

# 2017-18 PIGSKIN PREVIEW





# Hopeful forecast for Cols: End of Purple reign

BY CHRIS JUNG  
NEW ERA SPORTS EDITOR

No one has to remind Christian County about the name of its high school football postseason kryptonite.

Four times in the past five seasons, the Colonels have watched their season come to an end in the second round of the Class 5A state playoffs, all at the hands of Bowling Green.

This season, however, with a four-year starting quarterback beginning his swan song season, a Purdue commit roaming the secondary and a deep roster on both sides of the ball, Christian County is hoping for a forecast that features the end of the Purple reign.

"We hope so," said CCHS coach Steve Lovelace, who is in his 11th season with the Cols. "Kevin (Wallace) does a good job (at Bowling Green) and runs a program that you want to be like. They just reload every year, and that's where we want to get to."

Despite some spirited attempts, Christian County has lost 44-29 (2016), 41-21 (2015), 48-7 (2013) and 31-17 (2012) in postseason games against Bowling Green, and hasn't advanced beyond the second round of the playoffs since the Colonels finished as Class 5A state runner-up under Lovelace in 2010.

But while the Purples are certainly on the radar, the Colonels have some bigger tasks at hand, including an opportunity to clinch a significant advantage during the 2017 postseason.

"We've been on the short end of the stick (in those Bowling Green games), but our main focus right now is just trying to get past Owensboro and Graves (County) and Marshall (County) in our own little district," Lovelace said. "The last three years we finished second, which put us on the road (in the second round). The thing we talked about this summer, and coming into this fall, this is the first time in a long time where if we win our district, we're home throughout the playoffs. We wouldn't have to travel and people would come to us."

In order to reach that goal, it begins with the play of senior quarterback Kolbe Langhi — County's four-year starter, who is on the brink of passing Keith Tandy as the program's all-time leading passer and becoming just the 11th player in state history to throw for 10,000 yards.

The 6-foot-6 left-handed hurler has continued to improve upon his footwork and appears ready to lead, but it's do-or-die when it comes to execution and taking the bull by the horns for Langhi.

"He's got it in him (to be the leader)

— now it's just pulling it out of him constantly," Lovelace said. "But other people also have to help him, especially if things are going badly on a certain night. Playing quarterback is hard, so there are some things we're trying to fix for him, where we're running better routes and ending up where we're supposed to be for him to throw."

Langhi's top target, CCHS graduate and Purdue University freshman Keyron Catlett, is gone, but Ja'Quon Long turned into a consistent threat through the air in 2016. And with the switch of Ellis Dunn from defense to offense, his emergence should give Langhi ample playmakers.

"What I like right now is that we've really developed some depth," Lovelace said. "That's one thing we haven't had in a while and we really don't have many kids going both ways, so it's about getting some of these young guys in and mixing them in with some of our seniors who have been her for four years. There's a lot of good chemistry."

Long can play tight end, any wide receiver position, linebacker and is "probably one of the best long snappers" that Lovelace has ever seen. On the other side of the ball, 6-foot-4 free safety Cory Trice, who is committed to Purdue, is an extra coach on the field, often calling out his own coverages and taking charge of the unit.

Lineman Payton Leneave and senior defensive end Kendarius Major are also key members of the CCHS defense, which is already causing Lovelace the best type of problem.

"We're almost too deep at every spot right now," he said. "We're going to try and rotate and try to play 22 kids on defense."

Up front on offense, an experienced line of Zach Hale, Jude Langhi and Davion Radford will go a long way in setting the tone for Christian County's success. They'll be blocking for a crop of running backs, including senior Diion Leavell, who has switched full time to offense.

"Like people say, 'You show me a good running back and I'll show you a good offensive line.' That's where we're trying to build — our offensive and defensive line," Lovelace shared. "We've got four or five other kids trying to battle for that fifth, sixth and seventh spot. We'd love to be able to play eight O-linemen and be able to move people around in case something happens."

During a recent Courier-Journal statewide coaches' poll, the Colonels were ranked No. 2 in Kentucky for Class 5A — a designation Lovelace doesn't give too much attention, but is happy for his players to receive that type of recogni-



NEW ERA FILE PHOTOS

(Above) Christian County High School senior free safety Cory Trice (left), a Purdue commit, anchors a Colonel defense that will likely rotate over 20 players. (Below) Four-year County starting quarterback Kolbe Langhi could pass Keith Tandy as the CCHS all-time leading passer during his finale season in blue and red.



tion.

"That means that coaches have really looked at our kids. They do play hard and compete," Lovelace said. "I talk to (Wallace) every year, that it's always going to be one of us that's going to be in the (Class 5A) finals. That's not trying to sound cocky on my part or his part, but I just feel that way about our program."

"Now hopefully we can get over that hurdle and move deeper into the play-

offs. It's our job to go out there and prove we deserve to be No. 2 and then try to end up being No. 1."

The Colonels open their season at Caldwell County on Friday and play their home opener Aug. 25 against Clarksville Rossview (Tenn.) in the Toyota of Hopkinsville Jerry Claiborne Bowl at Stadium of Champions.

REACH CHRIS JUNG at 270-887-3261

# CHRISTIAN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

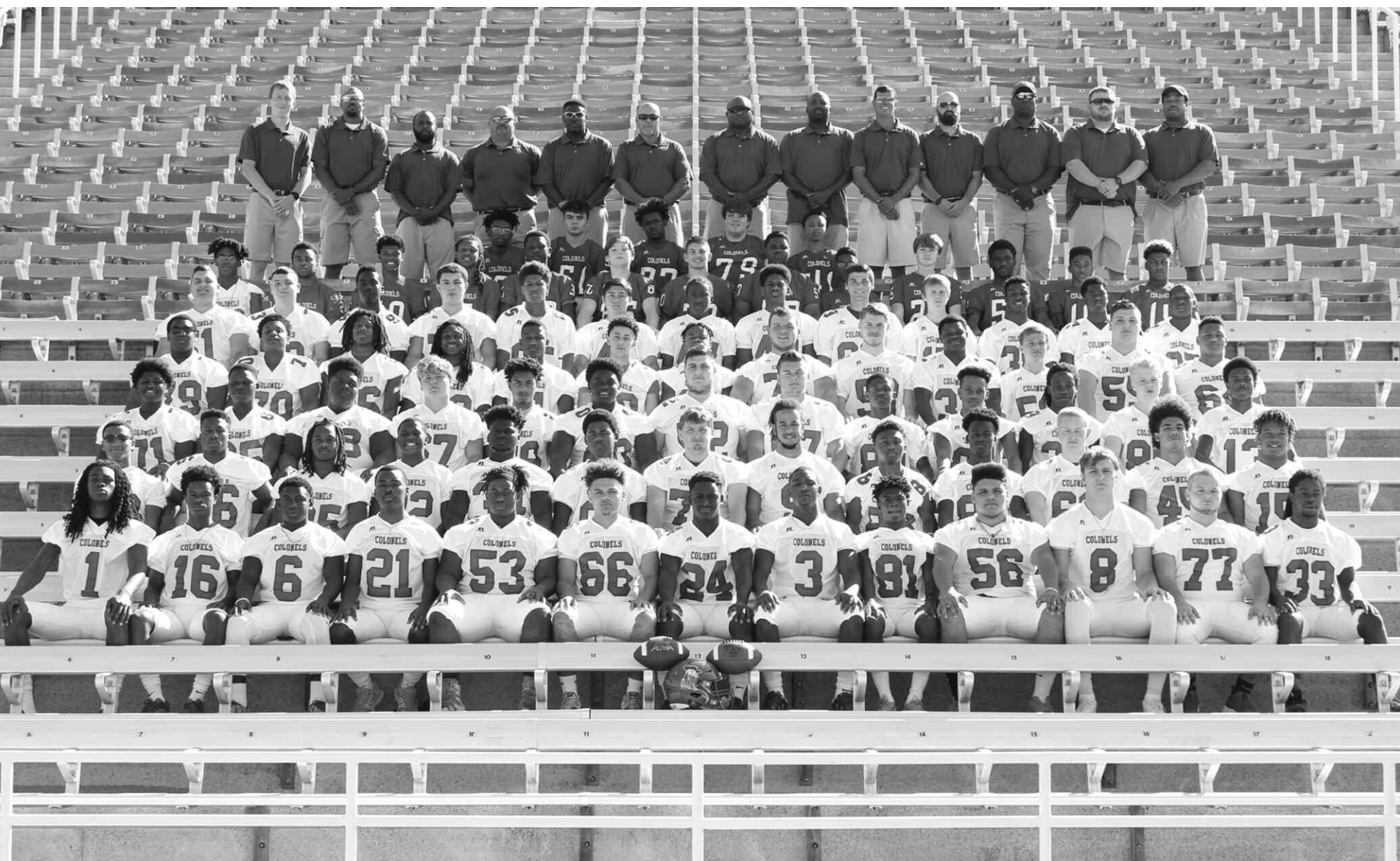


PHOTO COURTESY OF SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

Christian County High School has been eliminated in the second round of the Class 5A state playoffs by Bowling Green in four of the past five seasons. The Colonels, however, have developed player depth, particularly on defense, and are gunning for their first trip to a regional final since 2010. CCHS opens its season Friday at Caldwell County.



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## 2017 SOUTHERN PENNYRILE FOOTBALL SCHEDULES

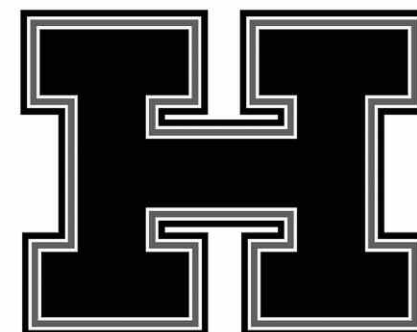
# CHRISTIAN COUNTY



DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	HOME/AWAY
AUG. 18	7	CALDWELL COUNTY	AWAY
AUG. 25	5:30	VS. ROSSVIEW (TENNESSEE)*	HOME
SEPT. 1	7	HENDERSON COUNTY	AWAY
SEPT. 8	7	HOPKINSVILLE	HOME
SEPT. 15		BYE	
SEPT. 22	7	MARSHALL COUNTY	HOME
SEPT. 29	7	OWENSBORO	AWAY
OCT. 6	7	APOLLO	HOME
OCT. 13	7	GRAVES COUNTY	AWAY
OCT. 20	7	MADISONVILLE	HOME
OCT. 27	7	PADUCAH TILGHMAN	AWAY

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	HOME/AWAY
AUG. 18	7	SOUTH WARREN	AWAY
AUG. 25	7:30	VS. MAYFIELD*	HOME
SEPT. 1	7	CALDWELL COUNTY	HOME
SEPT. 8	7	CHRISTIAN COUNTY	AWAY
SEPT. 15	7	PADUCAH TILGHMAN	HOME
SEPT. 22		BYE	
SEPT. 29	7	MADISONVILLE	HOME
OCT. 5	7	LOGAN COUNTY	AWAY
OCT. 13	7	CALLOWAY COUNTY	HOME
OCT. 20	7	HOPKINS COUNTY CENTRAL	AWAY
OCT. 27	7	GREENWOOD	HOME

# HOPTOWN



\*TOYOTA OF HOPKINSVILLE JERRY CLAIBORNE BOWL

## 2017 SOUTHERN PENNYRILE FOOTBALL SCHEDULES

**FORT CAMPBELL**

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	HOME/AWAY
AUG. 18	7	MARSHALL CO.	HOME
AUG. 25	5:30	RUSSELLVILLE	AWAY
SEPT. 1	7	GLASGOW	AWAY
SEPT. 8	7	MURRAY	AWAY
SEPT. 15	7	FORT KNOX	HOME
SEPT. 22	7	TRIGG CO.	AWAY
SEPT. 29		BYE	
OCT. 6	7	UNION CO.	HOME
OCT. 13	7	CALDWELL CO.	AWAY
OCT. 20	7	PADUCAH TILGHMAN	HOME
OCT. 27	7	MADISONVILLE	AWAY

**TODD CO. CENTRAL**

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	HOME/AWAY
AUG. 18	7	BRECKINRIDGE CO.	HOME
AUG. 25	7:30	FORT KNOX	AWAY
SEPT. 1	7	CAVERNA	HOME
SEPT. 8	7	HOPKINS CO. CENTRAL	HOME
SEPT. 15	7	FULTON CITY	HOME
SEPT. 22	7	HANCOCK CO.	AWAY
SEPT. 29		BYE	
OCT. 6	7	MCLEAN CO.	HOME
OCT. 13	7	OWENSBORO CATH	HOME
OCT. 20	7	BUTLER CO.	AWAY
OCT. 27	7	LOGAN CO.	AWAY

**TRIGG CO.**

DATE	TIME	OPPONENT	HOME/AWAY
AUG. 18	5	MONROE CO.**	AWAY
AUG. 25	7	MCLEAN CO.	HOME
SEPT. 1	7	CRITTENDEN CO.	AWAY
SEPT. 8	7	BALLARD MEMORIAL	AWAY
SEPT. 15	7	RUSSELLVILLE	HOME
SEPT. 22	7	FORT CAMPBELL	HOME
SEPT. 29	7	PADUCAH TILGHMAN	AWAY
OCT. 6	7	CALDWELL COUNTY***	HOME
OCT. 13	7	HOPKINS CO. CENTRAL	HOME
OCT. 20	7	UNION CO.	AWAY
OCT. 27		BYE	

\*\*SCOTTIE BOWL AT GLASGOW

\*\*\*139 BOWL

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# Youthful Tigers look to retool, repeat in district

BY CHRIS JUNG  
NEW ERA SPORTS EDITOR

When Craig Clayton returned as the head football coach at Hopkinsville High School in April, he was confident his two-time defending district champion Tigers would be in the thick of the Class 4A conversation as a potential state championship contender.

Four months later, as Hoptown prepares to begin its 2017 campaign, Clayton finds himself with just one returning offensive starter and an untested starting quarterback.

Following the transfer of last year's Southern Pennyryle Football Athlete of the Year, Jalen Johnson, who opted to transfer from HHS to focus on basketball at Aspire Academy in Louisville, Clayton must regroup by relatively expediting the teachings to his young squad.

"Right now, we're our own worst enemy," Clayton said. "That's just because of lack of experience and young kids not knowing how fast the game has to be played. So it's getting them to speed up that sense of urgency. I think the more games they play, the slower it will seem, and they won't get as confused or upset."

In addition to Johnson, who collected 69 career passing touchdowns and 5,037 passing yards, leaving him 12 passing TDs and 2,202 yards away from surpassing Deontey Kenner as Hoptown's all-time leading passer, the Tigers also lost fellow senior Shorty Cager, who has chosen to also focus solely on hoops.

Cager was Hopkinsville's leading receiver last season, hauling in 57 catches for 953 yards and 16 TDs. He also rushed for 163 yards and two more scores on the ground. Despite the loss of two significant contributors, Clayton isn't worrying about the void.

"I've always coached with the ideology that you play with what you've got. I'm not going to go out and beg anybody to play," Clayton admitted. "We'll be in the hallways and asking people if they want to come out and give it a shot, but as far as going and begging someone to play, that's not going to happen."

So for Hoptown, which has gone a combined 20-4 the past two seasons, and suffered heartbreaking losses in the second round of the state playoffs, it's all about the progression of sophomore QB Jay Bland, utilization of junior running back JaTorion Dillard and relying heavily on the Tigers' most productive unit: the defense.

"We're very fast on defense and it's going to be hard to get to the corners against us," Clayton said. "I also think

we play pretty good pass defense, so I don't think (teams) will be able to put up a bunch of points against us. And hopefully that's the case, because we're probably not going to score a lot of points early on ourselves.

"We're going to depend on the big plays and use special teams and short fields to have success."

Prior to a season-ending injury that occurred in the regular season finale in 2016, Andrew King racked up nearly 50 tackles and returned both an interception and fumble for a TD. He and JaKevis Bryant anchor a defense that has been one of Class 4A's best during the past two seasons.

During a recent scrimmage against Owensboro (Class 5A) and McCracken County (Class 6A), the Tigers did not surrender a single point, which has caused confidence to swell.

Offensively, Hoptown is progressing in the post-Jalen Johnson era, but Clayton wishes the rules regarding scrimmages were different. During his previous 12 seasons coaching teams in the Volunteer State, Clayton has six scrimmages per year — two in the spring and four in the summer.

"I just wish we had more," Clayton shared. "If I could say one thing right now that Kentucky doesn't do well, it's the number of scrimmages each team gets. When you get (six) scrimmages, you kind of know what you've got coming into those first games of the season. The product, for the first week of the year in Kentucky, is probably not as good as it should be."

Despite the extra time to face real competition, Clayton is encouraged by how Bland is coming along under center.

"Jay Bland has an opportunity to be one of the good ones to come out of here," Clayton said. "I really like his demeanor. We are short at receiver right now and an area that is one of our bigger concerns."

During a few brief appearances in two games during his freshman year in 2016, Bland completed two of his three passes for 17 yards and no touchdowns. He also ran six times for 16 yards, an area Clayton says could be a game changer for his new starting QB.

"He's turned into a pretty good runner and has deceiving speed. He's gets better every day," Clayton said. "The thing I like about Jay — if he makes a mistake, he'll come in after practice and say, 'Can you show me on the board what I did wrong,' or ask how he can improve."

"It's a great to see a sophomore with that desire to want to get better," he continued.



NEW ERA FILE PHOTO

(Above) Hopkinsville High School sophomore Jay Bland has unexpectedly stepped into the role of starting quarterback in 2017. His progress as a deceptive runner and student of the game have the Tigers confident in his ability. (Below) Hoptown junior running back JaTorion Dillard (right) figures to be a massive piece to the Tigers' offense this season, coming off a season in which he rushed for 13 touchdowns and nearly 900 yards.



# HOPKINSVILLE HIGH SCHOOL

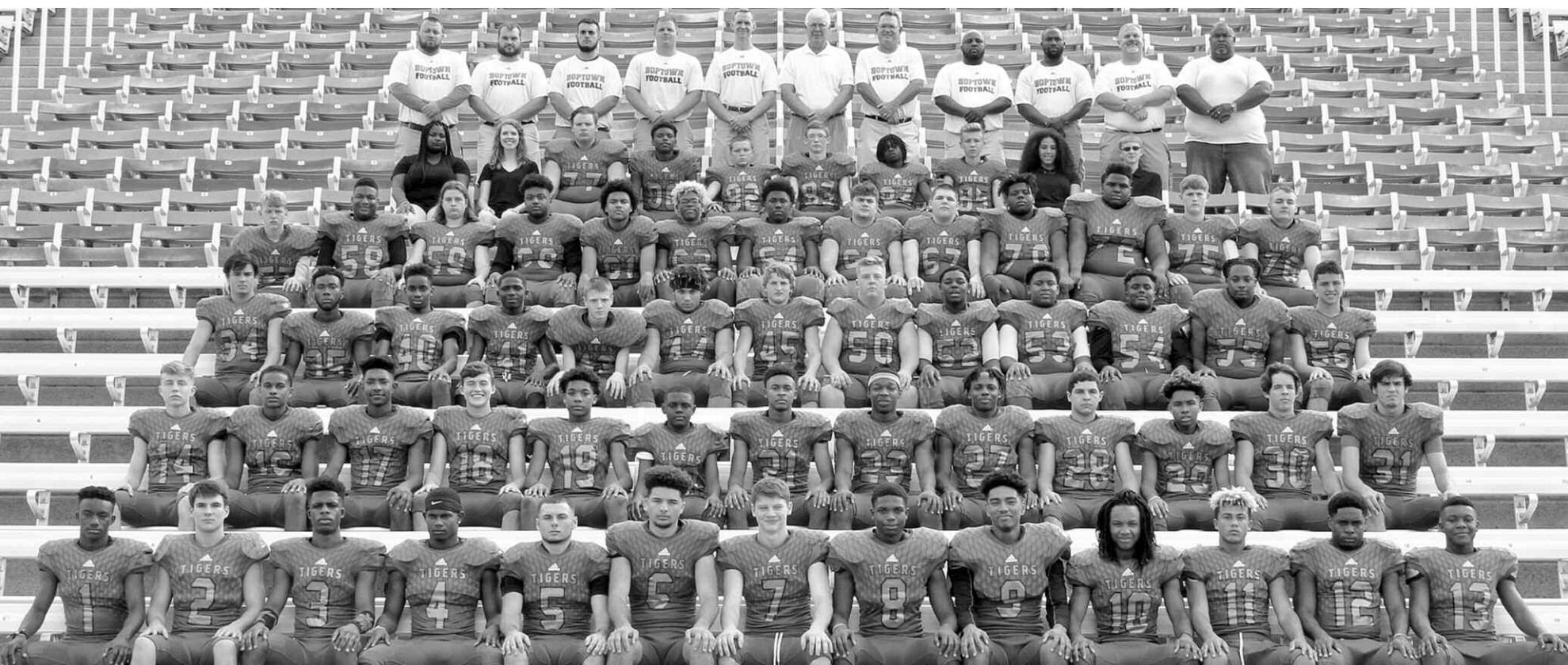


PHOTO COURTESY OF SOUTHERN EXPOSURE

After achieving 10-win seasons and Class 4A, District 1 championships the past two seasons, the Hopkinsville High School football team is looking to replace key offensive contributors under returning coach Craig Clayton.

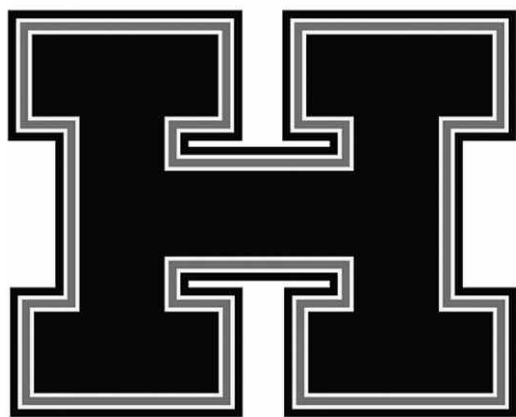
"I also think he has the confidence of his teammates and believes in what he's doing. As he gets better, I can give him more to do. I don't want to overload him too much early."

Dillard is the aforementioned lone returning starter on offense and is the Class 4A, District 1 Player of the Year, according to Cats' Pause magazine. Despite the explosive playmaking from Johnson, Cager and departed senior CJ Henagan last year, Dillard still ran for 827 yards and 13 TDs.

In Clayton's run-heavy scheme, he stands to improve upon those numbers. He also showed an improved ability over the summer to catch the ball out of the backfield. Combined with Bryant and Jordan Hopson, Dillard's presence gives Hopkinsville a solid stable.

"Running back is probably our deepest group on offense," Clayton said. "We're going to run the ball."

The Tigers will learn a lot about their team early in the season. They begin their 2017 slate Friday against South Warren, which eliminated Hoptown



from the postseason a year ago after a goal line interception at the buzzer.

HHS will also take on perennial Class 2A power Mayfield, Caldwell County and crosstown rival Christian County in the annual Braggin' Rights game, all during the first four weeks of the year.

REACH CHRIS JUNG at 270-887-3261 or [cjung@kentuckynewera.com](mailto:cjung@kentuckynewera.com).

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# Rebels seeking momentum after winless campaign

BY TYLER DIXON

NEW ERA ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

Despite an 0-10 record last season and only three wins the year before, the Todd County Central football team is trying to put the past behind them, all while proving to themselves and the community that they belong.

The school celebrated Meet the Rebels night on Aug. 4 and for second-year coach Les Broady, it was the kickoff to the season that his team needed.

"We need all the momentum we can," he said. "After last year, we really don't even bring it up, but that's the thing we need. We need something to get us kick started."

"We need something like this to get the kids thinking about Friday nights, being optimistic about what's going to be taking place and then that way, hopefully they will continue to work hard and do the things that it's going to take for them to be successful."

The Rebels were one of only two teams in Class 2A to go winless last season, joining Shawnee. Broady said as coaches, they have a simple message for their team after their lack of wins.

"Don't give up," he said. "We don't give up on the kids any play, any day, any time. We'll continue to fight and that's how we're going to go and hopefully the kids get into that and that's what they're going to do."

"We've got some kids right now that are mentally tough and practices right now are more mentally tough than they've ever been and for the purpose of we don't want the things that happened last year to happen. That's what we're going to be."

One of the biggest things Broady emphasized during the offseason was his team's size and strength.

He said he knew they were lacking in that area when he was approached after a game by one of his players.

"The whole thing was we had to get tougher, we had to get stronger," he said. "Last year at the end of the season, we had a young man walk off the field and say 'Coach, I just can't do this. I'm too small. You're going to have to get me bigger. Just promise me you'll get me bigger.' When he walked off the field he was 6-foot-1 and weighed right at 155 pounds and had to play defensive end for us. He put on 30 pounds through the winter."

"Across the board, you're going to see 15-30 pound gains across every kid that we have," he said. "They had a good winter. They made some big strides for us. Hopefully that's going to

be the biggest thing you're going to see is that we're bigger. We're still going to have the speed and skill kids that we had last year that maybe this year will learn how to get places instead of just trying to go on their ability. Follow the techniques that will get them where they need to be."

The Rebels return key skill players Asa Young and Nick Tudor on offense, along with some of their top tacklers from last season.

But there will be some position changes to this year's squad.

"Asa is moving from a receiver over to quarterback which is going to play a big role for us and he won't always be quarterback," he said. "We also still have Nick Tudor back who played quarterback for us last year and Nick threw for close to 1,000 yards for us and actually in half of a season."

Tudor said he wants to show the people of Elkton that they're still relevant.

"I want to prove to our community more than anything that we still have a program at Todd County," he said. "Half the people in the community say, 'Todd County's got a football team?'"

One area they can do that is with what they show on the field but another way is showing the same positive mindset off the field.

"I think our attitudes on the field need to change a lot," he said. "Instead of having the mentality of always losing, we need to get a winning mentality back and our attitudes need to get a lot better than they were last year."

The Rebels start their 2017 trek at 7 p.m. Friday at home against Breckinridge County.

Broady said while wins are nice, there's more to football than the scoreboard.

"When the players can look themselves in the face and say that we gave the best we could every single game," he said. "That's when we can be successful. Whether it's wins or losses, six wins, five wins, 10 wins. At the end of the year, did I give my best all year long, every game, every play. If you can't do that then we don't get there and until you get there, as players, at teams, as a community, it can't be about 'me' out there on the field."

"It's got to be about all of us and until it gets to that point, we're never going to be successful. We have to give our best every single play, every single day."

REACH TYLER DIXON at 270-887-3260  
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NEW ERA FILE PHOTO

Todd County Central senior Nick Tudor (10) is back under center in a back-up quarterback role for the Rebels. In 2016, Tudor was 31-of-88 for 418 yards, three touchdowns and 10 interceptions.

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# 1st-year coach Robins seeks return to glory for FCHS

BY JESSE JONES  
THE EAGLE POST

Since winning three straight state titles from 2007-2009, Fort Campbell has struggled to replicate that success, or find much other.

With their last winning season coming in 2012, the Falcons will have their work cut out for them under first year coach Josh Robins, who comes to them from Clarksville Northwest High School, where he was defensive coordinator.

Robins has a little experience with turnarounds. During his tenure at Northwest, the team came to command an all-state level defense after years of floundering and poor records. The team was averaging just 1-2 wins a year when Robins arrived, but had a winning record last season, just the program's fourth since 1983.

The new coach will have a little to build on. The Falcons floundered last season before letting junior Abdel Howard take over the reigns at quarterback.

Howard, now a senior, struggled in his first game as a starter at Region 2 standout Christian County, throwing an interception and rushing for just 17 yards on nine attempts.

He came into his own over the next two weeks, helping Fort Campbell earn its only two wins of the year. Against Fort Knox, Howard completed just 2-of-9 passing attempts, but rushed 123 yards on 12 attempts with a pair of touchdowns in a 42-0 rout.

Against Trigg County the next week, Howard rushed for 161 yards and three touchdowns on just 16 attempts. This time, he also completed half of his passing attempts (6-for-12) and added a passing touchdown.

If the Falcons are to improve on a second consecutive 2-9 season, it's clear





PHOTO SUBMITTED

The Fort Campbell High School football squad begins its new season Friday against Marshall County. While the two opponents have not met in a long time, Fort Campbell hopes to use the matchup as a springboard to improving on last year's 2-9 record.

Howard will need to be the catalyst. Backfield mate Luis Regalado has graduated, so have defensive stalwarts Derian Insani and Ray Vela. Senior Dayton Keeling, who was among the Falcons' best tacklers last year, will step in to help fill those shoes.

The Falcons face an unfamiliar opponent in Week 1, squaring off with Marshall County. The two schools have not played since at least the Kentucky High School Athletic Association began keeping electronic records in 1998.




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# Trigg hoping Cam can as 'Cats aim for playoff return

BY TYLER DIXON  
NEW ERA ASSISTANT SPORTS EDITOR

It has been more than 1,000 days since the Trigg County Wildcats competed in a playoff football game, but up until Friday, coach Coby Lewis wasn't sure who his quarterback was going to be — a pivotal piece in the success of any football team.

Now after scrimmages with Todd County Central and Logan County, the Wildcats have a quarterback and several returning skill players, which makes Lewis and company hope a district championship and a playoff run are in their future.

Trigg County finished 3-7 last year and prior to the 2015 season, the last year the Wildcats didn't participate in the playoffs was in 1999 when now Hopkinsville assistant coach Curtis Higgins was at the helm.

"We got better toward the end of last season," Lewis said. "Actually was in a three-way tie to get into the playoffs and got beat out on the tiebreaker. We've got some older kids that have been with us. These seniors have played three years. The problem we had is a lot of those guys were playing when they were sophomores."

"Last year, we followed it up with some incoming freshmen that were playing too. We're a little bit older but some of our better skill guys are still just sophomores but we are older."

Lewis said it was a three-man race for the quarterback position with Cam Jordan, Riley Stallons and Trevor Lewis.

After his play Friday, Lewis made the decision to give the ball to his sophomore captain and put the football in the hands of Jordan.

Lewis said Jordan played well in the scrimmages despite it being his first varsity action.

Jordan said he feels confident going into the season.

"I feel like we can make a run," he said. "Have a better year than last year. If we keep working and striving every day to be great, like every day in practice, I feel like we can keep moving forward and getting better and better each day. Have a winning season."

Jordan said he's poised and that he's mature enough to lead the team.

There is a lot of pressure for a sophomore QB, but Jordan said it's more of a confidence builder.

"It means a lot actually," he said of Lewis making him a captain. "It means he looks at me as not only one of the best players but as a person, one of those that can lead a team."

Lewis said he's confident with his skill players returning but knows they have one aspect of their game that needs work.

"We feel good with our skill kids, we just really know we're thin up front on the offensive and defensive line so that's where our biggest concern is right now moving forward," he said.

Senior Tyson Bush is one of the players playing on both sides of the ball this year for the Wildcats.

Lewis said Bush has been with them since he was a freshman and will be a pivotal piece going forward.

"Most people want to end up playing college football but I don't want to get too far ahead of myself," Bush said of his final year as a Wildcat. "I just want to enjoy my senior year. I like playing with my friends. I don't want it to go by too fast but unfortunately it does sometimes. I'm just ready to go out there and work as hard as I can."

After Trigg County's Meet the Wildcats night, a player walked up to Lewis and thanked him for everything. He said it was fun being out on the field. Lewis said



NEW ERA FILE PHOTO

Sophomore Cam Jordan throws during a 7-on-7 game over the summer. Following a stellar performance the past month, Jordan was named Trigg County's starting QB, beating out two other players for the job.

playing is the fun part then pointed to the practice field and said, "That's the hard part."

The practice field is what makes football teams. Lewis knows his team needs to get in better shape but said after Meet the Wildcats that it's a process they will continue until the final game of the season, whether that's Oct. 20 or in November for the playoffs.

"We've just got to play hard, fast and physical," he said. "The rest of it should take care of itself. We want to have a winning season of course. We want to compete in our district. We want to make it

into the playoffs; we haven't made the playoff the last two years. Turned it on a little late last year but we want to be in the playoffs. We've been doing championship pushups for seven years; we want to be district champions. That's our goal. We know we're a long way from that right now but we also know they're not giving those away tonight."

The Wildcats start their season in the Scottie Bowl at 5:30 p.m. Friday at Glasgow against Monroe County.

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# TRIGG COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL

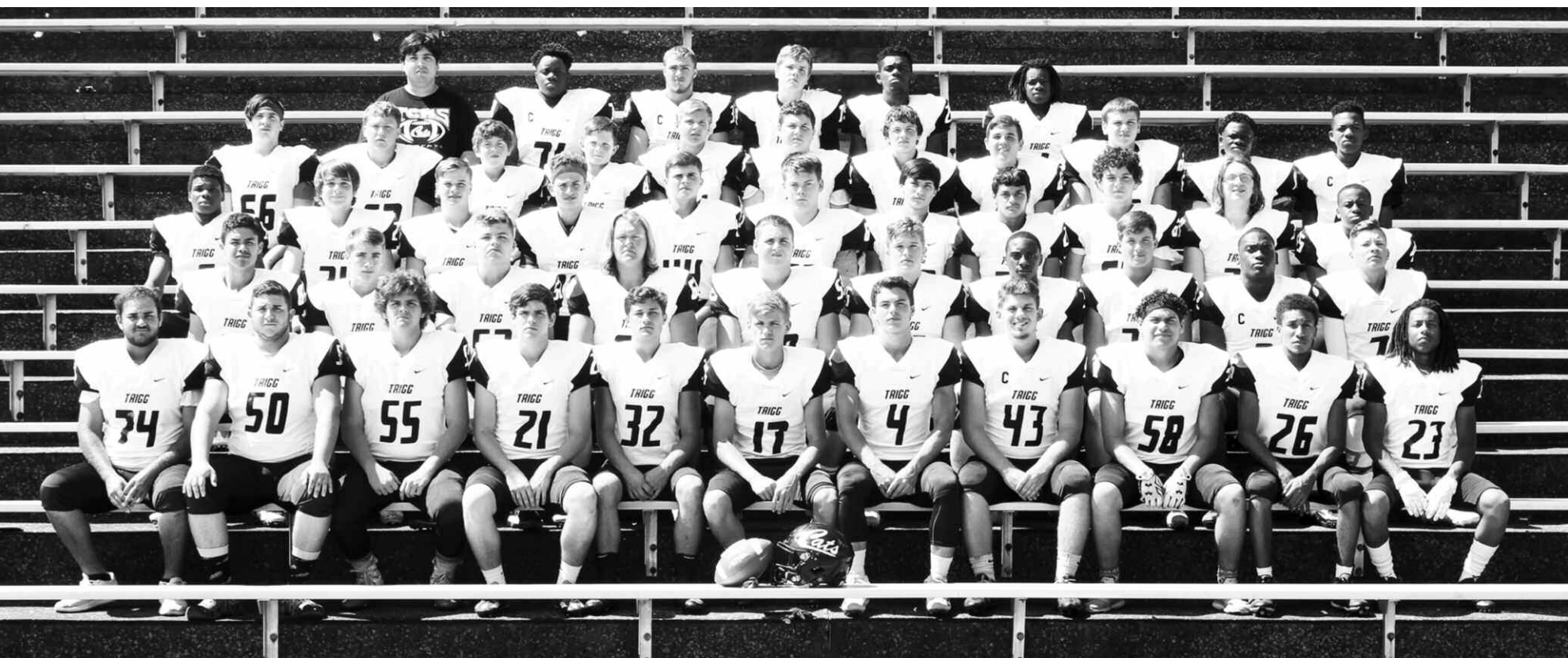


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The Trigg County High School football team is seeking its first playoff appearance in three years. The Wildcats open play Friday against Monroe County in Glasgow's Scottie Bowl.

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**Trigg County Public Schools  
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