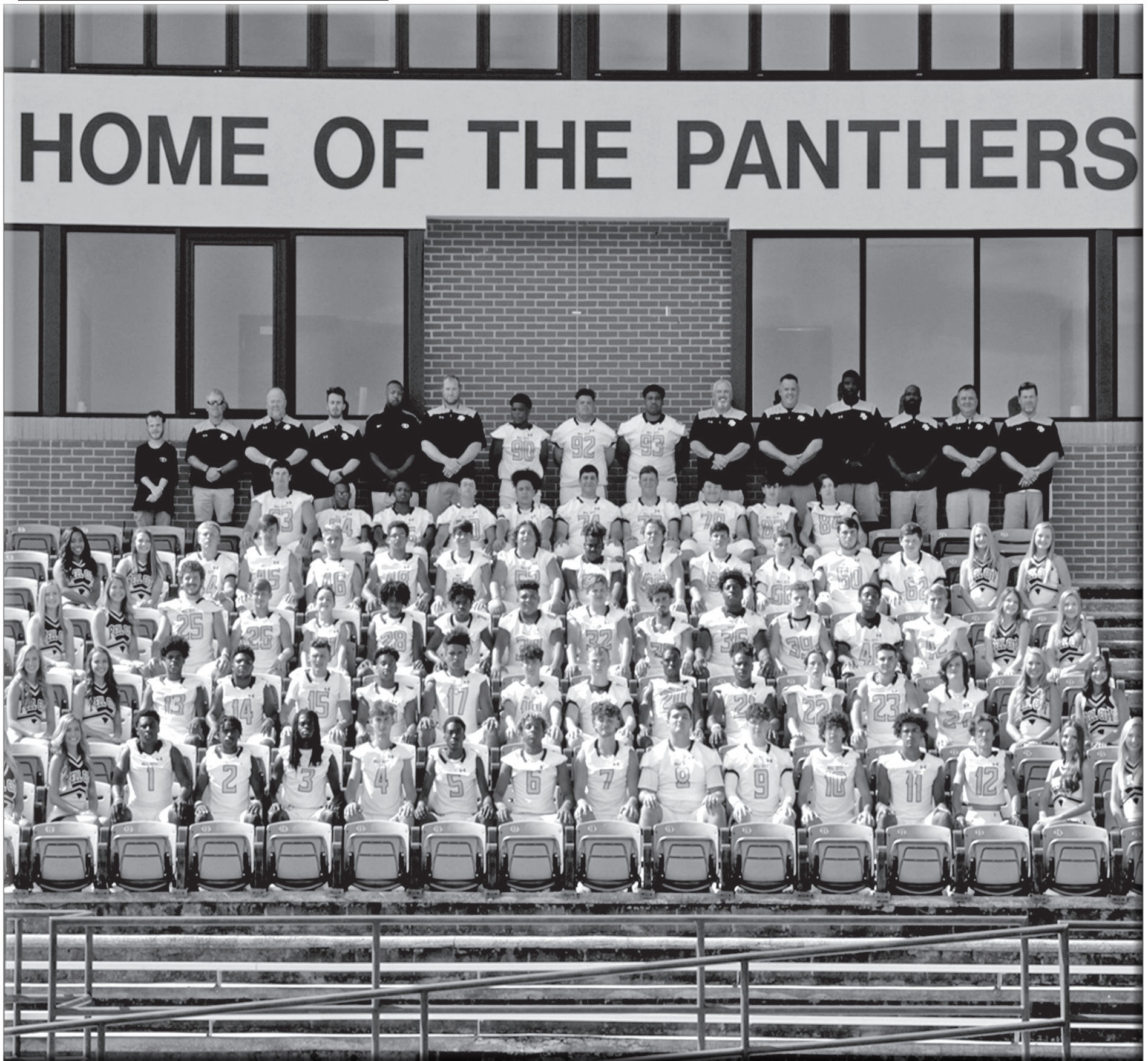
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Pell City Panthers



JUICED RIVALRY

Pell City coach just wants to 'beat Oxford'

By SHANE DUNAWAY

Pell City High School's football team got its first taste of action in a talent-packed Class 6A, Region 6 in 2018.

Panthers head coach Wayne Lee said his team is looking to build on a season where it bookended two pairs of victories around a six-game losing streak,

with five of those games against region opponents.

The Panthers finished fifth in the region last season.

"I think the big difference this year is everybody — me included, the players included — we kind of know more about what we're stepping into," he said.

"We knew the region last year and what it was about,

See **Panthers**, Page 20

PELL CITY 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	Fort Payne	A
Aug. 30	Calera	A
Sept. 6	Oxford	H
Sept. 13	Gardendale	A
Sept. 20	Huffman	A
Sept. 27	OPEN	
Oct. 4	Etowah	H
Oct. 11	Clay-Chalkville	A
Oct. 18	Pinson Valley	H
Oct. 25	Shades Valley	H
Nov. 1	Chelsea	H



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Panthers

from page 19

but now after being in it a year, you really understand what it's about.

“Working towards that, I think we'll be a lot better off this year than we were last year.”

The Panthers lost 12 seniors

“Both of them (Freeman and Staples) will be three-year starters this year, and a three-year starter in 6A, it takes a pretty special kid to do that,” Lee said. “Brett being a linebacker, he's kind of the



from the 2018 squad, but they will have continuity at the quarterback position with senior Mitch Gossett.

“(Gossett) has a year under his belt and should feel more relaxed,” Lee said. “We're expecting good things out of him this year.”

Joining him in leadership roles on the team will be offensive lineman Jon David Freeman and linebacker Brett Staples.

quarterback on the defensive side of the ball and has been since he's been playing.”

Freeman returns at a position group Lee said is a definite strength for the Panthers.

“We've got five guys returning on the offensive line,” he said. “That ought to be a strength for us. We've got receivers coming back. Our

See Panthers, Page 22

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See Panthers, Page 20

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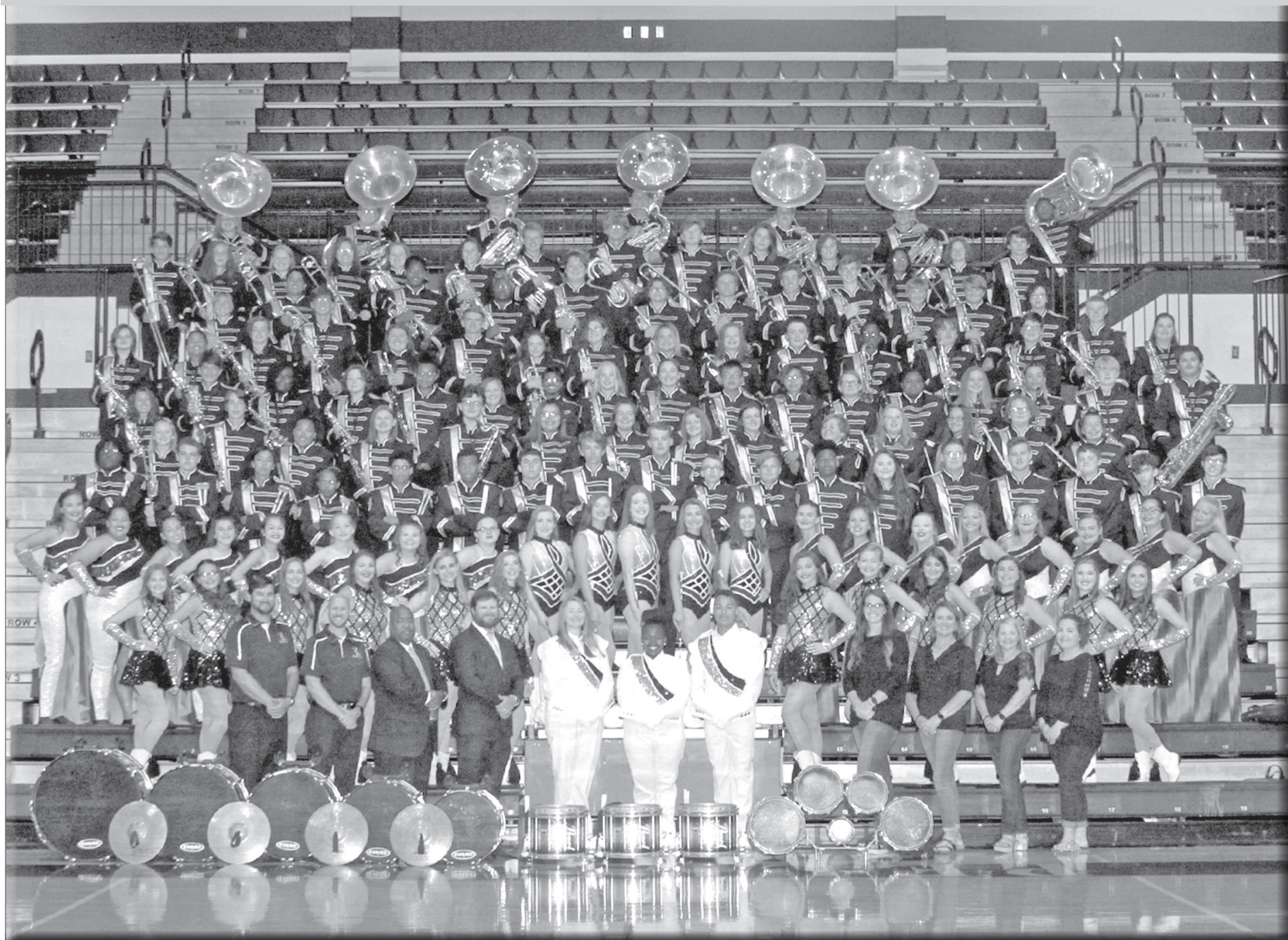
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Panthers

from page 19



quarterback is coming back.

“Defensively, the back seven have all got experience, but we’ve got to get better up front. On special teams, our kicker and punter are back, so we’ve got some guys in place. We’ve got some young kids who we got some good film on in the spring

game.”

Lee said his team needs to become more consistent this season.

“Last year, our first game and our last game were probably our two best games,” he said. “Now we’ve got to get 2 through 9 going in (that direction).”

Freeman said he sees the improvement in mentality among his teammates going into the season.

“I think everybody’s starting to work together as a

See **Panthers**, Page 24

*"We've been working really hard during the summer and doing a lot of conditioning," he said.
"I think it's going to be a lot better this year than last year." -Head Coach Wayne Lee*

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Panthers

from page 22

team instead of being an individual player,” he said.

Staples added that the team has emphasized giving maximum effort during offseason workouts.

“We’ve been working really hard during the summer and doing a lot of conditioning,” he said.

“I think it’s going to be a lot better this year than last year.”

Lee said he didn’t want to discuss the specifics of the looming Week 3 matchup between Pell City and Oxford, which hired former Panthers head coach Keith Etheredge in May, but Lee acknowledged those developments give the rivalry a bit more juice.

He did touch on the challenges that come with facing his region opponents.

“There’s no question you had the two best teams in 6A in that region with Clay-Chalkville and Pinson Valley, and Oxford, who very well could have been the third-best team ... We’re one game out of a playoff spot. This year, we’ve got to find a way to get that playoff spot. We know a little more about it and what we’ve got to do.”

As daunting a task as it may be to carve through a tough schedule, Lee reiterated making the playoffs is part of the goals for this season.

“Every year, you want to get to the playoffs,” he said. “Once you get to the playoffs, you never know and you see what can happen from there. For us, we want to beat Oxford. Bottom line, we want to beat Oxford.”



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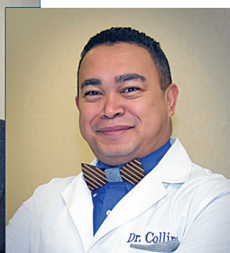
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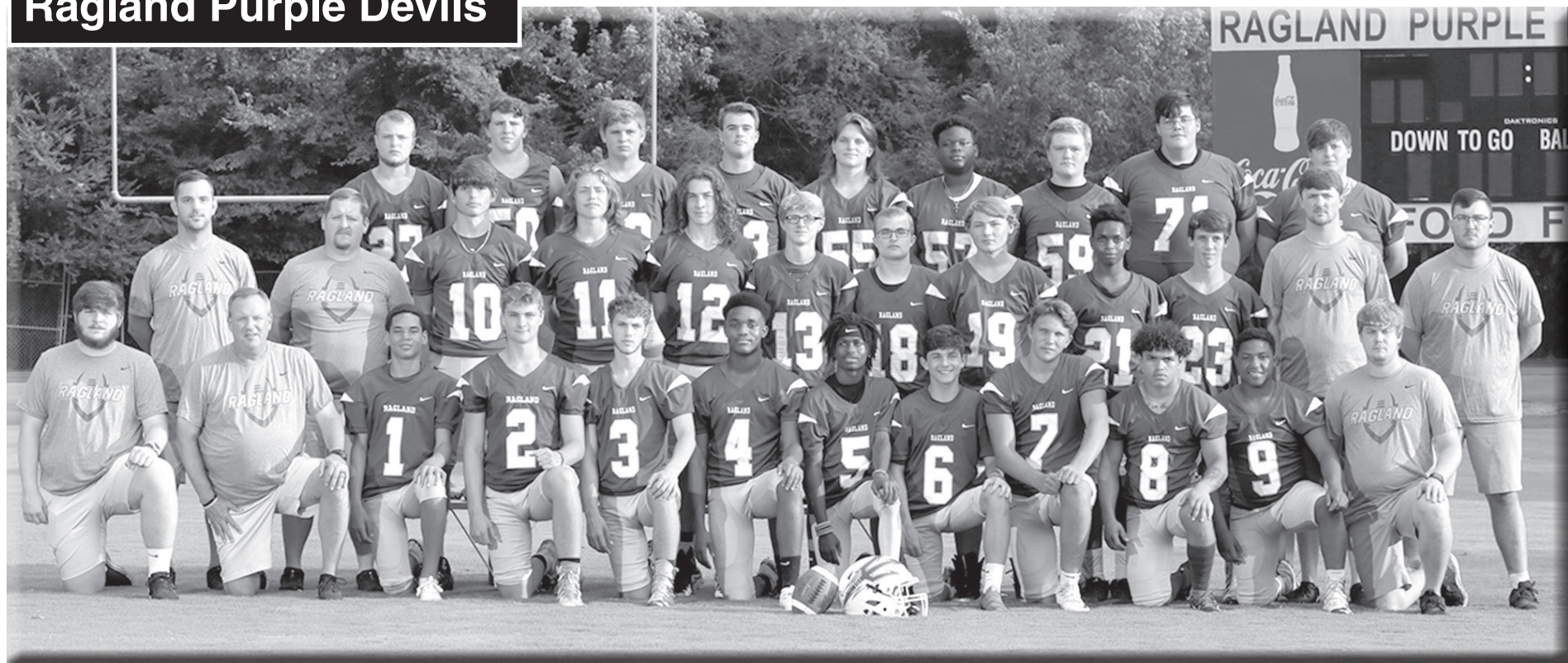
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Ragland Purple Devils



Ragland looking to get back to state playoffs

By GARY HANNER
Times Editor

Derrick Sewell is starting his second season as head football coach of the Ragland Purple Devils. After an inaugural season of 4-6 and missing the state playoffs, Sewell said he is excited about having seven returning starters on the offensive side of the football. And those returning starters could help get Ragland back to the state playoffs.

Offensively

This year, Sewell said the offense could operate more out of a shotgun look this year.

“But, we will try to move the ball down the field by running,” he said. “If we have to throw it, we will. I feel like we are very good up front with our offensive line. Some of our newcomers are explosive. We may not spread it out offensively as much as people would

like to see it, but we will pound the rock and see what happens.”

Last year was a season of streaks for Ragland. They started the season 0-4, won the next four games and lost the final two. They finished 2-4 in region play.

Sewell said key players returning include senior quarterback/linebacker Elijah Ball; senior runningback/linebacker Brody Bice; senior wide receiver/cornerback Nathaniel Kelley; senior linebacker David Sanders; senior tight end Kaeden Cotton; senior defensive tackle Matthew Turbville; senior offensive lineman Kaden Bice; junior offensive lineman/defensive tackle Jakolbe Brewster; junior offensive lineman Ryan Bearden; and junior defensive end Josh Phillips.

Class 1A, Region 5

The Purple Devils are in the same region with Appalachian, Donoho, Spring Garden, Talladega County Central, Victory Christian and Winterboro.

Sewell said the region is tough with three of the four teams advancing to the state playoffs last year, winning in round one.

“I believe the team to beat is the defending region champs in Spring Garden,” he said. “They finished 11-2 last year and went 2-1 in the state playoffs. We lost to them late, losing a close one, 29-26. Week in and week out in our region, everyone is tough. You can’t have an off night, and it is a grind every Friday. If you look over somebody, that’s when it is going to slip up and get you.”

Getting kids interested in playing

Being in a small 1A school, it can be a challenge getting enough kids interested in playing football.

“I spend a lot of time recruiting the hallways,” Sewell said. “Recruit the weight room for those guys who play other sports. You have to be at our level. We’re going to always average anywhere from 25 up to about 33 players. I rely heavily on our seniors because they are

our leaders. But I rely on the entire team letting them know they all have friends who may want to come out and play football.”

Key to a success

Sewell knows he has to get off to a faster start this year than last year.

“We broke in a lot of younger guys last year,” he said.

“They may have been juniors, but the three years prior, we had so many senior-loaded classes who carried the load. It took a few games for our guys to adjust last year. It’s never easy when you’re asking new guys to start out with 4A Ashville and 2A Westbrook. But, by the time we got to midseason, things were rolling.”

Sewell said he just wants to make sure they are ahead of the game when the season starts.

“I feel like we have the right guys back at the right spots,” he said.

Second season

Now that the initial head coaching season is over, Sewell said the one thing he will change headed into his second season — he will enjoy it more.

“Slow down and enjoy the process,” he said. “Enjoy this opportunity because it is huge. I want to enjoy it and not allow it to pass me by.”

Goal

Sewell said the goal is to go 10-0 during the regular season.

“Then, from there, we start the second season in the state playoffs,” he said. “Our fans have high expectations

of our kids going out in each game and being prepared mentally and physically. Fans know we have a hard work ethic, so they can expect a lot of aggression and a lot of physicality. That is something we are always going to bring because those are things we can control. Fans need to expect that we will be as prepared as we can be, come that first week of the season.”

Ragland will open the season Friday on the road at Ashville.

See Purple Devils, Page 28



**RAGLAND
2019 SCHEDULE**

Aug. 23	Ashville	A
Aug. 30	Westbrook Christian	H
Sept. 6	Donoho	H
Sept. 13	TCC	H
Sept. 20	Victory Christian	A
Sept. 27	West End	H
Oct. 4	Appalachian	A
Oct. 11	Valley Head	A
Oct. 18	Winterboro	H
Oct. 24	Spring Garden	A
Nov. 1	OPEN	

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Purple Devils

from page 27



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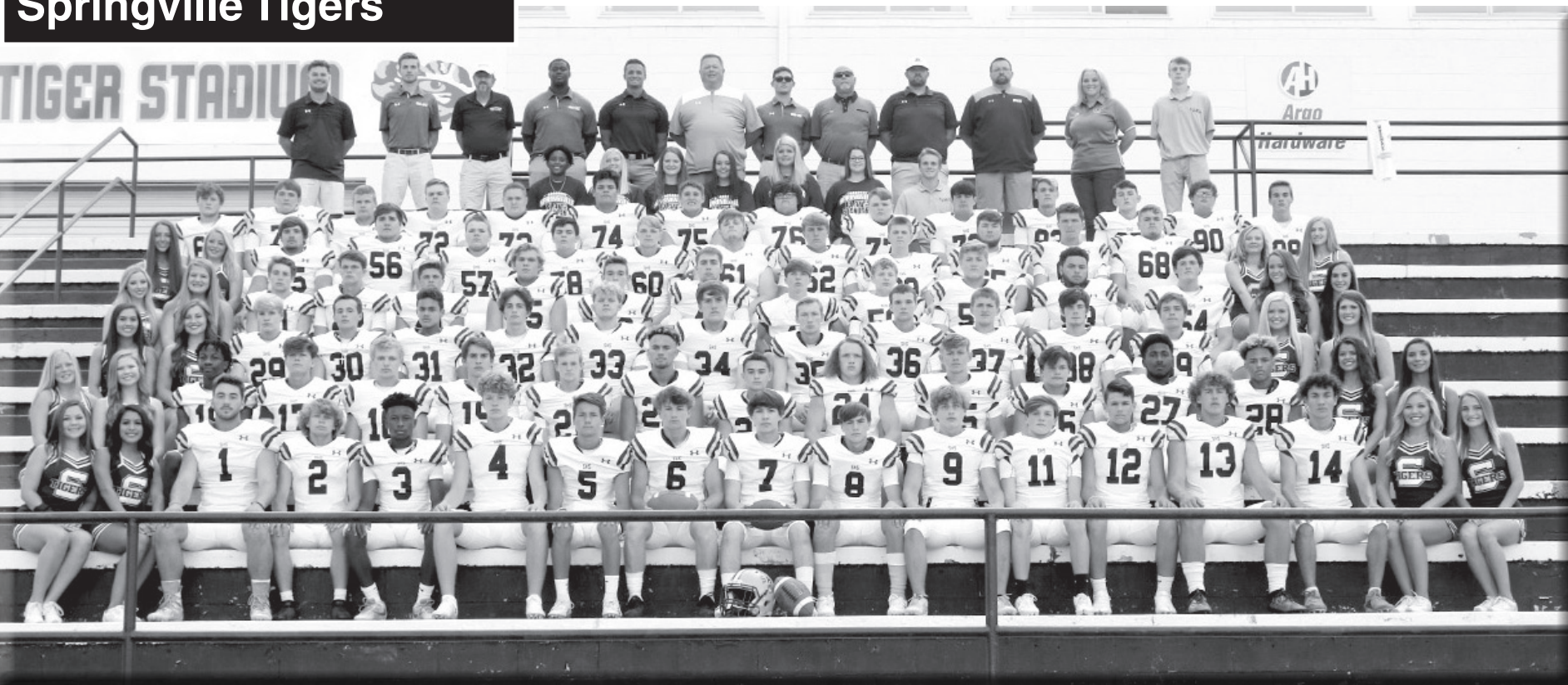
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Michael Graben set for second season at Springville

By GARY HANNER
Times Editor

Michael Graben starts his second year as head football coach at Springville. He understands his Tigers are in one of the toughest regions in Class 5A. Region 5 has the current state champion in Central Clay County, and Mortimer Jordan, which lost to Central Clay County in the semifinals last year.

The other two region teams making the state playoffs last year were Center Point and Sylacauga. Rounding out the region schedule includes Munford, Moody and St. Clair County High.

To improve on the 3-7 record from last year, Graben knows he has to improve on the 1-6 region record.

"If you look at all the guys sports, Central Clay County won the football state crown, Center Point was the basketball state runner-up, Moody won the wrestling state crown, Springville's soccer team finished state runner-up and Springville won the state baseball crown," Graben said. "We understand how tough this region is."

Springville defeated Ashville and Moody last year, but lost to St. Clair County.

"We are excited to have the opportunity to play these county

rival games," he said. "I think Ashville and Moody will be much improved this year, and we haven't beaten St. Clair in about eight or nine years. I think the guys get up for these county rivals and play a little harder."

Keys to a successful season

The first key to success, Graben said, is staying healthy.

"We have about 80 players who showed up to play football, so we should have a little depth," he said. "We also need to get off to a fast start and work hard."

Graben mentioned that last year's season-opener was his first game as a head coach. They took Hayden to overtime. The Wildcats got the football first, scored a touchdown but missed the extra point.

"On our first play in overtime, we mishandled the snap from center, fumbled, and the game was over," he said. "We didn't get another opportunity to run anymore plays. So getting off to a good start this season is definitely a key to a successful season."

Graben said though Springville has not been as successful as they would like to be on the field the past few years, the guys are

See Tigers, Page 32

SPRINGVILLE 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 22	Hayden	H
Aug. 30	Ashville	H
Sept. 6	Sylacauga	H
Sept. 13	Central Clay Co.	A
Sept. 20	Munford	H
Sept. 27	Crossville	A
Oct. 4	Center Point	A
Oct. 11	Moody	A
Oct. 18	Mortimer Jordan	H
Oct. 25	SCCHS	H
Nov. 1	OPEN	

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Isaiah 40:31



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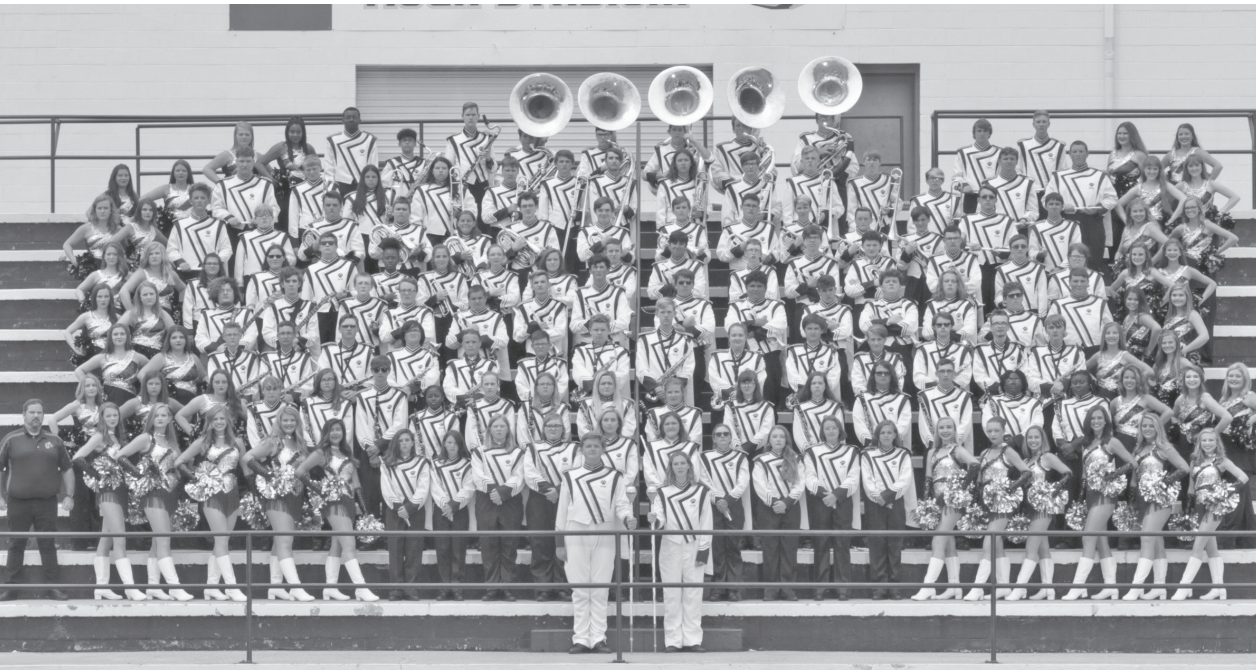


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Tigers

from page 31



working hard in the weight room.

"These kids have always worked hard," he said. "They worked hard for the coaches (Steve Davis and Keith Maple) before me. We have to translate that hard work into something good happening on the field."

Huge senior class

Graben said there are 22 seniors on this year's squad.

"We have several kids coming out for the very first time," he said. "We have some basketball and baseball players coming out and this helps our skilled people."

Graben said for his offensive guys, the faster they go, the more fun it is.

"We want to spread it out, throw it a little bit," he said. "Even when we are running the ball, we still want to go fast."

Key players returning

Graben said key players returning include junior quarterback Pearson Baldwin; senior wide receiver Jace

See Tigers, Page 34

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Tigers

from page 32



Hayes; senior offensive guard Nic Giangrosso; junior tight end Ben Bianchi; senior linebackers Braden Hughes and John Raby; senior defensive tackle Austin Shoop; and senior defensive end Bradyn Kyser.

Goal

Without hesitation, Graben said the goal is to go 10-0.

"That's the goal every year," he said. "If you don't say it, then you will never believe that it's going to happen."

Springville looks to avenge the overtime loss to Hayden as they open the season tonight at home against the Wildcats.

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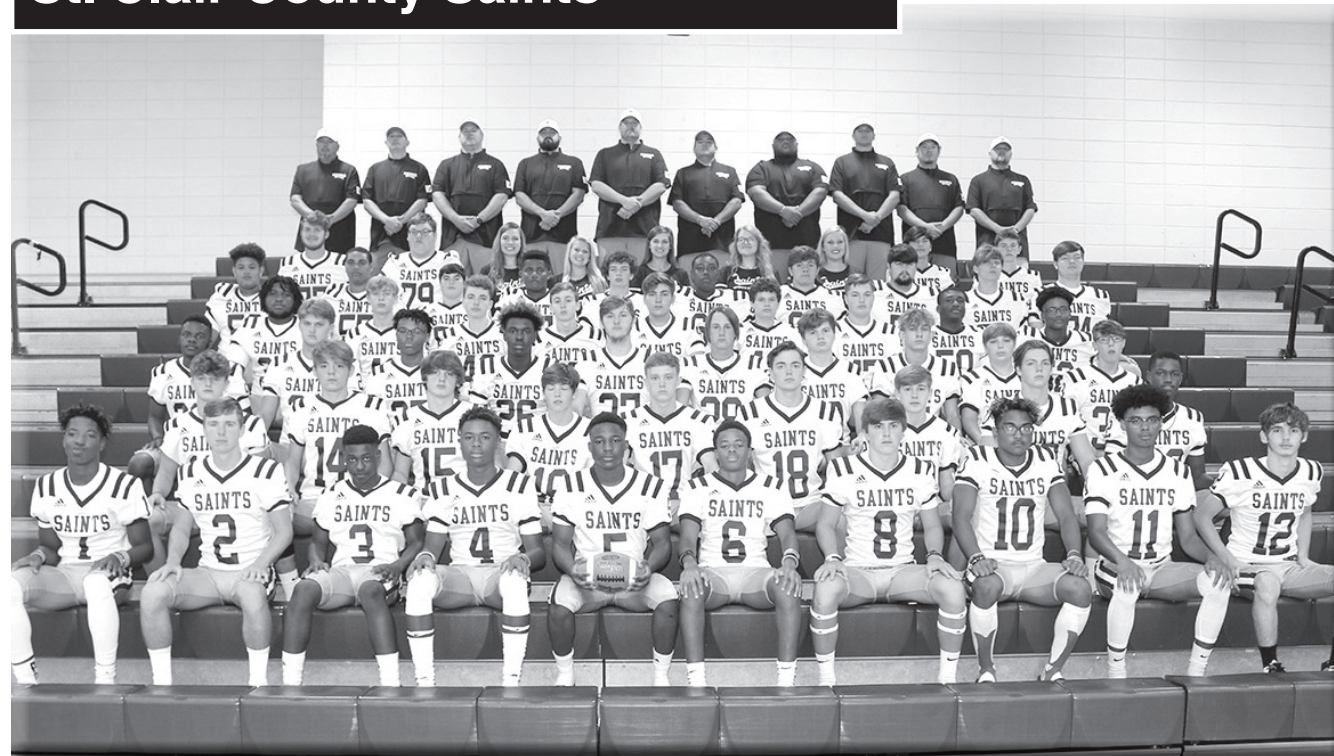
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St. Clair County Saints



ST. CLAIR COUNTY 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23	John Carroll	H
Aug. 30	Cherokee Co.	H
Sept. 6	Moody	H
Sept. 13	Mortimer Jordan	A
Sept. 20	Center Point	H
Sept. 27	OPEN	
Oct. 4	Sylacauga	H
Oct. 11	Central Clay Co.	H
Oct. 18	Munford	A
Oct. 25	Springville	A
Nov. 1	Shelby Co.	A

Brooks Dampeer takes over as head coach for Saints

By GARY HANNER

Times Editor

After spending the past two seasons as the offensive coordinator for St. Clair County High, Brooks Dampeer

is the new head football coach for the Saints. This move came after former head coach Matt Glover left to pursue other options

Dampeer has head coaching experience as he was the head man for the Pell City Panthers from 2013-15.

He led the Panthers to two playoff seasons and finished with a record of 16-16.

"I am blessed to have my second head coaching position," he said. "It's a good feeling to understand

See Saints, Page 36

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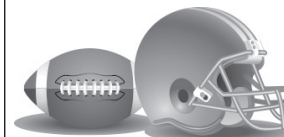
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Wishing All Area Teams A Good Year!

Wishing All The St. Clair County Teams
Good Luck!

Saints

from page 35

that I get the chance to help kids accomplish what they want to in goals and leadership. My three core values are people, planning and process. As their head coach, I want to help mentor the kids and the assistant coaches.”

Dampeer said two years ago was an exciting season for the Saints as they advanced to the semi-finals, finishing the season at 10-4.

“We had a lot of senior participation that year,” he said. “Last year was somewhat of a rebuilding

season as we lost a lot of seniors. Even this year, we’ve lost a lot of seniors again.”

Dampeer said each player understands it’s about how they pay attention to each detail.

“Controlling what they can control and working hard,” he said. “Doing their job and knowing they have done everything they can do. It all starts in the weight room in the off-season and summer.”

Region play

SCCHS is in Class 5A, Region 5 along with Center

Point, Central Clay County, Moody, Mortimer Jordan, Munford, Springville and Sylacauga.

Dampeer said the team to beat in the region is the defending Class 5A state champion Central Clay County.

“Our region has produced five teams in the past four years that either played in the semifinals or

See **Saints**, Page 38



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Saints

from page 38



finals," he said. "Center Point is going to be a very good team, and Sylacauga could have its best team this year. Munford will have a very athletic club, while Moody and Springville will make for some good county games that should draw huge crowds."

Goals

First of all, Dampier said, they have the opportunity to slip up on a team or two that, maybe on paper, they are

not supposed to beat.

"Our goal is to get into the playoffs, and we can if we focus on our tasks," he said. "Last year, we dropped a couple of close games against Munford and Shelby County that were one-score games late in the games. We have to learn how to finish those games. It's all about staying focused and controlling emotions at the end. We have to pay attention to detail, and not make any

bonehead mistakes late in the game."

Key players returning

There are eight seniors on the Saint team this year.

See **Saints**, Page 40

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to the
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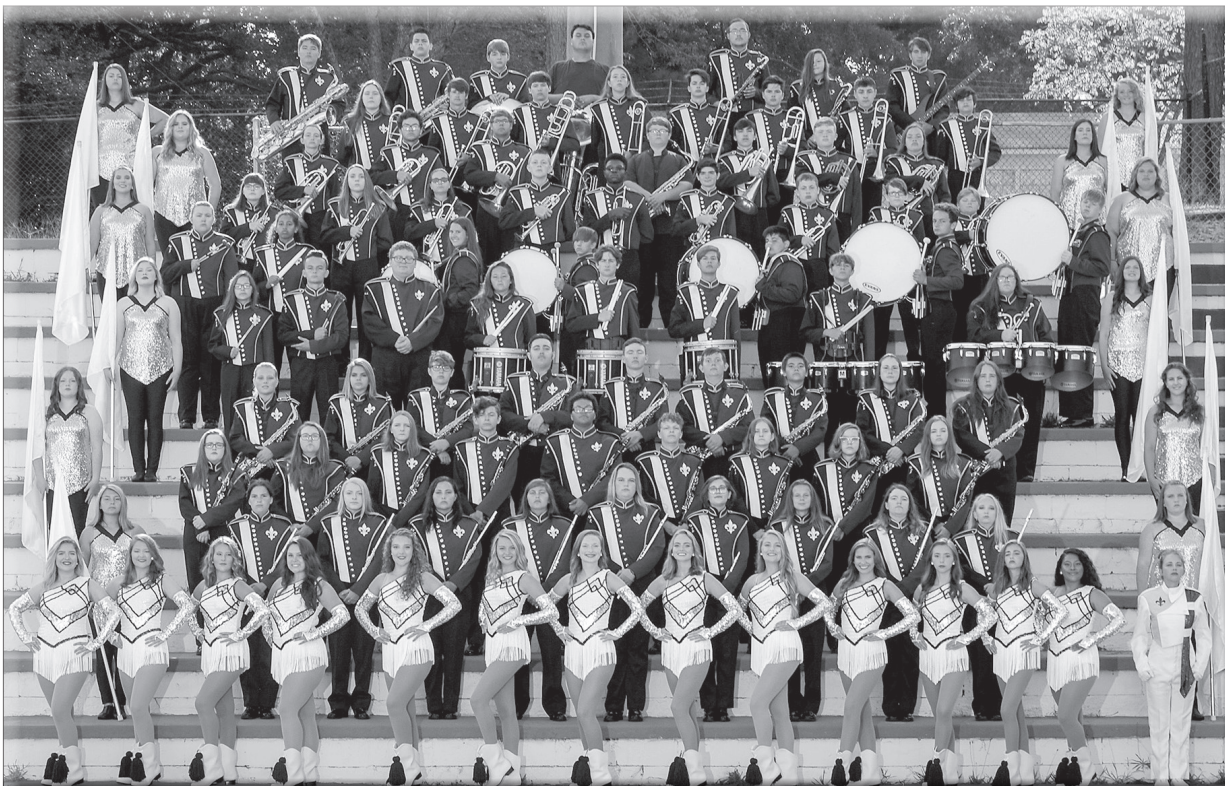
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*We Hope All
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School Football
Teams
Have A Good
Football Season!*

Saints

from page 38



Dampeer said key players returning include senior wide receiver Micah Gilbert; senior offensive linemen Jalin Henderson and Jaden Osborne; junior offensive linemen Jason Thomas and Nathan Fuller; and sophomore defensive back Josh Ruff.

SCCHS opens the season Friday night at home against John Carroll.



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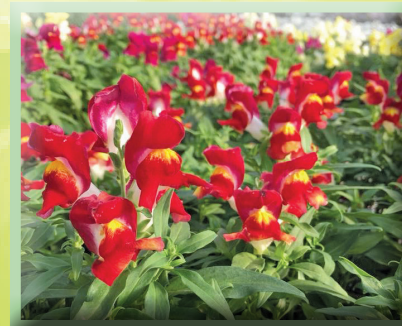
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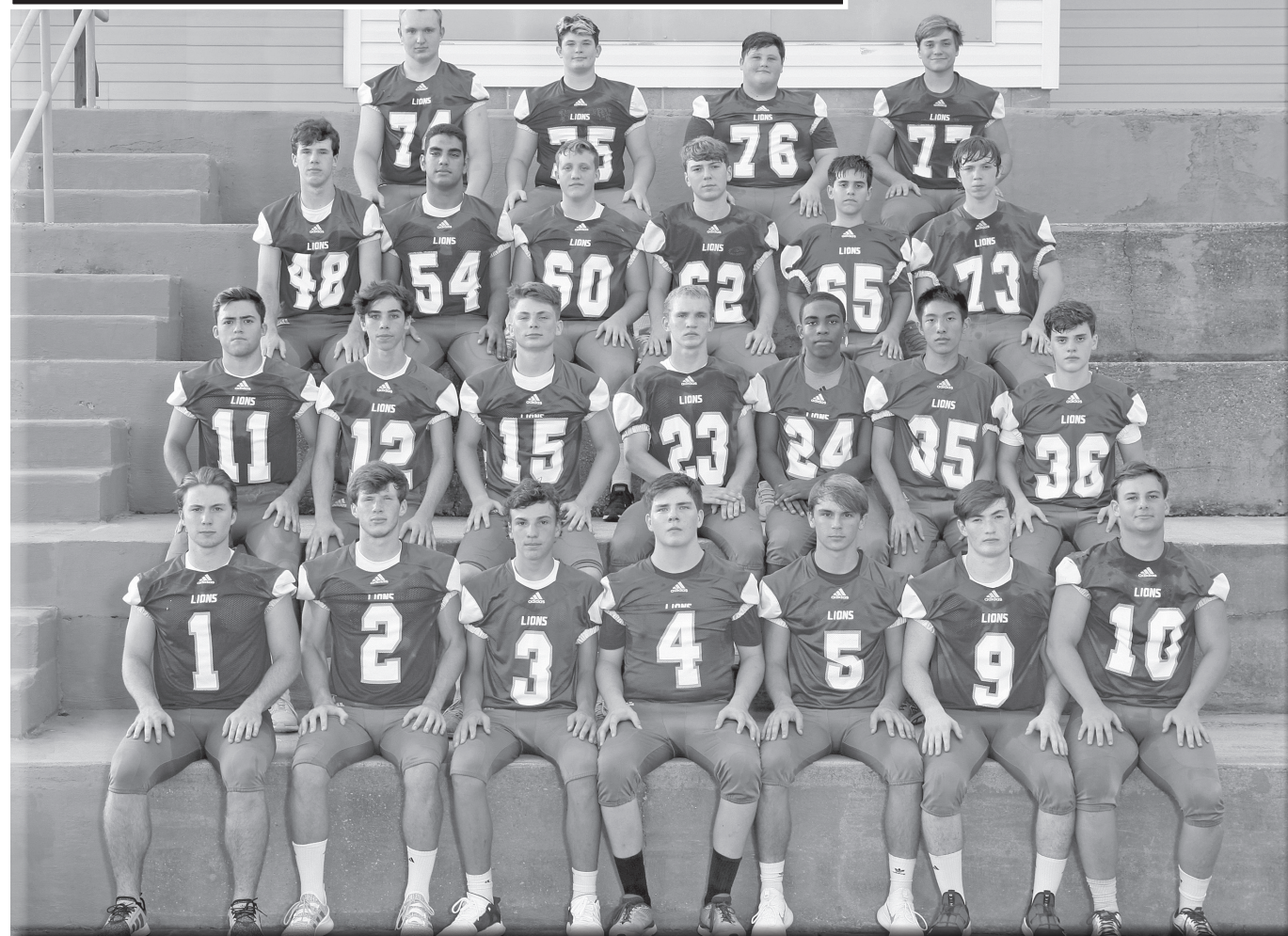
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Victory Christian Lions



RECLAIMING THE MAGIC

Victory Christian hoping to find success of three years ago

By SHANE DUNAWAY

Victory Christian veers toward the 2019 campaign trying to find the magic from three seasons ago when they were contenders in Class 1A.

The Lions enter the upcoming season with a new head coach, Bruce Breland.

Breland previously served as offensive coordinator

under recently-resigned head coach Mike Holliday.

Breland has held head coaching jobs at Coosa Valley Academy, Bessemer Academy, Fultondale, Shelby County, Woodlawn and Alma Bryant. He has compiled an 88-109 record in his 19 years leading football programs.

“I think it’s great,” Breland said. “My last stop, I had 105 players. Now, I have 25 players.

“The thing that I’m excited about with them is they

are all great young men character-wise at a great school. They support us very well, and I couldn’t be any happier where I am ... Being able to come back and coach again is just a blessing to me.”

Victory Christian will open the season at home against Fayetteville on Aug. 30 at 7 p.m. Breland said it would be great to open the season with a victory.

“I think it would be a huge feather (in our cap) with Fayetteville being a 2A school,” he said. “When we go into that game, we’re not looking at them as being anything above where we are. We’re ready to play at that level ... I think it would show our guys their hard work is worthy.”

The Lions lost just seven seniors from the 2018 squad. One of those vacancies

VICTORY CHRISTIAN 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 23 OPEN

Aug. 30 Fayetteville H

Sept. 6 Gaylesville A

Sept. 13 Appalachian H

Sept. 20 Ragland H

Sept. 27 Coosa Christian A

Oct. 4 Winterboro A

Oct. 11 Spring Garden A

Oct. 18 Donoho H

Oct. 25 TCC A

Nov. 1 Sumiton Christian H

includes the quarterback position, but Breland said he'll roll with freshman quarterback Dalton Lewellyn to replace last season's starter Abe Sargent.

"(Lewellyn) is an outstanding ballplayer," he said. "We have complete confidence in him. He's a great athlete. He's got a good arm, really good feet and a great head on his shoulders. We're not expecting to miss a beat with

him in there."

Running back/safety Lee Yeager and offensive/defensive lineman PJ Holman return as two key leaders for the Lions.

"Whether we're in the weight room, whether we're in school or we're at Shop 'N' Snack, these two guys right here is what Victory Christian is all about," Breland said. "We expect them

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to shoulder (the) load, and they do it with the leadership they bring.”

Breland said he considers running back, the offensive line, defensive ends and linebackers as positions of strength going into the season.

“Offensively, we’ll continue what we do because I’ve been offensive coordinator,” he said. “Defensively, we went to the 4-2-5 last year, which is what we’ll be running this year. We will try to make it a little more unpredictable, be a defense that forces the action a little more and not allow the offense to dictate to us what it wants to do.”

Yeager said he’s excited about the upcoming season.

“I love the guys I play with,” he said. “There’s no other line I’d rather be running behind and no other players I’d rather be on the field with.”

Victory Christian put together one of its best seasons in 2015 and won its first home playoff game in school history (a 33-19 victory over Woodville in the first round of the 1A playoffs).

For the past three seasons, the Lions have been on the cusp of a playoff berth, but a 5-13 record in region play during that span has kept an otherwise competitive program on the fringe.

“The players are working hard, and they want it,” Breland said. “They want the very best for Victory Christian and themselves, and they are striving very

hard to be an elite team and be one of those playoff teams.”

Breland said the late-season scramble to claim one of four region playoff spots can be challenging.

“The region is a tough region for sure, and depth towards the end of the year is critical,” he said. “So is staying injury-free ... Some injuries are unavoidable, and you just try to stay above that, and hopefully this year, we will because we don’t have a lot of depth. We do have a lot of passion, and these boys are working hard getting ready to play.”

He added his goal is to build a true program where year-in and year-out, the team is more competitive

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and not having to rely on “the good group” of players to rise through the system.

“That’s what we’re striving for is to be able to build that program, starting with the younger guys,” he said. “I think it starts in the weight room and it starts at the junior high level.

“We’re going to get there ... Everyone wants it now, but that’s unrealistic. We want it as fast as possible.”



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