

The Anniston Star

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL 2016

Profiles and schedules of 18 area football teams

INSIDE:

Let the discussion begin:
The Star unveils its
preseason All-Calhoun
County team



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The Anniston Star FOOTBALL 2016

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COVER:

Wellborn's Jordan Montgomery, Piedmont's Chase Bobbitt and Oxford's K.J. Britt are part of The Star's preseason All-Calhoun County team.

Photo by Trent Penny/The Anniston Star

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OUR PICKS

We're unveiling the best in Calhoun County

BY WILL GAINES

wgaines@annistonstar.com

There's never been a shortage of talented football players in Calhoun County, and this season will be no different.

The Anniston Star always has honored Calhoun County players' accomplishments with an all-county football team after the season. This year, The Star is unveiling a preseason All-Calhoun County team. Some players who make the team will be familiar faces, while others will be new stars.

Oxford's K.J. Britt is the Class 4A-6A Defensive Player of the Year for his accomplishments on the field. Britt has turned into one of the top players in not only the county but also the state. He has more than 30 college football scholarship offers with just about every SEC school interested in him.

As a junior, he had 126 tackles, 22 tackles for loss, five forced fumbles and two fumble recoveries. He also returned a fumble for a touchdown. This season, he's expected to be just as dominant. In addition, he'll play offense, because his coaches consider him too dominant to keep off the field when the Yellow Jackets have the ball. This summer he was invited to Oregon for the Nike Opening Finals, a recruiting showcase. He showed he can compete with some of the best players in the country.

Selected as the Class 4A-6A Offensive Player of the Year is Alexandria's Jamal Tucker. He's coming off a season where he led the Valley Cubs to the state semifinals of the playoffs. He rushed for 1,350 yards on only 116 attempts. He averaged 11.4 yards a carry with 22 touchdowns. On defense, he was just as dominant from his safety position as he finished with 49 tackles, eight pass breakups and seven touchdown-saving tackles. All of this earned him all-state honors from the Alabama Sports Writers Association and



Trent Penny/The Anniston Star

Please see TEAM | Page 5

Oxford's K.J. Britt is the Class 4A-6A Defensive Player of the Year.

TEAM

Continued from Page 4

this season looks to be another strong year for Tucker.

The Class 1A-3A Offensive Player of the Year is Piedmont quarterback Taylor Hayes, who had a junior season he won't soon forget.

Hayes led the Bulldogs to the Class 3A state championship and was selected as the 3A Back of the Year by the Alabama Sports Writers Association. He passed for 1,760 yards and 19 touchdowns, completing 103 of 188 passes with just six interceptions. He ran 208 times for 1,560 yards and another 18 touchdowns.

Last season was his first to start at quarterback for the varsity. As a sophomore, he shined as an all-state linebacker.

The 1A-3A Defensive Player of the Year will be Wellborn's Jordan Montgomery, who had 108 tackles, seven interceptions and three fumble recoveries on defense. Offensively, he ran the ball 90 times for 703 yards and 10 touchdowns. He also had 24 receptions for 416 yards and six touchdowns. He returned a punt for a touchdown.

He's already received a scholarship offer from Samford University, and with a solid senior campaign he could be looking for even more offers by the end of the season.

There are plenty of other talented players on the team, such as two-time all-state linebacker Chase Bobbitt from Piedmont, Ohatchee running back Austin Tucker, Oxford offensive lineman Clay Webb and Anniston running back L.J. Heard.

Even so, all of these players will have plenty to prove this fall.

PRESEASON ALL-CALHOUN COUNTY TEAM

CLASS 1A-3A

Preseason Offensive Player of the Year: **Taylor Hayes**, Piedmont
Preseason Defensive Player of the Year: **Jordan Montgomery**, Wellborn

QB: **Taylor Hayes**, Piedmont
RB: **Austin Tucker**, Ohatchee
RB: **Reed Murphy**, JCA
RB: **Mitchell Baker**, Donoho
WR: **Reagan King**, Pleasant Valley
WR: **Cody Ortiz**, Weaver
OL: **Chandler Cupp**, Wellborn
OL: **Javien Woods**, Piedmont
OL: **Krae Keener**, Piedmont
OL: **Mason Langley**, Piedmont
OL: **Caleb Allison**, Weaver
DL: **Chase Bobbitt**, Piedmont
DL: **Jamesio Elston**, Wellborn
DL: **Logan Beadles**, Piedmont
LB: **Tyrik Hall**, Weaver
LB: **Austin Brazier**, Piedmont
LB: **Giovanni Mosley**, Weaver
LB: **Taylor Eubanks**, Ohatchee
DB: **Jordan Montgomery**, Wellborn
DB: **Paul Hubbard**, Weaver
DB: **Caden Turner**, Pleasant Valley
DB: **Cardavian Myers**, Piedmont
K: **Riley Benevides**, Weaver
P: **Easton Kirk**, Piedmont

CLASS 4A-6A

Preseason Offensive Player of the Year: **Jamal Tucker**, Alexandria
Preseason Defensive Player of the Year: **KJ Britt**, Oxford

QB: **Colton Clark**, Jacksonville
RB: **Jamal Tucker**, Alexandria
RB: **Keenan Woodruff**, Alexandria
RB: **Taye Ackles**, Jacksonville
WR: **Jack Peavey**, Oxford
WR: **Tray Huguley**, Saks
OL: **Clay Webb**, Oxford
OL: **K.J. Satcher**, Jacksonville
OL: **Braden Best**, Alexandria
OL: **Brannon Ogle**, Saks
OL: **Brett Houston**, Oxford
DL: **Elijah Jackson**, Anniston
DL: **Mak Curry**, Jacksonville
DL: **Amaud Simmons**, Oxford
LB: **KJ Britt**, Oxford
LB: **Brandon Tarrance**, Alexandria
LB: **Edward Montgomery**, Anniston
LB: **Trahmaud Jordan**, Oxford
DB: **Mario Dobbins**, Anniston
DB: **AJ Martin**, Alexandria
DB: **Niko Richmond**, Jacksonville
DB: **Brashaud Harris**, Anniston
K: **Keaton Borrelli**, Oxford
P: **Dakota Abramski**, White Plains



Trent Penny/The Anniston Star

Wellborn's Jordan Montgomery is the Class 1A-3A Defensive Player of the Year.

ALL-CALHOUN COUNTY TEAM

ALEXANDRIA

VALLEY CUBS

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

It's tough to find a better running back duo in the state than Alexandria's Jamal Tucker and Keenan Woodruff. After replacing Alton Davis and Tyrelle Gay a year ago, Tucker and Woodruff shined. Don't expect them to fizzle this season. The defensive side of the ball is where three under-the-radar players — Chase Smitherman, Brandon Tarrance and A.J. Martin — live. Smitherman and Tarrance are standout linebackers, while Martin is a lockdown cornerback who tallied more than 100 tackles in 2015. Braden Best is expected to be the next great offensive lineman, replacing two-time all-state player Dakota Sams.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Of the nine years Frank Tucker has been the head coach at Alexandria, the Valley Cubs have had at least one all-state player in six of those seasons — 2007, 2010 and 2013 are the only exceptions. Last year, Dakota Sams, Jamal Tucker and Keenan Woodruff became the first Alexandria trio to earn the honors. Before that, 2012 (Justice Owens and Taylor Watts) and 2008 (Ethan Vineyard and Terrell Stewart) were the years with multiple Valley Cub players on the all-state lists.

BIG GAMES:

Alexandria makes a region change this season, but on paper, it doesn't sound like much of a problem. Of the seven new teams the Valley Cubs will face in Class 5A, Region 7, only Etowah (7-4) and Guntersville (12-1) had a winning record a season ago. Scottsboro (5-6) is dropping from Class 6A to join the region, too. Those three teams and Alexandria appear to be the favorites for the region's four playoff berths. However, within that, when the Valley Cubs host Guntersville on Oct. 14 and Etowah on Sept. 16, those matchups are key ones to circle with Alexandria's eyes locked on a region championship.

OUR TAKE:

Jamal Tucker and Woodruff make up one of the most feared backfields in the state. Both are all-state players from last year and should carry the load once again for the Valley Cubs. Head coach Frank Tucker loses one of his sons — Luke — to graduation, but gets another — Josh — to step into the starting quarterback job. He should split time with Quinton Bowie. Alexandria won't put the ball in the air on too many occasions, but that's a compliment to its offensive line. Yes, two-time all-state player Dakota Sams has graduated, but the Valley Cubs always produce quality linemen to open the holes for their skill players. In "Death Valley," it's hard to live up to Lou Scales and Larry Ginn, but Tucker is doing a great job of creating his own legacy. Since taking over for Ginn heading into the 2007 season, Tucker has only had one losing season — 2013, which is also the only year Alexandria hasn't made the postseason under Tucker. He knows what it takes to make a productive team, so 2016 will be no different.

WORD FROM COACH TUCKER:

"I told this team that last year's team is gone, so they have to be their own team with its own personality and do what fits them. There are going to be a lot of big games against good quality opponents that it's hard to pinpoint any one game being the game this season. I hope (Jamal and Keenan) can produce as well as they did last year, but that's up to them and the offensive line, if they can be as effective."

Coach: Frank Tucker, 64-37, 10th year

Last year: 11-2, 6-1 in Class 5A, Region 6 (first place), lost to Mortimer Jordan in semifinals of playoffs

Returning starters: TE/WR Chase Smitherman, OL Braden Best, OL Skylar Hawkins, RB Keenan Woodruff, LB Kobe Woodruff, LB Brandon Tarrance, LB Quinton Bowie, ATH Jamal Tucker, DB AJ Martin

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 Jamboree
Aug. 26 at Jacksonville
Sept. 2 vs. Arab*
Sept. 9 at Boaz*
Sept. 16 vs. Etowah*
Sept. 23 vs. Cleburne Co.
Sept. 30 at Scottsboro*
Oct. 7 vs. Douglas*
Oct. 14 vs. Guntersville*
Oct. 21 at Crossville*
Oct. 28 Open

*Class 5A, Region 7 games

2015 RESULTS

vs. Jacksonville —W (46-14)
vs. Hayden —W (36-14)
at Lincoln —W (34-7)
vs. Springville —W (27-0)
at Mortimer Jordan —W (39-36)
vs. St. Clair Co. —W (50-21)
at Moody —W (56-14)
at Anniston —L (25-0)
vs. Cherokee Co. —W (65-49)

Playoffs

vs. West Point —W (41-21)
vs. Pleasant Grove —W (36-14)
at Russellville —W (22-14)
vs. Mortimer Jordan —L-OT (42-36)



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star/File

Alexandria head coach Frank Tucker high fives Alexandria's Jamal Tucker after a long TD run during the Pleasant Grove at Alexandria AHSAA AHSAA playoff football game.

ANNISTON

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

Anniston will have plenty of running backs to watch this fall. L.J. Heard will lead the way for the unit along with Jeremy McCants. Jamaree West and Jonovan Carlisle also will provide some depth. On the offensive line, the Bulldogs will return Deangelo McHeldrey, who is expected to provide leadership for the young offensive lineman. On defense, Brashard Harris will return as a safety and is expected to be a playmaker on offense, too. Mario Dobbins returns as cornerback along with linebacker Tareeq Woods. Anniston will have plenty of newcomers to keep an eye on. One will be quarterback Savion Bethune who will take over for Tae Miller, who graduated last year.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Anniston is moving down from Class 5A to 4A. The last time the Bulldogs were in 4A they enjoyed a lot of success as they made the semifinals in 2011. They'll look for similar results this season with a young team.

BIG GAMES:

While the Bulldogs are moving down a classification, that doesn't mean their schedule is going to get any easier. Cherokee County, Saks, Jacksonville and Oneonta will be tough region opponents. Then you add in larger schools like Sylacauga, Pell City and Fort Payne in non-region games, and it makes for a tough schedule. Anniston also will face county schools Saks, Jacksonville and White Plains. Expect those games to have electric atmospheres.

OUR TAKE:

Anniston lost 10 seniors from last year's team, including quarterback Tae Miller, but the Bulldogs are confident in the young talent they have coming back.

They are dropping to Class 4A from 5A where they were the third smallest school in the classification by enrollment. In 2011, Anniston made it to the 4A state semifinals, and the Bulldogs think they can have similar success this time around, especially as they have more than 70 players on the roster.

Head coach Eddie Bullock is entering his seventh season as head coach at Anniston. He's pleased with the players coming back including a talented stable of running backs in McCants and Heard. He likes the newcomers as well, such as quarterback Javion Bethune who he thinks will bring a lot to the offense with his football knowledge and strength. He played sparingly last season, including when the Bulldogs moved Miller to receiver on certain plays.

The Bulldogs got off to a slow start a season ago by losing their first three games, but they came on strong late and earned a spot in the playoffs with an upset win over Alexandria.

Part of the reason for the slow start was offensive coordinator Shannon Felder not joining the coaching staff until July. Felder added some spread concepts to the Bulldogs' normal I-formation philosophy. The team went through growing pains at the beginning of the season, but came on strong late. Bullock thinks they can pick up where they left off at the end of the season despite losing a lot of seniors.

Cherokee County will be the favorite in the region going into the season with so much returning talent, but the Anniston players and coaches like where they stand and feel they have something to prove.

If they can get solid offensive line play then the Bulldogs could have a happy return to Class 4A.

WORD FROM COACH BULLOCK:

"We've got a lot of speed. We're going to be young on the offensive line, but we've got a stable of running backs and a good stable of linebackers. If we can keep everybody healthy then we should be solid. I'm looking to see the talent transfer over to the field now."

Coach: Eddie Bullock, entering seventh season, 35-32 overall record

Last year: 4-6 overall, 4-3 Class 5A, Region 6 record

Returning starters: Jeremy McCants, LJ Heard, DeAngelo McElderry, Brashard Harris, Mario Dobbins and Tareeq Woods.

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 Jamboree
Aug. 26 vs. Sylacauga
Sept. 2 vs. Ashville*
Sept. 9 vs. Cherokee Co.*
Sept. 16 at Jacksonville*
Sept. 23 at Pell City
Sept. 30 vs. White Plains*
Oct. 7 at Saks*
Oct. 14 at Hokes Bluff*
Oct. 21 vs. Oneonta*
Oct. 28 at Fort Payne

*Class 4A, Region 5 games

2015 RESULTS

at Handley —L (14-6)
vs. Mortimer Jordan —L (43-19)
at Hayden —L (28-12)
vs. Lincoln —W (37-14)
at Springfield —W (22-3)
vs. Moody —L (27-24)
at St. Clair Co. —W (8-0)
vs. Alexandria —W (25-0)
vs. Fort Payne —L (27-26)

Playoffs

at Russellville —L (10-7)



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star/File

Anniston's Jeremy McCants gets tackled by Fort Payne's Jaden Richburg during the Ft. Payne at Anniston prep football game.

BULLDOGS

CLEBURNE COUNTY

TIGERS

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

John Robinson will return this season to help anchor the offensive line and will be one of the Tigers' best players. He's a college prospect, and the Tigers will be looking to him for leadership. Quarterback Brock Swafford will return after starting all 12 games last season as a sophomore. He'll look to continue his strong play, but he'll have to do it without his favorite target, Jeremiah Blake, who is now playing at Coffeyville (Kansas) Community College. Stashun Henson will step into the leading role at receiver this season, but the Tigers will have other receivers looking to contribute, also. J'son Henson will return this season at running back and could have another big season. Newcomers such as Micaiah Ross could emerge this season as well.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

For the first time in Michael Shortt's head coaching career, he'll be leading a team in a classification other than 4A. Reclassification pushed Cleburne County into Class 5A. He has won seven region or area titles in 18 seasons at Heflin, and even with the move up, he won't aim for anything other than another strong region run.

BIG GAMES:

The Tigers will player one of the tougher schedules they've played in a long time. They open the season with defending 4A state champion Leeds and then face Clay-Central, Alexandria, Randolph County, Beauregard and Fyffe — all teams that expect to win a lot of games.

OUR TAKE:

Cleburne County is coming off back-to-back region championships in Class 4A, but now the Tigers are making the jump to 5A and that will present some challenges. They'll be one of the smaller schools in 5A, and they'll make this move after having lost key players such as Blake. In addition, eight players with playing experience chose not to return this season for various reasons.

However, the Tigers return Robinson, Swafford and Henson, who rushed for more than 1,000 yards last year.

This season, Swafford will have to throw to a larger variety of receivers, but he'll have several solid targets. Henson, Nick Dunston and John Darius Stewart will each have to step up in the passing game. The Tigers also return three offensive linemen and several good running backs.

On defense, the Tigers suffered more losses. Several young players will have to play at key positions, and Cleburne County will rely upon players who have playing experience but not starting experience. The Tigers plan to keep the defensive game plan simple to help the younger players play faster.

Head coach Michael Shortt said the schedule is as tough as it's ever been while he's been at Heflin. The Tigers will open with defending 4A champion Leeds and it will only get tougher. They'll play Alexandria, which made the semifinals in 5A last season, Randolph County, which made the semifinals in 2A, Fyffe, which was state runner up last season in 2A and won a state title in 2014. Also, there are quality teams such as Beauregard, Valley, Lincoln and Clay Central.

If the Tigers can have production from their proven veterans and have their talented underclassmen step up then they could have a solid season.

WORD FROM COACH SHORTT:

"Going into a new classification is something I've never dealt with, I've always been 4A, so it's going to be some unknown this year. We're the smallest 5A school in the state and we're going to be playing against schools with a lot more students than us, but we're not going to use that as an excuse. We're going to take the guys we have coming back, mix in some young guys, work hard and do the best we can. That's what we've always done at Heflin."

Coach: Michael Shortt, 19th season as head coach, 139-70 record

Last year: 9-3 overall, 7-0 Class 4A, Region 5 record (region champ). Beat Wilson 31-12 in the first round of the state playoffs before falling to Fayette County 40-23.

Returning starters: DL Trevor Ivey, OL John Robinson, OL Sam Pate, OL Ethan Spears, WR Stashaun Henson, WR, Nick Dunston, QB Brock Swafford, RB J'son Henson, RB Trevor Houston, RB Kade Clark, DL Cameron Dryden and OL Ben Taylor.

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 26 vs. Leeds
Sept. 2 at Talladega*
Sept. 9 vs. Valley*
Sept. 16 at Clay Central*
Sept. 23 at Alexandria
Sept. 30 vs. Randolph Co.
Oct. 7 vs. Lincoln*
Oct. 14 at Beauregard*
Oct. 21 vs. Sylacauga*
Oct. 28 at Fyffe

*Class 5A, Region 4 games

2015 RESULTS

vs. Munford — **L (41-28)**
 vs. Cherokee Co. — **W (41-14)**
 at White Plains — **W (42-6)**
 at Crossville — **W (39-3)**
 vs. Haralson Co. (Ga.) — **W (44-17)**
 vs. Jacksonville — **W (29-14)**
 at Sardis — **W (35-13)**
 at Saks — **W (36-29)**
 vs. Hokes Bluff — **W (28-7)**
 vs. Glencoe — **L (38-13)**

Playoffs

vs. Wilson — **W (31-12)**
 vs. Fayette Co. — **L (40-23)**



Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star/File

Cleburne County's J'son Henson during the Cleburne County at Saks football game.

DONOHO

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

Donoho will return eight starters on both offense and defense this fall. Garrett Steed will play quarterback after being a running back a season ago. Mitchell Baker could be the most talented player on the roster as a do-it-all back for the Falcons. He's already received college interest as a kicker and punter as well as a running back and defensive back. Getting Baker in the best position to make plays will be key for the Falcons this season.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Donoho missed the playoffs last season for the first time in five years. A big reason for that was all of the close losses they had in region play. If they can find a way to win those close games then they should be able to get back in the postseason. Andy McWilliams will be entering his second season as Donoho's head coach and he expects the Falcons will compete better than they did in his first season.

BIG GAMES:

Every region game the Falcons play this year is going to be big. The Falcons are in a tough region where most all of the teams could easily land in one of the top-four spots. Because of that, the Falcons have to take all of their region games seriously. The good news for the Falcons is four of their six region losses last season were by 10 points or less and three of those were by eight points or less. The only lopsided loss came to Wadley, which won 46-0. Wadley will probably be strong again this season, but Donoho should be able to compete with everyone in its region.

OUR TAKE:

After a disappointing season for a Donoho team bitten by the injury bug, this year's squad is determined to make it back to the playoffs. The Falcons have gotten stronger and worked hard to prove doubters wrong and that last year was a fluke. McWilliams doesn't want to make excuses for the Falcons, but acknowledged the effect injuries can have on a small team such as Donoho. The Falcons are a young team, especially on the line, but a core of six seniors, including Baker, J.R. Allen and Steed, is trying to keep them focused. This is a team that knows what it's like to win, and the memories of 2014 — an 11-1 record and a region championship — are still fresh for the seniors. The younger guys are hungry, and that pushes seniors like Baker, Allen and Steed.

Their new mentality will be challenged each week in a tough region. The only team to finish behind Donoho was Appalachian. There were a lot of close games across the region last year. The back end of Donoho's schedule is especially tough, as the Falcons face Talladega County Central and Wadley in the last three weeks of the season.

Most of last year's losses were close, so McWilliams believes the issues were with execution. McWilliams made some tweaks to the coaching staff, and there is a big focus on playing as a team. He started to see that at the end of last year, and hopes it will carry over.

With his team back healthy, McWilliams hopes to return the Falcons to winning ways. Their first game is Aug. 19 at Jacksonville Christian, a team the Falcons beat 55-33 three years ago. They don't play at home until they host Winterboro on Sept. 9.

WORD FROM COACH McWILLIAMS:

"We're going to be a young team in the trenches. We've got the opportunity to be pretty explosive offensively, I think. Defensively, we're going to be kind of small, but I think we're going to have decent speed. ... I expect us to put a better product out there than we did last year."

Coach: Andy McWilliams, 3-6, second year

Last year: 3-6, 1-5 in Class 1A, Region 5 (sixth place), missed playoffs

Returning starters: Garrett Steed RB/DB, Mitchell Baker RB/K, Tej Patel, Buddy Ray, J.R. Allen C/LB, John Hutto WR/LB, Wilson Russell WR/DL

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 at Jacksonville Christian

Aug. 25 at Horseshoe Bend

Sept. 2 at Victory Christian*

Sept. 9 vs. Winterboro*

Sept. 16 Open

Sept. 23 vs. Spring Garden

Sept. 30 at Appalachian*

Oct. 7 vs. Talladega Co. Central*

Oct. 14 at Ragland*

Oct. 21 vs. Wadley*

Oct. 28 vs. Woodland

*Class 1A, Region 4 games

2015 RESULTS

vs. Shoals Christian — **W (65-13)**

vs. Talladega Co. Central — **L (22-21)**

at Winterboro — **L (30-24)**

at Fayetteville — **L (14-9)**

vs. Victory Christian — **L (21-13)**

at Wadley — **L (46-0)**

vs. Ragland — **L (23-13)**

at Appalachian — **W (35-14)**

vs. Coosa Christian — **W (28-6)**



Kirsten Fiscus/The Anniston Star/File

Donoho head coach Andy McWilliams talks with Tej Patel during a game.

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JACKSONVILLE CHRISTIAN

THUNDER

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

JCA lost one when Antwon Fegans transferred to Oxford, but much of the Thunder's offensive production returns from last season. Senior Jayden Mitchell is back at quarterback, along with running back Reed Murphy and wide receiver Walker Messer. Murphy rushed for nearly 2,000 yards in 2015, and JCA never has trouble putting up points. Expect to hear their names a lot this fall as otherwise short-handed JCA tries to maximize their thunder.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Did we mention JCA is short-handed? The loss of five seniors and the transfer of three players to Oxford has left the Thunder with barely enough to field a full 11-man team, barring new players coming out after preseason practice starts. A school that graduated a class of 20 last year doesn't have much from which to draw.

BIG GAMES:

Reclassification didn't change much for JCA. Region games against Spring Garden, Valley Head and Cedar Bluff will be big, but then so will others in a region where everybody else is playing for that fourth and final playoff spot.

OUR TAKE:

JCA coach Tommy Miller expects to field his smallest team since the Thunder began Alabama High School Athletic Association play in the 2002-03 school year. If JCA can get through the year with enough healthy players, realignment didn't help much. The Thunder remains aligned with the likes of Spring Garden, Cedar Bluff and Valley Head. It likely means the season is a fight for fourth place and the final playoff spot in Class 1A, Region 6 ... and a short-handed battle, at that. No doubt Miller's team will compete. It always does, but its top competition will bring two-to-three times the number of players JCA has.

WORD FROM COACH MILLER:

"One thing, you kind of have to be a psychiatrist much more than we were in eight-man football. When they (his players) look at Spring Garden, Cedar Bluff, they see that Spring Garden has about two-and-a-half times the number of kids we've got, maybe three. Cedar Bluff has three-or-more times the number of kids we've got. You look at those situations, it's about the same thing as, say, Wellborn or White Plains playing with Hoover."

Coach: Tommy Miller, 71-117, 21st year

Last year: 4-5 overall, 2-4 in Class 1A, Region 7 (fifth place).

Returning starters: QB Jayden Mitchell, RB Reed Murphy, WR Walker Messer, OL Ion Bonds.

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 vs. Donoho
 Aug. 26 vs. Whitesburg Christian
 Sept. 2 vs. Woodville*
 Sept. 9 at Valley Head*
 Sept. 16 at Coosa Christian*
 Sept. 23 at Ala. School for Deaf
 Sept. 30 Open
 Oct. 7 vs. Spring Garden*
 Oct. 14 vs. Cedar Bluff*
 Oct. 21 at Gaylesville*

*Class 1A, Region 6 games

2015 RESULTS

vs. Woodville —L (50-48)
 at Coosa Christian —W (43-6)
 at Cedar Bluff —L (66-14)
 vs. Ala. School for Deaf —W (35-12)
 vs. Gaylesville —W (28-22)
 vs. Spring Garden —L (61-21)
 at Valley Head —L (55-40)
 at Waterloo —W (42-21)
 at Verbena —L (46-28)



Thomas Wilczek/Special to The Star/File

Reed Murphy (21) breaks down the sidelines against the Silent Warrior defense during first half play.

JACKSONVILLE

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

Everyone knows about Taye Ackles and Niko Richmond because they've been stars at Jacksonville for years now. Colton Clark is set to emerge as the starting quarterback, so people will know his name as well. Jewels Gray, a sophomore receiver, senior receiver T.J. Carr and senior outside linebacker Nie'dale Archie appear to have the potential to be breakout stars, so keep an eye on those three. Gray is talked about as the next go-to offensive threat after Ackles and Richmond graduate. If that's the case, why wait until they leave to make yourself known?

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Clint Smith has not had a losing season with Jacksonville since becoming the head coach four seasons ago. The last time four straight Golden Eagle teams had a .500 record or better was 1996-99 under Russell Burroughs, who has the second most wins in the school's history with 40. Smith is third on that list with 28. The longest streak of non-losing seasons in Jacksonville's history is six, which occurred from 1971-76.

BIG GAMES:

It wouldn't be a preseason football issue if there wasn't at least one mention of the Alexandria and Jacksonville rivalry. Everyone knows how heated these games can get, because the kids just don't like the other school. The Golden Eagles haven't won since a 27-19 victory in 2014, which was the second of back-to-back wins over the Valley Cubs. This game could set the tone for the kind of season Smith and his squad want. If Jacksonville can win the pair of Class 4A, Region 5 games against Saks and Anniston, the Golden Eagles will all but lock up a playoff berth heading into the final month of the regular season.

OUR TAKE:

It feels as if Smith just got to Jacksonville yesterday, but he's entering his fifth year at the helm. The Golden Eagles also always seem to fly under the radar until late in the season when they earn a playoff berth. In 2016, Jacksonville has a bumpy road — schedule wise — with back-to-back games against Alexandria and Saks to start the season before late season showdowns with Oneonta and Cherokee County could turn the tables on teams within Class 4A, Region 5. This season for Jacksonville may be centered on how much Ackles and Richmond can carry. Smith lost quarterback Quen Veasley to graduation, but Clark is expected to fill the void, and word around the water cooler is he has an arm and can really sling the football. The wildcard for Jacksonville this season might be the effect Dominique Thomas has on Ackles, Richmond and the rest of the skill players as the former Jacksonville High and Central Arkansas running back has come back home to help coach under Smith. Thomas was one of the most feared local running backs during his time as a Golden Eagle, so the current ball carriers are getting a good mentor. A playoff appearance is not out of the realm for the Golden Eagles.

WORD FROM COACH SMITH:

"We do have a lot of returners coming back, a lot of experience with guys who have taken snaps. A lot of our seniors this year played as freshman, so they've gotten a lot of snaps in, so we are looking for good leadership out of them. They've been through the battles, so we expect a lot out of them and for that leadership to show. It does help when you've had guys who have been there before."

Coach: Clint Smith, 85-64, 15th year, (28-17 at Jacksonville, fifth year)

Last year: 6-5, 4-3 in Class 4A, Region 6 (fourth place). Lost to Brooks 35-21 in first round of playoffs.

Returning starters: OL Cole Gaddy, OL K.J. Satcher, OL J.D. Dudley, OL Trent Horn, RB Taye Ackles, FB Josh Glass, ATH Niko Richmond, WR Scout Spears, LB Nick Gangwer, DL Mak Curry, LB Nie'dale Archie, LB Blake Morris, LB Ben Patterson, DB Tahj Kirkland

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 at Trinity
Aug. 26 vs. Alexandria
Sept. 2 vs. Saks*
Sept. 9 at Hokes Bluff*
Sept. 16 vs. Anniston*
Sept. 23 Open
Sept. 30 vs. Ashville*
Oct. 7 at Oneonta*
Oct. 14 vs. White Plains*
Oct. 21 at Cherokee Co.*
Oct. 28 Open

*Class 4A, Region 5 games

2015 RESULTS

at Alexandria — **L (46-14)**
 vs. Weaver — **W (35-28)**
 at Crossville — **W (41-7)**
 vs. Sardis — **W (41-20)**
 at Cherokee Co. — **L (35-20)**
 vs. Butler — **W (2-0)***
 at Cleburne Co. — **L (29-14)**
 vs. White Plains — **W (48-14)**
 at Hokes Bluff — **W (47-20)**
 vs. Saks — **L (63-36)**

Playoffs

at Brooks — **L (35-21)**

*Butler did not field a team in 2015



Trent Penny/The Anniston Star/File

Weaver's Matt Elston takes down Jacksonville's Niko Richmond.

GOLDEN EAGLES

LINCOLN

GOLDEN BEARS

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

Running backs L.J. Carmichael and Montrell Johnson return a combined 1,400 rushing yards from last season and figure to carry the bulk of the load, now that quarterback Zay Caldwell has graduated. Carmichael is also a leader on defense as an outside linebacker, having made 72 tackles last season. Wide receiver Quin Carter figures to emerge this season as Lincoln seeks perimeter production lost when Devonte Whiteside graduated. Assuming Lincoln finds the right answer among four candidates at quarterback and the offensive line play is what it promises to be, you'll be hearing a lot about Carmichael, Johnson and Carter this fall.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

A real key for Lincoln this season will come on the offensive line. Shaown Davis returns to the team this season after sitting out 2015 and gives Lincoln a 6-foot-4, 340-pound presence at left tackle. His return allows Keon Woods to move from left tackle to center, which puts one of the team leaders at a leadership position. Also, right guard Kenneth Fomby gives the Golden Bears a pile mover who parallel squats 585 pounds and lifts 1,245 combined pounds in the squad, bench press and power clean.

BIG GAMES:

Where to start? How about the opener? The Golden Bears open with perennial power and defending 4A champion Leeds at home. Leeds lost a lot from last season, but it's Leeds, and there's an opportunity for Lincoln to open with a victory over a name-brand program and gain confidence. Lincoln also plays key region games at Valley and Cleburne County but gets Beauregard and Clay Central at home.

OUR TAKE:

The lightbulb clearly lit at midseason in 2015, as Lincoln turned an 0-5 start into a 4-6 season. The Golden Bears lost key people, led by quarterback Caldwell and safety/receiver Whiteside. Caldwell accounted for nearly 2,000 yards total offense. Still, seven starters return on defense and eight on offense. More importantly, what Lincoln discovered at midseason last season returns. So do Johnson and Carmichael. Reclassification shipped the Golden Bears south, and their schedule is brutal, but Lincoln was a better team than its record showed last season. Fourth-year coach Brad Wallace has talent and a few surprises in mind. Barring key injuries, expect to see Lincoln in the playoffs ... maybe hosting a first-round game.

WORD FROM COACH WALLACE:

"I really think we've got a very special football team with a bunch of special young men that will come out and give you everything they've got every play. The biggest thing — and this is what we went through last year — the leadership has got to be there every day. Leadership has got to be there from the time we start Aug. 1 to Aug. 19, when we play Leeds, and it's got to be there all season."

Coach: Brad Wallace, 15-18, fourth year

Last year: 4-6 overall, 3-4 in Class 5A, Region 6 (fifth place).

Returning starters: RB Montrell Johnson, RB/LB L.J. Carmichael, WR Quin Carter, OL Keon Woods, OL Kenneth Fomby, DL Weston Perry, DL Johnathan Howard, LB Eddie Leonard, LB Drew Snyder.

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 vs. Leeds

Aug. 26 at St. Clair Co.

Sept. 2 at Sylacauga*

Sept. 9 vs. Talladega*

Sept. 16 at Valley*

Sept. 23 vs. Munford

Sept. 30 vs. Clay Central*

Oct. 7 at Cleburne Co.*

Oct. 20 vs. Beauregard*

Oct. 27 vs. Hayden

2015 RESULTS

at Pell City — **L (51-20)**

at St. Clair Co. — **L (20-14)**

vs. Alexandria — **L (34-7)**

at Anniston — **L (37-14)**

at Munford — **L (42-28)**

vs. Hayden — **W (17-14)**

vs. Mortimer Jordan — **L (40-37)**

at Springville — **W (37-20)**

vs. Moody — **W (38-7)**

at Childersburg — **W (44-13)**

*Class 5A, Region 6 games



Kirsten Fiscus/Anniston Star/File

Lincoln's Quindarius Carter runs the ball during the game against Munford.

MUNFORD

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

Quarterback Avery Harris is one of the area's top offensive stars. He's a dual-threat quarterback who produced big-time a year ago and might need to produce even more this year, as Munford looks to replace its top running back. Another of Munford's stars touches the ball every play. Center Jakari Robinson is getting Division I offers. The same is true for receiver/tight end Tacorrie Russell, and converted defensive back LaRaie Ball brings intrigue as Munford has moved him to help make up for the production lost by Austin Campbell's graduation.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Look out for a linebacker that belongs on the all-name team and looks to have big production, considering where he's stepping in. Jimbo Stone looks to stone ball carriers now that he's moving from the outside to the middle, where Austin Stephens stoned ball carriers 170 times last season.

BIG GAMES:

Defending state champion Leeds looms as the team to beat in Munford's 4A region, but the Green Wave lost quite a few stars off that team. While realignment shipped Munford south, its non-region games against Clay Central, rival Lincoln and Cordova bring a lot of intrigue.

OUR TAKE:

Munford lost a 1,500-yard rusher in Charles Smith, leading receiver Campbell and middle linebacker Stephens, but the Lions return Harris, who accounted for 48 touchdowns and nearly 4,000 total yards. They also return seven starters on defense. The schedule is brutal, with one of the state's toughest 4A regions and a non-region slate that includes Clay Central, rival Lincoln and Cordova, but Munford has become accustomed to winning, with four winning seasons in a row and two semifinal runs mixed in. The Lions are a team that looks to use a tough regular-season slate to test itself and prepare for postseason. Second-year coach William F. Smith and his staff kept the winning ways going in year one after Will Wagnon moved on, and expect Munford to be there competing with Leeds to the region title again.

WORD FROM COACH SMITH:

"We feel like we have as good a returning quarterback as there is in the state with Avery Harris. We're looking forward to that leadership and ability to really have command of the offense. He's got a good football IQ, good leader, really outstanding young man."

Coach: William F. Smith, 45-34, 8th year (10-4, second year at Munford)

Last year: 10-4 overall, 4-2 in Class 4A, Region 3 (second place). Lost to Leeds 48-20 in 4A semifinals.

Returning starters: QB Avery Harris, WR Tanner Reeves, C Jakari Robinson, DE Tacorrie Russell, DE Dylan Campbell, DT Jaylen Best, LB Jimbo Stone, LB Caelon Patton, LB Garon Thomas, S Greg Oden, S Darren Parker.

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 vs. Clay Central
Aug. 26 Open
Sept. 2 at Dadeville*
Sept. 9 vs. Holtville*
Sept. 16 at Tallassee*
Sept. 23 at Lincoln
Sept. 30 vs. Elmore Co.*
Oct. 7 at Handley*
Oct. 14 vs. Childersburg*
Oct. 21 vs. Leeds*
Oct. 28 vs. Cordova

*Class 4A, Region 3 games

2015 RESULTS

at Clay Central —**L (21-7)**
 at Cleburne Co. —**W (41-28)**
 vs. Leeds —**W (49-48)**
 at Elmore Co. —**L (43-42)**
 vs. Handley —**L (50-48)**
 vs. Lincoln —**W (42-28)**
 at Dadeville —**W (26-12)**
 vs. Childersburg —**W (47-21)**
 at Holtville —**W (47-8)**
 vs. Talladega —**W (35-0)**

Playoffs

vs. W.S. Neal —**W (20-0)**
 at Straughn —**W (25-15)**
 vs. Andalusia —**W (33-31)**
 at Leeds —**L (48-20)**



Kirsten Fiscus/The Anniston Star/File

Tanner Reeves anticipates a Lincoln tackle.

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OHATCHEE

INDIANS

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

Taylor Eubanks and Austin Tucker will be two of Ohatchee's biggest threats this season. On offense, Eubanks plays quarterback, and Tucker shines at running back. Both play defense for the Indians as well. Caleb Montgomery plays on the line on both sides of the ball and is expected to have a solid season. Tight end Owen Hale should do well, too. Seniors Garrett Young and C.J. Ray will be back on the field for Ohatchee after sitting out their last year. They are expected to help fill key spots on the offensive line.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Ohatchee has 16 seniors, and eight of them are expected to start. Ohatchee also has 15 juniors on this year's roster. Four of them are returning starters. That depth and experience is something the Indians have lacked in the past, as they had only 17 seniors combined on the field in 2014 and 2015. In 2014, there were nine, and only four were starters. In 2015, there were only eight.

BIG GAMES:

Ohatchee has a handful of area games this season that could pose a bit of a challenge. The turning point of the season could come when the Indians face Wellborn on Sept. 30, and then face back-to-back games against defending 3A state champion Piedmont and Glencoe. Luckily, Ohatchee will have an open week to rest and prepare before facing the Bulldogs. In addition, that game will be at home. The Indians will have to travel to Glencoe.

OUR TAKE:

It's been 13 years since Ohatchee has had a winning season or a playoff team, but this year that could all change. Since head coach Scott Martin took over in 2014, the Indians have gone from a one-win season to four wins last season. They had an opportunity to win one or two more, giving hope for getting over the hump this year. With 31 combined juniors and seniors, the depth and experience should start to show for the Indians. They have five returning starters on offense, and seven on defense. Eight of those returning starters are seniors. Ohatchee needs to start off solid to have a real shot at a playoff berth. The Indians will face Randolph County, Pleasant Valley and Weaver, and they need to do well in that early stretch. An upset late in the year wouldn't hurt, either.

WORD FROM COACH MARTIN:

"Our region is just tough, and all six region games are going to be tough. There are going to be some good teams in our region that don't make it to the playoffs. It's going to be a weekly fight, and we are just trying to prepare for that. We are looking at it as a one game season, and taking it one week at a time."

Coach: Scott Martin, 31-33, seventh season overall; 5-15 at Ohatchee, third season

Last year: 4-6; 2-5 in Class 3A, Region 5 (sixth place)

Returning starters: OL Aaric Goode, OL/DL Caleb Montgomery, TE Owen Hale, RB/OLB Austin Tucker, QB/LB Taylor Eubanks, DL Trystan Garcia, DL Jacob Lowe, LB/DL Jaylon Jenkins, OLB Jesse Sellers

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 at Ragland
 Aug. 26 vs. White Plains
 Sep. 2 at Randolph Co.*
 Sep. 9 vs. Pleasant Valley*
 Sep. 16 at Weaver*
 Sep. 23 vs. Ashville
 Sep. 30 vs. Wellborn*
 Oct. 7 Open
 Oct. 14 vs. Piedmont*
 Oct. 21 at Glencoe*
 Oct. 27 at Pisgah

*Class 3A, Region 5 games

2015 RESULTS

vs. Southeastern — **W (48-0)**
 at Westbrook Christian — **L (35-34)**
 vs. Piedmont — **L (40-13)**
 at Ashville — **W (42-20)**
 at Cherokee Co. — **L (28-19)**
 vs. Weaver — **L (21-7)**
 at Glencoe — **L (21-7)**
 vs. Pleasant Valley — **W (49-14)**
 at Wellborn — **L (42-14)**
 vs. Ragland — **W (49-19)**



Bill Wilson/Anniston Star/File

Ohatchee's Taylor Eubanks is all smiles after scoring a touchdown during the Southeastern at Ohatchee football game.

OXFORD

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

Without a doubt, Oxford linebacker K.J. Britt is the top prospect in Calhoun and surrounding counties. The slightly undersized standout started last season with scholarship offers and promises of more, if he showed out. He did, and major offers have come. Big-time offers have also come for sophomore offensive tackle Clay Webb, who already flashes advanced footwork. With a star stopper and blocker, though, Oxford needs a go-to ball carrier to revive its running game, and watch converted safety Jordan Swain.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Oxford already has a defensive-minded head coach, but additions to the coaching staff on that side of the ball add a lot of intrigue. Lee Ozmint and Scott Peavey, both successful former head coaches, will coach linebackers and defensive line, respectively, and former Anniston High/Jacksonville State standout Marquise Elston is on board to work with inside linebackers.

BIG GAMES:

Reclassification left nearby rivals Pell City and Southside aligned with Oxford. Cullman and Fort Payne also figure to be strong in that 6A region, so those games will be huge. Also big to Oxford fans will be non-region games against Gadsden City, which became a rival in a previous alignment, and Benjamin Russell, in Oxford's region the past two years and still on the slate.

OUR TAKE:

Oxford rebuilt while starting a lot of freshmen and sophomores in 2015. Key injuries, like LB Conner Syer, didn't help. The payoff should come this season, as the Yellow Jackets return all starters but departed senior defensive end Lott Cates. Britt is a national recruit, and sophomore offensive tackle Webb is catching fire on the recruiting scene. Quarterback Brody Syer comes back with a year as a starter under his belt. Successful former head coaches Scott Peavey and Lee Ozmint join Ryan Herring's staff on the defensive side. Reclassification brought Oxford back to 6A north and took power Opelika off the Jackets' schedule, so it all adds up to a promising fourth season for Herring.

WORD FROM COACH HERRING:

"We're going to have some depth this year on the O-line. The three years prior, we haven't had depth, and we haven't been real good. I think this year, we can block people."

Coach: Ryan Herring, 64-47, 11th year (18-16 at Oxford, fourth year)

Last year: 3-7 overall, 2-4 in Class 6A, Region 3 (fourth place).

Returning starters: The Yellow Jackets return all but departed senior defensive end Lott Cates. Key returnees include QB Brody Syer, linebacker K.J. Britt and OT Clay Webb.

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 vs. Talladega
Aug. 26 at Gadsden City
Sept. 2 vs. Brewer*
Sept. 9 at Cullman*
Sept. 16 vs. Albertville*
Sept. 23 vs. Benjamin Russell
Sept. 30 at Southside*
Oct. 7 vs. Fort Payne*
Oct. 14 at Pell City*
Oct. 28 vs. Sumter Central

*Class 6A, Region 7 games

2015 RESULTS

vs. Southside — **W (24-9)**
 vs. Gadsden City — **L (41-19)**
 at Valley — **L (20-13)**
 vs. Chilton Co. — **W (42-7)**
 at Opelika — **L (55-0)**
 at Vestavia Hills — **L (17-10)**
 vs. Benjamin Russell — **L (27-7)**
 at Pell City — **W (28-21)**
 vs. Chelsea — **L (38-17)**
 at Decatur — **L (35-14)**



Stephen Gross/The Anniston Star/File

Oxford's Joshua Thomas celebrates after the Jacket D recovered a fumble during the Southside at Oxford football game.

YELLOW JACKET S

PIEDMONT

BULLDOGS

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

While Piedmont returns an abundance of starters from its 2015 Class 3A championship team, there are holes to be filled. Head coach Steve Smith recently pointed to three rising seniors as players who could "make a difference for us as far as helping us go from a pretty good team to a really good team." Derrick Baer looks to be the starter at tight end and showed the ability to catch passes in traffic over the summer. Trey Snyder was a reserve at linebacker last year but will start on the outside in 2016. Jacob Pfledderer will see time at safety and possibly as a wide receiver, too.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Piedmont enters the season with a 10-game win streak at home. The last loss for the Bulldogs was to Leeds on Sept. 25, 2014. Since the start of the 2011 season, when renovations to the Field of Champions added artificial turf, Piedmont is 31-2 at home. In Smith's 10 years as head coach at Piedmont, his teams are 59-7 playing in front of home folks.

BIG GAMES:

Smith said Piedmont's first four games would all be challenges. The Bulldogs open with a much larger opponent in Cedartown (Ga.). Cherokee County is expected to have its best team since its 2009 state championship. Glencoe has become a bitter rival, and new head coach Rusty Davis would like nothing better than to down Piedmont in his first season at Glencoe. Randolph County reached the Class 2A semifinals in 2015. "We don't get any warm-up games the first four," Smith said.

OUR TAKE:

After the Bulldogs won the Class 3A championship in 2015, there are many reasons for optimism in Piedmont for 2016. All-state quarterback Taylor Hayes, the Alabama Sports Writers Association 3A back of the year, returns for his senior season. Hayes rushed for 1,560 yards and 18 touchdowns last year and passed for 1,760 yards and 19 scores. Also back are the Bulldogs' top seven offensive linemen. Gone is first-team all-state running back Darnell Jackson. Jackson contributed 2,013 yards of total offense and 23 touchdowns. Junior Lee Stanley appears healthy again and ready to be the top running back. The receiving corps is Piedmont's biggest unknown on offense. The Bulldogs caught 106 passes last year and the players who were responsible for 84 receptions have graduated. Fullback Austin Brazier's 12 catches out of the backfield are tops among the returning players. On defense, the Bulldogs lost two first-team all-state performers in inside linebacker Neonta Alexander and defensive back Bayley Blanchard. Also gone are end Jamie Crutcher and defensive backs Jackson and Malik Gamble.

Look for senior Chase Bobbitt, a first-team all-state pick at defensive end last year, to wear a new number (9) and play a new position (inside linebacker). If Smith is comfortable moving Bobbitt off the defensive line, he has confidence in the players who will play beside junior Logan Beadles, the Bulldogs' massive returning nose tackle. Bobbitt will join Brazier, Logan Smith and Cobey McFry at linebacker. Cornerback Cardavion Myers, second-team all-state last year, returns in the secondary where Kaedon Jenkins, whose 2015 season was shortened by injury, also has experience. Smith has often said the 2015 champions distinguished themselves not only by winning but by the toughness — physical and mental — they displayed as they won. If this year's Bulldogs have that same toughness, 2016 bring another championship.

WORD FROM COACH SMITH:

"I think it's very important that you've got some guys that have big-play capability on the outside that can hurt folks when they (load the box). I feel very comfortable that we've got the guys that can do it. The experience in passing camps this summer has been vital to their growth."

Coach: Steve Smith (193-68 in 21 seasons, 108-23 in 10 seasons at Piedmont and 85-45 in 11 seasons at Cedar Bluff)

Last year: 14-1, 7-0 in Class 3A, Region 6 (region champion); defeated Bayside Academy 44-7 in 3A championship game.

Returning starters: DL Logan Beadles, DL Chase Bobbitt, LB Austin Brazier, OL Cole Chasteen, QB Taylor Hayes, OL Blake Headrick, DB Kaedon Jenkins, OL Krae Keener, K/P Easton Kirk, OL Mason Langley, LB Cobey McFry, DB Cardavion Myers, LB Logan Smith, OL Javian Woods

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 vs. Cedartown (Ga.)

Aug. 26 at Cherokee Co.

Sept. 2 at Glencoe*

Sept. 9 vs. Randolph Co.*

Sept. 16 at Pleasant Valley*

Sept. 23 vs. Leeds

Sept. 30 vs. Weaver*

Oct. 7 at Wellborn*

Oct. 14 at Ohatchee*

Oct. 21 Open

Oct. 28 vs. Oneonta

*Class 3A, Region 5 games

2015 RESULTS

at Cherokee Co. — **W (35-20)**

vs. Ashville — **W (62-21)**

at Ohatchee — **(40-13)**

vs. Glencoe — **W (44-26)**

at Leeds — **L (29-12)**

at Pleasant Valley — **W (49-0)**

vs. Wellborn — **W (35-0)**

vs. Westbrook Christian — **W (39-7)**

at Weaver — **W (35-14)**

vs. Oneonta — **W (30-0)**

Playoffs

vs. Lexington — **W (34-0)**

vs. Oakman — **W (64-22)**

at Madison Academy — **W (35-21)**

at Colbert Co. — **W (14-0)**

vs. Bayside Academy — **W (44-7)***

*Played in Tuscaloosa



Stephen Gross/Anniston Star/File

Piedmont's Cardavion Myers scores a TD in front of Bayside's John Bryant during the Piedmont vs Bayside Academy AHSAA 3A state championship game in Tuscaloosa.

PLEASANT VALLEY

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

Pleasant Valley will have only three returning starters in offensive and defensive lineman Jordan Lambert, running back and defensive back Dakota Jones (2014 starter) and Reagan King, who is expected to move from receiver to quarterback this year. Those three have stepped up and been key leaders for the team. All three are hungry to get back on the field and prove there are more wins in Pleasant Valley's future.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Head coach Jonathan Nix is entering his second season at Pleasant Valley after a successful three years at Ragland that saw him post a 30-5 record. His first season at Pleasant Valley didn't bring the same results, but he feels like they are making the right strides to get to that point.

BIG GAMES:

Just like last year, the Raiders' schedule is difficult. They have defending state champion Piedmont leading the way along with Weaver, Wellborn and Glencoe who have been usual playoff contenders. Add in Randolph County, which was a Class 2A semifinalist last season, and Ohatchee, which looks like it can have a breakthrough season this year, and the schedule is as tough as any.

Class 1A Spring Garden at the end of the season could be Pleasant Valley's best opportunity to pick up a win.

OUR TAKE:

Despite a winless 2015, things are looking up for Pleasant Valley and Nix. The Raiders have put in the hours in the weight room during the offseason and come into this year with a changing mentality.

Nix led successful teams before taking the reins and hopes to lead Pleasant Valley to more than its first win since beating Ohatchee 41-19 on Oct. 17, 2014 — he hopes to lead the Raiders to the postseason for the fifth time and their first playoff win.

Hard work is the "brand" for this year's team and having one goal will help keep the Raiders focused through the long offseason and hot summer, according to Nix. There has been a lot of change around the team, but Nix wants it to be a fun one for the players.

Pleasant Valley is in an extremely tough region, one that is also home to the defending 3A state champion Bulldogs. But that doesn't scare Nix. In fact, he believes playing teams such as Piedmont will better prepare the Bulldogs for teams in the postseason. But first they have to get there. Their first test will be Aug. 19 in a non-region game against Vincent.

WORD FROM COACH NIX:

"A Pleasant Valley kid works hard. The kids over there are hard workers, and they want success."

Coach: Jonathan Nix, 37-38, 8th year (Went 7-23 in three years at Ashville, 30-5 in three years at Ragland and 0-10 in one season at Pleasant Valley)

Last year: 0-10, 0-7 in Class 3A, Region 6 (eighth place).

Returning starters: OL/DL Jordan Lambert, RB/DB Dakota Jones, WR/DB/QB Reagan King

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 vs. Vincent
Aug. 26 vs. Gaston
Sept. 2 vs. Wellborn*
Sept. 9 at Ohatchee*
Sept. 16 vs. Piedmont*
Sept. 23 at West End
Sept. 30 at Glencoe*
Oct. 7 at Randolph Co.*
Oct. 21 vs. Weaver*
Oct. 28 at Spring Garden

*Class 3A, Region 5 games

2015 RESULTS

at Ranburne — **L (43-13)**
 at Weaver — **L (46-13)**
 vs. Wellborn — **L (69-20)**
 at Westbrook Christian — **L (48-25)**
 vs. White Plains — **L (18-6)**
 vs. Piedmont — **L (49-0)**
 at Ashville — **L (48-22)**
 at Ohatchee — **L (49-14)**
 vs. Glencoe — **L (48-8)**
 vs. Gaston — **L (40-33)**



Trent Penny/The Anniston Star/File

The Raiders enter the field through the stands during their homecoming game.

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RANBURNE

BULLDOGS

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

Offensive lineman Riley Smith returns this season after being an all-state selection in 2015. Also returning on the offensive line is Hunter McAdams. The Bulldogs will have a new quarterback this fall after Dylan Wiggins graduated. Jordan English and Jake Burson will compete for the job, and both have done nice things, according to head coach Stephen Bailey. Aaron Benefield will handle the running back duties, and Bradley Martin will be a key receiver. Also, kicker Jake Howle will return this season after making all-state honorable mention last season.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Bailey will be just the third head coach in 50 years at Ranburne. He's taking over for Chad Young, who led the Bulldogs every season since 1999 and won more than 100 games. Before him was Harlan Robinson, who won 244 games during his time leading the Bulldogs. Bailey served as an assistant coach to Young for four years, and before that he was at Woodland for eight years under then-head coach Larry Strain. Bailey said working under Strain and Young helped prepare him to be a head coach.

BIG GAMES:

The Bulldogs' schedule won't get any easier this season, as they look to break in a new squad. They begin the season with Mount Zion (Ga.) and then hit region play with Woodland, Gaston, Reeltown, Lanett and Vincent. Add in tough non-region games like Randolph County, and the Bulldogs will be in for a challenging season.

OUR TAKE:

The past two years have been two of the best in Ranburne's rich football history. They made back-to-back deep runs in the playoffs, won a region championship in 2014 and finished runner-up last season. They knocked off one of the best teams in Class 2A in Tanner in a thrilling 56-55 double overtime win and had their season come to an end against Fyffe in the quarterfinals. This season, however, will be a fresh start for the Bulldogs.

They lost 18 seniors from last year's team that included quarterback Dylan Wiggins, who now plays at Reinhardt University, and receiver Owen Smith. They also lost Young, who stepped down after being elected as the Cleburne County superintendent.

Bailey has taken over the reins and he expects the goals to be exactly the same as they've been the past two years — compete for a region championship and get in the playoffs.

They'll have to make adjustments to both the offense and defense now that they no longer have certain players, but Bailey is confident in what his team can accomplish.

Smith returns to anchor the line along with six more returning starters.

The Bulldogs will most likely have some growing pains with all of their losses to graduation, but Ranburne usually finds a way to make the playoffs.

WORD FROM COACH BAILEY:

"I've been pleased with the way the players' attitudes have been this summer. We lost tons of talent, but they don't expect anything to change and that's what we're going to expect from them year in and year out."

Coach: Stephen Bailey, first season as head coach

Last year: 10-2 overall, 5-1 in Class 2A, Region 5 (second place). Lost to Fyffe in 2A quarterfinals.

Returning starters: OL/DL Riley Smith, OL/LB Hunter McAdams, RB/LB Jake Burson, QB/DB Jordan English, WR/DL Landon Woodard, QB/DB Josh Ralston and K Jake Howle.

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 26 vs. Mount Zion (Ga.)

Sept. 2 vs. Fayetteville*

Sept. 9 at Woodland*

Sept. 16 at Horseshoe Bend*

Sept. 23 vs. Gaston

Sept. 30 vs. Reeltown*

Oct. 7 at Lanett*

Oct. 14 at Lafayette*

Oct. 21 vs. Vincent*

Oct. 28 at Randolph Co.

*Class 2A, Region 5 games

2015 RESULTS

vs. Pleasant Valley — **W (43-13)**

at Randolph Co. — **L (21-14)**

vs. Lanett — **W (30-0)**

at LaFayette — **W (42-32)**

at Beulah — **W (42-0)**

vs. Reeltown — **W (24-20)**

at Horseshoe Bend — **W (44-7)**

vs. Woodland — **W (40-8)**

at Westbrook Christian — **W (37-30)**

Playoffs

vs. Gaston — **W (35-7)**

at Tanner — **W (56-55, 2OT)**

at Fyffe — **L (24-20)**



Trent Penny/Anniston Star/File

Ranburne head coach Stephen Bailey watches QB Jordan English during a passing camp at Piedmont.

SAKS

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

In recent seasons, Saks has always had at least one standout player at running back, and 2016 will be no different. After having to sit behind Calvin Figueroa last year, Rodney Reddick and Will Fletcher are set to be the guys in the backfield expected to produce in the historically potent and fast-paced Wildcat offense. Brannon Ogle and Keenan Jung are the staples up front while Tray Huguley will be a threat out wide. LaDerrick Bell is expected to take over for Quin Smith at quarterback, so with Miller's successful history with players at the position, expect Bell to excel.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Heading into his fifth year as a head coach, Miller is creating a nice resume. Since taking over before the 2013 football season, Miller — an Alexandria alumnus and member of the Valley Cubs' 1995 state championship team — has the second most wins (39), tied for the most playoff wins (four) and three region wins (25) shy of tying the mark for most in the school's history. No coach in Saks' history has scored more points than Miller's teams in playoff games (252) and region games (1,123).

BIG GAMES:

On first glance, Class 4A, Region 5 appears to be top heavy with the likes of Cherokee County, Oneonta, Jacksonville and Anniston to go along with Saks. However, the Wildcats have back-to-back second-place finishes in the region, so they know how to get the job done. This year should be no different, but two games to circle are Sept. 30 at Cherokee County and Oct. 14 at Oneonta. Of those trio of teams, whoever can beat the other two may be in prime position for a region championship.

OUR TAKE:

This is going to be an interesting year for Miller and his squad. The Wildcats return only two starters after losing a huge senior class a year ago, and they're both on the offensive line. This means all of the guys at the skill positions will be new and assuming the starter status for the first time in their varsity careers. Luckily for Saks, the schedule sets up nicely to allow those young guys to gain confidence and set themselves up nicely in the region standings before taking on powerhouses such as Oneonta and Cherokee County. Non-region matchups against Wellborn and Weaver won't be cupcakes, either. Even with the Wildcats earning wins against both teams in years past, you can be assured those two Class 3A teams will be out to turn the tables. Miller has a long history of using an athlete's attributes and making them great quarterbacks in his system — such as Tre' Smith, Devin Harris and Quin Smith — and expect Bell to continue that trend after he rushed for 71 yards while also running and throwing a touchdown in Saks' spring game against White Plains. With Rodney Reddick and Will Fletcher splitting carries in the backfield, it may be interesting to see how that duo works against opposing defense. An above .500 season and a playoff berth seems like a lock for Miller and the Wildcats, but this season may just be a teaching one in preparation for next year.

WORD FROM COACH MILLER:

"You have guys who last year may not have very prominent roles, but have to step up this year and assume new responsibilities and hopefully lead us to some wins. We are pretty much starting over and, in a sense, it's exciting. We are in a situation where a lot of guys are going to get opportunities, but, after losing so much from last year, it's basically next man up. The good thing about it though is that a lot of our guys will be back next year for another

Coach: Jonathan Miller, 39-9, fifth year

Last year: 8-3, 6-1 in Class 4A, Region 6 (second place), lost to West Limestone 42-36 in first round of playoffs.

Returning starters: OL Brannon Ogle, OL Keenan Jung, LB Will Fletcher, LB Kaynan Mays, DL Deviate Garrett, DL Mareo Thomas

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 Jamboree
Aug. 26 vs. Wellborn
Sept. 2 at Jacksonville*
Sept. 9 vs. White Plains*
Sept. 16 at Ashville*
Sept. 23 vs. St. Clair Co.
Sept. 30 at Cherokee Co.*
Oct. 7 vs. Anniston*
Oct. 14 at Oneonta*
Oct. 21 vs. Hokes Bluff*
Oct. 28 at Weaver

*Class 4A, Region 5 games

2015 RESULTS

at Wellborn — **L (21-20)**
 at Sardis — **W (54-12)**
 vs. Cherokee Co. — **W (32-14)**
 vs. White Plains — **W (54-16)**
 vs. Weaver — **W (47-21)**
 at Crossville — **W (40-7)**
 vs. Hokes Bluff — **W (35-21)**
 vs. Cleburne Co. — **L (36-29)**
 at Jacksonville — **W (63-36)**
 at LaFayette — **W (63-34)**

Playoffs

vs. West Limestone — **L (42-36)**



Bill Wilson/The Anniston Star/File

Saks head coach Jonathan Miller during the West Limestone at Saks first round playoff game.

WILDCATS

SPRING GARDEN

PANTHERS

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

On the offensive line, Jacob Molock returns at one guard and Christian Crider returns at center. Taylor Hardin and Damon Whitmore will be new starters at tackle and Pjay Smith at guard. "We've got the backfield to be competitive but those guys have got to come around," head coach Jason Howard said of his linemen. On defense, junior Draevan Bowman will be a hybrid linebacker-free safety and could be an impact player.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

The position of quarterback and the name Ivey go hand in hand at Spring Garden. This year, Ben Ivey returns for his third season as the starting quarterback. Ben followed older brother Will, who was also a three-year starter. Waiting in the wings is younger brother Luke, a sophomore. When Ben was injured last year and missed games, Luke was his backup. Ben had been Will's backup when Will was injured his senior season.

BIG GAMES:

Spring Garden's biggest game should come at county rival Cedar Bluff on Oct. 21. For that game to carry the importance it should, the Panthers must defeat Region 6 foes Gaylesville and Woodville at home and Valley Head on the road in their second, third and fourth games of the season. "I think those are going to be critical. Gaylesville, Woodville and Valley Head very easily could fill two or three of the playoff spots," Howard said.

OUR TAKE:

This year's Spring Garden team has a lot of football history within its reach. With at least six wins, this year's senior class will have been part of the most wins in any three-year span of Panther football. Finishing first or second in the region will earn Spring Garden an unprecedented third straight home game to begin the Class 1A playoffs. Even if the Panthers are third or fourth in region play, Spring Garden will be in the playoffs for the third straight season, something that's never happened.

Jason Howard's teams played in Region 7 the last two years. The Panthers will be in Region 6 this season and next but the change is one of form over substance. The region will again be Spring Garden, Cedar Bluff, Coosa Christian, Gaylesville, Jacksonville Christian, Valley Head and Woodville.

On offense, Spring Garden will be experienced at three of the four backfield positions — quarterback, tailback and fullback. Only two starting offensive linemen return. Replacements must be found for two tackles and a guard. Taylor Hardin will move from tight end to tackle for his senior season.

Spring Garden averaged just over 50 points a game in its eight wins, substituting liberally in the fourth quarter, in 2015. For that kind of production to continue, the line must jell quickly.

Personnel losses on offense were substantial but Howard has said he feels the Panthers lost more on defense. All three starters at linebacker — leading tackler Jordan Buttram, Dylan Short and Corey Williams, also a starter at guard on offense — are gone. Also lost to graduation were tackles Sam Parris and Ethan Rogers, each a starting tackle on offense, too. The more points the offense produces the less pressure the defense will feel.

WORD FROM COACH HOWARD:

"I think our offensive line is going to have to come around and mature early. Then we're going to have to make it through the season without having injuries. We get sort of thin when we start talking about our backups."

Coach: Jason Howard (61-78 in 13 seasons, 56-63 in 11 seasons at Spring Garden and 5-15 in two seasons at Ohatchee)

Last year: 8-4, 5-1 Class 1A, Region 7 (second place), lost in second round to Decatur Heritage 30-22 in overtime.

Returning starters: OL Christian Crider, FB/DL Quintin Downey, DE Taylor Hardin, QB/DB Ben Ivey, TB/DB Dakota Lambert, WR Devin Mobbs, OL/DE Jacob Molock, WR Joe Rogers, K Kaitlyn Rogers, WR Jonah Smith

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 26 vs. Beulah
Sept. 2 vs. Gaylesville*
Sept. 9 vs. Woodville*
Sept. 16 at Valley Head*
Sept. 23 at Donoho
Sept. 30 vs. Coosa Christian*
Oct. 7 at Jacksonville Christian*
Oct. 14 vs. Holy Spirit
Oct. 21 at Cedar Bluff*
Oct. 28 vs. Pleasant Valley

*Class 1A, Region 6 games

2015 RESULTS

vs. Appalachian — **W (61-21)**
 vs. Cedar Bluff — **L (35-18)**
 at Gaylesville — **W (39-13)**
 at Gaston — **L (28-14)**
 at Talladega Co. Central — **L (32-14)**
 vs. Valley Head — **W (50-6)**
 at Jacksonville Christian — **W (61-21)**
 vs. Woodville — **W (52-6)**
 at Coosa Christian — **W (50-6)**
 vs. Gaylesville — **W (50-25)**

Playoffs

vs. Talladega Co. Central — **W (39-16)**
 at Decatur Heritage — **L (30-22 OT)**



Trent Penny/Anniston Star/File

Spring Garden's Dakota Lambert weaves his way through the Talladega County Central defense.

WEAVER

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

Any success Weaver has on offense will start with Dalton Hamby, the son of the head coach and the starting quarterback. He'll have the benefit of multiple playmakers — including Paul Hubbard, Cody Ortiz and Maurice Goodman — who can help move the ball upfield. Second-team all-state linebacker Giovanni Mosley is one of the leaders on a defense that held five opponents to 15 points or less. Caleb Allison, a sophomore, may be one of the best offensive linemen for Weaver since Tevin Heath six years ago, so he'll be the anchor and lead blocker for the Bearcats' rushing attack

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

In terms of finding a way into the postseason, Daryl Hamby stands above all former head coaches at Weaver. Hamby, who learned the game from legendary Alexandria coach Larry Ginn, has a 24-20 career record in region games. Paul Farlow (2004-09) held the high mark for most region victories (18) before Hamby took over in 2010. In addition, Hamby has led five different Bearcats teams to the postseason, which is the most in school history. Terry Willingham (1989-99) previously held the mark with four.

BIG GAMES:

It's hard not to put every Class 3A, Region 5 game in this category. To boil it down to two or three, start with the region opener against Wellborn, which has been a tough opponent historically for Weaver. The Bearcats' home game against Glencoe on Oct. 7 may decide whether Weaver makes the postseason. Those two have been rivals for as long as current players can remember, but the Yellow Jackets are breaking in a new head coach, so there's a possibility Weaver can take advantage of that.

OUR TAKE:

Those around the Weaver program believe this team should deliver more consistency than past Bearcats squads. Daryl Hamby and his assistant coaches return loads of experienced players. As in years past, speed is the name of the game for Weaver. Opponents can't let any Bearcats skill-position players around the edges and into open space, or else they'll rack up a chunk of yards. Mosley returns to help anchor a stout defense, which features Allison in the trenches and the athletic Hubbard lurking in the secondary. The Bearcats are all too familiar with their Class 3A, Region 5 opponents, with the exception of Randolph County, which is coming up from Class 2A this season. The preseason hype surrounding this region may be at an all-time high with each coach saying it always produces at least one contender to go far in the Class 3A playoffs. It's possible for Weaver to finish in the top of the region and host its first playoff game in over a decade, but a playoff berth in general is a better expectation for Hamby's squad.

WORD FROM COACH HAMBY:

"I like the way the team is getting after it and putting a lot of effort into summer workouts and passing camps. The guys are definitely coming together and bonding as a team, they like to see each other do well and that's real important. This year, we don't need to be the team that starts each series first-and-15 right off the bat. We can't shoot ourselves in the foot and put ourselves in a hole. With that, we have to start being able to finish games and playing better during the third and fourth quarters, so we can put people away."

Coach: Daryl Hamby, 29-36, seventh year

Last year: 5-6, 4-3 in Class 3A, Region 6 (fourth place), lost to Madison Academy 56-21 in first round of the playoffs.

Returning starters: ATH Paul Hubbard, QB Dalton Hamby, LB/RB Tyrik Hall, OL/DL Caleb Allison, WR Cody Ortiz, WR Maurice Goodman, OL/DL Matt Elston, OL Connor Usery, LB/RB Giovanni Mosley, LB Chris Lemon.

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 19 vs. Hayden

Aug. 26 at B.B. Comer

Sept. 9 at Wellborn*

Sept. 16 vs. Ohatchee*

Sept. 23 at Locust Fork

Sept. 30 at Piedmont*

Oct. 7 vs. Glencoe*

Oct. 14 vs. Randolph Co.*

Oct. 21 at Pleasant Valley*

Oct. 28 vs. Saks

*Class 3A, Region 5 games

2015 RESULTS

at Jacksonville — **L (35-28)**

vs. Pleasant Valley — **W (46-13)**

at Ashville — **W (42-20)**

vs. Wellborn — **L (54-35)**

at Saks — **L (47-21)**

at Ohatchee — **W (21-7)**

at Westbrook Christian — **W (40-14)**

vs. Glencoe — **L (15-14)**

vs. Piedmont — **L (35-14)**

vs. White Plains — **W (45-14)**

Playoffs

at Madison Academy — **L (56-21)**



Bill Willson/The Anniston Star/File

Weaver's Maurice Goodman tries to get a first down during the White Plains at Weaver game.

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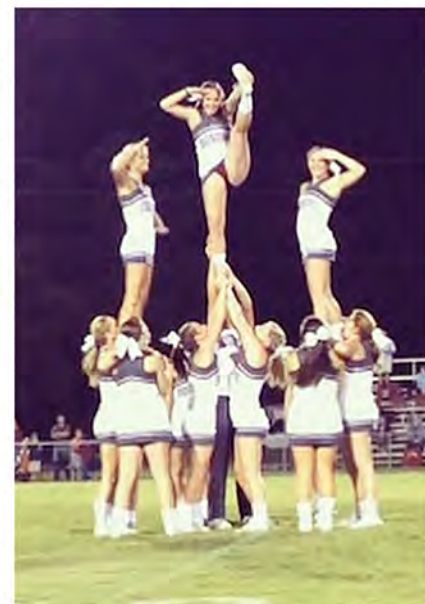
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WELLBORN

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

Jordan Montgomery has played a key role for Wellborn his entire career, and now as a senior, he'll do the same. He already has an offer to play at Samford University and he'll be all over the field for the Panthers this fall. He'll play wingback, running back, receiver and wildcat quarterback in certain situations. He also will play a key role on defense as a safety. Leading the way for him will be two four-year starters on the offensive line in Chandler Cupp and Ethan Beadles. At quarterback will be Austin McQueen, who has plenty of starting experience. The Panthers have seven starters returning on offense and 10 have playing experience on defense. They're hoping to use that to their advantage this season.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

Since head coach Jeff Smith returned to coach his alma mater in 2009 the Panthers have qualified for the playoffs every year. This season the Panthers will be in for a tough playoff race as they play in one of the toughest regions in Class 3A. Smith said he thinks the pride the players have in Wellborn football will help them make another run at the postseason this year.

BIG GAMES:

Wellborn's season will start off tough as the Panthers play Saks in the season opener and follow up with back-to-back region games against Pleasant Valley and Weaver. Getting off to a good start will be key. The Piedmont game will be a big region game and the Panthers will be excited to play Ohatchee again, after the Indians beat them in the spring jamboree.

OUR TAKE:

Wellborn returns 13 starters from last year's team that finished with a 6-4 record, but the Panthers did lose some key players like Derrick Rhoden and Quantarius Moore. However, they return one of the better players in Calhoun County in Montgomery, who will have an experienced senior offensive line in front of him along with some other skill players.

Wellborn lost to Ohatchee 19-13 in the spring jamboree at Jacksonville State. The Panthers have used that loss as motivation throughout their offseason conditioning program and 7-on-7 games.

Smith and the veteran players said they have seen an improvement in leadership which is something they lacked last season. They also had to battle injuries to key players a season ago, and they are hoping that won't be an issue this season.

Offense will be a strength for the Panthers. In the spring game against Ohatchee they moved the ball but a dropped pass in the end zone and a fumble on the goal line kept them from scoring more than 13 points. Defensively, Smith would like to see more improvement.

The Panthers have a tough schedule as they will play in one of the more competitive regions in Class 3A, Region 5 with teams like defending state champion Piedmont along with Weaver, Ohatchee, Glencoe, Randolph County and Pleasant Valley.

The Panthers have the experience they need to be successful, but overcoming the difficult schedule will be tough. The letdown from the loss to Ohatchee could be the motivation the team needed to have a solid season.

WORD FROM COACH SMITH:

"At Wellborn, we've got a lot of tradition and a lot of pride. Wearing that black helmet, that black jersey and playing on "The Hill" means a lot to these kids. I would say most of the kids in our program have had a daddy, uncle, brother or a cousin that's played here. When they take the field they don't just take the field for themselves they are really representing their families and that's very meaningful to them."

Coach: Jeff Smith, entering eighth season at Wellborn, 126-85 overall record.

Last year: 6-4 overall, 5-2 in Class 3A, Region 6 (third place). Lost at Lauderdale County in the first round.

Returning starters: OL/DL/P Chandler Cupp, OL Ethan Beadles OL/LB Dalton Epps, RB/WR/SS Jordan Montgomery, RB/CB Pat Harris, QB Austin McQueen, OL Lance Hill, DE Joseph Harris, DT Jamesio Elston, DE/FB JaMyron Curry, RB/OLB Ked Harris, LB Kane Pitts and S Jaylan Booker.

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 26 at Saks
Sept. 2 at Pleasant Valley*
Sept. 9 vs. Weaver*
Sept. 23 vs. Talladega
Sept. 30 at Ohatchee*
Oct. 7 vs. Piedmont*
Oct. 14 vs. Glencoe*
Oct. 21 at Randolph Co.*
Oct. 27 vs. White Plains

*Class 3A, Region 5 games

2015 RESULTS

vs. Saks — **W (21-20)**
 vs. Glencoe — **L (28-27)**
 at Pleasant Valley — **W (69-20)**
 at Weaver — **W (54-35)**
 at Moody — **L (42-38)**
 vs. Westbrook Christian — **W (20-7)**
 at Piedmont — **L (35-0)**
 vs. Ashville — **W (41-40)**
 vs. Ohatchee — **W (42-14)**

Playoffs

at Lauderdale Co. — **L (22-7)**



Trent Penny/Anniston Star/File

Wellborn's Jordan Montgomery is pulled down by Piedmont's Chase Bobbitt.

WHITE PLAINS

POTENTIAL STARS TO WATCH:

Quarterback Blake Roszell returns for his senior season. He has played for three head coaches during his time at White Plains and is anxious to get his final prep football season underway. Alex Howard returns at running back and is expected to have a solid season. Both have taken on leadership roles, which is something head coach Chris White has wanted to see more of. Most of the team returns this season, so new stars could emerge for the Wildcats.

YOU SHOULD KNOW:

White is entering his second season as a head football coach and he says he learned a lot in his rookie year. He has been part of successful teams in the past. As an assistant at Westbrook Christian he helped lead the team to the state championship game in 1997. He also was part of a good team at West End. He also played at football-crazy Munford and wants to bring that same kind of culture to White Plains.

BIG GAMES:

White Plains' schedule won't be easy. The Wildcats will play Woodland in the jamboree and then open the season with Ohatchee, a team that could be in for a good season. In region play, it's going to be even tougher. Cherokee County, Saks, Anniston, Jacksonville and Oneonta will be tough games. White said it's one of the toughest regions in Class 4A.

OUR TAKE:

White has worked hard to develop a winning attitude in the White Plains football program. However, it's been tough. In the last two years, White Plains has only won three games and the Wildcats went 1-9 a season ago. He's seen some progress, but the Wildcats still aren't where he wants them to be. The good news is that they will return a lot of players from last season, and most of them are juniors. They have spent most of the offseason focusing on themselves, working mostly on becoming a more physical football team.

This summer Rick Stewart, the coach from the movie "McFarland," came to White Plains and put on a camp for the Wildcats. His message to the team was learning to change the culture.

White said the key to success this season will be the offensive line play. The Wildcats' goal is to run the ball and be more physical, and they can't do that without having solid offensive line play.

Plenty of players will return this season, but White Plains still is looking for players to step up and lead.

Blake Roszell and Alex Howard have both tried to take that leadership role, but White would like to see more come forward.

White Plains hasn't made the playoffs since 1994, and as tough as the region is, it may be tough to get in this season.

Even before the wins, White just wants to see the program show it's moving forward.

WORD FROM COACH WHITE:

"I'm looking forward to this year, because last year I made too many mistakes. If we are 1-9, we are 1-9 because of me. I didn't do a good job of setting the culture like it needed to be. You think after being an assistant coach you're ready. You aren't. This year, I'm much more excited because I know exactly what needs to be done."

Coach: Chris White, 1-9, second season

Last year: 1-9 overall, 0-7 Class 4A, Region 6 play

Returning starters: Alex Howard, Blake Roszell, Jacob Briggs, Caleb Knight, Elijah Brown, Jake Spivey, Walker Surret, Nathan Jenkins, Charlie Huey, Payton Morgan.

2016 SCHEDULE

Aug. 26 at Ohatchee
Sept. 2 vs. Oneonta*
Sept. 9 at Saks*
Sept. 16 vs. Hokes Bluff*
Sept. 23 at Westbrook Christian
Sept. 30 at Anniston*
Oct. 7 at Cherokee Co.*
Oct. 14 at Jacksonville*
Oct. 21 vs. Ashville*
Oct. 27 at Wellborn

*Class 4A, Region 5 games

2015 RESULTS

vs. Ashville —**L (59-0)**
 vs. Hokes Bluff —**L (27-20)**
 vs. Cleburne Co. —**L (42-6)**
 at Saks —**L (54-16)**
 at Pleasant Valley —**W (18-6)**
 vs. Sardis —**L (21-19)**
 at Jacksonville —**L (48-14)**
 at Crossville —**L (21-13)**
 vs. Cherokee Co. —**L (45-6)**
 at Weaver —**L (45-14)**



Trent Penny/The Anniston Star/File

Pleasant Valley's Ethan Borders is taken down by White Plains' Walker Surret.

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