

2020 HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL

PRIME 9

Here is a look at a top returning player from each area school for the 2020 season:

BY ROB HUNT | PHOTOS BY DON KNIGHT & JOHN P. CLEARY | DESIGN BY HEATHER BREMER

ERIC PEGG

The Tigers’ defense returns plenty of experience and production, with Pegg set to anchor that side of the ball. Pegg tallied 82 tackles last year from his outside linebacker position — including 47 of the solo variety — along with three sacks and two interceptions. He also was part of the Alex running game offensively, gaining 252 yards with two touchdowns while averaging more than 6 yards per carry. He sees a similar role for himself this season. “My goals are basically just to do better and better every single game,” Pegg said. “I think we’re going to be really good on defense this year.”



LINEBACKER  
ALEXANDRIA - SENIOR

MJ ARMSTRONG

In coach Ron Qualls’ up-tempo passing offense, the quarterback is vital, and Armstrong is back at the position for a second year. As a junior, Armstrong completed 95 of 218 pass attempts for 1,040 yards and nine touchdowns. He was also Anderson’s leading rusher with 207 yards. He is hoping to use what he learned in 2019 to have a strong 2020. “Confidence to me is all about experience, and last year I didn’t have much experience,” Armstrong said. “But this year, I’m gaining experience. I’m watching more film and understanding coverages.” Armstrong has plans to study sports management in college.



QUARTERBACK  
ANDERSON - SENIOR

JUSTIN LEWIS

After missing out on the bulk of his junior year due to the cancellation of the season after four games, Lewis is ready to take the reins of the Jets offense as quarterback in the first season for head coach Tony Bowman. “He’s a good coach,” Lewis said. “Everyone out there wants to play. Everyone is excited.” As both a senior and the quarterback, Lewis is hoping to lead the Jets and will do so both by example and vocally. “I just stepped up to it and started leading, felt like I had to,” Lewis said. “I’m kind of both. I’ll speak out when I need to.”



QUARTERBACK  
ANDERSON PREP - SENIOR

BEN DELONG

A converted quarterback, DeLong will be counted on for his playmaking ability at the wide receiver position this season. DeLong caught 15 passes for 199 yards and a touchdown last year and was one of the top tacklers for the Panthers defensively with 42 tackles and a recovered fumble. He also accounted for more than 150 return yards and is looking forward to his role as a senior leader for Elwood this season. “We have a lot more seniors than we did last year,” he said. “I’ve got to lead well and hope for the best.” DeLong plans to attend school to study to be a conservation officer.



WIDE RECEIVER  
ELWOOD - SENIOR

KORBIN FINLEY

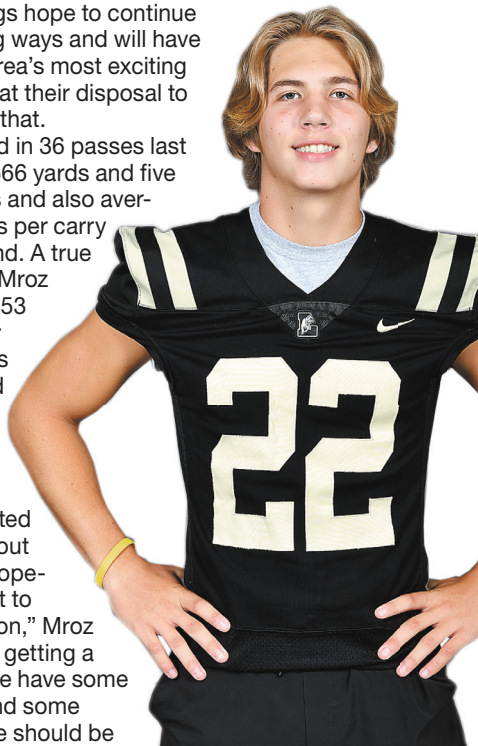
For the Eagles, Finley is back as the area’s leading returning rusher. Finley rushed for 996 yards and seven touchdowns in 2019, gaining more than 100 yards in five games for Frankton. He added 31 tackles and two sacks on the defensive side of the ball and expects to have a little more help on the offensive side of the ball this season. “The line is looking great, they’ve gotten bigger and stronger,” Finley said. “We have a good quarterback coming in this year as a sophomore, and we’ve got a couple running backs to help me out in the running game.” Finley plans to study business and hopes to play football but is undecided on which college he will attend.



RUNNING BACK  
FRANKTON - SENIOR

TANNER MROZ

The Bulldogs hope to continue their winning ways and will have one of the area’s most exciting playmakers at their disposal to help do just that. Mroz hauled in 36 passes last season for 566 yards and five touchdowns and also averaged 6 yards per carry on the ground. A true dual threat, Mroz also posted 53 tackles, four interceptions and a forced fumble on the defensive side of the ball. “We’re excited to get back out there, and hopefully we’ll get to have a season,” Mroz said. “We’re getting a new field. We have some new guys and some old guys. We should be solid.”



WIDE RECEIVER  
LAPEL - SENIOR

JACK THOMPSON

The Argylls caught fire at the right time of the year last season, and Thompson is back to pilot an offense that averaged nearly 6.5 yards per rush in 2019. Thompson completed just 27 of 70 passes with three touchdowns but also gained 432 yards on the ground with eight touchdowns. He says that last season’s run to the sectional championship game has built confidence and excitement into this year’s squad. “We’re already this year, in July, we’ve gotten better than we were last year,” he said. “We lost a lot of our line last year, but we have a lot of guys coming up that I have confidence in. They’re good players and they work hard.” Thompson is currently planning to attend Purdue University to study agri-business.



QUARTERBACK  
MADISON-GRANT - SENIOR

LUKE BAYS

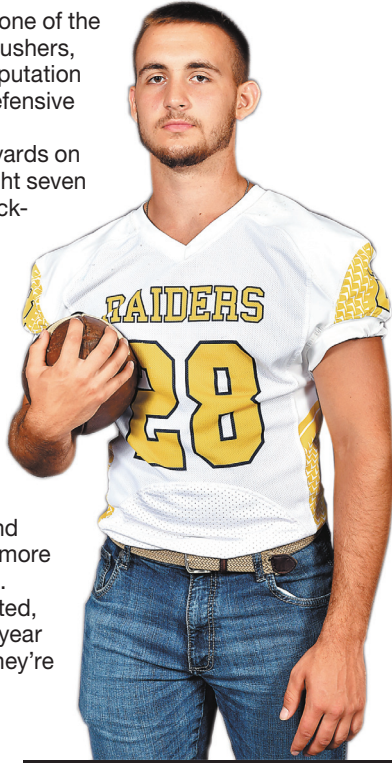
Bays returns as one of the leaders of a strong Pendleton Heights defense. In 2019, the outside linebacker posted 123 tackles, a sack, an interception and three forced fumbles while recovering two. He pairs with Caden McClain to form one of the top linebacker corps in the area. He says experience will be a major asset for the Arabians in 2020. “We’re very high on our confidence level, and we return a lot of seniors,” Bays said. “We’ve gotten a couple seniors who didn’t play last year to come back out, so we’re very top-heavy on seniors.” Bays is hoping to play college football and plans to study engineering.



LINEBACKER  
PENDLETON HEIGHTS - SENIOR

JOSH FARMER

In addition to being one of the area’s top returning rushers, Farmer has built a reputation as one of the best defensive players. Farmer gained 815 yards on the ground and caught seven passes out of the backfield for the Raiders. Defensively, Farmer tallied 68 tackles — including nine for a loss — and forced two fumbles. Stopping the other guy is his preferred side of the ball. “It just feels good chasing him down and tackling him, there’s more satisfaction,” he said. “We’re all pretty excited, a lot of the guys last year were new, but now they’re more experienced.” Farmer says playing in college is a possibility.



LINEBACKER  
SHENANDOAH - SENIOR



Football  
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