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BIG BOY FOOTBALL



Abingdon Falcons

Class 3D, Mtn 7 District

Schedule

Aug. 26	John Battle	A
Sept. 2	Christiansburg	A
Sept. 9	Gate City	H
Sept. 16	Richlands	H
Sept. 23	Tennessee High	H
Sept. 30	Wise County Central	A
Oct. 7	Marion	A
Oct. 21	Ridgeview	H
Oct. 28	Union	A
Nov. 4	Lee High	H

★ Falcons reloaded and looking for more

The Abingdon Falcons have relied on prolific passers and dominant runners to win the Mountain 7 District football title three of the past four years.

Now that those playmakers have advanced to college programs, look for AHS to rely more on the big boys.

"We have talent in the line," AHS

head coach Garrett Amburgey said.

"Those guys are experienced, strong and committed."

Following a 12-2 season that featured a trip to the VHSL Class 3 semifinals, AHS returns four starters each on offense and defense.

The veterans include the offensive

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line cast of senior Dasean Lucas (6-0, 285), junior Noah Gilliam (5-10, 220), senior Kadin Hounshell (6-0, 260) and 6-2, 245 senior center Eli Singleton.

Lucas has started every game since his freshman season, while Hounshell is a three-year starter.

With his massive arms and strength, Lucas usually

attracts double-teams.

“Dasean is a weight room warrior who is dominant up front,” Amburgey said.

“Dasean has attracted some interest from NCAA Division 1

and 2 schools, and I think he can definitely play at the next level.”

The presence of Lucas and company provides a comfort zone for the new group of AHS



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skill players.

Sophomore Lucas Honaker (6-1, 165) is the quarterback, with senior Ector Taylor at tailback and sophomore Isaac Doss (6-2, 225) at fullback.

“Ector hasn’t played football for a couple years, but he’s got the speed and athletic ability to make things happen,” Amburgey said. “All our running backs know that they are fortunate to run behind a line like we have.”

The receivers include senior J.J. Long (6-1, 165) along with sophomores Owen Barr (6-2, 155) and Caden Sheffield (5-10, 155). Freshman Aidan Woods (6-6, 245) at tight end.

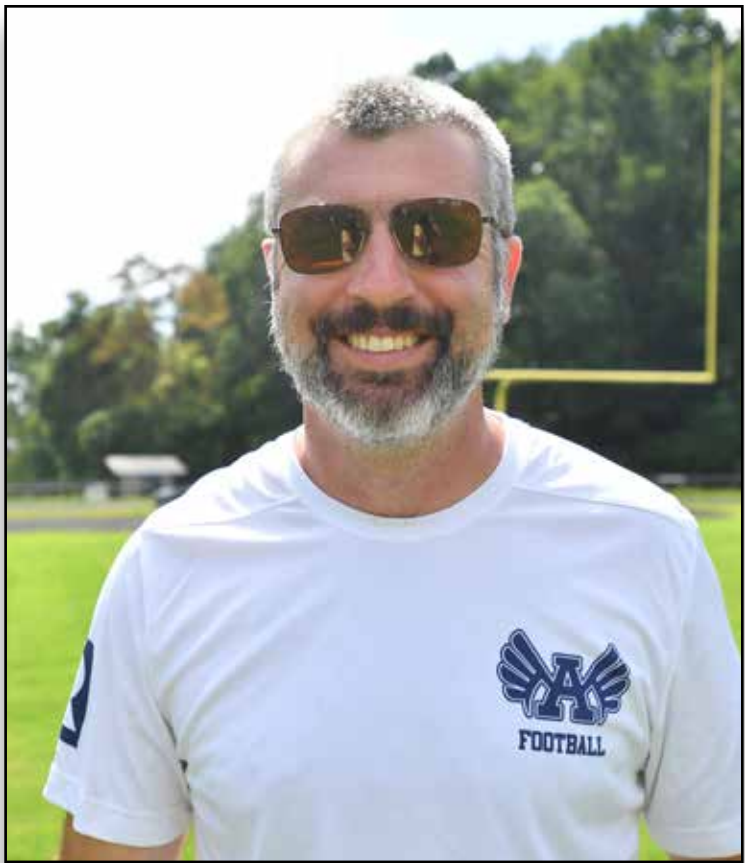
Will Abingdon focus on the do what you need to do when you need to do it.”

Lucas, Singleton and Hounshell also anchor the defensive line, while senior Jack Ferguson (5-11, 175) returns at safety.

“Jack is a smart and physical player who gets our defense in the right places,” Amburgey said. “We have a good duo at safety with Jack and Lucas Honaker.”

Names to watch at linebacker include junior Brayden Self (6-0, 205) and 6-foot, 195-pound sophomore Alex Hawkins.

“We look for big things from Alex. He’s had a terrific preseason camp,” Amburgey



“For us, balance is being able to do what you need to do when you need to do it”

run or pass?

“We have the capability to do both, and that’s what I always want,” Amburgey said. “For us, balance is being able

said.

The Falcons have compiled 21-2 district record the past four seasons behind stars such as quarterback

Cole Lambert, running back Malique Hounshell, receiver Peyton McClanahan and two-way standout Bishop Cook.

Lambert is now in the football program at Emory & Henry after throwing for 1,819 yards and 18 scores last season, while McClanahan

(695 yards receiving, 9 TDs) is at the University of Virginia’s College at Wise and Cook (753 yards rushing) is listed at cornerback at VMI.

Hounshell, who accounted for 1,830 total yards and 26 scores last season, has joined the football program



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Falcons Roster

1 Owen Barr

2 J.J. Long

3 Lucas Honaker

4 Isaac Brooks

5 Brayden Self

6 Baylee Blevins

7 Caden Sheffield

8 Ethan Stanley

10 Alex Hawkins

11 Sullivan Perkins

12 Payton Molinary

14 Cody Bailey

15 Neal Pochyla

16 Max Ferguson

17 Lucas Brooks

18 Oliver Summitt

20 Griffin King

21 Ector Taylor

22 Zach Rasnake

23 Nick Miller

24 Dylan Lee

25 Gage King

27 Hunter Reynolds

28 Landan Taylor

30 Christian Miller

33 Jaylen Perry

38 LJ Ratliff

40 Rohn Lee

41 Noah Miller

42 Tobias Reid

44 Isaac Doss

45 Jack White

46 Tykenevan Thompson

50 Austin Lucas

51 Gage Crabtree

52 Sage Blevins

54 Lucas Droguett

55 Dasean Lucas

56 Alex Lucas

57 Noah Gilliam

58 Joseph Haberkorn

63 Logan Brady

64 Eli Singleton

65 Kadin Hounshell

67 Creed Maness

70 Derek Penley

71 Mason Hale

72 Turner Remine

73 Cole Remine

74 Paul Widener

75 Jacob McDiffett

77 Trevor Turner

78 Landon Fuller

79 Bradley Lunsford

80 Drew Baker

81 Ethan Grubb

82 Will Henley

84 John Berry

85 Cash Hall

87 Colton Allison

88 Aidan Woods

at the University of the
Cumberlands in Williamsburg,
Kentucky.

"We graduated a really good
group of seniors," Amburgey
said. "We won a lot of games
with those guys, and we're
excited to see them compete
at the next level."

The roster, which expanded
by 15 since last season,
includes just nine seniors.

Amburgey said he's
intrigued by the potential
of one of the youngest AHS
teams in recent years.

"This is an interesting group
that will be fun to coach and
watch as the season goes
along," Amburgey said. "And
it's always good to see more
players come out. We've had
some success and guys want
to be part of that."

According to Amburgey, the
bottom line of his program
never changes.

"Everybody talks about
culture in sports, but it's a
daily thing with us from how
we work to how we interact,"
Amburgey said. "Our guys
know the standard here. We
practice hard, play hard and
have fun."

The playmakers may be new

at Falcon Stadium, but the
standard remains.

"We've had success, but
we're not living off that,"
Amburgey said. "These guys
have had a good off-season
and they are eager to write
their own story." ★

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★ *Castlewood fortunes to be determined by senior leaders*

Bubba Edwards was hired as Castlewood High School’s head football coach in June and it didn’t take the new guy long to realize seniors Brad Steffey and Kaden Lasley were going to be his team’s cornerstones.

“Steffey and Lasley’s leadership carried us through the offseason,” Edwards said. “The month of July it was about Lasley and Steffey showing everybody how to work.”

Edwards has put the dynamic duo in different positions on the offensive side of the ball and they will be counted on to play a big role in those new roles as Castlewood seeks to improve on last season’s 2-7 showing.

The 6-foot-2, 190-pound Steffey spent time on the offensive line and got some

carries out of the backfield last season for the Blue Devils. He will be used at wide receiver this year.

“I’ve been all over the place,” Steffey said. “But I’m just doing whatever’s good for the team.”

There’s a reason for his versatility.

“He’s a stud athlete,” Edwards said.

Lasley (6-1, 210) makes the move from guard on the offensive line – where he was a second-team All-Cumberland District pick – to tailback.

How did those guys take news of the move?

“They were tickled pink,” Edwards said.

Edwards will run the spread offense, a drastic change from the single-wing look implemented by his predecessor, Chris



**Castlewood
Blue Devils**

**Class 1D,
Cumberland District**

Schedule

Aug. 26	North Greene, TN	A
Sept. 2	Honaker	H
Sept. 9	Thomas Walker	A
Sept. 16	Grundy	H
Sept. 23	Rye Cove	H
Sept. 30	Bland County	A
Oct. 7	Twin Springs	A
Oct. 14	Lebanon	A
Oct. 21	J.I. Burton	H
Nov. 4	Eastside	H



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2022 CASTLEWOOD BLUE DEVILS



Blue Devils Roster

1 Jimmy Shouse
2 Luke Cress
3 Xavier Sanders
4 Ely King
5 Sam Gibson
6 Slade Castle

7 Brad Steffey
8 Brayden Houchins
9 Cayden Dishman
10 Forrest McConnell
11 Caden Ruff
21 Kaden Lasley
22 Seth Sifford

24 Kenneth Godsey
26 Ethan Meade
30 Austin Kiser
50 Gabe Jones
52 Kaleb Taylor
53 Eli Long
55 Brad Ramey

58 Will Musick
60 Weston Stout
62 Trey Hamm
65 Jacob Young
75 Rolan Painter
76 Ryan Miner
77 Joe Dotson

Lark.

Newcomer Forrest McConnell will be the maestro at quarterback with Steffey, Jimmy Shouse and Cayden Dishman figuring to catch their share of passes.

Slade Castle was an honorable mention all-district running back last season as well and is back in the fold.

"The strength is our athletes on the edges," Edwards said.

Sam Gibson is also a solid kicker for the Blue Devils and will lead the way on special teams.

Steffey and Lasley will anchor the defense from their outside linebacker spots as well. Sophomore linebacker Kaleb Taylor is proven on that side of the ball too.

Castlewood is thin on both the offensive and defensive lines and that is the biggest

concern. Senior Joe Dotson, senior Rolan Painter, sophomore Gabe Jones and junior Cayden Dishman will battle in the trenches for the Blue Devils.

Edwards is a 1997 graduate of now-defunct Haysi High School and played football at the University of Virginia's College at Wise.

He previously had assistant-coaching gigs at Haysi, South Lakes, C.D. Hylton and Ridgeview. This is the first head-coaching job for Edwards.

"He really cares about us and cares about the program and I think it will be really good for us having him around," Steffey said. "We have a better connection this year. Last year we were trying to teach some of the freshmen who had never played football how to play



football. We did what we could with it and now they are sophomores and have gotten better."

Edwards is optimistic when it comes to his first year on the job.

"If you ask us how many

wins we're going to have, I have no clue," Edwards said. "But what I do know is we're getting better every day." ★

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DOUBLE TROUBLE



Chilhowie Warriors

**Class 1D,
Hogoheegee District**

Schedule

Aug. 26	Marion	A
Sept. 2	J.I. Burton	H
Sept. 9	Narrows	H
Sept. 16	Lebanon	A
Sept. 23	Northwood	H
Sept. 30	Honaker	A
Oct. 14	Rural Retreat	A
Oct. 21	Virginia High	H
Oct. 28	Patrick Henry	H
Nov. 4	Holston	A

★ Warriors plan to ride experienced linemen to success

Those linemen battling in the trenches this fall against the Chilhowie Warriors might think they are seeing double.

That's because twin brothers Conner Castle and Cayden Castle are among the best two-way linemen in Southwest Virginia and cause plenty of problems for the opposition.

"I'm looking for big things from them," said Chilhowie coach Jeff Robinson.

The 6-foot-3, 210-pound Conner Castle and 6-foot-1, 195-pound Cayden Castle – both juniors – will hold down the guard spots on the O-Line as well as delivering bone-crunching hits as defensive ends.

Center Aemon Cress (5-6, 285, sr.), offensive tackle Caleb Delp (6-2, 200, sr.), offensive tackle/defensive tackle Greg Fullen (6-0, 245, jr.), defensive tackle Bransen Gwinn (6-2, 275, soph.),

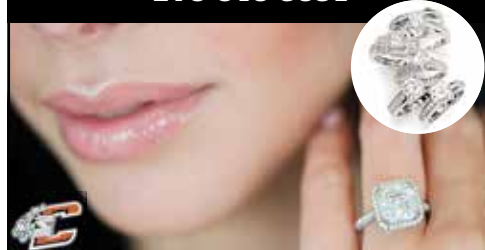
Nate Hahn (5-10, 280, soph.) and Aiden Hoagland (6-0, 315, sr.) provide strength and size of their own up front.

"We're going to have to ride our line,"



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2022 CHILHOWIE WARRIORS



Warriors Roster

1 Landon Hall

2 Noah Hill

3 Jake Russell

4 Justin Gonzalez

6 Rylan Williams

7 Ezra Taylor

9 Marcos Silverio

10 Asher Chapman

11 Nolan Blevins

12 Kevin Crewey

13 Drake Grinstead

20 Chris George

21 Brandon Miller

22 Ian Sturgill

23 Dylan Stevenson

25 Blake Robinson

27 Shane Farris

30 Derrick McGee

31 Colton Gentry

33 Talan Poe

34 J.T. Moore

42 Jordan Crisanto

44 Dawson Tuell

53 Keegan Ashby

54 Nate Hahn

55 Cayden Castle

56 Conner Castle

57 Aiden Hogland

59 Greg Fullen

60 Bransen Gwinn

62 Nate Taylor

64 Luke Montgomery

65 Aemon Cress

66 Caleb Delp

68 Christian Ford

74 Jaxson Poe

75 Aiden Broughman

77 Bodie Miller

80 Daniel Hutton

81 Martin Widener

84 Drew Mabe

Robinson said. "That's where our most experience is and the strongest part of our team."

There are question marks when it comes to the rest of Chilhowie's roster. "A lot of inexperience,"

Robinson said. "We lost six seniors, but they were six two-way starters who had experience."

Marcos Silverio is the top returning rusher and is proven at outside linebacker as well. Kevin Crewey returns at

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linebacker for the Warriors and will also begin the season as the No. 1 quarterback. He might be the team's most versatile player.

"We're going to do a lot of different things with him," Robinson said. "He's our best offensive player and we'll try to get him the ball in a lot of different ways. He'll line up behind center some, we'll hand it to him some and we'll throw it to him some."

Linebacker/fullback Chris George, running back/wide receiver/safety Ian Sturgill, tight end Daniel Hutton, wide receiver Rylan Williams, safety/running back Ezra Taylor, cornerback Dylan Stevenson and defensive back Drake Grinstead are other names to watch.

Sturgill and freshman Asher Chapman will get snaps at QB along with Crewey.

"Depth-wise, we've got a lot of good young talent, but they're not quite ready for Friday night," Robinson said. "They may have to be,



“ We lost six seniors, but they were six two-way starters who had experience.”

if we have some injuries or whatnot. I'm hoping we can get those guys some JV experience before we throw them into the fire."

Chilhowie will be tested by a tough schedule. The Warriors also played contenders Grundy and Tazewell in the

preseason to go along with that tough 10-team docket.

"It seems like everybody on our schedule is a little bit better than they normally are if you look at it," Robinson said. ★





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Sat., October 29

vs. Carson-Newman @ 1 p.m.

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INDIAN UPRISING



Dobyns-Bennett Indians

**Class 6A, Big East
Conference**

Schedule

Aug. 19	Tennessee High	H
Aug. 26	Volunteer	A
Sept. 2	Morristown East	H
Sept. 9	David Crockett	A
Sept. 16	West Ridge	A
Sept. 23	Greeneville	H
Sept. 30	Jefferson County	A
Oct. 14	William Blount	H
Oct. 21	Oak Ridge	H
Oct. 28	Science Hill	A

★ *Finishing strong is the plan for Dobyns-Bennett*

It's been said that it's not how your team starts, but how you finish. That wasn't a good thing last season for Dobyns-Bennett, which started 5-0, but only won twice more to finish with a 7-4 record and a first-round playoff exit. Dobyns-Bennett head coach Joey Christian felt the issue was injuries and the more difficult late schedule, but is certainly looking for a better finish this season.

"I don't know how motivated [kids] are by that. I think their motivation typically just comes from positive things and they just want to do better for themselves," Christian said. "They just want to do better for the team and whatever they

can do to make the team better."

The combination of better athletes and more experience is expected to pay dividends for the Indians, who have 812 wins in school history, the second most in Tennessee behind Maryville and among the top 40 programs in the nation.

"Last year we didn't have much experience and this year we do have some guys, especially at our skill positions, that have played and on the line that have played," said Christian, who said that his current senior class went 1-15 in middle school. "We have got experience up and down the roster within that senior class so that is a good



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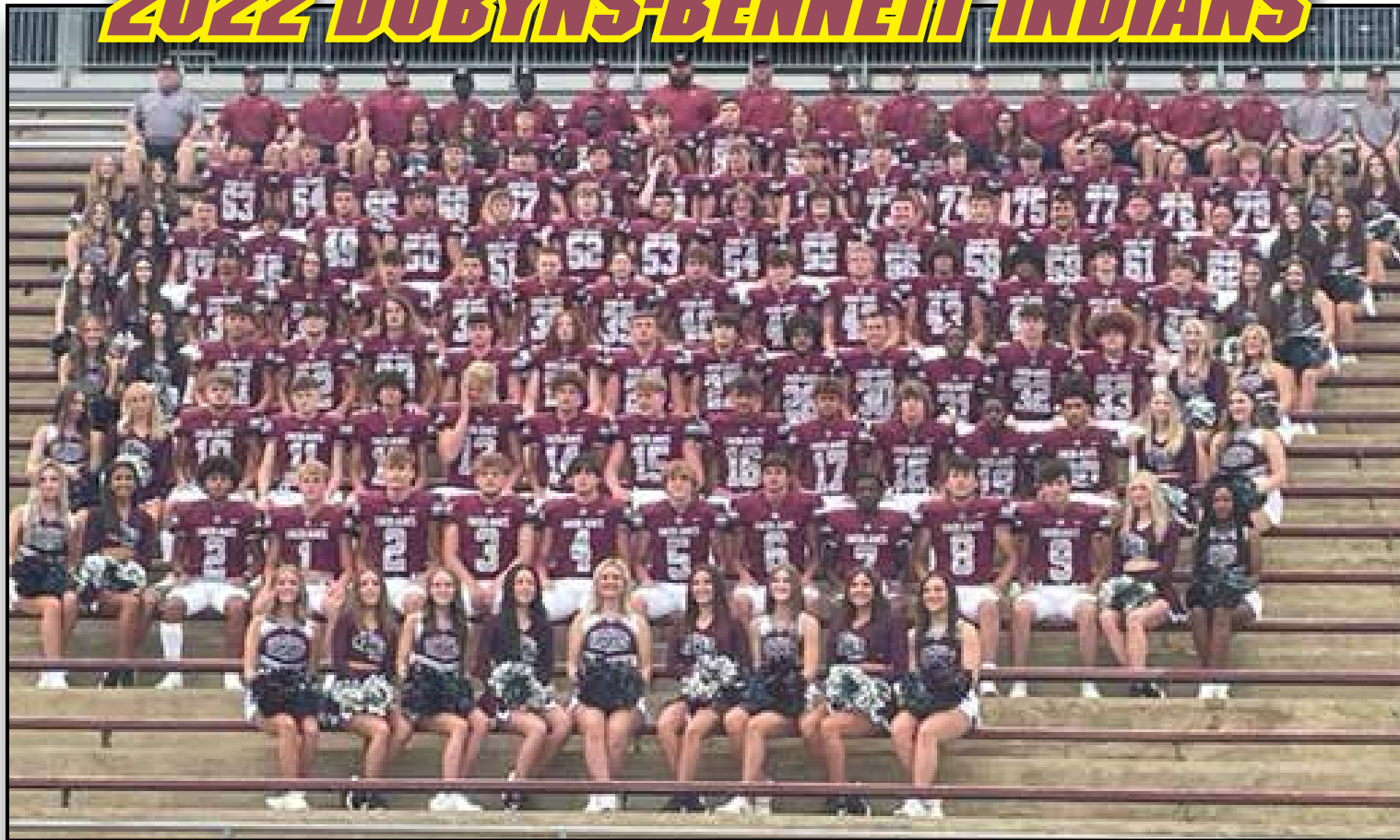


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2022 DOBYNS-BENNETT INDIANS



thing, but I don't want the program to get where we are just staggering.

"We have got experience and then we are don't, and it looks like an EKG. We want it to always be plateauing at a very high level. Very excited about this senior class and where they have come from."

Christian would rather not use a two-quarterback system, but was pleased with last year's contributions from senior returnees, pocket passer Jake Carson and dual threat Noah Blankenship, a transfer from Abingdon.

"I know the old adage," he said. "If you got two you don't have one, but we have got two and I am happy about that."

Among the weapons to exploit are senior receivers Jonavan Gillespie, who had 11 touchdowns out of 40 catches

last season, and speedy Hayden Russell, who runs a 4.41 40-yard dash. Christian would like to have two primary backs, but currently has six vying for playing time, including two-time state hurdles qualifier Brayden Simpson.

There is experience on the offense line, led by Christian's son, Carson, who starts at center, along with returnees Cardin McVey, Braylon Banks and John Teboe. Four players are working at tight end, including Keldon Mullins and Brody Dunford.

Former Dobyns-Bennett standout and Tennessee national champion Teddy Gaines has taken over the defense for the Indians. Leading the way is linebacker Branson Carswell, who led the club in tackles last season.

"He is one of those guys that I always say the football finds him, it just does," Christian said. "He has just got it. He just has this knack. He has gotten stronger and he has gotten faster."

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2022 DOBYNS-BENNETT INDIANS

Indians Roster		21	Eli Wallace	43	Brady Parks	67	Gabe Throp
0	Jonavan Gillespie	22	Peyton Franklin	44	Maliki Starnes	68	Jake Pritchard
1	Cannon Mullins	23	Colt Wynegar	45	Nathan O'Neil	69	Christian Oaks
2	Hayden Russell	24	Andrew Myers	46	Devin Skeens	70	Will Ford
3	Peyton Brooks	25	Keldan Mullins	47	Noah Bucchi	71	Chris Kilgore
4	Branson Carswell	26	Cooper Martin	48	Noah Coclough	73	Sam Browder
5	George Evans	27	Weston Cordell	49	Jimmy Taylor	74	Trent Benedict
6	Noah Blankenship	28	Xavian Medina	50	Carson Christian	75	Eli Smith
7	Dakari Dixon	29	Tray Windham	51	Cardin McVey	77	John Tebow
8	Ethan Dietrich	30	Brayden Simpson	52	Ryder Brown	78	Eli Depew
9	Will Hurd	31	Damonte Alexander	53	Braylon Banks	79	Tyler Grizzle
10	Nick Trent	32	Brody Dunford	54	Preston Holmes	80	Rome Pruitt
11	Tony Simpson	33	Jai' Carnes	55	Gavin Commerford	81	Kosiah Steele
12	Mason Kerkhoff	34	Abrahm Graves	56	Jacob Issacs	82	Peyton Newman
13	Jake Carson	35	Devin Murdock	58	Nicholas McVey	83	Haden Burleson
14	Jackson Jones	36	Hayden Jobe	59	Juan Camacho	84	Caleb Steach
15	Kaden Kulbacki	37	Ethan Cline	61	Luke Cox	86	Cooper Reed
16	Grayton Manning	38	Gabe Marshall	62	Javon Graves	87	Jeramy Templeton
17	Kamarion Marshall	39	Dylan Murray	63	Howard Siddons	88	James Thompson
18	Dusten Freeman	40	Justin Hale	64	Christopher Harris	89	Tylen Taylor
19	Javonte Alexander	41	Paker DeFord	65	Sam Hyatt		
20	Nigel Vidale	42	Titan Thomas	66	Collin Shell		

other positions, including Eli Smith, Banks, McVey and possibly freshman Tyler Grizzle at tackles, with Chris Harris and Sam Browder on the ends. Running back candidates Peyton Brooks, Eli Wallace and Peyton Franklin will compete for spots at linebacker, while the secondary will include Nigel Vidale, Dakari Dixon, Gillespie, Russell and transfers Tylen Taylor and Abrahm Graves.

Special teams should be strong with Titan Thomas at kicker and punter Grayton Manning, with speedy return options including Gillespie, Russell and Dixon. Gillespie was the point guard for the Indians' state championship basketball team last year.

"One out of every five plays in a high school football game is a special teams play," Christian said. "We have got to continue to get better at that and we have to do better in our coverage in punt and kickoff. There have been three

kickoffs in the last three years that have hurt us so we have to shore up that for sure."

Dobyns-Bennett, which opens its season on Aug. 19 by hosting Tennessee High, is expected to compete for the top in the six-team Big East, with Christian looking at Science Hill and Jefferson County as the favorites in the 6A league.

"We have got to get better, we have got to learn our stuff," he said. "We have got to get better at every position group. We are not where we need to be by no stretch of the imagination. There are some positions that we are better than we are at others.

"It is just a process... We are focusing on Dobyns-Bennett. You have got a chance to go out and play. We are going to play the ones who give us the best chance to win. We have just got to get better every day. We are better right now than we were last year." ★



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Under the Lights | 23

JAXSYN IN CHARGE



Eastside Spartans

**Class 1D,
Cumberland District**



★ *Quarterback Collins to lead young Spartans*

Eastside's aerial attack has been cleared for takeoff with Jaxsyn Collins once again playing the role of top gun.

The 6-foot-2, 175-pound senior signal-caller is in his second season under center for the Spartans and will look to build on last season's impressive showing when he threw for 1,636 yards.

"Jaxsyn's a smart kid and is able to read things," said Eastside coach Mike Rhodes. "That year under his belt really helped him. He made a few mistakes and had some growing pains, but he showed some signs of what he really can be. He has a chance to be really special."

Collins threw 18 touchdown passes and also rushed for three scores in what was his first season playing quarterback.

"Just learning to play quarterback was the biggest thing," Collins said. "It took

me a few games to get used to it, but this year I'm ready to throw the ball and run the ball."

What makes Collins unique?

"Lefty," said Eastside senior wide receiver Eli McCoy. "It throws you off at first and it takes some getting used to."

McCoy (6-5, 210) is the only other returning starter on offense for the Spartans and figures to be one of Southwest Virginia's top receivers.

He's already one of Region 1D's elite athletes as he stars in baseball and basketball as well.

"He's a really good athlete," Collins said. "He's a go up and get it guy."

Cobe Collins (6-0, 170, sr.), Cole Mullins (6-4, 175, sr.) and Shawn Mullins (6-1, 205, sr.) will also be pass-catching threats for the Spartans.

The void left by the graduation of

Schedule

Aug. 26	Wise County Central	A
Sept. 1	Lee High	H
Sept. 9	Lebanon	H
Sept. 16	Honaker	A
Sept. 23	Holston	H
Sept. 30	J.I. Burton	H
Oct. 7	Rye Cove	A
Oct. 14	Twin Springs	H
Oct. 21	Thomas Walker	A
Nov. 4	Castlewood	A



2022 EASTSIDE SPARTANS



rugged running back Adam Hill's 1,241 rushing yards and 19 TDs must be filled as sophomore Dayton Stanley, senior Evan Mullins and junior Clay Ward will get carries. "[Hill] is tough to replace and I'm not sure you can replace it," Rhodes said. "We'll go with running back by committee until one of them has a breakout."

Luke McConnell (5-10, 240)

will anchor the offensive line and is the only senior starter in the trenches. "We're relying on him right now," Rhodes said. "Our line will be the biggest key." Three starters return on defense: Jaxsyn Collins at defensive back, Cobe Collins in the secondary and Dayton Stanley at linebacker.

"Jaxsyn's our quarterback on offense and defense,"

Rhodes said. "We rely on him to keep everybody in line." Inside linebackers Chase Carico (5-10, 180, jr.) and Evan Mullins (6-1, 190, sr.) are other names to watch. Eastside has just two freshmen on the roster and 10 seniors. There are a lot of sophomores and juniors being counted on to step in and step up.

Eastside also plenty of

motivation. The Spartans are looking to redeem themselves of a tough stretch run from 2021 that saw the team lose three of their last four games, including a first-round Region 1D playoff contest to rival Twin Springs. "We're pretty young," Jaxsyn Collins said. "But we're ready to go." ★

Spartans Roster			
1 Cole Mullins	9 Gabe Raymond	27 Noah Barnette	58 Colton Yates
2 Peyton Adkins	10 Cobe Collins	32 Aaron DeRamus	59 Luke McConnell
3 Chris Steele	11 Landon Diets	44 Shawn Mullins	60 Ethan Cloud
4 Nick Ward	13 Jonathon Elliott	50 Brycen Christian	61 Isaac Hicks
5 Eli McCoy	15 Ben Elswick	51 Noah Morgan	67 Wyatt Kennedy
6 Dayton Stanley	16 Clay Ward	52 Andrew Sargent	70 Isaiah Watts
6 Evan Mullins	20 Christian Slagle	54 Dalton Phillips	74 Tony Underwood
8 Jaxsyn Collins	21 Chase Carico	55 Dylan Luther	75 Christian Bolling
	22 Luke Trent	56 Reagan Wood	77 Jake Dutton

BUILD BACK BETTER



Gate City Blue Devils

Class 2D, Mtn 7 District



★ *Gate City working toward first winning season since 2014*

Schedule

Aug. 26	Richlands	H
Sept. 2	Radford	A
Sept. 9	Abingdon	A
Sept. 16	Marion	A
Sept. 23	Union	H
Sept. 30	Lebanon	H
Oct. 14	Lee High	A
Oct. 21	John Battle	H
Oct. 28	Wise County Central	A
Nov. 4	Ridgeview	H

The numbers are up for the Gate City Blue Devils football team, but the bottom line remains.

"We weren't very good on defense last year and we're trying to get better," GC coach Jeremy Houseright said.

The inability to stop other teams is a big season why Gate City has not posted a winning record since 2014.

Gate City (4-6, 2-4) allowed 30 points per game last season and failed to make the playoffs following a 48-7 loss to Ridgeview in week 10.

"We had good kids who worked hard, but we gave up a bunch of yards and points," Houseright said. "I did a terrible job getting those guys ready. That was totally on me."

There is good news.

After just 31 players attended media day last year at Legion

Field, Houseright and his coaching staff were working with a roster of 60 when practice began for this season.

The Gate City youth football league is also flourishing with both flag and tackle programs.

"That's a good sign," Houseright said. "We just have to keep working to build things back."

The other point of emphasis is replacing Carson Jenkins. The versatile speedster, signed to play at William & Mary, accounted for 110 points and 1,243 yards rushing last year.

A total of 14 seniors are on the roster, including proven talents in junior quarterback Luke Bledsoe and senior running back Ethan Fleming.

Houseright declined to list the names of potential starters during his media day interview.



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2022 GATE CITY BLUE DEVILS



Blue Devil Roster

1 Gabe Johnson

3 Eli McMurray

4 Elijah Hurd

6 Landen McDonald

7 Bryson Bailey

8 Luke Bledsoe

10 Walker Hillman

11 Layton Barnett

12 Jacob Taylor

13 Bryson Smith

14 Tanner Fleming

15 Malachi Carrico

20 Brady Miller

21 Sam Casteel

22 Keven Hall

23 Brendan Cassidy

24 Ethan Fleming

25 Malachi Kern

28 Keegan Light

30 Carter Derting

31 Bryon Williams

32 Ethan McConnell

33 Jude Crawford

34 Gabe Babb

35 Corey Byrd

40 Aiden Hartsock

41 Mason Hickman

42 Noah Clifton

43 Zach Depriest

44 Trent Williams

45 John Little

50 Devon Clark

51 Gavin Stubblefield

52 Harper Dorton

53 Connor Darnell

54 Brett Baker

55 Jacob Bowman

56 David Doran

57 Avery Flanary

58 Jacob Austin

59 Cyrus Gibson

61 Hunter Lawson

62 Logan Cassidy

63 Caden Fields

64 Aiden Freeman

65 Nathaniel Gilliam

66 Domenic Collins

67 Mario Atkins

68 Connor McDavid

69 Hayden Frazier

72 Wyatt Hall

73 Nick Youmans

74 Nathaniel Wells

75 Kaidyn Brown

76 Isaiah Watts

77 Cameron Dolan

78 Nathaniel Sloan

82 Blayne Way

83 Hunter Gillenwater

88 Jotham Gardner

"We're still trying to find out who we are and who is going to be able to help us," Houseright said. "The kids worked hard all summer and the effort in the weight room has been awesome. Now, we just need to build on that."

Junior receiver Landen McDonald will be in the mix after collecting five touchdowns in 2021.

"We've got several kids who have ability," Houseright said. "We're looking at a running back by committee where we can keep everybody fresh."

That search and discovery system also applies to the defense.

"From day one, we told the kids nobody has a starting job. They've got to earn it in practice," Houseright said. "Right now, I couldn't tell you who is going to be starting where."

Following a 63-39 loss to Abingdon at midseason last year, GC improved to 4-4 with Mountain 7 District wins against Lee High and John Battle. Jenkins, Fleming and Brady Edwards provided the spark in those victories.

Playoff hopes then faded as the Blue Devils were outscored by a combined margin of 76-7 in setbacks to Wise County Central and

Ridgeview.

"We've got to be more consistent, in practice and games," Houseright said. "You can't look good one Friday and then lay an egg the following week."

According to Houseright, the key to consistency starts with the basics.

"We're teaching the little things and trying to master that," Houseright said.

The strength of the team can be traced to the senior-based offensive line corps.

"We've got most of those guys back and they know what to do," Houseright said. "We have some size and strength

along with some juniors that haven't played football in a couple years. We're looking to set a starting group and then add depth."

That bottom line need for defense yielded some encouraging results on the morning of the GC media day session.

"We had 11 kids flying toward the football on each play," Houseright said. "We're still trying to put the pieces together on defense, but that kind of effort is a good starting point."★

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★ Veteran cast has Maroons optimistic for season

There will be lots of familiar faces at George Wythe in the season ahead.

That is good news for the Maroons.

"We have everybody back except one kid that started last year for us. We are expecting big things from those kids," George Wythe head coach Brandon Harner said. "We have been young for a while. If we can stay healthy I think we are going to be a pretty good football team."

Leading the way are nine seniors, including talented running back and linebacker Leyton Fowler and the twin duo of quarterback Luke

Jollay and Ben Jollay, who joins Fowler in the backfield and on defense.

"I think [Luke] is the best quarterback in our whole district honestly," Fowler said. "He can run, he can pass, he can do about anything. He can take a hit and hit people. I think he is the best one in our district."

Jollay missed the COVID season in 2021 with a pulled pectoral muscle, but did play well last season and Harner expects more of the same.

"Really his first year was last year for us as a junior so he is a lot more comfortable this year," Harner said. "We are expecting him to really

step up for us."

Jollay will be joined in the backfield by Fowler, Ben Jollay and Laden Houston, while Tandom Smith, Brayden Rainey and Austin Repass will catch footballs in what Harner plans on being a balanced attack of run and pass.

"We do both. We are mixed. I don't like to be one way or the other," Harner said. "I like to be 50/50 as much as possible, but we are going to



George Wythe Maroons

Class 1D, Mtn Empire District

Schedule

Aug. 26	Radford	H
Sept. 2	Fort Chiswell	H
Sept. 9	Giles	A
Sept. 16	Carroll County	A
Sept. 23	Rural Retreat	A
Sept. 30	Graham	A
Oct. 14	Galax	A
Oct. 21	Bland County	A
Oct. 28	Grayson County	H
Nov. 4	Auburn	H

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2022 GEORGE WYTHE MAROONS



Maroon Roster

1. Laden Houston	8. Holden Luttrell	25. Trenton Hall	57. Zach Neal
2. Luke Jollay	9. Kaiden Irby	27. Thomas Jones	60. Johnny Hoback
3. Brayden Rainey	10. Leyton Fowler	50. Hollis Rigney	66. Xayden Brown
4. Joey Hatfield	11. Austin Repass	51. Gunner Gray	68. Owen Repass
5. Landon Bennett	12. Caleb Campbell	52. Kyle Stephens	70. Alex Murrell
6. Ben Jollay	13. J'mere Rivens	53. Colton Green	71. Brock Ayers
7. Brady Walters	15. Tandom Smith	54. Samuel Kichline	75. Nick Crockett
	19. Seth Ortiz	55. Dylan Sisk	
	23. Camden Skeens	56. Trey Sparks	

do whatever it takes to win a football game. If we have got to run it 80 times, we will run it 80 times. If have to throw it 80 times, we will throw it 80 times."

Colton Green is the leader of an experienced offensive line that will also include fellow seniors Owen Repass and Zach Neal, along with 295-pound Brock Ayers and Dillon Sisk.

"We have got all those kids back except one," Harner said. "The five-day camps that we just finished up, you can already tell it is a huge improvement from last year just knowing what to do and knowing the calls. That should be a major improvement. It has got to be a major improvement for us for us to be successful."

Eliminate a few issues and Harner expects the Maroons to be able to put points on the board against a difficult slate that includes non-conference foes Radford, Giles and Graham, along with fellow Mountain Empire District clubs like three-time Class 1 state runner-up Galax and county rival Fort Chiswell.

"We have a good group. Last year what hurt us was just a lot of mistakes," Harner said. "We put ourselves in bad positions with fumbling the football or getting penalties when you don't need penalties. If we can get that cleaned up we shouldn't have too much of a problem being able to score some points"

Defensively, the Maroons will be led at linebacker by Fowler, Smith, the Jollay

brothers and Houston. The secondary returns intact, while Green leads a veteran interior line.

"Last year I thought most of the time we actually played pretty good defense," Harner said. "I really think that linebacking corps is really good, I really do. Those four guys, most of them have been playing since they were freshmen and sophomores so this year they should know exactly what to do. Secondary, I have got all those kids back too. I think we should be pretty stout all around if we stay healthy."

Young players like sophomore Hollis Rigney and freshman Camden Skeens will be given the opportunity to provide depth.

"You have got to have that

because most of our kids are going to be playing both ways," Harner said. "We are going to be ironman football this year with that so that is why we are depending on a lot of these younger kids to be able to step in on every special team and give them some breaks throughout the game."

Staying healthy is key for every team, but especially at a small school with limited numbers.

"That is everybody now in today's game. It is just trying to remain healthy," Harner said. "There is a big difference. If you lose one of your top guys, that can change the whole dynamic of the team. It is just remaining healthy and getting after it and having fun."★



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Under the Lights | 31



Grundy Golden Wave

Class 1D, Black Diamond District

Schedule

Aug. 26	Patrick Henry	A
Sept. 2	Ridgeview	H
Sept. 16	Castlewood	A
Sept. 23	Honaker	H
Sept. 30	Tazewell	H
Oct. 7	Bland County	H
Oct. 14	J.I. Burton	A
Oct. 21	Hurley	H
Oct. 28	Twin Valley	H
Nov. 4	Wise County Central	A

★ Experienced Golden Wave eyeing deep postseason run

Many are pegging the Grundy Golden Wave as the favorites to win the VHSL Region 1D football championship in 2022.

The team's starting lineup is almost entirely intact from a year ago with three guys who were first-team all-regional honorees back in the fold.

Grundy also has postseason experience,

if they want to take that next step."

Not only does Grundy figure to have one of the area's better teams this season, the Golden Wave unequivocally boast one of the top running backs in Southwest Virginia in 5-foot-11, 200-pound senior Ian Scammell.

Scammell rushed for more than 2,000 yards last season and included in that stellar

backfield – they take pride in what he does and they feed off him."

Scammell is as humble as he is hard to tackle.

"A lot of people are talking good about us, but we're not thinking about all that," Scammell said.

"Slow and steady, we're working hard so we can live up to those expectations. Everybody on this team has experience."

Center Cameron Keene (5-11, 220, sr.) is as reliable as they come and was a first-team All-Region 1D pick last season, while Logan Looney (6-4, 300, sr.) earned all-regional honors on both sides of the line.

Jacob Deel (5-9, 280, sr.) and Parker Snead (5-11, 200, sr.) at guards with Looney and Ryan Campbell (6-2, 230, sr.) owning the tackle spots give the Golden Wave plenty of size and strength up front.

Junior Ethan Roberts and sophomore Wyatt Bush can tote the rock as well. Roberts

scored the game-winning touchdown in a win over Blacksburg, while Bush had 133 rushing yards in that playoff win over Chilhowie.

Sophomore Logan Lester and senior Isaiah Boyd will likely both see time at quarterback.

"It makes for a good backfield," Plymal said.

Oh yeah, Jonah Looney (6-5, 205, jr.) is a proven receiver.

"He's a big target," Plymal said.

Scammell might be the go-to guy, but he's far from a one-man show.

"We've got a lot of weapons," Scammell said.

Wyatt Bush anchors the defense as the 5-foot-11, 205-pound muscleman was

“A lot of people are talking good about us, but we're not thinking about all that,”

having reached the second round of the playoffs last fall.

Just don't expect the Wave to be the ones pounding their chests and making such bold declarations.

"They're kind of quiet about it," said Grundy coach Craig Plymal. "They don't say much and know what they have to do. They now realize they have to step it up one more notch

campaign was a 32-carry, 295-yard, four-touchdown performance in a 56-37 first-round playoff victory at Chilhowie.

"He's a special kid," Plymal said. "The thing about it is that these kids care about each other. It's not that it's so much about his success as the guys around him – linemen and the whole

2022 GRUNDY GOLDEN WAVE



Golden Wave Roster

1 Logan Lester	18 Bryce Looney	45 Brady Deel	68 Jacob Deel
2 Ethan Roberts	19 Brody Coleman	48 Carson Deel	71 Jackson Ratliff
5 Carson Griffey	20 Trenton Meadows	50 Lucas Boyd	72 Tristen Keen
8 Jonathan Thompson	22 Shiaem Gordon	51 Brody Ford	75 Talen Looney
9 Wyatt Bush	25 Ian Scammell	52 Cameron Keen	77 Parker Snead
10 Jacob Fields	26 Blake Broyles	55 Luke Shelton	78 Dillan Justus
11 Trey Taylor	27 Braxton Ramey	60 Ryan Campbell	79 Jacob Bentley
12 Isiah Boyd	32 Jake Spake	63 Logan Looney	87 Braxton Helton
14 Nazir Combs	33 Garon Marcum	64 Jesse Lester	88 Jonah Looney
	40 Ryder Anderson	66 Lucas Bandy	

a second-team All-Region 1D selection at defensive end last season.

Roberts at outside linebacker, Boyd at strong safety, Scammell at free

safety and defensive backs Jonathan Thompson and Shiaem Gordon will also contribute in a major way on that side of the ball.

Grundy's season ended

with a 42-8 loss to eventual regional champ Holston. The Golden Wave are eager to make a deeper postseason run this time around and be the ones to claim regional

gold.

"We've got a good group of seniors returning and they've been there before," Plymal said. "The next step is what we would like to do." ★

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★ Holston's hopes for a 3-peat could ride with Bott brothers

The two-time defending VHSL Region 1D champion Holston Cavaliers will be relying on plenty of new faces as they go for a three-peat.

The running back trio of Jordan Ezzell, Trent Johnson and Gage Quina are gone after combining to rush for 2,505 yards. Ezzell was an all-state defensive end and Johnson was a shutdown defensive back as well.

Quarterback Brycen Sheets graduated after throwing nine touchdown passes and rushing for 13 more scores.

Lane Blevins departed and the 2021 Bristol Herald Courier defensive player of the year was a tackling machine from his linebacker position.

In total, six seniors who were cornerstones of a squad that finished 13-1 and advanced to the state semifinals are no longer around.

"We lost some really good seniors and we've got some new guys at the

skill positions, so we will see how things pan out," said second-year Holston boss Chris Akers. "We have a slew of sophomores and we really like 'em. They'll have to grow up fast and the adjustment is you go from 17, 18 year-old kids to 14, 15 year-old kids. It's a big difference in grade levels."

There are two seniors who have shined on the varsity level and will be counted on heavily in twin brothers Dillon Bott and Dustin Bott.

The 6-foot-2, 195-pound Dillon Bott is shifting from center to running back and from defensive lineman to linebacker.

The 6-foot-1, 205-pound Dustin



Holston Cavaliers

**Class 1D,
Hogoheegee District**

Aug. 26	Eastern Montgomery	A
Sept. 2	Twin Springs	H
Sept. 9	John Battle	H
Sept. 23	Eastside	A
Sept. 30	Narrows	A
Oct. 7	Patrick Henry	H
Oct. 14	Northwood	A
Oct. 21	Lebanon	H
Oct. 28	Rural Retreat	A
Nov. 4	Chilhowie	H

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2022 HOLSTON CAVALIERS



Golden Wave Roster

1 Luke Greene

3 Gabe Foster

4 Collin Widener

5 Merrick Kestner

7 Griffin Hall

9 Noah Tweed

12 Landon Sanders

14 Elijah Berryhill

15 Hayden Sinclair

22 Colten Hess

23 Dillon Bott

24 Dustin Bott

25 Jake Bott

52 Lance Thomas

54 Tristan Hess

55 Kendon Keith

58 Caleb Casey

60 Alex Leonard

62 Colt Millinger

65 Jo'Lon Norman

66 Bryce Lane

70 Boone Thomas

72 Israel Parks

74 Brack Stamper

76 Brycen Frye

77 Clayton Honaker

Bott will also be toting the football as he moves from the offensive line to running back. He had 130 tackles a year ago from his linebacker spot and is among the hardest hitters in Southwest Virginia.

"They're both very strong, they're both ultra-competitive and they're in good shape," Akers said. "They don't like to ever lose at anything. They want to be first in everything they do and they're competitive with each other. They are our senior leaders and we're asking a lot moving them to different positions where they've never played

before. We know they're physical and we know they're battle-tested. If you're gonna get in a foxhole with somebody those are two you'd want to get in there with."

Noah Tweed is penciled in as the starting quarterback and he got some late-game snaps last season. As a wide receiver, he caught eight passes for 158 yards and three touchdowns last season. His speed is impressive and he will hold down a spot in the defensive secondary as well.

Wide receiver Landon Sanders (seven catches, 141

yards, one TD; two carries, eight yards) is also back and will be counted on as a defensive back too.

Sophomores Luke Greene (11 carries, 50 yards) and Gabe Foster (10 carries, 24 yards) got cameo appearances last season and will tote the pigskin for the Cavaliers. Kicker Griffin Hall made two field goals and 51 extra points last season and gives the Cavs some continuity when it comes to special teams.

Senior Brack Stamper (6-3, 315) anchors the line along with fellow senior Colt

Millinger and junior Caleb Casey.

Holston's roster numbered just 26 in the preseason, so almost everybody will play on both sides of the ball.

"It's probably one of the favorite groups I've coached, because they've all committed themselves," Akers said. "We may not have that many, but every kid has been in the weight room and doing what we've asked. We're going to put our heads down and go to work." ★



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CHANGE AT THE TOP



Honaker Tigers

Class 1D, Black Diamond District

Schedule

Aug. 25	Lebanon	H
Sept. 2	Castlewood	A
Sept. 9	Twin Valley	A
Sept. 16	Eastside	H
Sept. 23	Grundy	A
Sept. 30	Chilhowie	H
Oct. 7	Virginia High	A
Oct. 14	Hurley	A
Oct. 21	Patrick Henry	H
Oct. 28	Northwood	A

★ Tiller follows Hubbard's 39-year run at Honaker

For the first time since 1982, the head football coach of the Honaker Tigers will be an individual other than Doug Hubbard.

Todd Tiller has taken over at the helm for a man who became an institution at the Russell County school. Hubbard won more than 200 games in 39 seasons, guided Honaker to a pair of state runner-up finishes

and coached two guys who reached the National Football League.

"I joked with him and said, 'There's no way I could ever fill your shoes. Maybe your shirt, but not your shoes,'" said Tiller, who like Hubbard was an offensive lineman and is a big man. "There is no replacing Coach Hubbard. Coach Hubbard is Honaker Tiger football. There's

no coming in and replacing a legend like that."

Tiller is no coaching neophyte, however, as he had successful stints at Fort Chiswell (2015-2017) and Ridgeview (2020-21) as the main man.

"Had this been my first head-coaching job, it would have been a lot more overwhelming and I would

have felt more pressure," Tiller said. "I've been around a couple of places and I think that's made for an easier transition. The coaching staff here has been awesome."

Tiller has installed a spread offense, a change from the run-heavy look the Tigers previously relied on.



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2022 HONAKER TIGERS

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Tigers Roster

1 Peyton Musick
2 Brayden Marsh
3 Parker Bandy
4 Chance Jewell
5 Jaxon Dye
6 Austin Clayburne
7 Avery Musick
10 Nick Ball

12 Aidan Lowe
13 Wesley Hurley
14 Trevor Lester
16 Braden Mabe
18 Jax Horn
19 Isaac Johnson
20 Tyler Stevens
21 Derek Miller
23 Peyton Whited
31 Kaden Howard

32 Xavier McClanahan
33 Eli McGlothlin
50 Maddox Sykes
52 Max Boyd
54 Jacob Powers
55 Aiden Gilbert
56 Payton Jessee
59 Elijah Musick
60 Logan McGuire
62 Joshua Childress

63 Evan Kennedy
65 Jakobi Nunley
67 Blake Sheppard
70 Braxton McGlothlin
72 Travis Coleman
74 Steel Monk
78 Ethan Hale
80 Zach Reynolds
82 Logan Boyd
88 Malachi Lowe

"It's really been a learning process," said Honaker standout Aidan Lowe. "Coach Tiller is working with us really hard and we're learning something new every day."

Black Diamond District opponents already know that Lowe is one of the most dynamic playmakers in the area as the 5-foot-9, 158-pounder has speed to

burn.

"He's one of a kind, honestly," said teammate Jax Horn.

Quarterback Peyton Musick will be the man getting the ball to Lowe and the 6-foot-3, 168-pound sophomore earned rave reviews in the preseason.

"He's very aggressive and will be one of the top quarterbacks around, I do



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Under the Lights | 39



believe,” Tiller said. “He’s smart with his reads, accurate, strong arm and escapes the pocket if he needs to. He can run the ball, has got a good frame and will be able to take some hits and do a lot of things for us.”

He might not have to endure many hits with a big and experienced offensive line providing protection.

Center Payton Jessee (6-0, 325, sr.), guard Steel Monk (6-5, 350, sr.), guard Ethan

Hale (6-2, 295, jr.), tackle Elijah Musick (6-1, 240, jr.) and tackle Max Boyd (6-5, 215, jr.) are the starters with Aiden Gilbert (6-2, 305, soph.) and Maddox Sykes (6-0, 230, fr.) providing depth.

Parker Bandy, Jaxon Dye and Tyler Stevens will be the top wide receivers for the Tigers.

Inside linebacker Jax Horn anchors the defense, while defensive lineman Ethan Hale (6-2, 295, jr.), Isaac Johnson,

Peyton Whited, Wes Hurley and outside linebacker/tight end Malachi Lowe are other names to remember.

Aidan Lowe isn’t the only guy with that last name to be a key contributor for the Tigers. Malachi Lowe is 6-foot-3 and 190 pounds.

“He’s going to have a good year, I believe,” Tiller said of Malachi Lowe.

Honaker went 5-6 last season and lost to Holston in the first round of the Region

1D playoffs. It was the sixth straight sub-.500 season for the Tigers.

Will the new head coach help the Tigers end that streak?

Stay tuned.

“I just hope we can get some wins this year. That’s all I want,” Aidan Lowe said. “I definitely think we can improve on last year and everything feels right.” ★





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ANYTHING TO WIN



J I Burton Raiders

**Class 1D,
Cumberland District**

Schedule

Aug. 26	Ridgeview	A
Sept. 2	Chilhowie	A
Sept. 9	Union	H
Sept. 16	Twin Springs	H
Sept. 30	Eastside	A
Oct. 7	Lee High	A
Oct. 14	Grundy	H
Oct. 21	Castlewood	A
Oct. 28	Rye Cove	H
Nov. 4	Thomas Walker	H

★ Raiders poised to rebound from rare losing season

J.I. Burton's reputation as a small-school powerhouse took a hit last season.

The Raiders won just three games and failed to make the Virginia High School League playoffs for the first time since 2001.

"We hit the reset button on Jan. 10, that Monday morning coming off winter break and coming in the weight room," said Burton coach Jacob Caudill. "They knew last year was a failure. Not many people are happy about a 3-7 season in Norton."

"They wanted to start outworking people and we had on our shirts the saying 'To be the best you have to do more than the rest.' That's a good quote for this team because they are willing to do anything to win. Everybody's on the same page and that's a good feeling after a disappointing season."

One of the keys to reestablishing themselves as

a Region 1D contender will be the performance of the guys up front.

Isaiah Sturgill (6-foot-5, 275 pounds, sr.), Morgan Potter (6-0, 240, sr.), Carter Stidham (5-9, 190, soph.), Bryson Keys (6-0, 230, sr.) and Dauntae Keys (6-2, 275, sr.) are pretty good at opening holes and providing protection.

Herald Courier's 2022 Gene "Pappy" Thompson Award.

"Jaymen Buchanan was a once-in-a-lifetime player," Caudill said. "He did so much and it was the intangibles that you can't always see in the stat line or read about in the papers – just being a leader and doing

“ We hit the reset button on Jan. 10, that Monday morning coming off winter break and coming in the weight room ”

"They all bring a lot to the table," Caudill said.

J.I. Burton must replace popular quarterback Jaymen Buchanan, a three-year starter and recipient of the Bristol

everything the right way."

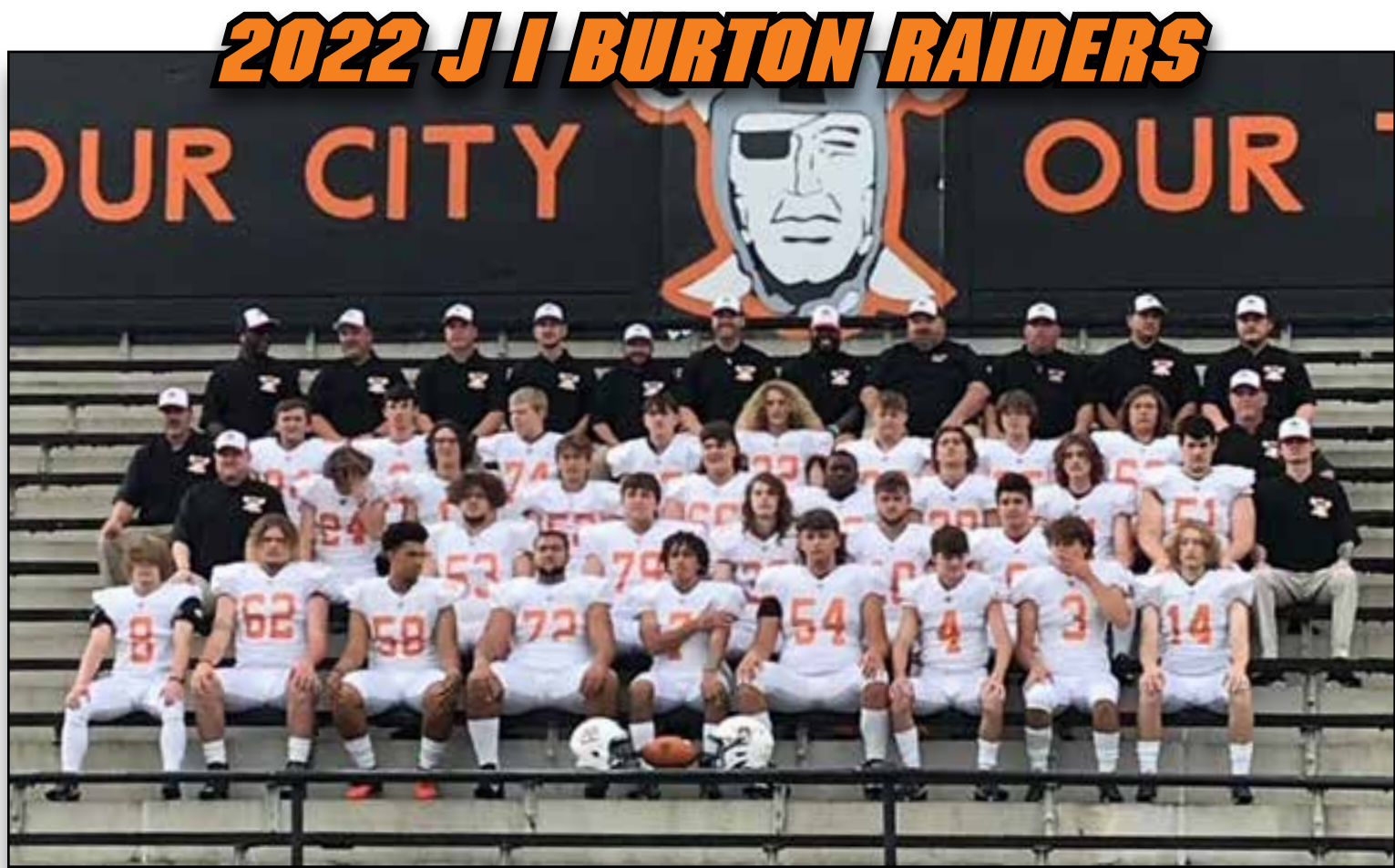
Six-foot-one, 175-pound sophomore Drew Culbertson will be the man taking the snaps and directing the offense this fall.

"Drew's had a good summer," Caudill said. "He's a big, strong kid. As time progresses and he progresses, he's going to get better. We've got a lot of trust in him."

In total, seven starters return on each side of the ball for the Raiders.

Wide receiver/defensive back Brayden Dutton, defensive back/wide receiver Trey Keys, wide receiver/defensive back Landon Reed and linebacker/wide receiver Ethan Hawk have gained valuable varsity experience.

Hawk and Dutton were among the team leaders in tackles last season, while Trey Keys snagged four interceptions.



Raiders Roster

- 1 Drew Culbertson
- 3 Landon Reed
- 4 Brayden Dutton
- 6 Christian Williams
- 7 Trey Keys
- 8 Mike Humes
- 9 Miguel Madrigal
- 10 Landon Fleming
- 14 Ethan Hawk

- 21 Lukas Ball
- 24 Ian Tate
- 30 Braylon McConnell
- 32 Lucas McClain
- 36 Holden Hutchinson
- 40 D.J. Buchanan
- 51 Ian Wells
- 52 Carter Stidham
- 53 Cliff Skorupa
- 54 Isaiah Sturgill
- 58 Bryson Keys

- 60 Adrian Russell
- 62 Morgan Potter
- 65 Brayden Broskey
- 66 Braxton Coffey
- 68 Cameron Wampler
- 70 Mike Carver
- 72 Dauntae Keys
- 74 Preston McNew
- 77 Kaenan Sturgill
- 79 Dave Sturgill
- 84 Josh Carlton

Dutton scored a touchdown in Burton’s 12-7 season-ending win over Thomas Walker as the Raiders closed that disappointing campaign with three consecutive victories.

Perhaps that momentum will carry over into the season-opener on Aug. 26 at Ridgeview.

“We’re super motivated this

year,” Dauntae Keys said. “We’ve worked really hard through the summer. Our chemistry is going to be way better this year. Coach Caudill put up a sign that said ‘The harder you work, the harder it is to surrender’ and that’s what we’ve lived by.”

This year marks the 50th anniversary of Burton’s only state football championship

and that team will be honored prior to a game with Cumberland District rival Twin Springs on Sept. 16.

The 2022 Raiders are looking to regain some respect.

“The standard of John I. Burton football was always that we were going to win the district and we’ve got to get back to that and get the

kids believing that,” Caudill said. “The John I. Burton standard was different than the Cumberland standard. That’s not taking a shot at anybody or throwing shade at anybody, it was just like that here forever and we want to get back to that.” ★



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LESSONS LEARNED



★ *Young Trojans hope Battle scars pay dividends*

The John Battle Trojans finished the 2021 football season with just 16 players and no wins.

"We were relying on sophomores who were learning on the job," John Battle head coach Bradley Ricker said.

With 16 returning starters and roster of 35, the Trojans hope those 2021 lessons pay dividends this fall.

"The guys have said in the preseason that the game is slowing down for them, and they feel more confidence. That's



John Battle Trojans

Class 2D, Mtn 7 District

Schedule

Aug. 26	Abingdon	H
Sept. 2	Virginia High	A
Sept. 9	Holston	A
Sept. 16	Tazewell	A
Sept. 23	Patrick Henry	H
Oct. 7	Wise County Central	H
Oct. 14	Ridgeview	A
Oct. 21	Gate City	A
Oct. 28	Lee High	H
Nov. 4	Union	H

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Trojans Roster

1 Braxton Emerson

2 Brason Hayes

3 Drake Houser

4 Izaya Selz

6 Caleb Lockhart

7 Kalleb Hall

8 Brayden Emerson

9 Andrew Cochrane

10 Broadie Bailey

11 Ethan Dillard

12 Jackson Musick

13 Nick Freeman

14 Christian Rector

15 Brylee Lunsford

15 Bryson Harris

18 Noah Sills

20 Gaige Leab

24 Elijah Childress

25 Xavier Helling

31 Kaidden Dean

44 Braedyn Bailey

50 J.J. Hampton

51 Riley Kiser

52 Ryan Mix

53 Dawson Aspiote

54 Gavin Chappell

55 Blake Woodby

60 Braison Brush

64 Cole Smiley

66 Christian Bowlin

70 Joseph Harr

71 Arison Allison

72 Jessee Owens

74 Jaedyn Cottrell

always good to hear," Ricker said.

John Battle received a major boost of confidence on Aug. 12 with a 55-27 win against Eastside in a VHSL Benefit Game on Battle Hill.

Led by newcomers Noah Sills at quarterback and Elijah Childress at running back, the Trojans generated 423 total yards.

What was the reaction in the locker room?

"Everybody was jumping around and having fun," Ricker said. "We made plays,

held on to the ball and didn't make penalties."

Sills, Childress, senior center Ryan Mix and junior receiver Caleb Lockhart were all members of the Battle baseball team that advanced to the VHSL Class 2 title game last spring. The 6-foot-2 Childress is a sophomore.

"And we've also got some junior varsity players who came over from baseball. We're glad that all those guys decided to come out," Ricker said. "Coach (Jimmy) Gobble does a great job of instilling

a winning mentality with his baseball program."

A 6-3 junior, Sills doubles as a standout pitcher.

"Noah has the 'it factor' and he has fun with football," Ricker said. "He played well against Eastside, and I was really impressed with how he got the attention of the younger guys."

Junior Braxton Emerson, who started at quarterback last season, is now working at running back.

"Braxton is a very athletic guy who will have the

opportunity to make some plays," Ricker said.

Sophomores Brason Hayes and Jackson Musick will also get some carries.

Juniors Broadie Bailey, Brayden Emerson and Izaya Selz are working at receiver. The speedy Selz caught two touchdown passes against Eastside.

Juniors Jessee Owens and Gavin Chappell provide experience on the offensive line, while sophomore Arison Allison has shown promise at guard.

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2022 JOHN BATTLE TROJANS



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ENJOYING THE GRIND



Lebanon Pioneers

**Class 1D,
Hogoheegee District**

Schedule

Aug. 25	Honaker	A
Sept. 2	Patrick Henry	H
Sept. 9	Eastside	A
Sept. 16	Chilhowie	H
Sept. 23	Virginia High	H
Sept. 30	Gate City	A
Oct. 7	Northwood	A
Oct. 14	Castlewood	H
Oct. 21	Holston	A
Nov. 4	Rural Retreat	H

★ Growing Pioneers seek to get better every day

A head-coaching change, a freshman quarterback and some maturation are among the developments for the new-look Lebanon Pioneers.

“Everything’s different this year,” said senior offensive lineman/linebacker Thai Tatum. “We’ve been grinding and I think it’s going to be great this year.”

Things weren’t so great last year as Lebanon struggled to a 2-8 record with the only wins coming over Northwood and Castlewood.

Injuries took a toll and Lebanon’s defense allowed opponents to put 30 or more points on the board on six occasions. Dropping down

from the Class 2 Southwest District to the Class 1 Hogoheegee District did not result in instant success for the Pioneers.

“The biggest thing I learned was things can change very quickly,” Tatum said. “Things can be going good and then you have some injuries. You have to keep your head up and keep going.”

Darrell Taylor is Lebanon’s new head coach and the 58-year-old Russell County native has split his 32-year coaching career between Castlewood and Lebanon.

He was the gridiron boss at Castlewood from 2013-2018, going 21-41 and leading the

Blue Devils to a pair of playoff appearances.

Taylor has inherited a team with a roster numbering 54 with 14 of those players

“Are we getting better every day? Are we going to be as good as we can be? That is what we are focusing on,” Taylor said. “Things will take

“ Things can be going good and then you have some injuries. You have to keep your head up and keep going.”

being seniors. By comparison, the Pioneers had just three seniors last year.

care of itself if we take care of ourselves.
“I think the strength of the

2022 LEBANON PIONEERS



team right now could be our skill people. We have a ton of depth there. The defensive line is going to be a strength as well as we've got numbers there."

Grayson Olson and Zach Hertig have plenty of

experience carrying the ball and are dynamic playmakers.

Hertig was hampered by an injury last season and pound-for-pound is one of the Hogoheegee District's best players.

"He seems to look like he's

100 percent," Taylor said. "He's cutting and going and getting deep balls."

Throwing those deep balls is freshman QB Mike Reece, who is one of the top prospects in Southwest Virginia and at 6-foot-2,

195-pounds looks the part.

Folks have raved about his throwing arm.

"The biggest thing I think he has realized at this point in time as far as making adjustments is the speed of the game," Taylor said. "The

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Pioneers Roster

1 Peyton Mabry

2 Breneen Hess

3 Austin Caldwell

4 Maddox Knuckles

5 Grayson Olson

7 Luke Taylor

8 Daulton Hess

9 Colton Barton

10 Mike Reece

11 Toby Baker

12 Ayden Stiltner

13 Eli Cook

14 Jordan Johnson

15 Zach Hertig

18 Kaden Miller

20 Jude Smith

21 Bill Gilmer

23 Carter Dillon

24 Brayden Keen

28 Caleb Taylor

29 Dustin Rose

30 Caleb Bowen

31 Kaiden Woodward

31 Gavin Gibson

32 Kolbey Frye

40 Eli Perkins

41 Jared Slate

44 Jesue Hernandez

51 Connor Bowen

52 Andrew Calhoun

53 Skylar Street

54 Robert Stevenson

55 JJ Johnson

61 Colton Watson

62 Aiden Peck

63 Seth Coterel

64 Hunter Sykes

64 Tanner Kinder

66 Alden Addington

66 Blain Frye

68 Issac Olvera

70 Thai Tatum

72 Quincy Brown

73 Ethan Johnson

74 Lucas Peck

75 Hunter Phipps

78 Hunter Cox

79 Nathan Phillips

80 Kent Newberry

82 Luke Garrett

84 Brock Keene

85 Jacob Crabtree

88 Nick Belcher

89 Thomas Meade

knowledge of the game, he had that last year. It's not foreign language when you tell him about reads. It's the speed and strength of the game mainly. He's stepped up in the pocket and thrown some passes with people in his face. He's further along

than a typical freshman. With that said, he still has a lot to learn."

Tight ends Nick Belcher and Jacob Crabtree are reliable receivers and should haul in some passes from Reece.

As far as those guys up front that Taylor alluded to,

that group is led by the likes of Tatum, Hunter Sykes and Skylar Street.

"We just have to stay focused and do the little things," Taylor said.

Ending a postseason drought that dates back to 2016 is definitely not out of

the question.

"The goal is the playoffs," Taylor said. "The old saying I use a lot is that you can't dance with the pretty girl if you don't go to the dance. The goal is to always make the playoffs." ★




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HURRICANE SEASON



Marion Scarlet Hurricanes

**Class 2D,
Southwest District**

Schedule

Aug. 26	Chilhowie	H
Sept. 2	Wise County Central	A
Sept. 9	Northwood	A
Sept. 16	Gate City	H
Sept. 23	Grayson County	A
Oct. 7	Abingdon	H
Oct. 14	Richlands	A
Oct. 21	Tazewell	A
Oct. 28	Virginia High	H
Nov. 4	Graham	H

★ *Ginn sees positive signs ahead for Marion football*

Jack Ginn has been in the football coaching business for 34 years at various levels.

So far, the latest stop for the 57-year-old Richlands graduate has been a fun

adventure.

Meet the new boss of the Marion Scarlet Hurricanes.

"I'm having a blast," Ginn said.

What is the best part of Ginn's new

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2022 MARION SCARLET HURRICANES



Hurricane Roster

1 JB Carroll

2 Colton Branson

3 Matthew Pruitt

4 Reid Osborne

6 Parker Wolfe

7 Brenner Davis

8 Logan Langston

9 Brody Whitt

10 Ethan Campbell

11 Terrance Armstrong

12 Elijah Wheatley

13 Brody Taylor

14 Fred Smith

15 Dalton Hall

18 Daniel Lee

22 Christian Jackson

23 Hayden King

24 Jeff Gates

25 Gabe Kell

30 Hunter Robinson

32 Kendrick Smith

34 Jordan Miller

36 Logan Presley

40 Levi Testerman

41 Caleb Widener

42 Henry Shaver

44 Colby Heath

45 Josh Hutton

49 Anthony Miller

51 Ethan Hounshell

52 Drew Frazier

53 Jack Pugh

54 Slade Parnell

55 Gauge Allen

56 Josh Marousek

58 Cash Pruitt

60 Anthony Pasinato

62 Kyle Mabe

63 Caleb Brewster

64 Austin Allen

66 Ethan Whitt

67 Gavin Leonard

68 Kane Akers

70 Kade Terry

76 Noah Duty

77 Ryan Mullins

78 Miles Harrington

79 Jalen Miller

80 Angel Wheatley

82 Jakob Thomas

84 Conner Henderson

85 Austin Coe

86 Tayler Pierce

89 Zach Kell

routine?

"I enjoy wearing all the different hats that a high school coach has to wear,"

Ginn said. "That includes paperwork, fundraising, overseeing the weight room and working with my

assistants."

On the steamy afternoon of Aug. 5, Ginn guided the Scarlet Hurricanes through

media day.

Marion had 54 players in its roster, including 11 seniors.

Ginn said he more time for



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evaluation before listing any names of players to watch.

"I haven't seen any of these guys go up against anybody yet," Ginn said.

Marion's new coach took the same cautious approach in terms of strategy.

"We will have a definite playing style on offense, defense and special teams, but I really don't want to talk that about that. I want to use every advantage we can," Ginn said. "I think we've got something that will benefit our players."

The senior cast features 2021 contributors such as receiver Logan Langston (40 receptions, 548 yards, four touchdowns), linebacker-receiver Matthew Pruitt, running back Brody Taylor and receiver Brenner Davis.

Junior quarterback Reid Osborne threw for eight scores last season, while versatile junior J.B. Carroll led the offense in several games.

Ginn met with his team in April and came away encouraged by the feedback. A total of 46 players attended Marion's media day last August.

"I've tried to get more

players out for the team, and I think our kids are hungry and eager," Ginn said. "I want to have transparency so the players will know what we need to do and how to do it."

Marion has endured four straight losing seasons, with the lone win in 2021 coming against non-district rival Northwood.

But Ginn sees reason for optimism

"I've tried to get more players out for the team, and I think our kids are hungry and eager"

"I think you can be successful here," Ginn said. "It may take a little while, but we have some talented kids."

According to Ginn, one of his biggest goals is getting his players to mesh. Marion draws students from several communities, including rural Sugar Grove.

"If we can take all our kids and make them into a team, that will be a great first step," Ginn said. "We've got to work as one."

Ginn knows the culture and power structure of football in far Southwest Virginia. After playing at Richlands, Ginn was a standout place-kicker at Emory & Henry. His name is among the program leaders in several categories.

assistant at E&H, Ginn spent the 1988 and 1989 seasons as a graduate assistant at the University of Illinois where he was involved in the All-American Bowl and the Florida Citrus Bowl. Ginn coached the secondary at E&H from 1990-1996 before moving on to several other coaching stops.

Has Ginn thought about the reaction when Marion faces his alma mater in Richlands?

"That will be interesting," Ginn said. "Things are a lot different in Richlands from when I played. But obviously, I'm familiar with Southwest Virginia and have friends here."

Ginn said assistant coaches Nolan Lipscomb, Tim Henson and Nick Yates returned from the 2021 coaching staff at Marion.

"The kids worked hard this summer," Ginn said. "If we can keep that up, we're either gonna be successful or I will be dead wrong." ★

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OPTIMISM-ABOUNDS



★ Panthers expects better results after rough stretch

Northwood might have struggled through its fourth straight one-win season in 2021, but there were some silver linings for the Panthers.

Northwood played Smyth County rival Chilhowie tough in a 7-0 setback, while the Panthers built a 21-0 lead before dropping a 28-21 decision to eventual Region 1D runner-up Patrick Henry in their final game of the season.

Those are moments to build on.

"A lack of depth hurt us last year," said Northwood senior Caleb "C.B." Johnson said. "Having more people will help a lot. If we keep

playing like we did at the end of last year, good things are coming."

The numbers are up and so is the positivity for the Panthers with Greg Prater now at the helm of the program full-time.

Prater is a 1995 graduate of Northwood and has been an assistant coach at his alma mater since 2006. He served as the interim head coach at



Northwood Panthers

Class 1D, Hogoheeggee District

Schedule

Aug. 26	Twin Springs	A
Sept. 2	Rye Cove	A
Sept. 9	Marion	H
Sept. 16	Twin Valley	A
Sept. 23	Chilhowie	A
Oct. 7	\Lebanon	H
Oct. 14	Holston	H
Oct. 21	Rural Retreat	H
Oct. 28	Honaker	H
Nov. 4	Patrick Henry	A

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2022 NORTHWOOD PANTHERS



Panthers Roster

2 Sam Rhea
4 Blaine Joannou
5 Austin Graber
7 Dalton Gates
8 Ethan Frye
9 Shawn McGlocklin

10 Eli Williams
11 Clayton Rhea
12 John Garner
20 Kaleb Havens
21 Brandon Woodward
23 Caleb "C.B." Johnson
24 Lucas Debord
25 Will Brown

31 John Debord
32 Preston Dorsey
50 Gabe Frye
51 KJ Comer
52 Will Minton
54 Jake Barlow
55 Denim Kirk
56 Prestyn Reynolds

60 Andrew Woods
61 James Terry
62 Jessie Terry
63 Andrew Call
70 Jackson Nutter
73 Caleb Gobble
88 Dallas Bowman

the school in Saltville on two previous occasions.

He guided the team for the final two games of the 2018 season after Chris Duble stepped down as head coach and was at the helm of the Panthers for the last five games of the fall 2021 season after Tim Johnson resigned the position due to personal reasons.

He'll be no midseason or late-season replacement this time.

"The kids are excited and I'm excited," Prater said.

Sam Rhea will be the trigger man at quarterback, while Blaine Joannou will be the

featured running back. Rhea scored two touchdowns in that aforementioned loss to Patrick Henry.

Johnson is making the move from the offensive line to running back, a shift that showcases his athleticism.

"He's just an all-around good athlete," Prater said.

Brandon Woodward will carry the ball as well.

Tight end Austin Graber, wide receiver Clayton Rhea and the offensive line trio of Denim Kirk, KJ Comer and Jake Barlow are proven on the varsity level.

Northwood had a stretch of four straight games without

scoring a point last season, but the offense should be much improved.

"We've got some pieces," Prater said. "We laid a good foundation last year and I think they've gotten better with the way they've worked."

The O will mix things up as far as schemes go.

"We are going to run multiple sets," Prater said. "It's going to be different and the kids seem to like it."

Kirk, Graber, Johnson, Joannou, Woodward and Comer will also be among the dudes leading the defense.

"They're flying to the ball and having fun," Prater said.

A tough schedule will test Northwood, but the team should be much better.

The enthusiasm was palpable during the preseason.

"I like their attitude," Prater said. "It's been positive. Anything we've asked 'em to do, they do it. The ones who have been here long enough understand what we're trying to do."

No longer the interim coach, Prater shares in that optimistic approach.

"If we stay healthy," Prater said. "I think we'll be OK. I really do." ★

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TRADITION OF WINNING



Patrick Henry Rebels

**Class 1D,
Hogohegee District**

Schedule

Aug. 26	Grundy	H
Sept. 2	Lebanon	A
Sept. 9	Virginia High	H
Sept. 16	Lee High	H
Sept. 23	John Battle	A
Sept. 30	Rural Retreat	H
Oct. 7	Holston	A
Oct. 21	Honaker	A
Oct. 28	Chilhowie	A
Nov. 4	Northwood	H



★ *Rebels can't fail with McFail on their side*

The previous eight seasons for the Patrick Henry Rebels have featured a winning record and a spot in the playoffs.

"It's an expectation here and these kids thrive on that," said PH coach Seth Padgett. "Overall, our nucleus is good and I think if we stay healthy, we'll be OK."

One constant in the run of success

has been a relentless rushing attack and it should be no different this fall with senior J-Kwon McFail leading the way.

A broken collarbone limited McFail to seven games last season and he was unable to play in the season's biggest games as Patrick Henry finished as Region 1D runner-up.

"It was real tough and I hated missing



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2022 PATRICK HENRY REBELS



those games,” McFail said.
“I even tried to get Coach

supported them.”
McFail’s stat line last

He impressed in a preseason
jamboree hosted by Patrick
Henry on Aug. 12 in showing

he’s back to 100 percent.
“I’ve said this about him
before, but he’s just a football

“We’re kind of hungry to get back
[to the regional finals] and that’s
been the driving motivation.”

Padgett to let me play and
he wouldn’t let me. I still
stood on the sidelines and

season included two kickoff
returns for touchdowns and
one punt return for a score.

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Rebels Roster

1 Nick Hudson

2 J-Kwon McFail

4 Maddux Steele

5 Eli Delp

6 Alex Brown

7 Brayden Ferguson

8 Cameron Goodspeed

9 Ben Belcher

10 Frost Croson

11 Holdon Belcher

12 Carter Brown

14 Connor Kausch

15 Brady Newberry

20 Aiden Monahan

23 Grant Buchanon

25 Bobby Cline

32 Landon Steele

33 Michael Jenkins

52 Kyler Thayer

55 Levi Coleman

56 Conrad Ellis'

59 Trajan Cannon

62 Tommy Hudson

64 Colton South

66 Sammy Mink

68 Cameron Crosswhite

71 Iziah Johnson

72 Nathan Morrison

74 Isaiah McFail

75 Dylan Tuggle

76 Aaron Bierstedt

77 Will Dunn

78 Tyler Barrett

79 Trevor Tiller

80 Brady Robert

81 Jacob Stillwell

82 Mason Cook

84 Waylon Daniels

88 Kolin Gobble

player," Padgett said. "He's good on offense, defense, special teams. He could play any position on the field and be all-state. He's just that good. When you have a kid like that, you always have a shot."

Connor Beeson (234 carries, 2,242 yards, 150 points) formed a nice one-two punch with McFail at running back and then took on a much bigger load when his teammate was injured.

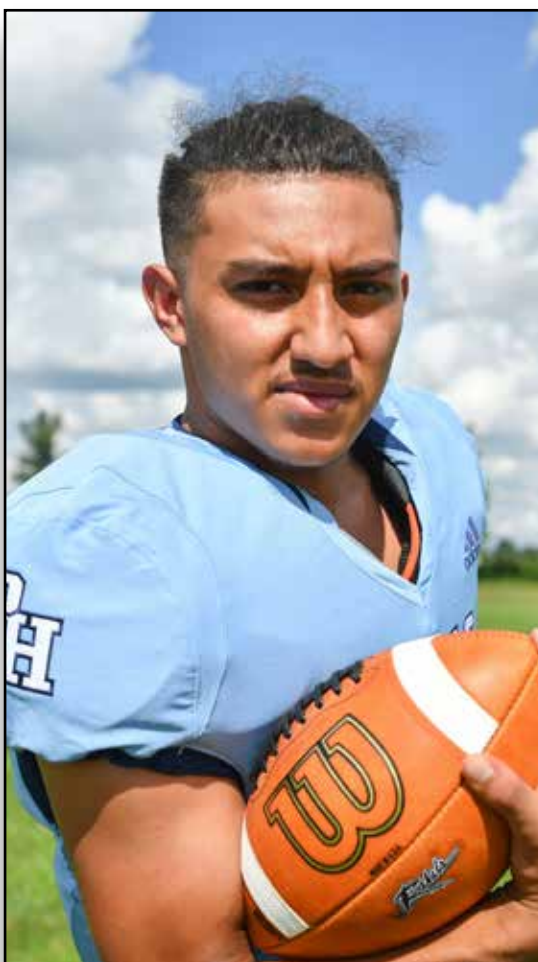
Beeson has graduated, so senior Connor Kausch and sophomore Alex Brown will vie to be McFail's co-star.

Ben Belcher is back at quarterback and has improved as a field general.

The offensive line is anchored by senior Colton South and sophomore Tyler Barrett.

"We will go as our offensive line goes and I say that every year," Padgett said.

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starter, while Barrett has emerged as a NCAA Division I prospect.

Barrett won the state championship in the discus back in June.

“He’s amazing,” McFail said. “He works his butt off and look how big he is. As soon as I get behind him, I don’t think anybody’s going to touch me.”

Padgett also realizes the 10th-grader is special.

“In my 18 years doing this, he’s one of the strongest kids I’ve ever coached,” Padgett said. “To be 15-years-old and to put up the numbers he does in the weight room is impressive.”

The leader of the defense is senior Bobby Cline, a four-year starter who has more than 300 career tackles to his credit.

He made 122 stops last season, 22 of which occurred behind the line of scrimmage. Cline also forced two fumbles and blocked a kick.

McFail, Barrett and Belcher are also defensive stalwarts.

“We’re further along defensively than we are on the offensive side of the ball [in the preseason],” Padgett said. “I feel good about it.”

Padgett likes the moxie of his squad as well.

The Rebels were bit by the injury bug that led to a late-season swoon in 2021, but topped Twin Valley (35-12) and Twin Springs (50-40) in the playoffs before dropping a 24-0 decision to Holston in the regional title game.

“We had a bunch of injuries late in the season when you don’t want them, but we had young kids step up and get some valuable experience,” Padgett said. “We’re hungry to get back [to the regional finals] and that’s been the driving motivation.” ★



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LITTLE THINGS MATTER



★ Blue Tornado working for return to winning ways

Jeff Tarter has been involved with Richlands football for nearly four decades.

He was a part of a 13-year run of nine-win seasons that included four state championship appearances and one state title. The last five years have included three uncharacteristic losing campaigns, something he is trying to get turned around.

Tarter took over the final game of the truncated 2021 spring season that became necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic cancelling the fall campaign. He got the full time role last season. .

"It was a lot of transition work I had to do," said Tarter, who was part of the 23-year tenure of Greg Mance, who led the Blue Tornado to more

than 250 wins over that span. "I had expectations of making that change and working our way back to what made us really good through that era of the early 2000s where we had so many state championship runs."

He knows what the problem was.

"It was a little things that we had missed out on, developing a stronger locker room and really last year and the year before, things had split apart," Tarter said. "There wasn't that community camaraderie. That is what it takes."

Richlands started strong last season, defeating Gate City in the opener before COVID-19 struck again. That, and the usual stringent Blue Tornado schedule resulted in three losses in a row.

"We started out good last year. We got Gate City out here, got off to a good start and COVID hits," Tarter said. "We get postponed and we really didn't recover for about five weeks. It was disappointing, but you learn a lot from losses and you learn a lot about the character of those you are trying to develop as those losses pile up."

While the Blue Tornado lost several talented seniors from that 4-6 team, including Sage Webb (Pennsylvania), Gavin Cox (UVa-Wise) and Shane Vencill (Bluefield), Tarter feels like the pieces are in place for success.

Leading the way this season



Richlands Blue Tornado

**Class 2D,
Southwest District**

Schedule

Aug. 26	Gate City	A
Sept. 2	Union	H
Sept. 9	Graham	A
Sept. 16	Abingdon	A
Sept. 23	Bluefield, WV	H
Sept. 30	Ridgeview	A
Oct. 7	Tazewell	H
Oct. 14	Marion	H
Oct. 28	David Crockett, TN	H
Nov. 4	Virginia High	A

will be senior running back and defensive back Dylan Brown, along with a talented interior line that includes Tyler Cole, P.J. Ward and freshman Max Herndon. Kevin Dye and Jackson Perry are expected to return from injuries. Add Dalton Phillips, Dalton Altizer and 290-pound Jonathan Minnix and that unit will be a definite strength.

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2022 RICHLANDS BLUE TORNADO



"There is not a lot of fat on those boys," Tarter said. "They move very well for their size."

Junior Kalib Simmons will replace Cox at quarterback, while Brown will be joined in the backfield by Kaden Dupree, Tyson Cordle and freshman Collin Adkins. Webb will be tough to replace, but Simmons will have targets in Cole Vanover and Gavin Whited. Parker Lowe will line up at tight end.

"I never had to fool with offense a lot because Greg Mance was Greg Mance," said Tarter, who plans to still incorporate some of the spread sets favored by Mance. "I never wanted to fool with the marbles that are up there because of 250-some wins, he knew how to roll the dice out there and they came out snake-eyes all the time. He just knew how to do it."

Many of the same players will be on the other side of

the ball, including Colton Lawson and Minnix splitting time at nose guard, with Cameron Grimmett, Cole and Ward playing at ends.

Another freshman, Hunter Ratliff, will see of playing time at linebacker, along with Dupree, Adkins and Herndon. Ethan and Dylan Brown will be joined by Izek Hubbard, Simmons and freshman Andrew Boyd in the secondary.

"Max [Herndon] is probably going to be the first freshman starter at inside linebacker that I have ever had," Tarter said. "That is some pretty big shoes to fill."

Richlands does return Isaiah Bandy, who is one the better kickers in the region.

Blue Tornado Roster

1 Izek Hubbard
2 Dylan Brown
3 Austin Wall
4 Isaiah Bandy
5 Cole Vanover
6 Cameron Grimmett
7 Kalib Simmons
8 Max Herndon
9 Tyson Cordle
11 Gavin Whited
12 Gage Lewis
13 Ethan Brown

14 Andrew Boyd
15 Ethan Roberts
16 Branden Phillips
17 Collin Adkins
21 Cole Paris
23 Peyton Arms
24 Logan Hubbard
25 Parker Lowe
34 Wyatt Spencer
40 Kaden Dupree
42 Hunter Ratliff
50 Rider Bush
52 Kevin Dye
54 Ethan Smith

55 Dalton Phillips
58 Ezekiel Mullins
59 Daniel Foland
65 Lucas Keith
66 Jaxson Perry
67 Philip (PJ) Ward
70 Ryan Perkins
71 Tyler Cole
72 Dalton Altizer
74 Brayden Dye
75 Colton Lawson
76 Calden Stapleton
78 Jonathan Minnix
80 Daniel Woody

He connected on five field goals to tie a state record in a heartbreaking playoff loss to Ridgeview.

Tarter is a believer in a close-knit locker room resulting in success. He likes what he sees in his.

"I have heard coaches say over the years, if I am equal to you in athletic talent, the difference maker is going to be how tight that locker room

is," Tarter said. "That has been my focal point, we have done so much community service this year. I am so proud of the kids because they have bonded together and they have reached out to each other and they have brought people in."

Time to play ball.

"We are ready to roll," he said. ★



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Ridgeview Wolfpack

Class 2D, Mtn 7 District

Schedule

Aug. 26	J.I. Burton	H
Sept. 2	Grundy	A
Sept. 9	Wise County Central	H
Sept. 23	Lee High	A
Sept. 30	Richlands	H
Oct. 7	Union	H
Oct. 14	John Battle	H
Oct. 21	Abingdon	A
Oct. 28	Bluefield, WV.	A
Nov. 4	Gate City	A

★ Playoff run has Ridgeview looking for more

A large crowd attended the media day session for the Ridgeview Wolfpack earlier this month.

Many of those folks spent time discussing the record-breaking 2021 season which culminated with a trip to the Region 2D title game against Graham.

New coach Dewayne Stanley, 55, has heard the

optimistic chatter among Ridgeview fans.

“It’s nonstop everywhere you go,” Stanley said.

There is a good reason for excitement on Rose Ridge. Ridgeview returns 15 seniors and all the pieces from a prolific offense.

“I know what the expectations are,” Stanley said “If we don’t make a deep

playoff run, there will be some disappointed people. And I will be one of them.”

The ringleader is quarterback Ryan O’Quinn, who passed for 26 scores and accounted for over 2,900 yards last year as a freshman. The skillset for O’Quinn includes a quick release and poise under pressure.

Senior Cannon Hill supplied

851 yards receiving, 613 yards rushing and 15 touchdowns. The durable 6-foot-2, 195-pound Hill has already received an offer to play football at Army.

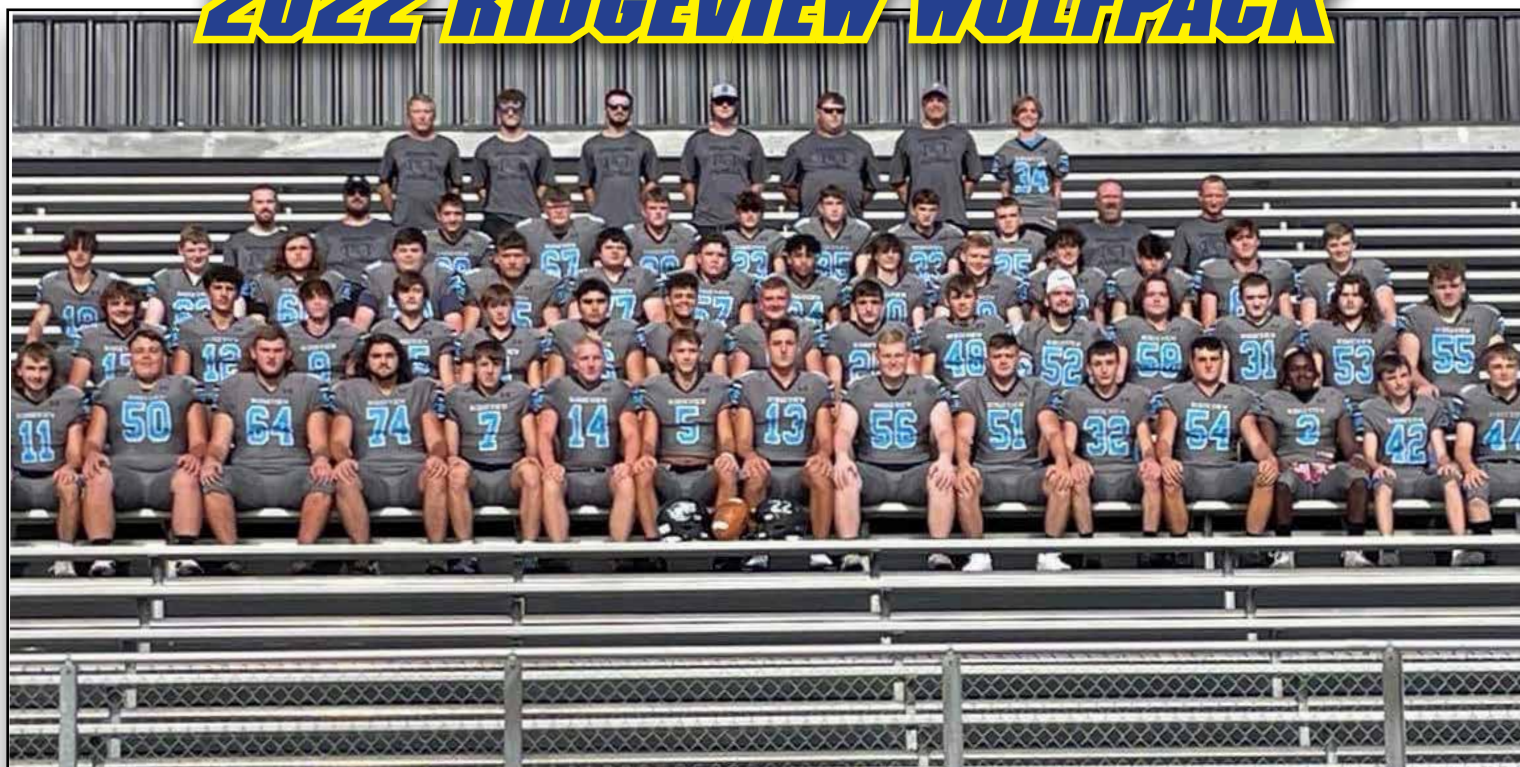
“Ryan and Cannon are great athletes who play with confidence,” Stanley said. “They know what they can do, and they know how hard everybody else on the team

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2022 RIDGEVIEW WOLFPACK



Wolfpack Roster

3 Daquan Proffitt

4 Dalton Mullins

5 Koda Counts

6 Bentley Brockhoff

7 Brandon Beavers

8 Kolter Scanlon

9 Logan Sutherland

10 Hayden Baker

11 Brady Fleming

12 Ryan O'Quinn

13 Cannon Hill

14 Ian Hartsock

15 Chace Fuller

16 Gabe Hackney

17 Branson Honaker

18 Tristan Stevens

19 Luke Collins

20 Austin Rose

21 Isaiah Colley

22 Gavin Dingus

23 Ryan Porter

24 Jaalan Deel

25 Landon Shafer

27 Brayden Kiser

28 William Kiser

32 Cody Deel

33 Allen Mullins

42 Nathan Schafer

45 Peyton Ratliff

48 Tanner Hill

50 Elijah Rasnick

51 Walker Lester

52 Jeremiah Johnson

53 Mason Blansett

54 Caden Powers

55 Waylon Perrigan

56 Hunter Goodman

57 Noah Rasnick

58 Cooper Powers

61 Connor Neece

62 Jonathan Salyers

63 Haddon Fleming

64 Chance Fleming

65 Jason Mullins

66 Jayden Johnson

67 Jaeson Butts

68 Myles Phipps

70 Elijah Mullins

74 Zack Owens

77 Mason Stallard

85 Conner Smith

worked this summer. There's a lot of trust there."

The passing attack also features senior Brandon Beavers (59 receptions, 1,110 yards) and senior Koda Counts. Beavers is one of the fastest athletes in far Southwest Virginia, while Counts is a reliable target.

"Koda had an awesome summer," Stanley said. "Last

year, Koda was more of a possession guy who caught a bunch of passes but didn't have a lot of yards. Koda has since changed his body and now he's able to make things happen down the field."

Senior Ian Hartsock and junior Gabe Hackney will try keep defenses off-balance with their work in the backfield.

An all-senior cast returns on the offensive line. Hunter Goodman is the center, with Elijah Rasnick and Walker Lester at guard, and the combo of Zack Owens and Chance Fleming at tackle.

"We've basically got everybody back on offense. That's a good feeling," Stanley said.

Junior Waylon Perrigan

and freshman Noah Rasnick provide depth for the line corps.

On defense, Ridgeview must replace three linemen and a cornerback.

A prospect at linebacker is sophomore Branson Honaker.

"Branson will be something to see before he graduates," Stanley said. "He's athletic and aggressive." ★



TARGETING THE PLAYOFFS



Photo by Christie Blevins

★ Rural Retreat hopes to end postseason drought

One spot is all that has stood between Rural Retreat for each of the last three seasons.

If answers can be found on the interior line, Jamey Hughes expects that to change.

"I feel like if we can play to our potential I feel like we are in for a solid year," said Hughes, in his fifth season as head coach of the Indians. "I am hoping we can break that playoff drought from the last few years and get back in the playoffs where Rural Retreat

kind of belongs."

There is plenty of skilled talent available for the Indians, who return seven defensive starters and six on offense from last year's 5-5 last campaign.

Quarterback is blessed with two talented candidates in Ely Blevins and Caleb Roberts, both of whom saw starting time last season, and both might do it again. When not behind center one of them will see still the football at receiver and running back.

"We really have got two

starters," Hughes said. "I feel confident putting either one of them at any time in the game. They have taken a lot of snaps and both them are very talented."

There are plenty of weapons around then to work with, led by second team all-state end Kaiden Atkinson, who led the Indians in every significant receiving category last season.

"He is primed for a breakout year," Hughes said. "He had a good year last year, but he is due for a big year."

Also returning is Gatlin Hight, a second-team all-state punt returner as a sophomore who missed nearly all of last season after breaking his collar bone in the second quarter of the opening game win over Fort Chiswell.

"He's got a lot of experience carrying the football," Hughes said. "He has been getting carries since he was a freshman. This will be his fourth year starting. I think a lot of people kind of forget about him coming back."



Rural Retreat Indians

Class 1D, Hogoheegee District

Schedule

Aug. 26	Fort Chiswell	A
Sept. 2	Eastern Montgomery	H
Sept. 9	Grayson County	A
Sept. 16	Bland County	H
Sept. 23	George Wythe	H
Sept. 30	Patrick Henry	A
Oct. 14	Chilhowie	H
Oct. 21	Northwood	A
Oct. 28	Holston	H
Nov. 4	Lebanon	A



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2022 RURAL RETREAT INDIANS



Photo by Christie Blevins

Indians Roster

2 Caleb Roberts	12 Ethan Simmons	40 Levi Crockett	65 Mason Via
3 Chaz Penwright	14 Christopher Martin	46 Caleb Gibson	66 Aiden Buckingham
5 Gatlin Hight	15 Austin Umberger	51 Hunter Pennington	70 Alijah Nunley
6 Anderson Newberry	16 Tucker Fontaine	52 Jacob Montgomery	72 Brandon Smith
7 Trevor Shelton	17 Parker Stone	56 Garrett Worley	75 Isaac Shrader
8 Justin Walker	22 Gunner Hagerman	57 Scott Meredith	76 Leland Seagle
9 Kaiden Atkinson	23 Brandon Combs	58 Bryce Tibbs	77 Ben Shupe
10 Ely Blevins	30 Wyatt Patrick	59 Jacob Dalton	78 Scottie Campbell
11 Christopher Sapp	31 Dakota Lemmon	61 Easton Burkentine	82 Jay Snavelly
	33 Hunter Rollyson	63 Grayson Irvin	88 Odell Stroupe

Hight is one of the better athletes in the region, having also starred in basketball and track for the Indians.

"He's about 6-foot tall, 210 pounds and he runs well and catches the ball well out of the backfield," Hughes said. "He is a good offensive weapon to have, that is for sure."

Isaac Shrader also returns as a starter on both the offensive and defensive lines.

Finding reinforcements for that position will be key to the season ahead, which begins on Aug. 26 at Wythe County rival Fort Chiswell.

"I feel like this is probably the best skill group that we have had since I have been the head coach," said Hughes, who has been part of Rural Retreat's program for 18 years. "We are just inexperienced up front. We have got some guys that are

capable, it's just going to come down to them being able to put it all together."

Defensively, many of those skill players return at linebacker and in the secondary. Once again, the Indians will be looking to build experience on the interior line.

"If we can put some things together up front" Hughes said. "I feel like with our skill group, we have got four or five guys that can run the football

and we got two quarterbacks that can play. We have got some receivers that can catch and run so we just have to get it all put together up front.

"If we can do that on offense, I feel like our defense is going athletic enough to get some stops and get the ball back." ★

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RETURN TO NORMALCY



Science Hill Hilltoppers

Class 6A, Big East Conference

Schedule

Aug. 19	Elizabethton	A
Aug. 26	Anderson County	H
Sept. 2	West Ridge	H
Sept. 9	Powell	A
Sept. 16	William Blount	A
Sept. 23	Maryville	H
Sept. 30	Morristown East	H
Oct. 7	Daniel Boone	A
Oct. 14	Jefferson County	A
Oct. 28	Dobyns-Bennett	H

★ Lots of seniors depart, but expectations the same for Hilltoppers

Stacy Carter likes his teams to run the football.

Science Hill will return to that reality this season, a change from last season when Jaxon Diamond threw for 2,600 yards during a 7-4 campaign that included a perfect Big East Conference marked, but ended with a 57-56 playoff loss to Farragut.

"Our run game is going to be good," said Carter, the head coach at Science Hill. "We are a different kind of team. We are stronger up front than we have been in a long time on the offensive and defensive lines. We have

been having some holes so that is why we have been throwing it every down."

That won't be as much of an issue this season with an experienced offensive line back for the Hilltoppers, led by four-year starting center Kellan Hensley, along with returnees Brody Barnett, Brycen Hill, Tristan Smith and 295-pound Keimel Radford.

"They are as big and strong as anybody around and they can run too so that is a good bunch of kids," said Carter, whose Hilltoppers open the season on Aug. 19 by visiting Elizabethton.

Science Hill is rebuilding somewhat from losing 26 productive seniors, including Diamond, record-setting receiver Cole

Torbett and talented linebackers Cade Fleeman and Justus Sutton.

Diamond will be replaced behind center by junior Jaysahn Swartz, a dynamic runner with the football, who will be backed up by sophomore Spencer Taylor and freshman Cole ReSue, whose fastball in baseball has been clocked at 88 miles

per hour.

"When you have got a quarterback that can run it makes your play-calling so much easier," Carter said. "You spread them out with a single back, you want deception and that helps. The good thing about Jaxon is he could get the ball out quick and he could do things.

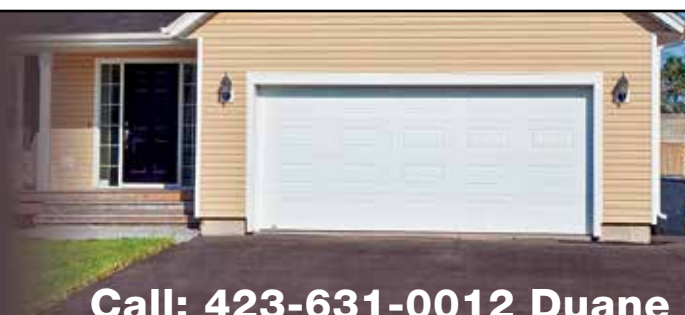
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2022 SCIENCE HILL HILLTOPPERS



Hilltoppers Roster

1 Mikah Jones	19 Jovanni Williams	38 Kyle Jennings	60 AJ McKinney
2 Javin Bryant	20 Aidyn Peterson	42 Devon Medina	63 Elijah Seals
3 Kendal Bumpass	21 Zeph Fegyak	43 Cole Freeman	64 Nowlin Saylor
4 Jacob Julian	22 Steven Famoyin	44 Brayden Letcher	68 Keimel Redford
5 Tyler Moon	23 Javin Chester	46 Reiley Jefferson	72 Hobie Merritt
6 Baylor Necessary	24 Trevor Whitson	47 Isaiah Casillas	73 Nolyn Story
7 Carter Nelson	25 Easton Miller	48 Ben O'Daniel	74 Elijah Morgan
8 Derrick Smith	26 Davion Stewart	50 David Reed	75 Brody Barnett
9 Mathew Marsh	27 Nathan Byrd	51 Brycen Hill	76 Gauge Stout
11 Jaysahn Swartz	29 Zane Huff	52 Mario Sanchez-Gomez	79 Gavin Carder
12 Cole ReSue	31 Rylan Jordan	53 Kellen Hensley	80 Demarco Rhea
14 Emmett Watson	32 Gaven Aldridge	54 Kayvon Thompson	82 Palmer Kind
15 Daniel Nerren	33 Kayden Barnes	55 Gavin Taylor	84 Bladen Ferrier
16 Spencer Taylor	34 Kevin Aimura	56 Tayshaun Fisher	94 Antonio Torres
17 Josiah McGann	35 John Giturwa	57 Tristan Smith	95 Dylan Bishop
	37 Keilan Reid	58/90 Kevin Smith	

be more balanced, it really is. We will flip the other way now, which is fine. It is easier on me, it cuts the turnovers down so that is a big deal. Living the other way you are living feast and famine."

Several backs are vying to carry the football, including Javin Chester, Mikah Dukes, Jovanni Williams and possibly even freshman Ian Mathes. Bailey Necessary will get reps at fullback.

"That position is pretty deep, there is a lot of battles going on right now," Carter said. "Some of them are bigger, strong and hit it fast and a couple of them can take it the distance which is a good thing to have. A couple of them can run, they have a smaller stature and some of them are bigger kids."

Tyler Moon, a dynamic weapon as a return threat, will be joined at receiver by Emmett Watson. Ben O'Daniel is the leader at tight end.

"Tyler was a dynamic kick returner last year and played a lot with us. He is a good

player," Carter said. "Emmett Watson really come on, first year playing football last year, a very, very talented kid. He will help us on the defensive side and the offensive side."

Defensively, O'Daniel is an all-conference returner on the line. He could be joined by Daniel Nerren, A.J. McKinney, Kevin Aimua, Kevin Smith, Hill, Barnett and Radford, among others.

Returnee Devil Medina could be joined by Matthew Marsh, Zeph Fegyak and Necessary at linebackers, while Kendal Bumpass leads a secondary that will also include Trevor Whitson, Jacob Julian and Watson.

There is talent there, but not a lot of experience when Friday night lights are shining bright.

"We lost 26 people. We are young on the line. We have got some big strong kids and that will be something we have to rely on, but a lot of guys are going to have to get experience," Carter said. "We have some pieces, we had

a good spring. It seems like there is some things falling into place, but we are green. That is where we are at right now."

The schedule certainly doesn't give the Hilltoppers much time to adjust to the new faces in the lineup, including non-Big East Conference foes Elizabethton, Anderson County, Knox Powell and Maryville. Three of those schools played for state titles last season, with Powell winning the 5A crown.

"We have got a tough schedule to get it so it is going to show us pretty quick what we need to do and what we don't need to do because we don't get away with any of our non-conference games," Carter said. "That is the kind of schedule you are playing so we will find out real quick, we will know the changes you need to make and

these kids are going to have to grow up fast."

Still, don't count out the Hilltoppers from defending their Big East title, even with Dobyys-Bennett and Jefferson County expected to be the class of the six-team 6A league.

"Expectations are still the same, they haven't changed," Carter said. "We are going to have to get some experience, but we are expecting the same, that we are going to make a run at the conference. We believe we can, we are just young right now." ★

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THE BEARD MUST GO



Sullivan East Patriots

Class 4A, Northeastern Conference

Schedule

Aug. 19	David Crockett	H
Aug. 26	Pigeon Forge	H
Sept. 2	Grainger	A
Sept. 9	Johnson County	H
Sept. 16	Seymour	H
Sept. 23	Unicoi County	A
Sept. 30	Elizabethton	A
Oct. 7	Union County	H
Oct. 13	Greeneville	H
Oct. 20	Volunteer	A

★ Patriots learning to compete in everything they do

J.C. Simmons has grown a rather long beard for a reason.

It will come off eventually, he just isn't saying when.

"That is between me and the team," said Simmons, the Sullivan East head coach. "Hopefully, before too long you will get a nice answer and video out of it."

Sullivan East is looking to rebound from a 1-9 season, which included a week three victory over Grainger. There were some close calls, such as a 1-point loss at Johnson County and falling to 10-win

Unicoi County by just seven points.

"The whole thing we have been preaching since we took over is the competition," Simmons said. "We want to compete at everything that we do, every time we step on the field, every time we go in the weight room and these guys have really bought into it."

"We haven't had an offseason like we have had this year so far so I am really proud of their effort so far."

Sullivan East, which will open its season on Aug. 19 against David Crockett, will

be led by senior Masun Tate, who appears poised for a breakout season after the loss of receivers Luke Hare and Hunter Brown to graduation.

It's not just Tate. Gavin Patrick, Will Alley, Tyler Cross and Chase Bailey are also expected to catch passes from second-year quarterback Drake Fisher.

"They are hard to replace, but these guys have stepped up," Simmons said. "They want to get on the field, they

want to go make plays and they want to do it for each other. That is a huge thing. The camaraderie in our locker room right now is going in the right direction."

Fisher will be joined in the backfield by Kaden Roberts, Dawson Jones and Donovan Smith-Peters, while Corbin Laisure will play both receiver and tight end.



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2022 SULLIVAN EAST PATRIOTS



Patriots Roster

1	Masun Tate	10	Zack Vannoy	30	Tyler Cross	71	Kolton Smith
2	Dawson Jones	11	Bentley Key	33	Andrew McDuffie	72	Marshall Jones
3	Konner Mercer	12	Corbin Laisure	40	Pierce Harless	74	Austin Brown
4	Nate Brown	13	Elijah Briggs	51	Elijah Murray	75	Carter Follis
5	Noah Ragan	14	Brayden Ringley	54	Joshua Ragan	77	William Whiteherd
6	Donavan Smith-Peters	16	Drake Fisher	55	Dylan Sams	78	Christian Blevins
7	Will Alley	17	Gavin Patrick	56	Shayne Hensdill	82	Cooper Cornett
8	Aiden Saxton	19	Camden Laisure	59	Nate Rose	84	Isaac Stanley
9	Blue Profit	20	Kaden Roberts	65	Jake White	87	Matt Geisinger
		21	Chase Bailey	66	Peyton Salyer		
		26	Noah Colley	70	Benjamin Childers		

"He will be doing a little bit of both," Simmons said. "He has a big body, but he can move and he has great hands."

Jack White will anchor the line at center, while Kolton Smith and Dylan Sams will line up at tackles. Guards will include Christian Blevins, William Whitehead and Josh Ragan.

Sullivan East will run a 4-4 defense, with hopes of getting more pressure on the quarterback. Laisure and Smith will be at ends, while Blevins and newcomer Pierce Harless could see action at tackle.

"I think he is going to surprise a lot of people," said Simmons, of Harless.

The brother duo of Dawson

and Marshall Jones will serve as inside linebackers, while Tate and much-improved Nate Brown will be on the outside.

"[Nate] has worked his tail off and has done a great job for us," Simmons said.

Roberts and Patrick will play safeties, while the cornerbacks will include Cross, Bailey, Alley and Noah Ragan.

All will be asked to do what it takes to make the Patriots a better team.

"I really love our camaraderie right now. I feel like we have a good mixture of kids that are focused on going in the right direction, everybody is working to get better and push each," Simmons said. "The weight room this offseason has been

great for us."

As for what needs the most work, Simmons just wants everyone to know their responsibilities.

"We are really trying to hone in on exactly what everybody's job is and just understanding that we want to play with relentless effort in everything that we do," he said. "We have been preaching that for a long time now. If you are going as hard as you can it is going to make up for a lot of mental mistakes."

Sullivan East hasn't played in a postseason game since reaching the playoffs three straight years from 2014-16. Simmons hopes that drought will come to an end.

"Everybody wants to win every game. At the end of the

year only one team is really truly happy, but I think our goal right now that we come out and play a one-week season," Simmons said. "At the end of the season we are looking for a shot at the playoffs."

Doing that against the Region 1-4A schedule won't be easy, which not only includes state powerhouses Elizabethton and Greeneville, but Simmons is wary of the rest of the conference as well.

"If I had to vote I would say this is the toughest conference in the state," he said. "Everybody knows the front end, but with Grainger, Volunteer and Seymour, it is a tough conference."

"Every game matters. We have no off weeks." ★



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TRADITION MATTERS



★ Holt preaching tradition in first season with Vikings

Fifty years ago, Tennessee High not only won its second straight state championship, but also claimed the national championship. Proof is in the trophy that proudly sits in The Viking Keep. New head coach Josh Holt has been preaching that tradition and wants his club to share the same values that one did.

“We are Tennessee High Vikings, that is who we are,” Holt said. “We are really pushing discipline, we are pushing simplicity, we are pushing consistency. We are pushing people showing up, doing the right kind of thing, that is really what we are after right now.” Tennessee High is looking to move on after a tragedy-filled season that included the death of a player and



Tennessee High Vikings

**Class 5A, Mountain
Lakes Conference**

Schedule

Aug. 19	Dobyns-Bennett	A
Sept. 2	Pulaski County	A
Sept. 9	Knox Karns	A
Sept. 16	David Crockett	H
Sept. 23	Abingdon	A
Sept. 30	Morristown West	A
Oct. 7	Volunteer	H
Oct. 14	Daniel Boone	H
Oct. 21	West Ridge	H
Oct. 28	Cherokee	A



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assistant coach in a matter of eight days. The Vikings still managed to claim a playoff spot and Holt said they have approached the new season with eager anticipation.

"They have been consistent. They show up every single day and that is all you can ask them to do because the coaching staff we have is going to get them better," Holt said. "We are second to none in this whole entire area when it comes to experience and ability to coach kids and get them to do what they are supposed to do. You are

not going to beat it with this staff."

They have some rebuilding to do, with the Vikings losing several talented seniors to the next level, including quarterback Steven Johnson (Charlotte), linemen Justice Musser (Princeton) and Grant Ferrell (Tusculum) and defensive back Nysaiah Foote (University of the Cumberland).

That is one season after losing Jaden Keller, who is now playing at Virginia Tech.

Dual threat junior quarterback Jimmy Phipps will

take over behind center for the Vikings. He will be joined in the backfield by running backs Josh Bell and Josh Green.

"I feel like Jimmy is really good with his feet and he is getting better every single day with his arm and that is going to help us a whole lot. He is a tough kid and he is going to do well for us," Holt said. "Both of them [Bell and Green] are really good downhill, hard running running backs, which is what we want to hang our hats on."

Logan Tudor, Maddox Fritts,

Josh Sizemore and Austin DeGeare will be among the targets for Phipps. Guards Evan Bedwell and Micah Norton, center Dorian Suggs and tackler Carter Kazee will anchor an offensive line that still had one position up for grabs in fall camp. "We

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2 Turner Elliott
3 Phillip Cox
4 Nick Osborne
5 Maddox Fritts
6 Jacob Van Valkenburg
8 Jackson Elliott
9 Mason Mays
10 Trent Dowdell
11 Colby Lamb
12 Logan Tudor
13 Colson Mattox

14 Josh Sizemore
15 Marquis Phelps
16 Jimmy Phipps
17 Hunter Canter
21 Austin DeGeare
22 Peyton Feagins
23 Owen Stallcup
24 Jashun Hernton
25 Nolan Hutson
26 Killian Laoo
27 Josh Green
28 Jackson Norris
29 Josh Bell

30 Bradley Price
31 Manny Hyatt
32 Owen Brown
34 Matthew Stinchcomb
36 Cooper Harris
50 Evan Smith
51 Mason Campbell
52 Ryan Mullins
53 Preston Feagins
55 Micah Norton
56 Evan Bedwell
57 James Smith
58 Carter Keese

59 Noah Johnson
60 Rylan Lambert
61 Dorian Suggs
63 Grayson Swaggerty
66 Michael Hicks
68 Cooper Conley
70 Chris Wilson
73 Aydan Thompson
74 Isaiah Trinkle
75 Jacob Rhea
76 Jose Gregori
81 Thatcher Hutton

have got what we need," said Holt, who is just the second former Tennessee High player to be head coach of the Vikings. "It is just a matter of being disciplined and doing what you are supposed to do and being the most physical team on the field."

Chris Wilson, Marquis Phelps and Jashun Hernton will anchor the defensive line, while linebackers include Nick Osborne and Jackson Elliott. Mason Mays, Fritts and Tudor are among those expected to

contribute on the back end.

"We really feel like we are going to be as good as we have ever been up front right now," Holt said. "They are tough kids, they play their technique well. There is nothing green about Marquis or Chris. Both of those guys have a lot of experience so we are in pretty good shape there and they can make the defensive calls on their own."

What awaits Tennessee High is a difficult schedule with six road games, including

five of the first six away from the Stone Castle, but after what the Vikings went through last season, Holt figures this team is ready for anything thrown in front of them.

"These kids are scarred, but they need to proud of that scar. It is not a negative thing at all," Holt said. "They have been through something that nobody in the state has been through and I tell them every day, you, right now, are mentally the toughest team in the state, what are you going

to do with it.

"You know how to deal with adversity. We are on the road 820 miles round trip this year. We have got six away games and they are all away, away games so we are going to see how they handle that. We are proud of how we handled last year the way we did. They embrace it, it is part of who they are and they went through that so it is part of them now." ★

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BUILT ON CONSISTENCY



Union Bears

Class 2D, Mtn 7 District

Schedule

Aug. 26	Lee High	H
Sept. 2	Richlands	A
Sept. 9	J.I. Burton	A
Sept. 16	Graham	H
Sept. 23	Gate City	A
Sept. 30	Thomas Walker	H
Oct. 7	Ridgeview	A
Oct. 14	Wise County Central	H
Oct. 28	Abingdon	H
Nov. 4	John Battle	A

★ *Reload in progress at Union again*

Consistency has been the calling card of Union High School's football program.

Born from the consolidation of Powell Valley and Appalachia in the fall of 2011, the Bears have won 100 of the 133 games they've played on the gridiron and made the playoffs each year of their existence.

Guess what?

They'll put another good team on the field in 2022.

"We've got a good nucleus of kids," said Travis Turner, the only head coach the program has ever had. "We've got 17 seniors on the roster and some good young kids."

While powerful running back Xavier Lomax (1,817 rushing yards, 27 touchdowns) and dynamic wide receiver/defensive back Malachi Jenkins (17 catches, 405 yards, six touchdowns; four interceptions) graduated, the offense should still put up plenty of points.

Junior Reyshawn Anderson takes over at quarterback, while sophomore Austin Sykes figures to get some snaps as well.

"Rey brings a different element to the game," Turner said. "He's a very athletic kid, football savvy and a tough kid too. He's the type of QB that when a play breaks down, he's able to make things happen with his legs and create things."

Johnny Satterfield and Peyton Honeycutt will get a bulk of the carries with William Lowery and Keyshawn Anderson toting the rock as well. Satterfield relies on strength, while Honeycutt is a speedster.

Honeycutt suffered a season-ending injury in the fourth game last season.

"Peyton's had a great fall camp," Turner said. "We had our navy and orange scrimmage the other day and I think he maybe got tackled one time and that was against a lot of our starters on defense. Having him healthy is key. He can break it and he's also a pretty good defensive player [at linebacker]."

They'll be running behind a proven and talented offensive line as Jacob Hamilton, Zach Hall, Tanner Bishop and Izaak Keith are proven in the trenches.





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2022 UNION BEARS



Bears Roster

1 Bryce Ramey

2 Kam Bostic

3 Devaughn Mitchell

4 Paul Huff

5 William Lowery

7 Braxton Bunch

8 Will Harmon

9 Braxton Collins

10 Reyshawn Anderson

11 Hamilton Osborne

12 Austin Sykes

13 Peyton Honeycutt

14 Cayden Phillips

15 Aiden Hafemeister

16 Johnny Satterfield

17 Keyshawn Anderson

18 Dakota Houston

19 Tyson Welch

20 Ethan Bailey

21 Trey McMahan

23 Jace Cochran

24 Ben Herron

25 Cole Chandler

26 Riley Boggs

27 Talan Golloway

28 Keith Chandler

30 Preston McCray

31 Ayden Hamilton

32 Camden Wharton

33 Gabe Sneed

35 Carlos Anderson

40 Tony Taylor

41 Kam Stivers

42 Colton Kennedy

43 Dylan Lane

44 Josh Guerrant

45 Brayden Mosier

46 Hunter Elliott

49 Riley Orange

50 Izaak Keith

51 Bryson Brock

52 Jacob Hamilton

53 Jacob Phillips

54 Keagan Belcher

55 Colton Brown

56 Eli Schlobohm

57 Eli Prewitt

58 Bryson Miller

59 Derek Mullins

60 Jacob Horton

61 Tanner Bishop

62 Brent Lovell

63 Tyler Reynolds

68 Bryson Boggs

70 Zach Hall

71 Brayden Chandler

72 Aayden Johnson

74 Malakai Kennedy

77 Chris Mayes

80 Isaiah Lipps

81 Nick Burns

83 Ben Bowman

85 Zach Hall

Dakota Houston leads the group of wide receivers with newcomers like Paul Huff, Kam Bostic and Braxton Bunch showing promise.

Keith Chandler is another nifty ninth-grader.

"We've got a good group of ninth and 10th graders," Turner said. "We had a really good JV team last year and we had some ninth and 10th graders who are pushing for

playing time and working hard. I like that competition. I'm excited about this year's team and excited for the future as well. We have a chance to build and gradually get those guys into it.

"We don't want to throw them to the wolves too fast. It's going to take a little while, but as the year goes on the depth is going to be better."

Defensively, senior

linebacker Johnny Satterfield (67 tackles) is among the toughest players in the area.

"Johnny is one of the hardest workers we have," Turner said. "You can tell he's a weight room guy. He's the heart and soul of our team right now."

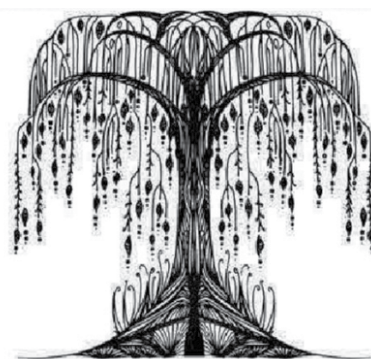
Defensive end Gabe Sneed (46 tackles) is hard to handle for opposing offenses as well. Look for Brent Lovell and

Brayden Mosier to make major contributions on that side of the ball too.

While Graham and Ridgeview were considered the Region 2D favorites before the season began, don't sleep on the Bears.

"People might have us as the underdogs," Reyshawn Anderson said. "But I think we can surprise a lot of people." ★





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SPEED AND TALENT



★ Jones returns as Bearcats move on without Thomas

The Virginia High Bearcats crafted a landmark football season in 2021 behind a dynamic athlete in Stevie Thomas and an upbeat new coach in Derrick Patterson. Now, for the next step.

"We've got to have better play in the line," Patterson said. "We have the

speed and talent, but we need more production from our linemen to make things go." Patterson said he has been pleased by the off-season commitment of his line corps. "A lot of those guys have been consis-



Virginia High Bearcats

Class 2D, Southwest District

Schedule

Aug. 26	Tazewell	A
Sept. 2	John Battle	H
Sept. 9	Patrick Henry	A
Sept. 16	Wise County Central	H
Sept. 23	Lebanon	A
Oct. 7	Honaker	H
Oct. 13	Graham	H
Oct. 21	Chilhowie	A
Oct. 28	Marion	A
Nov. 4	Richlands	H

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2022 VIRGINIA HIGH BEARCATS



keep building on that.” Junior center Cody Griffith (6-0, 215, junior) and Jason Plaster are the only two veterans along the offensive line. But Plaster missed most of last season due to an illness.

The other line candidates include Mason Lail (6-3, 245), Carter McReynolds, Chandler Lowe and Jaden King.

VHS, which features 14 seniors, returned eight starters on offense and nine on defense.

That group helped the Bearcats win eight games last season and advance into the playoffs.

Thomas was the headliner, compiling 1,989 total yards and 34 touchdowns as a runner, receiver and passer.

“Stevie was fun to watch,

said. “We will have to be more consistent on offense this season because we will not be able to hit as many big plays.”

Jones is back to run the show. A cerebral 6-foot-3 senior, Jones has improved each season and is now getting looks for NCAA Division I schools in both football and baseball.

“Brody is a tremendous leader and role model,” Patterson said. “He does everything the right way and has put himself in a position to play in college through relentless work.”

Sophomore Alijah Burks (6-0, 200) will be the primary running back, with Donnie Thomas, Dashaun Taylor and Dexter Barrett in the mix. Donnie Thomas is the younger

“We have the speed and talent, but we need more production from our linemen to make things go.”

and he did things that you can’t replicate,” Patterson

The good news for VHS fans is that quarterback Brody



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Bearcats Roster

1 Patrick Poku
2 Donnie Thomas
3 Logan Slagle
4 Taj Streeter
5 Dante Worley
6 Larry Vallejo
7 Prince Poku
8 Max Murph
9 Trystin Denny
10 Brody Jones
11 Keshawn Smith

12 Owen Dean
13 Spencer Nowiski
14 Dexter Barrett
15 Aidan Shamblin
18 Andrew Battel
20 Dashaun Taylor
21 Conner Davidson
22 Josh Williams
23 Jacob Roe
24 Alijah Burks
25 Levi McMurray
26 Jayden Patterson
27 Elwood Parks

28 Joel Edwards
30 Carter Price
36 Lewis Stuart
38 BJ Thomas
54 Micah Henson
55 Chelsey King
56 Dawson Lewis
57 Conner Watts
60 Nick Alaniz
61 Braedyn Sturgill
64 Josh Begley
65 Jason Plaster
66 Peyton Sturgill

67 Chandler Lowe
68 Calloway Jordan
70 Braylon Lester
71 Jaden King
72 Cody Griffith
74 Anthony Galbreth
75 Carter McReynolds
76 Bailey Blaylock
7Y Mason Lail
78 Trey Davis
80 Thomas Perry

brother of Stevie.

Fearless Conner Davidson (101 tackles) and speedy Patrick Poku (8 TD receptions) are proven targets at receiver. Davidson is also an option in the backfield, while Poku doubles as one of the elite soccer players in far Southwest Virginia.

"Patrick has put more and more time into football, and he has expressed an interest in trying football instead of soccer in college," Patterson said.

According to Patterson, Poku has been timed under 4.5 in the 40-yard dash.

"A couple of smaller schools have shown interest in Patrick for football, and I think he could definitely help a team," Patterson said.

Basketball standout Dante Worley, Keshawn Smith and Prince Poku, brother of Patrick, are also options at receiver. Prince did not play football last season.

"Dante has had a great summer and he has the

speed to help us," Patterson said.

The other main area of concern is defense.

The Bearcats allowed 28 points per game in 2021, including a 62-27 setback to Union in the first round of the Region 2D playoffs.

"We scored a lot of points, but we also gave up a lot of points," Patterson said. "We need to do better there."

The leaders will be Jones and Davidson at outside linebacker.

"Brody and Conner are the only guys who have been on our varsity all four years. They set the tone for us," Patterson said.

Logan Slagle and Smith are the other outside linebackers, with Thomas, Burks, Levi McMurray and Taylor at the inside spots.

Patrick Poku and Worley supply quickness at safety. Barrett, Elwood Parks, Prince Poku and Trystin Denny are vying for time in the secondary.



Griffith anchors the defensive line, where he will be joined by McReynolds. Lewis Stuart, Connor Watts and Nick Alaniz provide depth.

Versatile Ajaani Delaney (67 tackles, five fumble recoveries) will be hard to replace at linebacker.

"Ajaani did a little bit of everything for us," Patterson said.

Owen Dean, another soccer player, is the kicker.

Last year's run to the playoffs has paid in another way with an enlarged roster of 49. ★



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ENCORE PERFORMANCE



WEST RIDGE
WOLVES

West Ridge Wolves Class 6A, Big East Conference

Schedule

Aug. 19	Volunteer	H
Aug. 26	Daniel Boone	H
Sept. 2	Science Hill	A
Sept. 16	Dobyns-Bennett	H
Sept. 23	Cherokee	H
Sept. 30	William Blount	H
Oct. 7	David Crockett	H
Oct. 14	Morristown East	A
Oct. 21	Tennessee High	A
Oct. 28	Jefferson County	A

★ Wolves expect to keep howling in year two

Year one was a rousing success at West Ridge.

Year two awaits, and the Wolves will have to move on without 28 seniors who led the first-year program to a 9-3 record, including a thrilling home playoff victory.

The senior count has dropped to 15 this season, most of whom didn't see much playing time last season.

"What those seniors did last year really set the expectations for what we want these guys to do," West Ridge head coach Justin Hilton said. "We have just got to continue to grow, we can't sit on our

laurels and be happy with what those guys did. We need to go create our own destiny."

West Ridge, which will play six home games after having just four last season, started with a 2-2 mark, but then won seven straight, including a 17-14 playoff victory over Cleveland on a last second field goal by Eli Iacino.

"I will never forget it. I can close my eyes and visualize it, it was a really special time," Hilton said. "I don't know if it could have been scripted any better, but it was exciting. You talk about exceeding expectations, a lot of people didn't give us a chance going

into that. We had a group that believed and I think that is what made it even more special."

Only three starters return on both sides of the ball, including running back Kaleb McClain, receiver Cale Bryant and offensive lineman Ashton Waller. Noah Tipton saw a little time on the line as well for the Wolves, but much of what returns is green in terms of experience.

Defensively, the returnees include the secondary duo of Jesse Barnes and Sawyer Tate, along with Bryant at linebacker. Emilio Hobart, a transfer from San Diego,

also brings much-needed experience for the Wolves.

"It will be a little more traditional, what we used to do," said Hilton, who spent four years as a head coach at Sullivan South before taking over at West Ridge. "Experience, the only way to get it is by playing so it will come as the season goes."

"The rest of those guys are really kind of green and they are going to have to get in there and get some experience."

Chief among the returnees is sophomore Trey Frazier, who is expected to replace Ethan Bergeron at



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2022 WEST RIDGE WOLVES



Cleveland on a last second field goal by Eli Iacino.

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"The rest of those guys are really kind of green and they are going to have to get in there and get some experience.

Chief among the returnees is sophomore Trey Frazier, who is expected to replace Ethan Bergeron at quarterback.

"As a sophomore that is a tall order, but mentally and mature wise, he is way ahead of the game," Hilton said.

"Physically, he is a pretty good sized kid for a sophomore. We have put a lot on his plate, he does a good job leading, the guys rally around him.

"All the intangibles you want a quarterback to have he has really got a lot of those and is just growing into a good mold."

He will be joined in the backfield by McClain, while the receiving corps includes Hunter Wexler, Drew Odham, Bryant and Tate. Waller will be joined on the line by 280-pound Jeremiah Kirkpatrick, Josh Seto, 260-pound Trent Tatum and Tipton.

Defensively, Barnes will be molded inside with Carter Osborne and Jacob Cassell, who is listed at 6-foot-4 and 405 pounds. Bryant will line up at linebacker with Arian

Wolves Roster

1	Jesse Barnes	23	Drew Odham	56	Brady Osborne
2	Kaleb McClain	24	Gabe Musick	58	Fallon Waller
3	Trey Frazier	25	Austin Porter	59	Peyton Hamilton
4	Tate Sawyer	26	Dacoda Harkleroad	60	Josh Seto
5	Chase Gill	27	Gabe Young	62	Keanen Taylor
6	Levi Bachman	28	Cayden Coates	63	Dom Almarales
7	Carter Sanders	29	Jayden Ramsey	64	Mason Hunsucker
8	Adam Hunt	30	Sam Harmon	65	Dylan Wallen
9	Andrew Jones	32	Dom Ellis	66	Noah Tipton
10	Cale Bryant	33	Ryker Hann	67	Derrick Risner
11	Hunter Wexler	34	Dylan Joyner	70	Avery Waller
12	Bryson Horne	35	Braxton Hyder	71	Ashton Waller
13	Aiden Rhoton	36	Brayden Ray	72	Ty Christian
14	Dylan Fore	40	Connor Bowman	75	Trent Tatum
15	Kaiden Compton	42	Carter Osborne	77	Jeremiah Kirkpatrick
16	Kas Click	43	Arian Mauk	78	Bryson Crumbley
17	Elias Carter	44	Trey West	80	Hunter Hopkins
18	Reichen Gibson	45	Jesse Penland	84	Parker SESCO
20	Emilio Hogate	51	Brock Greer	85	Ben Quillen
21	Trent Moody	53	Jake McCamy	99	Jacob Cassell
22	Kayden Puck	55	Logan Pearce		
			Carson Abbott		

Mauk, Trey West and Dylan Joyner. Tate, Odham and Wexler will combine forces with Hobart on the back end.

There is talent there, but as Hilton said, it is definitely green with inexperience, although some did play at their previous schools, whether it be Sullivan Central, South or North.

"It will be different. We had so much experience because all those guys were playing at three different schools," he said. "A lot of the guys that we had left, even the young ones, they were starting at the schools they had been at and then they came in and the whole outlook of it transformed.

"We still have got some guys who played in games. We hope the guys who

experienced the playoffs and stuff last year can really help us."

West Ridge has some of the best fan support in the region last season, especially among its student body, and Hilton hopes the Wolves can give them plenty to cheer about in year two in Blountville.

"If we are going to be successful in the games we can't make mistakes and when you have young players playing that is always a concern," Hilton said. "If we can get through those first couple of games and grow up a little bit and not make mistakes and get out of those, I feel like that experience will just keep getting better and better and we will get better as the season goes on." ★



LESSONS LEARNED



★ Mullins back for second stint with Wise Central

Jason Mullins was faced with a crossroads decision earlier this year.

Should he retire after a 26-year run as a prep football coach or return to direct the Wise County Central Warriors following the resignation of head coach Luke Owens?

"I could have ridden off into the sunset and been fine, but I just care too much about these kids," Mullins said.

The resume for Mullins includes defensive coordinator roles at J.J. Kelly and Wise Central along with head coaching stints at Pound and in the first season for Wise Central in 2011.

"I just love the game and what it teaches young men," Mullins said. "The toughness, the hard work and the showing up every day."

Relying on a cast of veterans, the Warriors posted an 8-4 record in 2021 and advanced to the second round of the Region 2D playoffs before falling 26-20 to Ridgeview.

With stars such as linebacker Tyson Tester, running back Matthew Boggs

and playmaker Ethan Mullins out of the picture, Wise Central faces a transition.

"We lost 15 seniors, but we have 15 back," Mullins said.

A total of nine starters return, including five on defense.

"We have a good core," Mullins said. "The kids that came back from last year have worked extremely hard in the weight room. We've got leaders and players who were two-way starters on a really good team."

Senior Braeden Church will be one of those leaders at quarterback and safety, while senior Brady Sturgill (6-4, 300) will start for the fourth year on the line. Look for Church to play a more prominent role as a passer and runner.

Will the offense center around Church?

"Absolutely," Mullins said. "Braeden is not only tough, but we rely on him to direct things on the field."

Alec Gent, who qualified for the Class 2 state track meet in the triple jump as a junior, projects as a top running

back.

"Alec is a speedster who did some good things for last season, but he had seniors in front of him," Mullins said. "I think we've got more team speed overall. And we've

got some guys that see the field really well, plus they have bulked up and have been hitting the holes."

The other backfield candidates include seniors Jake Pinkard and fullback Dane Elkins along with junior Avery Hall and sophomore Talan Yates. Hall is a transfer from Salem



Wise County Central Warriors

Class 2D, Mtn 7 District

Schedule

Aug. 26	Eastside	H
Sept. 2	Marion	H
Sept. 9	Ridgeview	A
Sept. 16	Virginia High	A
Sept. 30	Abingdon	H
Oct. 7	John Battle	A
Oct. 14	Union	A
Oct. 21	Lee High	A
Oct. 28	Gate City	H
Nov. 4	Grundy	H

"We've got some good slotbacks and I think we will be able to throw more," Mullins said. "Dane has really good hands."

Sophomore Owen Amos will work at tight end.

"Amos is going to do great things for us," Mullins said. "Our sophomore class is loaded. We've got several

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2021 WISE COUNTY CENTRAL WARRIORS



Warriors Roster

1 Apollo Partin

2 Nate West

3 Braeden Church

4 Jackson Willey

5 Gavin Phillips

6 Ricky Onate

7 Zeke O'Quinn

8 Owen Amos

9 Talan Yates

10 Dane Elkins

11 Ian Hall

12 Jude Davis

13 Brady Carter

15 Alec Gent

18 Conner Pace

20 Shawn Collier

21 Eli Messer

22 Cayden Strouth

23 Mika Shortt

24 Jake Pinkard

25 Eric Green

39 Caden Mullins

32 Gavin Keith

33 Avery Hall

35 Ford Riley

42 Shawn Phillips

45 Caden Isbell

50 Noah Trent

51 Ethan Brock

52 Hadley Martin

53 Zeke Burnham

56 Brandon Hobbs

57 Rickey Kennedy

58 Austin Gillian

58 Richard Reeves

60 Blake Skyes

62 Isiah Mickles

54 Austin Sowards

66 Marshal Dingus

70 Brady Sturgill

72 Austin Clevinger

74 Aidan Bowman

75 Braylen Keith

78 Tyler Craddock

guys in that class who are around 6-foot-4 and 220 pounds, and they are athletes."

Sturgill anchors a line corps that also features junior Austin Clevinger and senior Aidan Bowman. All four starters return on the defensive front.

"We're going to be bigger on

the line, and I think that will be our strong point," Mullins said. "The key will be the new starters at linebacker."

Mullins is eager to begin his second stint as the head coach for Wise Central.

"Last year's team was unique," said Mullins, who served as the defensive coordinator for Warriors in

recent years. "In 26 years of coaching football, I've never had that many guys that started all four years on defense."

Another strong point will be at kicker, where senior Ricky Onate connected on 56 of 57 extra point attempts and three field goals. Onate recently

hit a 45-yard field goal in practice.

"This is a good bunch to be around," Mullins said. "The biggest thing we're lacking is just game experience." ★

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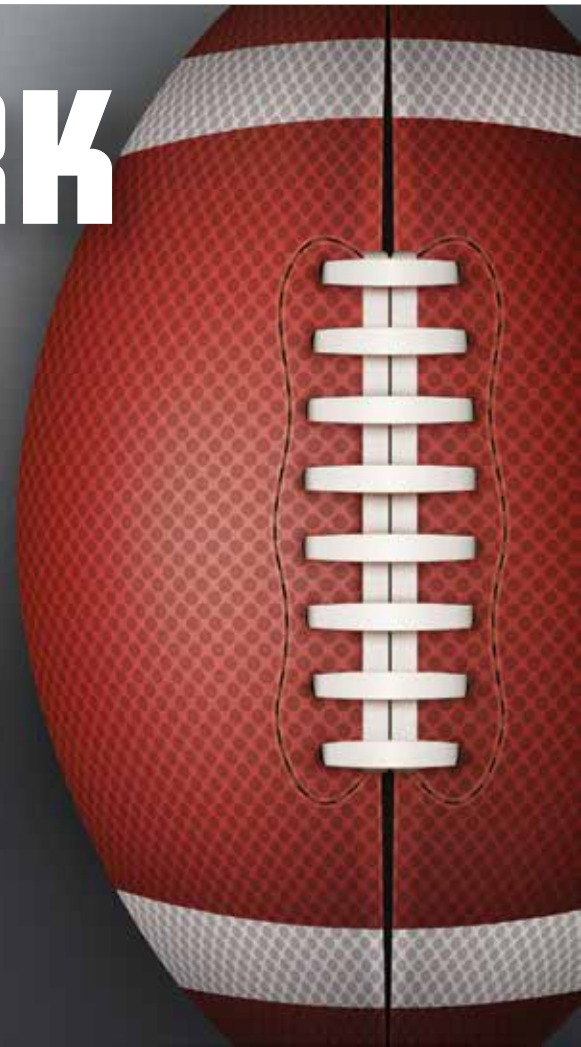
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