

August 2021

# PIGSKIN PREVIEW

A SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT TO THE ST. CLAIR TIMES



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**Varsity Cheerleader  
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# PIGSKIN PREVIEW 2021

# Friday night football looks promising for schools throughout St. Clair County

BY JOSIE HOWELL  
jhowell@thestclairtimes.com

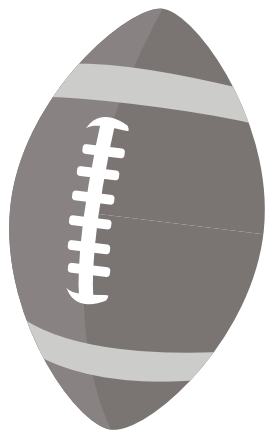
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Cover photo:  
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 ...  
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High school football season is a sacred time across the state of Alabama, and this long-awaited tradition has finally arrived. For the teams within St. Clair County specifically, there seems to be promise all across the board.

Out of the five schools within the St. Clair County School system, three have new coaches running and reworking the program: Ragland, St. Clair County and Springville. Everyone hopes a new coach will change the dynamic of any team for the better, but actions will of course speak for themselves.

Meanwhile, Moody and Ashville along with Pell City, Victory Christian and Leeds will continue to work under the same coaching philosophy, all of which seem to be getting the job done.

Fans will be looking closely at teams such as Leeds and Ragland, which made great strides in 2020 and were the only teams within the county to play more than 10 games.

However, I'm just as interested in the younger teams such as Moody and St. Clair to see if having more experience and maturity will translate on the playing field.

At the end of the day, however, if there is one thing that every football team across St. Clair County has in common, it's the fact that they have strong community support behind them. You can't tell me that doesn't make a difference in how a team approaches each and every game. Those athletes are not only playing for their teammates, but to make their community proud.

## SPRINGVILLE

The Tigers played their first year as a Class 6A school in



2020. After finishing a solid 4-5 including a big 34-35 win against Arab, the team ended things on a pretty decent note.

However, it's no secret that Quarterback Pearson Baldwin led his team in a way that is rare for any athlete. Now that Baldwin has graduated and is playing for Jacksonville State University, it will be time for new leaders to step up.

New head coach Jon Clements expressed in an earlier interview that his new quarterback Asa Morrison has shown great promise and been putting in the work. I will be interested to see how he steps into his new role as a junior QB and even after that for his senior year.

Clements has also said former head coach Michael Graben was running the program well and doesn't see that there needs to be much change. Instead, he will be bringing in multiple new assistant coaches to help him run things. With being a bigger school, Springville has the ability and man power to bring in those wins, even against the other giants in the area and hopefully improve on that 4-5 record from 2020.

## ASHVILLE

Ashville finished at an even

5-5 last season. Though it was Shea Monroe's first year leading the program, it seems the head coach and the Bulldogs have one of the best group dynamics of any team in the county.

One can easily tell that it's not just a team, but a family. That in itself has proven it goes a long way in the success of their team. When talking to Monroe, he said they've set the bar higher for 2021 and hope to make it to the playoffs.

Monroe even bragged about his team's willingness to put in the work and do whatever is asked of them. This isn't the case for every athlete, much less an entire team. Through my experience as an athlete, I've noticed the biggest difference in the success of any athlete is the want and need to get better on your own — even if that means working outside of practice and doing what hasn't been asked of you in order to grow.

Because of this, I think there is a solid opportunity for the Bulldogs to make it to the playoffs this year. As long as they set that goal and work towards it everyday, there is no reason why they can't.

## ST. CLAIR

For me, St. Clair is the most

interesting team going into the new season. Unlike Clements at Springville, head coach P.J. Wright has decided things needed to change at SCCHS. He has brought his own philosophy to the program and Saints fans are interested to see if he delivers.

The team went 0-10 in 2019 and 1-9 last year, everyone including Wright himself simply wants to see the Saints begin to collect more wins. What Wright has already proven is his passion for the sport of football and athletes who want to make it a part of their lives. Wright has mentioned that he not only wants to better the program as its coach, but improve funding so there are more resources available to his players and other athletes in order to make a name for St. Clair.

Part of this includes advocating for the new ad valorem tax benefiting schools to be passed in Odenville. He said he specifically wants to use this money to better SCCHS's football program. This includes not only a field house, but an actual turf football field at the high schools.

The athletes are playing on an outdated grass field behind the middle school. When a coach like that comes in that wants to not just prove he can run a football program, but also care for and invest in his players, success is inevitable.

## MOODY

I have to admit, Moody is one of the teams that I'm most excited to watch this year. While the Blue Devils didn't collect a single win last year, they also had a lot of extremely young players, including A.J. Wallace, who was only a sophomore as their starting quarterback. By his senior year, I can see him



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# Bulldog looking to be play f bound in

BY JOSIE HOWELL  
jhowell@thestclairtimes.com

The Ashville High School Bulldogs are hoping for a strong turnout for the new football season.

In 2020, the Bulldogs finished fifth in Class 4A, Region 6 at an even 5-5. Head Coach Shea Monroe said he is optimistic that his team will go far. This will be Monroe's second season overseeing the program.

"I think the things we've asked them to do, they've done and more on their own," Monroe said. "The biggest thing I see with this group is just the willingness to work."

He said this consistency translates on the playing field. "With our guys, they're always going to play hard; they're going to be very coachable and be responsible for what they can control and that's something I feel very confident in," Monroe said.

He said the goal is to take it one game at a time, and one play at a time.

"We've set the bar high this year and said we're going to try to play more than 10 games this year and try to go to the playoffs," he said.

"We don't really talk about the other team. It's more of a faceless opponent, and we're just going to take it game

by game."

Assistant Coach Nick Wilson emphasized that the Bulldogs are not only playing for themselves, but for the Ashville community.

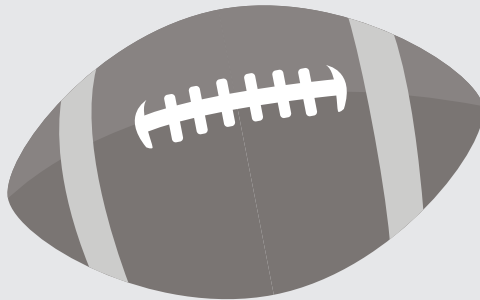
"They wear the green, white and orange because they know the community is supporting them," Wilson said.

He later added, "They have bought into what Coach Monroe has established in terms of culture, they love their coaches and their coaches love them."

The Bulldogs traveled to Oak Grove on Aug. 20 to kick off the season.

## ASHVILLE

- 8/20 @ Oak Grove
- 8/27 vs. Southeastern
- 9/3 @ Good Hope
- 9/10 vs. Oneonta
- 9/17 vs. Etowah
- 9/24 @ St. Clair County
- 10/1 OPEN
- 10/8 vs. Dora
- 10/15 @ Hanceville
- 10/22 @ Fultondale
- 10/29 vs. Weaver



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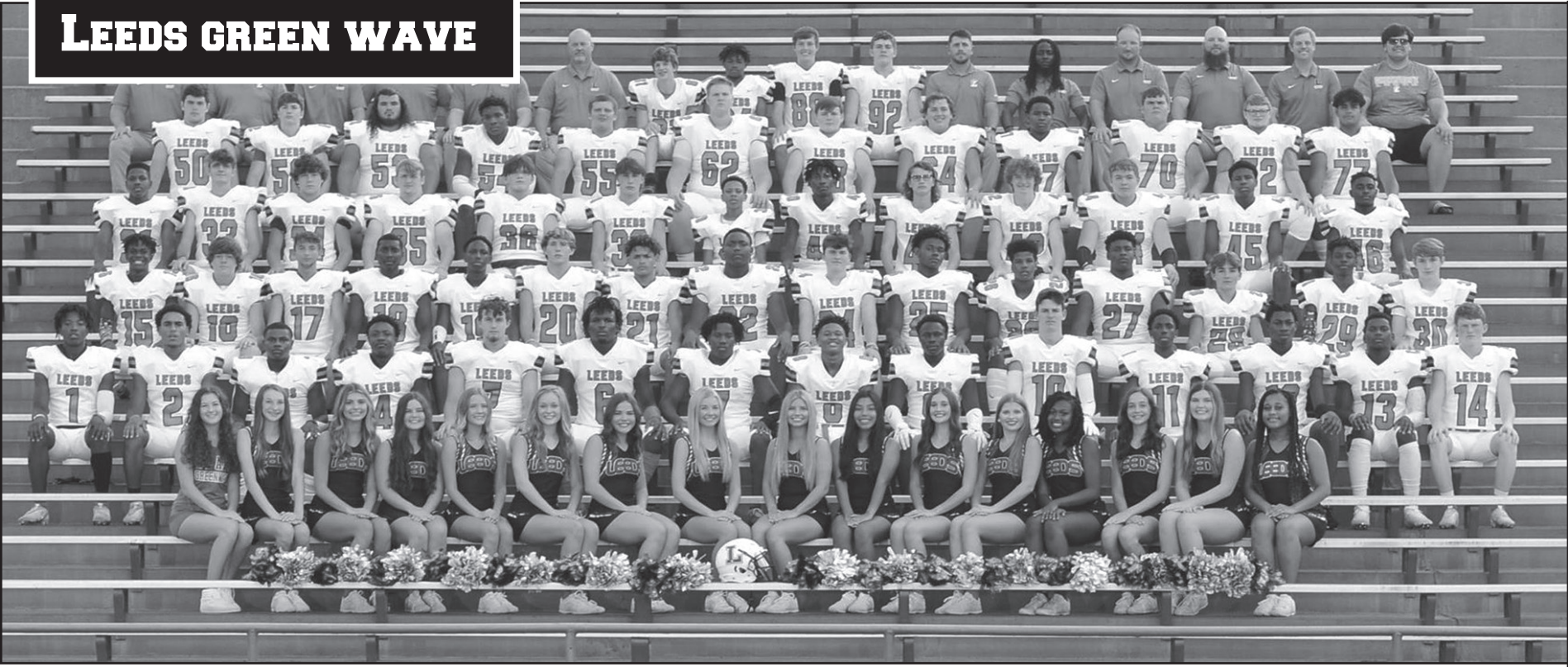
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# LEEDS GREEN WAVE



## Hood say he's hopeful for another successful season

BY JOSIE HOWELL  
jhowell@thestclairtimes.com

Coming off a nine-win season in Leeds' first season in Class 5A since 1989, third-year head coach Jerry Hood is hoping for another good year.

The Greenwave posted an eight-game win streak at one point on its way to going 9-3, finishing second in Region 6 and making the second round of the playoffs. That's Leeds' most victories since winning 13 in 2015.

The Greenwave cruised past Boaz 21-0 in the first round, but fell to Russellville a week later 35-14.

Hood said while it doesn't hurt to have success in the previous season, each team is unique.

"As I tell the kids, you have to earn everything you got," Hood said. "(This year), you're no longer going to be the bad

team that somebody didn't really prepare for as well as they should have. Now, you're a known commodity so you're going to get everybody's best punch, so we better be better than we were last year to accomplish whatever goals we might have."

The head coach emphasized that while the Greenwave lost two players on their offensive line, they have quite a few returning players and are an overall experienced team.

"They have a lot of game experience, which is why I decided not to do spring training and take an extra week in the summer," Hood said, adding his team started their first official practice Monday. "I'm interested to see how we do."

Hood added that every year, he hopes

See Wave, Page 9



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Green Wave

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## Wae

From Page 8

his players accomplish the same goal, putting their best foot forward.

“For me, it’s always the same thing. I want to see a group of guys come together, love each other and try to give their heart and soul every single day,

to win that day and then we’ll worry about the next day,” Hood said.

“If we do all that, the wins happen and if we fail to do that, we will lose. So we don’t really focus on the win or lose, we just wanna do as good as we can do.”

The Greenwave kicked off its regular season at home against Sylacauga on Aug. 20 at 7 p.m.

### LEEDS

8/20	vs. Sylacauga
8/27	@ Pell City
9/3	@ Lincoln
9/10	vs. Moody
9/17	vs. Hayden
9/24	@ West Morgan
10/1	@ Center Point
10/8	@ St. Clair County
10/15	vs. Corner
10/22	@ Alexandria
10/29	OPEN

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## Go Green Wave !

### Preview

From Page 2

becoming a powerhouse along with junior wide receiver Davion Dozier. Wallace and Dozier's chemistry on the field will carry their team a long way.

Not only are the players physically bigger and more experienced, but have shown signs of promise through the summer tournaments they've competed in. In the Gadsden City tournament, the team went 5-1 after falling to Opelika. They proceeded to finish runner up in Piedmont's 7-on-7 tournament including a win against Munford who went a solid 5-5 last season.

While these passing tournaments can only translate so much as to what will happen during a regular game, Moody has already shown that they can keep up with the competition. At the very least, we know the Blue Devils' passing game will be one of their strengths.

#### PELL CITY

Being one of the biggest teams in St. Clair, the Panthers certainly struggled last

year as they were one of the lowest scoring teams within the 6A classification.

Of course, the team has a new offensive coordinator, who should boost the Panthers up to the level they want to play. The team is also looking to name a starting quarterback as Baylor Smith and Caleb Groce are both looking to grab the leadership position.

As an entirely new dynamic is coming into play for the offensive side of Pell City football, only when the team punts the ball will fans really be able to tell if the efforts made will work in the Panthers favor. They have county rival Springville in their area that will prove to be a tough, yet intriguing competition.

#### RAGLAND

While Ragland is one of the smaller schools in the county, the Purple Devils proved in 2020 that they can be big on the playing field.

New head coach Wes Tidwell will have some big shoes to fill as Derrick Sewell left Ragland to coach at West End. Sewell took the Devils to the second round of the playoffs last season ending 9-3 overall and went 15-18 throughout all three years of his time at Ragland.

Tidwell has emphasized, however, that 2020 means nothing going into this season, especially after losing some players. He added that despite last year's success, he hopes to rebuild the culture at Ragland. Once again, actions will speak louder than words, and with a team as talented as the Purple Devils, hopefully his new coaching philosophy will push them as far if not further into the season. Either way, Ragland will certainly be one to keep an eye out for in 2021.

#### VICTORY CHRISTIAN

Like Ragland, Victory Christian is another small school that shows they can be big on the field.

They ended their season at 4-5 in Bruce Breland's second year as head coach. If Breland keeps running things the way he is, he should see great success in the upcoming season as they made significant strides in 2020.

Despite their size, the Lions proved to be an interesting team to watch. If there is one thing the team proved last year, it's that they can handle high pressure situations. Often, they found themselves down by a touchdown or two, but managed to come back victorious. During media day last year, Breland said something that would stick with

me forever as it's a great mindset to keep with you in any situation: You have to learn to be comfortable with being uncomfortable.

His players have obviously internalized that as well because it shows whenever they play on Friday nights.

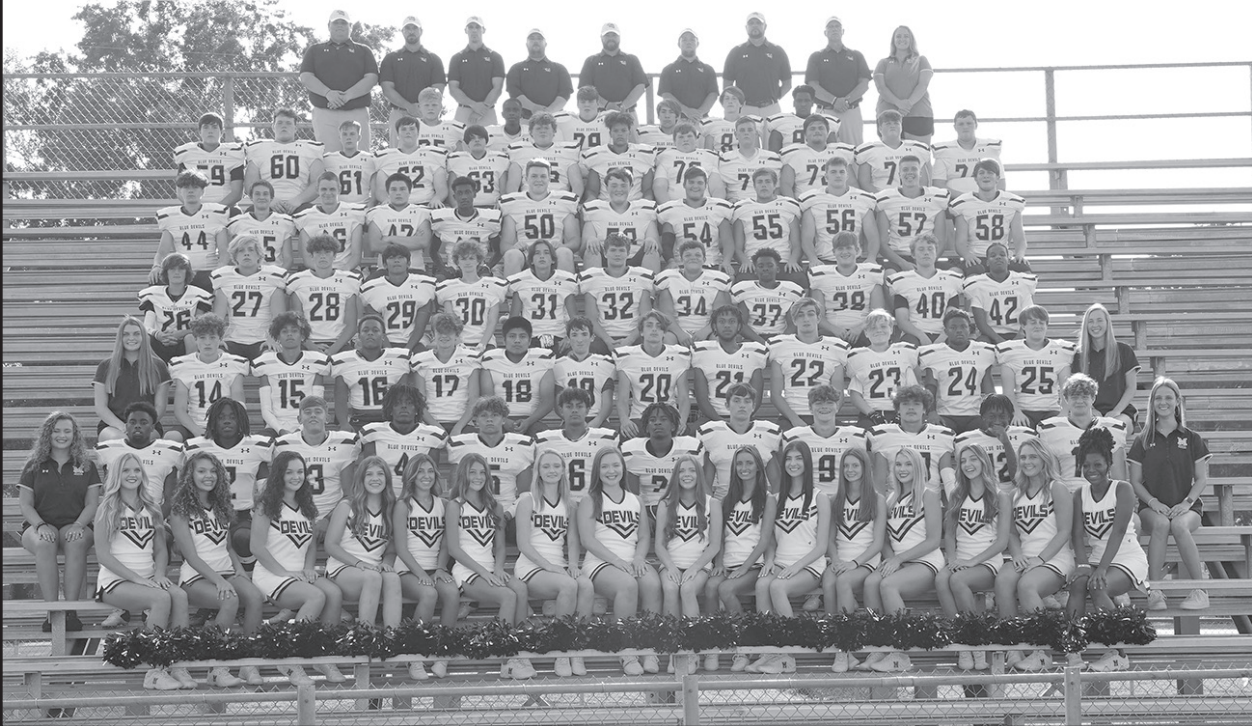
#### LEEDS

While a 5A school, Leeds played as if it was one of the biggest schools in the area last year as the Greenwave finished 9-3 before falling to Russellville in the second round of the state playoffs. Leeds is one of the biggest and most experienced teams in the county.

Much like Tidwell, Leeds head coach Jerry Hood agreed that while having previous success is great, this is a new year and they will need to prove themselves. He described it best when he said that, because the Greenwave has shown its talent, the players will get the very best from each team they compete against.

Though much of Leeds resides in Jefferson County and we only get a small portion over here in St. Clair, I think it's safe to say that the Greenwave will be a powerhouse that everyone in the area will be cheering on.

# MOODY BLUE DEVILS



## Blue Devils to return a bigger, more experienced football team

BY JOSIE HOWELL  
jhowell@thestclairtimes.com

After having one of the youngest football teams in St. Clair County for the 2020 season, the Moody Blue Devils are looking forward to returning to the playing field a bigger, more experienced team.

With the exception of one player, the Blue Devils will see all of its players from its previous season return in 2021.

Head coach Adam Wallace said the fact that his team is a year older is an improvement in itself.

"We were a super young team last year so we're a year older, a year more mature," Wallace said. "These guys have put in work to become faster and stronger, more explosive, so we're really going to see that work come Aug. 20."

The head coach emphasized that while his team has noticeably improved, he hopes that his team continues to practice with intention.

MOODY	
8/20	@ Elmore County
8/27	@ John Carroll
9/3	vs. Hayden
9/10	@ Leeds
9/17	vs. Center Point
9/24	OPEN
10/1	vs. St. Clair County
10/8	@ Corner
10/15	vs. Alexandria
10/22	@ Lincoln
10/29	@ Springville

"Everyday we talk about becoming a better football player and becoming the best we can be," Wallace said, adding that he is focusing on putting in the best work

See Devils, Page 12

## Go Blue Devils!

### Good Luck All Area Teams!

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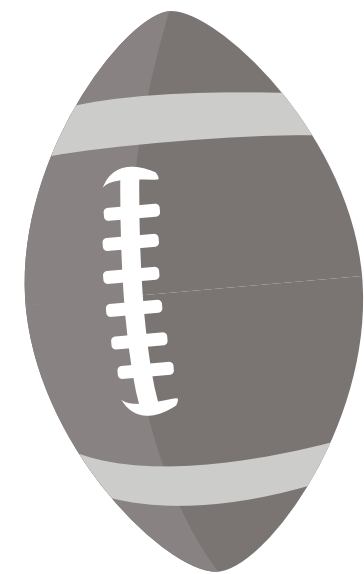
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## Devils

From Page 11

that he can every day so that success will happen on its own.

“In just the first spring we saw a big difference in our team,” Wallace said. “The work they have put in is very evident when you watch them

play. It’ll look like a different team out there honestly.”

Blue Devils’ starting quarterback A.J. Wallace began last year as a 5foot-7 sophomore weighing about 150 pounds. Now that A.J. Wallace is a junior, Coach Wallace said the quarterback has grown about four inches and put on about 25 pounds of muscle and is hopeful to use that to the Blue Devils’ advantage.

“That’s one thing we struggled with last year, you know being under-sized and stopping the runs, so you know it’ll be a great test for us the first game (against Elmore County) to show that we can stand up against their run game,” the coach said.

The Blue Devils kick off the 2021 football season at Elmore County Aug. 20.

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# Quarterback battle in Pell City

By **LAVONTE YOUNG**  
lyoung@dailyhome.com

The biggest question going into this offseason for Pell City was the offense. Last season, the Panthers struggled to produce points as they were the second-lowest scoring team in Class 6A, Region 7 as they only averaged 16 points per game.

The Panthers addressed their offensive woes in the offseason as they hired Logan Colafrancesco as offensive coordinator. Pell City has worked on finding a quarterback that can master the new offense throughout spring practice and summer workouts. The Panthers quarterback competition is between 2020 starting quarterback Baylor Smith and sophomore Caleb Groce.

Lee said it is vital for the Panthers to have solid quarterback play if they plan on competing in 2021.

“If you look at all the successful teams they have good quarterback play,” Lee said. “It doesn’t have to be the 6-foot-4, 215-pound kid like Oxford had last year. It is great if you have him, but you have to have good play from whoever you put back there. That’s the big thing for us; we have to have good quarterback play.”

The quarterbacks have shared snaps throughout the summer at 7-on-7 passing tournaments. Lee said that slitting snaps will likely continue until someone wins the position.

“It has been going good,” Lee said. “It is no question that the two of them are going to be on the field. Both of them have gotten a lot of reps and will continue to get reps. We will see what happens when we put pads on.”



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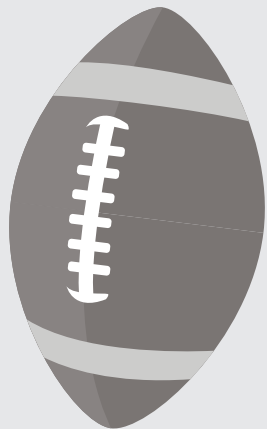


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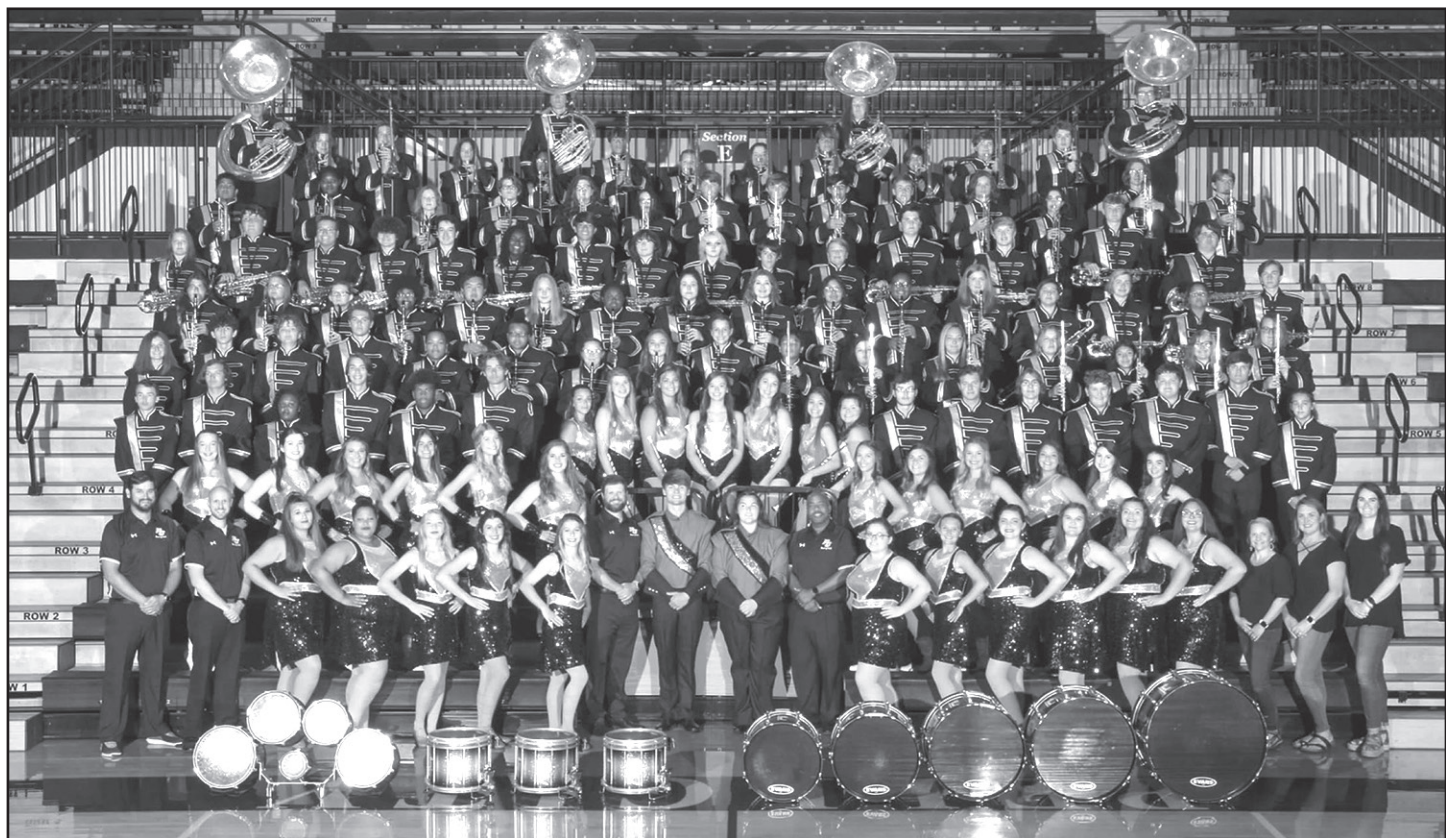
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**PELL CITY**

- 8/20 OPEN
- 8/27 vs. Leeds
- 9/3 vs. Southside Gadsden
- 9/10 vs. Talladega
- 9/17 @ Oxford
- 9/24 vs. Calera
- 10/1 @ Arab
- 10/8 vs. Springville
- 10/15 @ Fort Payne
- 10/22 vs. Scottsboro
- 10/29 @ Mae Jemison



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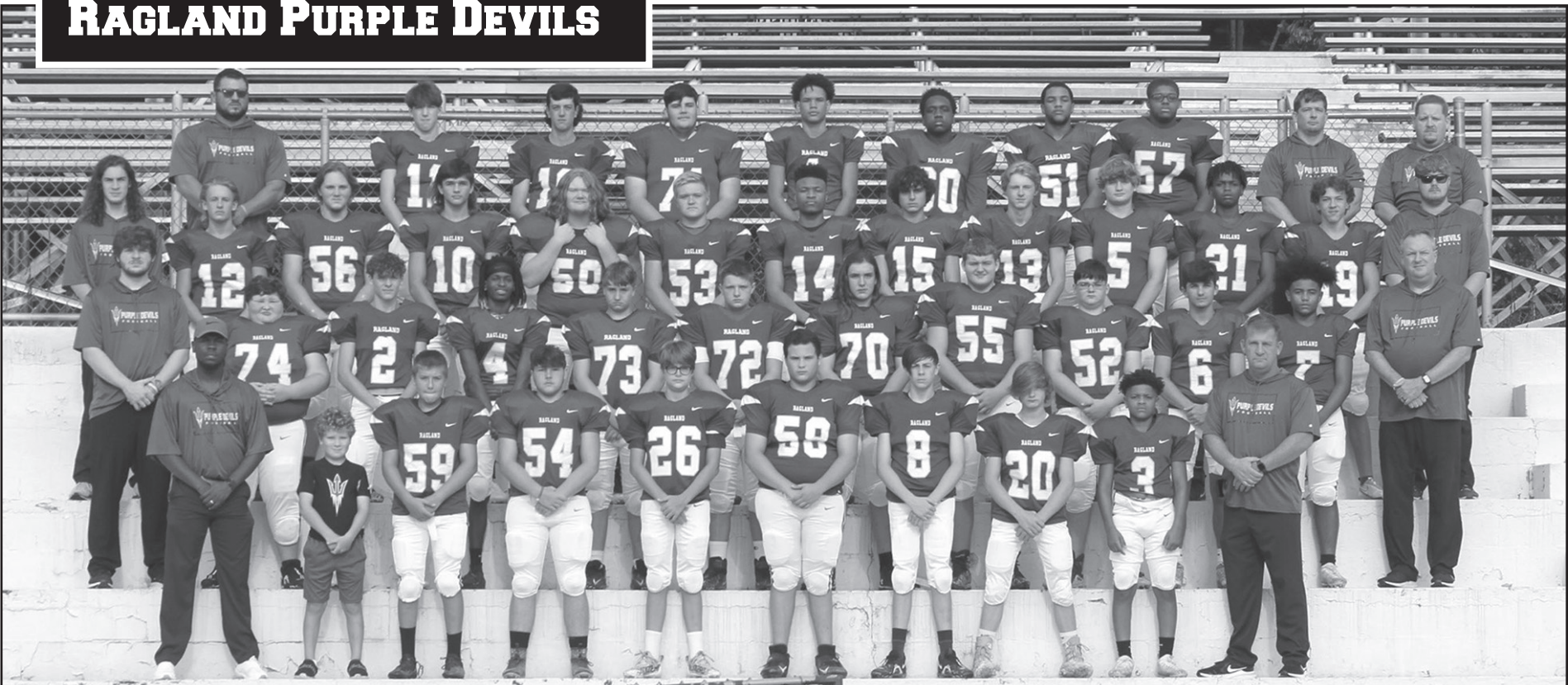
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# New coach takes over at Ragland

By **LAVONTE YOUNG**  
lyoung@dailyhome.com

Wes Tidwell was hired as Ragland's head football coach in May.

Tidwell has 18 years of experience and he spent the past four seasons at Bryant High School in Mobile.

Tidwell lone head coaching experience came at his alma mater Winston County. In four seasons, he went 22-21 with his best record coming in 2015 when they finished with a 7-4 record.

Tidwell takes over for Derrick Sewell, who left to take over at West End.

Sewell turned things around for Purple Devils last season. Ragland went 9-3 in 2020 and they lost to Brilliant 21-14 in the second round of the playoffs. Sewell went 15-18 in three seasons at Ragland.

"It's not something where you have to rebuild everything," Tidwell said. "Obviously, we want to build a different culture and that's not saying something happened last year. They were a good football team last year, but they are not going to give us credit for that this year. We have to win our own ball games. We lost some very good kids off that team and we have some very good kids coming back. We want to create our own path. I expect

to compete every week. I expect our kids to hit you in the mouth and I expect them to respond when you hit us in the mouth."

Springville and St. Clair County also have new coaches this season.

## RAGLAND

8/20	@ Valley Head
8/27	vs. Gaylesville
9/3	@ Winterboro
9/10	@ Woodland
9/17	OPEN
9/24	@ Gaston
10/1	vs. Donoho
10/8	@ Wadley
10/15	vs. Talladega County Central
10/22	@ Victory Christian
10/29	vs. Asbury



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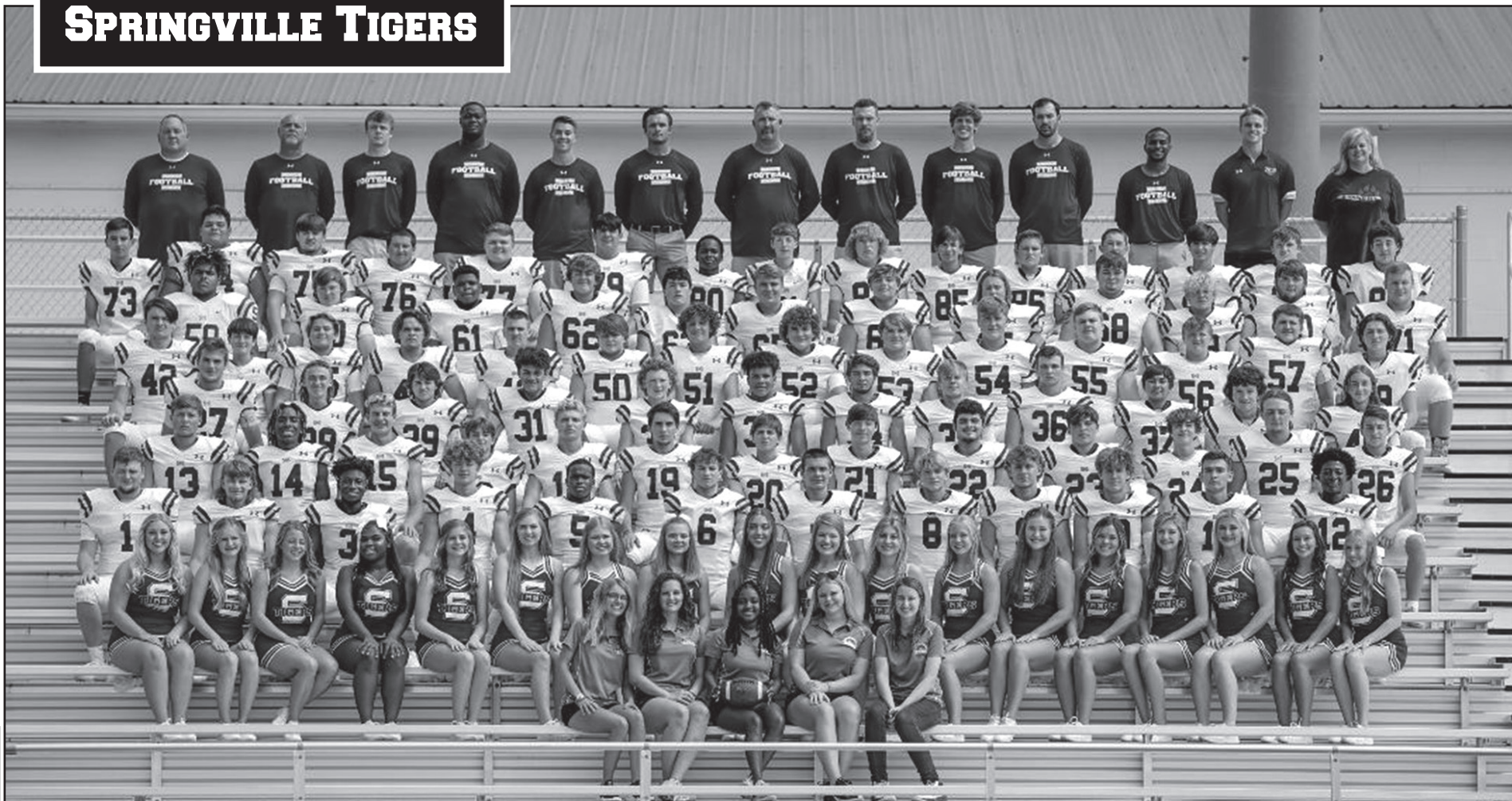
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# SPRINGVILLE TIGERS



## Springville kicks off season with new head coach, new starting quarterback

BY JOSIE HOWELL  
[jhowell@thestclairtimes.com](mailto:jhowell@thestclairtimes.com)

In 2020, Springville finished the season 4-5 under Michael Graben. While the Tigers lost a few members of the team, new Head Coach Jon Clements said his guys are ready to step up to the plate. Asa Morrison, in particular, will step in as the team's new starting quarterback.

"You cannot replace Pearson Baldwin; we have some people in our program who I think can fill those shoes a little bit," Clements said. "Asa, I think he's done a really good job, had a really good spring and first week of practice."

The Springville coach added that he feels his offensive line will continue to be the strength of his team.

"We're going to run the football and try to control the line of scrimmage. If we can do that I feel like it gives us our best opportunity to win," he said.

"I think our kids know who we are and what we've got to do and they're really adapting to that and it's working out pretty good."

Springville will officially kick off its season on Aug. 27 with a non-region game against county rival St. Clair County High School.

Clements emphasized that after working as an offensive coordinator for St. Clair County High School, he knows it won't be an easy contest.

"I know who their kids are and who our kids are, so it'll definitely be a tough contest right out of the gate," Clements said. "We're going to get their best shot and that's great. That's what you want, but it's a non-region game. We're not going to be defined by that, but I hope when it gets here we're ready to go."

Kick off for the Tiger's first matchup will be 7 p.m. at Springville's home field.

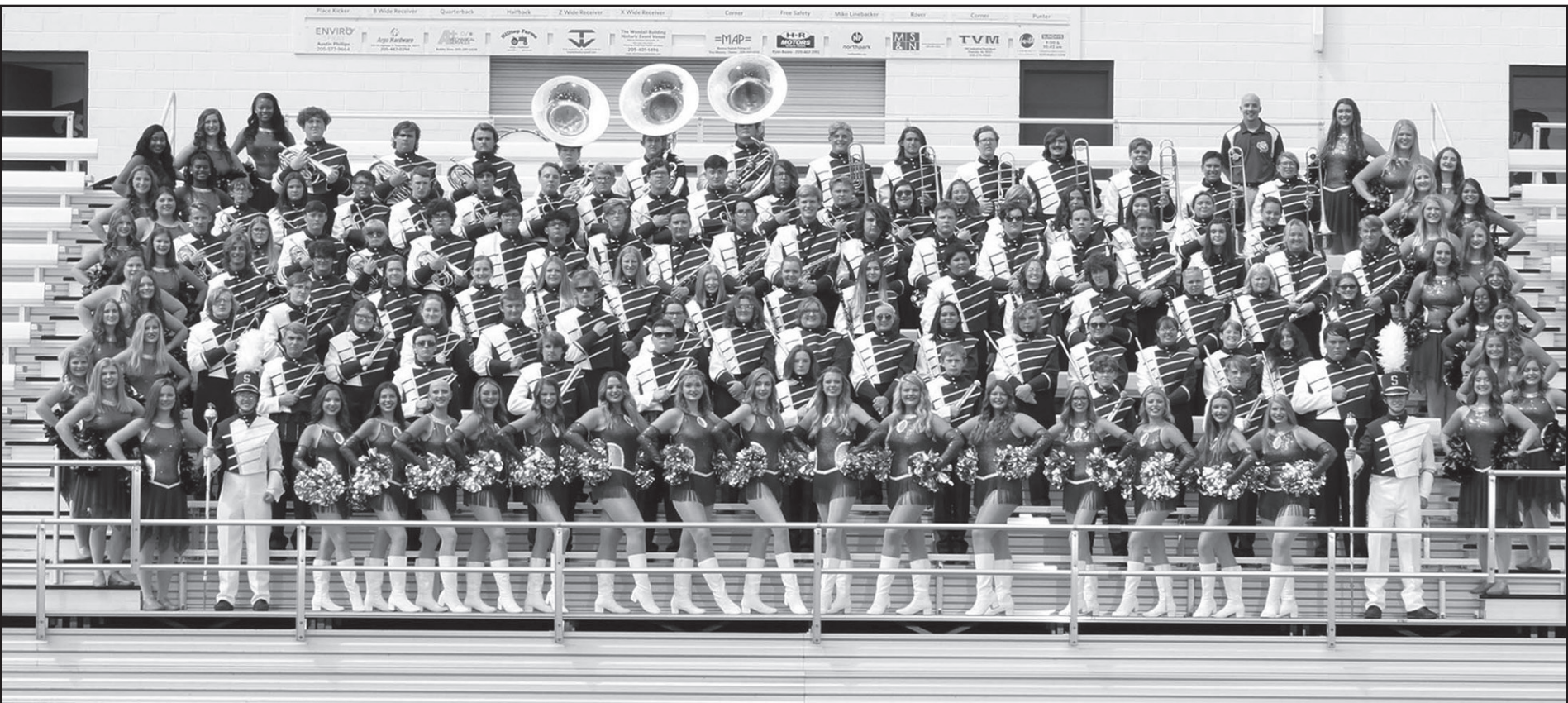
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9/3	vs. Cherokee County
9/10	vs. Fort Payne
9/17	@ Scottsboro
9/24	@ Fultondale
10/1	vs. Southside Gadsden
10/8	@ Pell City
10/15	vs. Oxford
10/22	@ Arab
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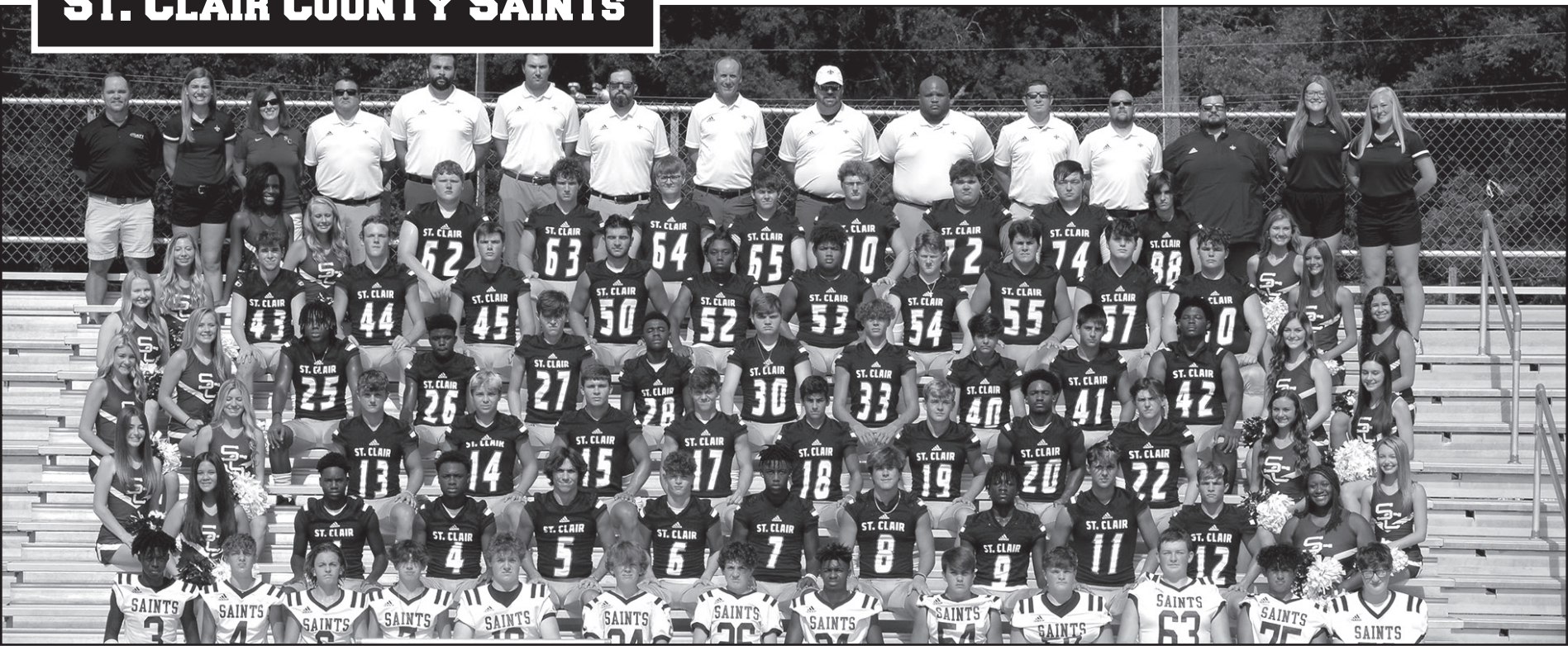


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# ST. CLAIR COUNTY SAINTS



## The Saints look to improve on last season's record under new leadership

BY JOSIE HOWELL  
jhowell@thestclairtimes.com

The Saints will enter into the 2021 season under the new leadership of P.J. Wright.

Last year, the Saints went 1-9 under Brooks Dampeer; Wright said he hopes to improve on that record. He added, however, you don't measure success solely on wins, but rather finding the small positives.

"You have to be careful on how you judge success," he said. "You've got to find the positive in everything. 'If we're going to judge success based on what it says on the scoreboard then, you know, I don't want to say we're not going to lose, but you don't want to say what's successful and what's not.'"

Wright said that so far, he's impressed with how hard his team has worked and adapted to his coaching style.

"They're working extremely hard," Wright said. "When they're (at practice), I believe in going 100 percent at full speed in short bursts and we are getting that from them."

Wright added that he's looking to wide receiver Jackson Linsdsey and inside linebacker Ethan Jackson to help lead his team going into the new season.

"We got beat in a 7-on-7 early (in the tournament), and I brought those two over and I said, 'It's up to you guys, are you going to let them hang their heads or are we going to say let's go, let's step back up' and we did and performed better after," Wright said.

Throughout the season, the coach said he wants to continue working on his team's overall attitudes during games.

"(On) film, I can see when things start to go badly, and things go downhill, heads drop, attitudes change and we get a lot of finger pointing," he said. "We preach, how are you going to respond when things go poorly? You are going to be successful, because I'm not going to let you fail. So, how are you going to (also) respond when that success comes?"

The Saints will travel to Springville on Aug. 27 for its season opener with kick off at 7 p.m.



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 9/10 @  
 Alexandria  
 9/17 vs. Lincoln  
 9/24 vs. Ashville  
 10/1 @ Moody  
 10/8 vs. Leeds  
 10/15 @ Center  
 Point  
 10/22 @ Hayden  
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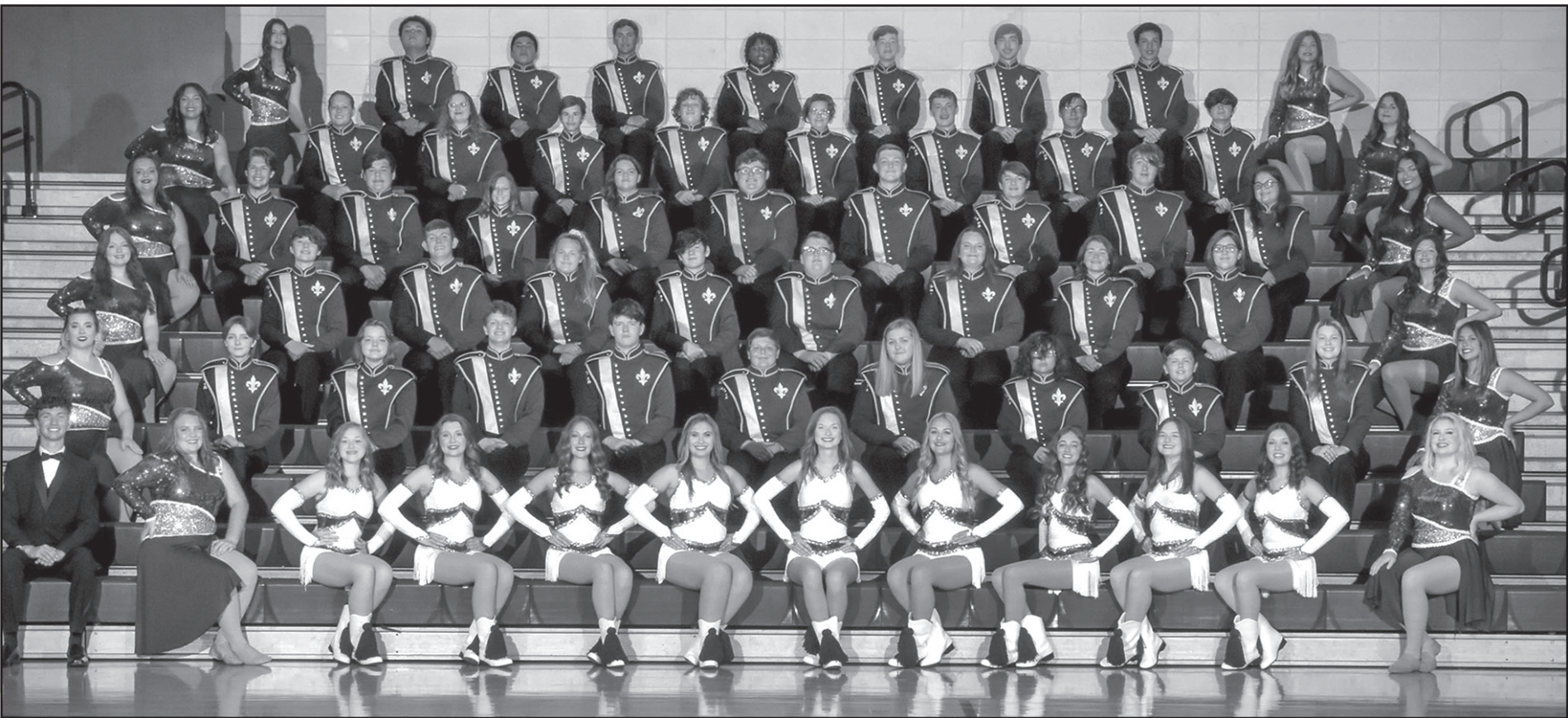
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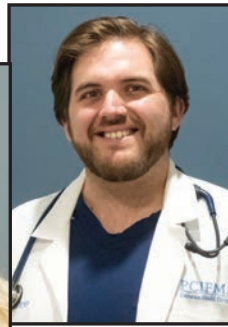
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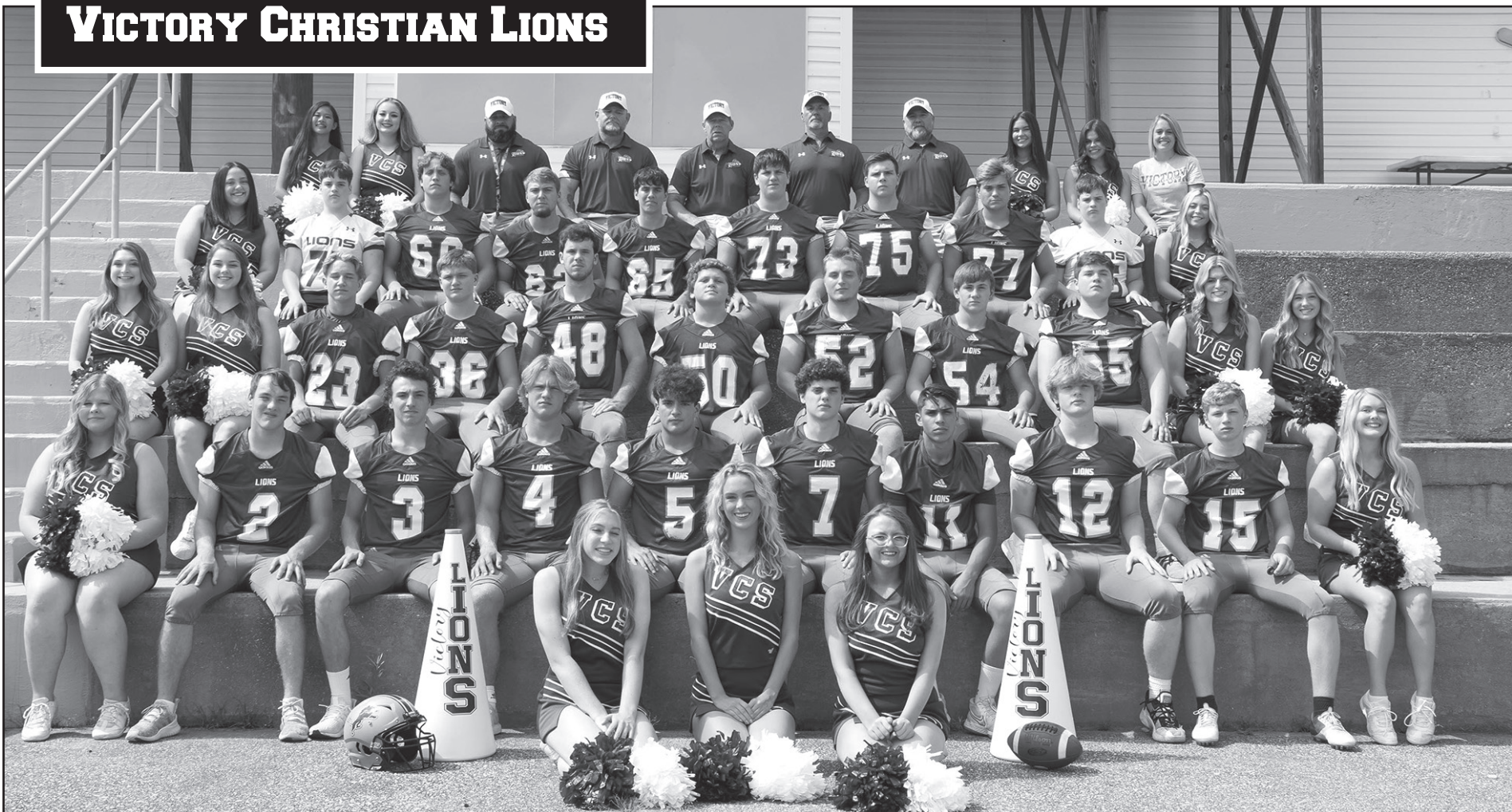
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# VICTORY CHRISTIAN LIONS



## Lions are looking for revenge

BY LAVONTE YOUNG  
lyoung@dailyhome.com

Victory Christian is looking to get the bad taste of 2020 out of their mouths. The Lions finished the 2020 season with a 4-6 record and missed the playoffs. Two of Victory Christian's losses came by forfeit due to Covid concerns.

Even when the team was able to return to the field the Lions were without head coach Bruce Breland was sidelined for an extended period with coronavirus.

Victory Christian senior Billy Davenport believes covid didn't allow the team to play to their full potential last season.

"We are going into the season with the mindset of revenge," Davenport said. "It's some teams that we shouldn't have lost to and some teams that we had to lose to because we were shut down. That brings back some bad blood coming into the season for me."

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- 8/27 @ Horseshoe Bend
- 9/3 @ Donoho
- 9/10 vs. Wadley
- 9/17 vs. Talladega County Central
- 9/24 vs. Fayetteville
- 10/1 vs. Ider
- 10/8 @ Winterboro
- 10/15 @ Woodland
- 10/22 vs. Ragland
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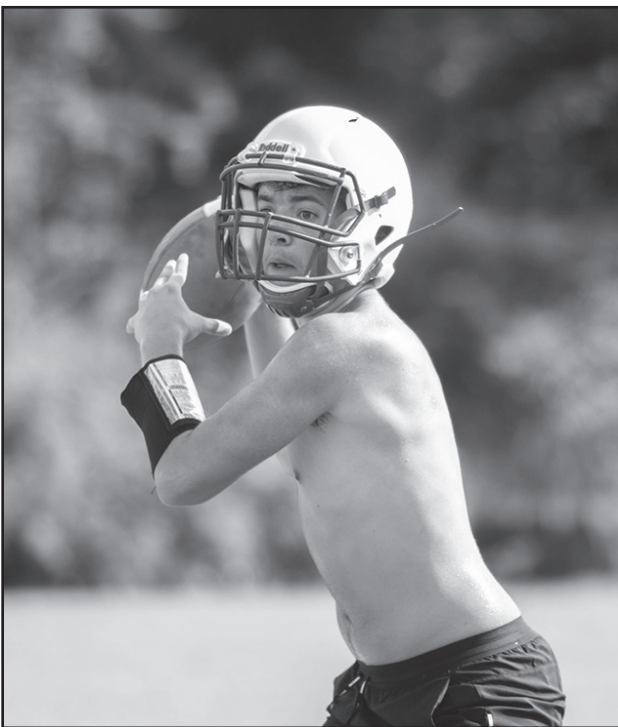
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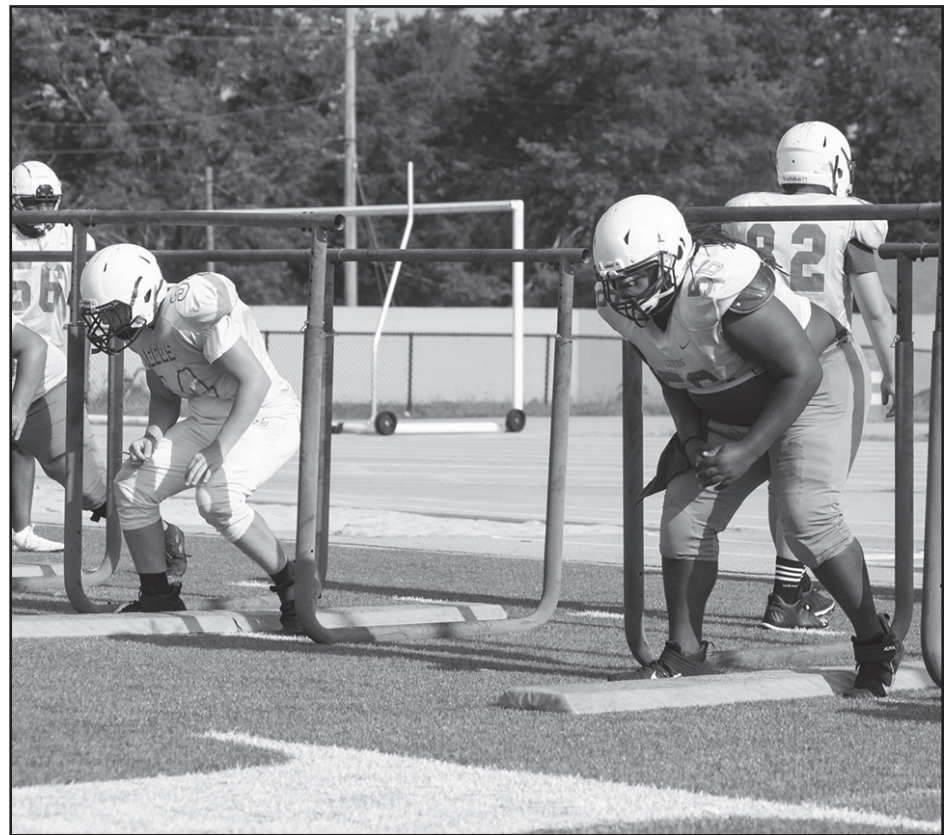
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# Preseason scenes from Leeds







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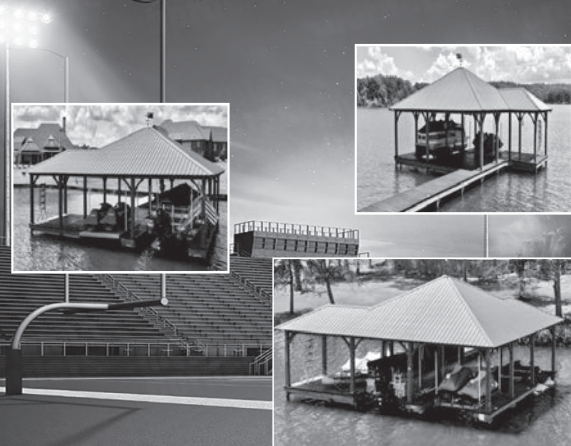
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*GOOD LUCK To All Area High School Football Teams!*



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# Preseason scenes from Victory Christian





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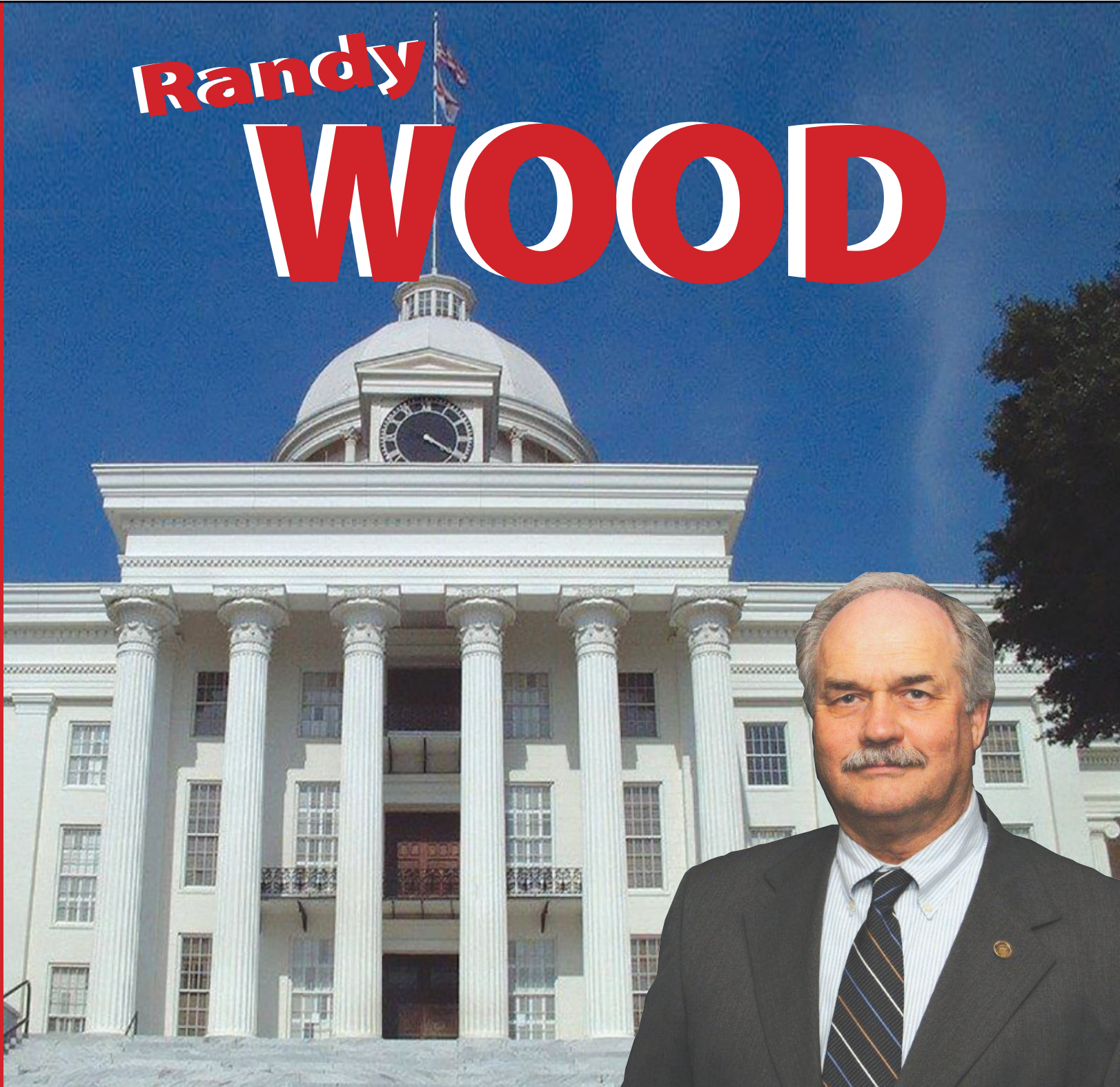
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000266337R1

A black and white photograph of a football field. The field is covered in grass with white yard lines and numbers. The numbers '10' and '20' are visible on the left side of the field. The text 'What it is, is football...' is overlaid in the center of the image in a large, white, serif font.

What it is,  
is football...

**BY BUDDY ROBERTS**  
Special Projects Editor

Friday evening, 6:30 p.m.

The stands are almost full, and people are still pouring in the gate.

Another half-hour and the place will be rocking.

There's been something in the air all day, a kind of atmosphere and excitement that exists only one day each week for only a few weeks each year.

It first erupts by mid-afternoon during the tribal rite of a pep rally. The

players are in the game jerseys, the cheerleaders are dancing on the gymnasium floor and a crowd of youngsters and teenagers demonstrate their school spirit — not to mention their appreciation for a chance to get out of class — with a deafening series of shrieks and screams.

Then the countdown begins.

As kickoff nears, there's just enough time to grab a quick bite on the run, at the risk of missing the opening festivities.

And here we are, Friday evening at 6:30, sitting on the 50-yard line looking at the field, the long green carpet that's seen its share of flags and whistles, touchdowns and injuries and celebrations and consolations. Coaches, officials, trainers, managers, statisticians and photographers are already pacing it, making their final preparations.

Finally, it's time.

Cheerleaders hoist a massive paper sign depicting their team's mascot bludgeoning, pummeling, throttling, incinerating or perpetrating other bodily harm on the opposing team's mascot. The band lays down the opening notes of the fight song, and the music cuts through the spectators like a stiletto.

The fans are on their feet. The anticipation

is rising. Adrenaline is pumping, and everything explodes as the home team rips through the thin paper wall and takes the field. Within five minutes, everyone has forgotten about summer, because it's football season now.

With the opening kickoff, the stadium is witness to a couple of hours of the kind of guts and glory only associated with prep sports.

High school football. You can't beat it with a stick.

Good Luck to  
all area teams!

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TO ALL AREA TEAMS FOR  
A SUCCESSFUL YEAR!**

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