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From left, Reporter Thaddeus Imerman, Sports Design Editor Mark W. Miller and Reporter Hunter King.

High School Football		College Football	
<b>Belton High School</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>Mary Hardin-Baylor</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Copperas Cove High School</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>University of Texas</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>Ellison High School</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>Baylor University</b>	<b>60</b>
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**On the cover:** (From left) Shoemaker's Thomas Devoux, Ellison's Everitt Rogers, Killeen's Ta'Shoyn Johnson, Copperas Cove's Jerome Gaillard and Harker Heights' Malachi Robinson.

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# Belton offense will lean on deep, experienced line

BY THADDEUS IMERMAN

Belton enters 2019 looking to improve on a 7-4 season that included a first-round loss to Rockwall in the playoffs.

One of the main focuses on offense for the Tigers is replacing their wide receivers after all of last year's starters graduated.

Despite the turnover at the position, there is still a silver lining thanks to Belton qualifying for the state 7-on-7 tournament in June.

"It's big," Belton head coach Sam Skidmore said, "because they saw how they got better."

Part of the strategy for getting his players ready is to schedule tough non-district opponents.

The Tigers open their schedule against Austin Westlake and Round Rock. The Chaparrals finished last season with a 13-2 record and made it to the Class 6A semifinals, while the Dragons were 7-5 and advanced to the second round of the playoffs.

Preparing the players for those big games begins in practice.

"We try to put them in a lot of competition phases in a lot of different situations to see them compete," Skidmore said. "Whether it be third-and-short, whether it be goal line, whether it be wide receivers or defensive back one-on-ones — just put them in different situations and have them learn from failures and learn from successes in those different situations."

The goal for Belton is to win the district championship and make a run in the playoffs.

Although no one is near a finished product, Skidmore likes the depth and experience his offensive line provides thanks in part to standout senior left guard Chris Brown.

He comes into the season with lots of experience having started all of



HERALD | FILE

Belton quarterback Ruben Jimenez is brought down near the goal line on Sept. 21 against Harker Heights at Leo Buckley Stadium.

## BELTON OFFENSE

the games last season and some of the games in 2017.

While Brown has some big responsibilities on the field, he hopes to contribute off the field as well.

"I hope to be the best leader they need me to be," Brown said.

Due to not having much varsity experience at the wide receiver position, the Tigers will focus on the running game, and the key to being successful offensively is the grittiness of the offensive line and a willingness to get their hands dirty.

"Our motto this year is 1-0," Brown said. "Every guy should be 1-0 on every play."

"In order to be successful on the team, we have to play together; play smart, and if we get down, just stay up."

## BELTON TIGERS LAST FIVE SEASONS

2018: 7-4  
2017: 6-5  
2016: 8-4  
2015: 5-6  
2014: 6-6

## 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at Austin Westlake	7:30
Sept. 6	Round Rock	7:30
Sept. 13	at Copperas Cove	7:30
Sept. 20	Harker Heights	7:30
Sept. 26	at Shoemaker	7:00
Oct. 4	Temple	7:30
Oct. 17	at Killeen	7:00
Oct. 25	Ellison	7:30
Nov. 1	at Waco	7:30
Nov. 8	Waco Midway	7:30



# Senior safety Jason Stephens will anchor Tigers' defense

BY THADDEUS IMERMAN

Belton head coach Sam Skidmore enters his third season with some strengths and question marks on defense, and both are in the secondary.

For starters, both of Skidmore's starting cornerbacks from 2018 graduated, but he has two seniors returning to play free safety and strong safety, including Jason Stephens, who will help guide the Tigers defense.

Stephens, who registered 64 tackles and three interceptions as a junior, enters his senior season as a two-year start-

er, having started every game of his sophomore and junior seasons. He will be looked upon for his leadership to help develop the young cornerbacks.

He credits playing behind Garrison Vaughn in helping him prepare for his leadership role. Vaughn is a redshirt freshman with the Houston Cougars.

"I look up to the people who have played before me," Stephens said, "so it feels good to be in this position.

"I hope people can feed off my leadership and stick with that."

Stephens' goal for 2019 is for the defense as a whole to be the focal point for the team.

In order to achieve the goal, the defense will need to make big plays and play with energy.

So far, through spring ball, the motto for the defense has been, "Play fast, run to punish."

The mentality is being instilled by new defensive coordinator Ty Patrick who comes from Flower Mound Marcus.

Stephens said Patrick is pushing the defense to do everything full speed.

"When we're on the sidelines," Stephens said, "it's not time to goof around.

"That's when we're locked in, cheering



HERALD | FILE

Belton senior Jason Stephens, left, enters his third season as a starter in the Tigers' defensive backfield.

on the offense, being there for the guys."

Stephens believes the unit will play a big role.

"If we can get that (linebackers) going," he said, "that'll be the anchor."

Skidmore said the strongest piece of the defense is the defensive line, and he

likes the depth.

"We have several seniors — Martin Rowe, Johnny Jackson, JJ Bowers," Skidmore said. "We're excited about the depth at the defensive line.

"I think it's going to be a huge asset to be able to rotate those guys."





The Belton High School varsity cheerleading team.

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The Belton High School Marching Band.

COURTESY | RAH PHOTOGRAPHY





The Belton High School Magic Belles dance team.

COURTESY



# Cove offense expects to surprise opponents with versatility

BY CLAY WHITTINGTON

Jaylin Smith is ready to surprise some opponents.

Every time Copperas Cove steps on the field this season, the intention is to reach the end zone. With a number of pieces returning to the offense, including an all-district running back and a pair of standout receivers, the Bulldogs are confident they can accomplish the goal with regularity.

The question, however, is how, according to Smith.

"Teams aren't really going to know what to expect," the Copperas Cove

senior said. "When people look at our offense, they are going to see a run-first offense, and when

we pass, it is going to shock people.

"So, this offense just works great for us, and we have the people to fit the system."

Smith will line up along with senior Jahmeel Rice at receiver this season, while Micah Cox, who was the team's second leading rusher last season with 817 yards and nine touchdowns as a junior, should spearhead the ground game.

But to deliver a balanced attack, the Bulldogs must replace their quarterback.

Easton Simpson graduated following an impressive debut campaign earning him 12-6A All-District Second Team honors alongside Cox, and entering the season, there is a competition between junior Russel Cochran and sophomore Shane Richey for the vacant position.

Others will be involved, though, especially at running back.

Along with Cox, junior Brandon Ortega returns following an increased role last year after Elijah Delacruz suffered a season-ending leg injury during the team's intrasquad scrimmage. Now a



Copperas Cove's Jaylin Smith carries the ball against Belton on Sept. 14, 2018, in Belton. Smith returns for his senior season with the Bulldogs, who expect to top last season's 33.4 points-per-game average in their second season under head coach Jack Alvarez.

HERALD | FILE

senior, Delacruz is also set to contribute.

"Last year," Copperas Cove head coach Jack Alvarez said, "I thought we showed signs of explosiveness, and we allowed a lot of people to touch the ball.

"This year, that is going to be amplified."

The Bulldogs averaged 33.4 points per game last season, producing the program's first winning season since 2014 while reaching the playoffs for a second consecutive year.

But to repeat the success, Smith believes the team must rely on its offensive line.

"With the formations we plan to use," he said, "our offensive line is everything.

"They are the key to what we want to do, and I fully trust them to get the job done."

Four seniors, including center Aaron Shanahan, will anchor the offensive line along with returning left tackle McKenzie Agnello, a junior.

Although talent will play a factor in Copperas Cove's potential, Alvarez, who inherited the program late last off-season, believes team chemistry is equally important.

"We are light years ahead of where we were last year at this time," he said. "Then, the kids were just introduced to us.

"So, I feel our ceiling is much higher."

## COPPERAS COVE BULLDAWGS LAST FIVE SEASONS

2018: 7-4

2017: 5-6

2016: 4-5

2015: 3-8

2014: 7-4

## 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	Burleson	7:30
Sept. 6	Manor	7:30
Sept. 13	Belton	7:30
Sept. 20	at Killeen	7:30
Sept. 27	Ellison	7:30
Oct. 4	at Waco	7:30
Oct. 11	Waco Midway	7:30
Oct. 25	at Harker Heights	7:30
Nov. 1	Shoemaker	7:30
Nov. 8	at Temple	7:30



# Bulldawg defense ready to battle 12-6A's high-octane offenses

BY CLAY WHITTINGTON

Nate David knows Copperas Cove's defense is talented.

Last season, the Bulldogs won a quartet of games in part by holding their opponents to 18 points or less. They are also returning five starters, including David, a senior linebacker.

With a roster full of rising defensive standouts set to complement the returners, David is confident the team has potential. The key will be playing intelligently.

"We are way ahead of where we were

## COPPERAS COVE DEFENSE

last year," David said, "when we had one of the best defenses in the district.

"We're already looking really good, so we just have to go out and play smart. We can't kill ourselves with penalties."

While mistakes are inevitable and a perfect performance is impossible, the Bulldogs should benefit greatly from the chemistry created over the past year.

Following more than two decades with the team, former Copperas Cove head coach Jack Welch surprisingly stepped down prior to last season, suddenly ushering in a new era under Jack Alvarez.

The rapid transition left virtually no time for the coaching staff and players to jell before the opening contest arrived, and due to the recent realignment, the first District 12-6A game was a mere two weeks later.

But there is no lack of familiarity with the coaches or their defensive philosophy anymore.

"The kids had a lot of questions about us," Alvarez said, "and we had a lot of questions about them.

"It's hard to create chemistry or trust in that short amount of time, but we're operating on a two-way street right now,



HERALD | FILE

Copperas Cove linebacker Nate David is tackled after intercepting a two-point conversion pass attempt against Ellison on Sept. 28, 2018, at Leo Buckley Stadium. David, a senior, is one of five returning starters on the Bulldawg defense.

and we're all feeling really good together."

Along with David, senior cornerback Jerome Gaillard is expected to be a defensive leader for the Bulldogs this season, while safety Christian Tuiasosopo and outside linebacker Kendal Parker will also be relied upon to contribute.

On the line, Zachary Hoyle and Devyn Taylor return from last year to lead the group.

"We've got four really good guys on our defensive line," Alvarez said. "We've got some spots in our defense where will still have to find out who is going to be

the guy.

"The positive thing, though, is that we feel we have a lot of really good choices."

Copperas Cove will need to be solid defensively to contend with high-scoring district opponents like Belton, Waco Midway and Temple, which each posted more than 440 points last season.

David feels the Bulldogs are ready for the challenge, though.

"We know we have to be ready when the time comes for district," he said, "but we also know we can do it.

"We know how good we are, and we know we can compete with any team."





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The Copperas Cove High School cheerleaders.



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# With strong senior class, Eagles look poised for playoff run

BY THADDEUS IMERMAN

Head coach Todd Wright enters his second season at the helm of the Ellison Eagles football team. Last year, the team took a slight step back, finishing 4-6 overall (4-4 in 12-6A district play). This year, however, the Eagles look poised to make a playoff run.

In order to accomplish this goal, however, Wright knows they need to find a way to beat their nondistrict opponents

## ELLISON OFFENSE

A&M Consolidated and Austin Vandegrift.

Ellison lost to both powerful teams last season. A&M Consolidated finished the season 10-2, while Vandegrift finished 12-1. Ellison will open 2019 with both on its schedule yet again.

“We got to find a way to beat the suburban schools,” Wright said.

Wright feels scheduling tough nondistrict opponents will help them prepare for the grueling eight-game district schedule in which perennial powers Waco Midway, Temple, Belton and Copperas Cove await.

Wright hired two coaches from the Houston area, both with head coaching experience, to help his players prepare for the season.

On the offensive side of the ball is wide receivers and first assistant coach Jeffrey Sowell. Wright said Sowell has a lot of high school coaching experience and has also coached wide receivers collegiately with Rice.

He has a ton of confidence, according to Wright, and is energetic and always has a positive attitude.

“The thing that coach Sowell will add is definitely confidence in that wide receiver position,” Wright said. “Coach Sowell is an energetic and very, very positive person.”

Sowell brings many years of experience that Wright was looking for to help



HERALD | FILE

Ellison quarterback Breezion Spiller scrambles against Killeen on Nov. 2, 2018, at Leo Buckley Stadium.

his strong senior class.

Wright said offensively there are potentially six or seven senior returning starters. Some of the key returners are offensive tackle Kaleb Luna, quarterback Breezion Spiller and wide receiver Stacy Brown.

Spiller comes into the season as the reigning 12-6A co-offensive player of the year. Spiller shared the honors last season with fellow quarterbacks Jared Wiley of Temple and Connor Carothers of Belton.

Brown had 42 catches for 493 yards in 2018, according to Dave Campbell's Texas Football magazine. He also possesses a leaping ability, capturing a gold medal in the triple jump at the 2019 Class 6A

## ELLISON EAGLES LAST FIVE SEASONS

2018: 4-6  
2017: 5-6  
2016: 6-4  
2015: 6-4  
2014: 2-8

## 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at A&M Consolidated	7:30
Sept. 5	Austin Vandegrift	7:00
Sept. 13	at Waco	7:30
Sept. 19	Waco Midway	7:00
Sept. 27	at Copperas Cove	7:30
Oct. 3	Harker Heights	7:00
Oct. 11	at Shoemaker	7:30
Oct. 18	Temple	7:30
Oct. 25	at Belton	7:30
Nov. 1	Killeen	7:30

UIL state track meet on May 11.

Luna comes in as one of Wright's captains. He will anchor a strong offensive line, a core group Wright calls his strongest on the offense.

Luna will put an emphasis on leading by example.

“When it comes to after practice, getting a little extra work in without the coaches telling you,” Luna said. “Me being a senior as well, I have to give the reins to the underclassmen.”

Luna echoed Wright's emphasis that the offensive line is the strongest part of the Eagle offense.

The only question mark entering 2019 is the running back position, as the Eagles must replace all-district running back David Carey. Wright said the focus in training camp will be to see how they have developed at running back.

Ellison opens the 2019 season Friday at A&M Consolidated with kickoff scheduled for 7:30 p.m.



# New coordinator Verzwylvelt takes reins of Ellison defense

BY THADDEUS IMERMAN

In only his second season, Ellison head coach Todd Wright is already shaking things up on his coaching staff. He hired new defensive coordinator Brent Verzwylvelt, or “Coach V” as Wright calls him.

The Eagles finished 4-6 overall in 2018, with a 4-4 district record. Wright’s goal for the season is to get into and make a run in the playoffs.

With a strong senior class, the Eagles may be primed for a playoff run. In order to get to the playoffs, Wright will lean on Verzwylvelt’s experience to assist the defense.

“We needed to add somebody who had coached multiple rounds deep into the playoffs, because that’s one of our goals, not just make the playoffs, but to make a little bit of a run,” Wright said.

Verzwylvelt comes from the Houston area, most recently coaching as an offensive coordinator for the Klein Forest Eagles, according to MaxPreps. Wright said during his coaching career, Verzwylvelt has coached in championship games.

“He’s coached against some really good programs over his years,” Wright said.

His experience and confidence will help when the Eagles make in-game adjustments.

Defensively, the Eagles are returning nine potential senior starters from last year’s team. The defense will be anchored by Everitt Rogers, who has already committed to Tulsa in the FBS American Athletic Conference.

According to Dave Campbell’s Texas Football magazine’s Ellison preview, Rogers had 65 tackles and six sacks in 2018, which leads all defensive returners for the Eagles.



HERALD | FILE

Ellison defensive lineman Everitt Rogers, right, participates in a drill during spring football practice in May. Rogers has committed to Tulsa University.

“Our team is young, and they’re also going to look up to me, because I’ve been there the longest,” Rogers said. “I know what it takes to get to the playoffs.”

Rogers said the 2020 senior class is different from any other senior class he’s seen at Ellison.

“Talent-wise, we bring in so much talent, and then we also work together,” Rogers said. “We’ve already built that bond together since middle school.”

Other players to watch on defense, according to Wright, are defensive back KJ Wilkerson and cornerback Isiah Grant.

Texas Football calls Grant the best

cover corner on the team, and he proved that last season with two interceptions.

Wright said his best core group on the defense is the defensive line. Led by Rogers, Wright said the defensive line is one of the biggest in the district this season.

To Wright, the question mark on defense is the linebackers. He said most of the linebackers coming into this season don’t have much varsity experience, but there are some good candidates to emerge as starters from camp.

The key for the defense will be to mesh quickly.





The 2019 Ellison High School Knights cheerleading team.

COURTESY



The Ellison High School Screaming Eagle band leadership corps.



COURTESY



COURTESY

Ellison High School Screaming Eagle Band drum majors, left to right, Gabriel Ferrer, Kennedy Crayton (head drum major) and Elliott Bolden.

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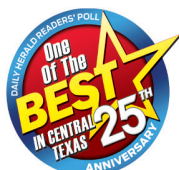
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# More experience, playmakers should make Knights better

BY CLAY WHITTINGTON

Chris Terry can see the evolution. In 2018, Harker Heights' offense struggled, averaging 15.4 points per game and being held to fewer than 10 points on four occasions, including a pair of shutouts.

Admittedly, it was a disappointing performance, but the Knights offensive lineman is witnessing a change.

"There is a lot of chemistry between all the players on the field this year," Terry said. "Last year, we had a lot of young guys, and things just weren't clicking right."

"But you can tell guys are jelling this year, and there is just a lot more chemistry."

Harker Heights returns eight starters on offense, including Terry, who was placed on last season's 12-6A All-District Second Team as a tackle.

While Terry was the Knights' lone offensive all-district selection in 2018, Harker Heights head coach Jerry Edwards believes his players have the potential to change that this year.

"We've added some skill guys," Edwards said, "and that is something we were missing. We didn't have the guys who were explosive and could make a big impact when you got the ball in their hands."

"Now, some of those guys who were younger have the experience and maturity, and they're stronger and faster. We have playmakers now."

Among them is sophomore quarterback Terrance Carter, who started five games as a freshman. As a 14-year-old, Carter led the Knights to their only victory last season — a 36-17 road win against Waco — in his second career start.

At running back, Andre Gebhardt should carry the load for Harker Heights' rushing attack, while LaPrinceton Dixon, Marcus Maples and Mikelle



HERALD | FILE

## HARKER HEIGHTS OFFENSE

Mason will serve as some of Carter's primary targets in the passing game.

Perhaps one of the Knights' most significant strengths this season, however, will be its offensive line.

With all but one starter returning, Terry believes the group is set to perform at a high level.

"Everybody knows what to do," he said. "It's very simple, we just stick to our rules, and we are already looking really sharp."

"Everybody got in great condition over the summer, and we are a lot stronger as a whole than we were last season."

With the benefits of both physical and mental growth, Harker Heights intends to produce far more trips into the end zone this season, but Edwards understands the task will not be simple.

"We were lacking some intensity on offense last year," he said, "and one of our staff's main focuses coming into the season was correcting that."

"We're going to have to be able to grind out yards and put points on the board, but everybody is looking forward to the challenge."

Harker Heights running back Andre Gebhardt dives into the end zone for a touchdown against Ellison on Oct. 4, 2018. The Knights have eight returning offensive starters.

## HARKER HEIGHTS KNIGHTS

### LAST FIVE SEASONS

2018: 1-9

2017: 5-5

2016: 6-5

2015: 2-8

2014: 5-5

### 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at Round Rock	7:30
Sept. 6	RR Stony Point	7:00
Sept. 13	Temple	7:30
Sept. 20	at Belton	7:00
Sept. 27	Killeen	7:30
Oct. 3	at Ellison	7:00
Oct. 10	Waco	7:00
Oct. 18	at Waco Midway	7:30
Oct. 25	Copperas Cove	7:30
Nov. 1	at Shoemaker	7:30



# Knights aiming to restore reputation as stingy defense

BY CLAY WHITTINGTON

Jerry Edwards feels his defense lost its identity.

For years, Harker Heights prided itself on being able to stop opponents offensively and limit their opportunities to score through a dedication to sound, solid play.

Last season, however, the Knights lapsed.

Harker Heights allowed the second most points of any team in District 12-6A, giving up 398 points during the season, including 317 throughout the eight-game district schedule.

But Edwards does not envision a similar performance this year.

“We had made a name for ourselves as being a good defensive football team,” he said. “Last year, we didn’t uphold our end of the bargain to maintain that reputation.

“So, this year, we’re senior heavy with guys who have been in the system for a while, they know what it takes, and I think they are going to get us back to where we were by being a hard-nosed, stop-the-run, good-tackling defense.”

The Knights bring back six starters on defense, and the unit sports a multitude of seniors at key positions. Among them, Harker Heights has a trio of senior linebackers, including all-district second-team selection Reece Vazquez and Malik Wilson, and a senior-heavy secondary.

Additionally, two seniors — Idris Haith and Malachi Robinson — will help anchor the defensive line at the ends.

Along with the experience, the players are benefiting from a renewed motivation, according to Knights cornerback Darian Stephens.

“Last season stuck with all of us,” the senior said. “We all know that we can play better than that, and we should perform better than that.



HERALD | FILE

Harker Heights cornerback Darian Stephens, left, breaks up a pass for Mikelle Mason during the Knights' spring game in May.

## HARKER HEIGHTS DEFENSE

“So, it has just pushed us to work harder in practice and pay attention.”

While Harker Heights has numerous seniors, the Knights possess plenty of younger talent.

Savonte Stanford-Page, a safety, was a unanimous selection as all-district defensive newcomer of the year as a sophomore, while juniors Quintin Howard (LB), Elijah Setefano (DL) and varsity newcomer Donte Lopez are each expected to produce this season.

Even with all the factors in Harker

Heights' favor, Edwards knows it will be difficult to contain the district's high-powered offenses like Waco Midway, Temple and Belton, but it is not impossible.

“All our guys are unselfish,” Edwards said, “and on defense, that’s how you have to be. Players have to do their jobs, so everybody else can do theirs.

“But all the kids have bought into it.” Stephens echoed the sentiments.

“We each want to be the best we can be for the team,” he said. “Our chemistry is so much better, and it has led to better communication.

“Now, we’re focused on maintaining



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9/28	HOWARD PAYNE UNIV.	BELTON, TX	6:00PM
10/5	MCMURRY UNIV.	ABILENE, TX	1:00PM
10/12	EAST TEXAS BAPTIST UNIV.	BELTON, TX	2:00PM
10/19	SOUTHWESTERN UNIV.	GEORGETOWN, TX	1:00PM
10/26	HARDIN-SIMMONS UNIV.	BELTON, TX	1:00PM
11/2	LOUISIANA COLLEGE	PINEVILLE, LA	1:00PM
11/9	TEXAS LUTHERAN UNIV.	BELTON, TX	1:00PM
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# With multiple starters back, Roos offense expects to shine

BY HUNTER KING

The Killeen Kangaroos are betting on their experience to play a key factor in improving their offense this season.

The Roo offense is returning multiple starters, including their quarterback and running back.

James Terry will be in his senior season after playing the position as a junior. Head coach Neil Searcy is very optimistic about his quarterback.

## KILLEEN OFFENSE

“For any offense when you’ve got your starting quarterback coming back, that’s going to be huge for us,” Searcy said.

Also returning is the team’s starting running back, Kadarius Marshall, who rushed for about 1,400 yards in nine games during the 2018 season.

Marshall was the unanimous District 12-6A newcomer of the year as a sophomore.

Killeen will also have three receivers returning from last year, including senior Brandon Fox, who started as a sophomore and a junior.

Fox thinks the offense is very well-rounded and going to perform well this year.

“We’re going to have a good year. We’re going to play hard, play together and play as a family,” Fox said.

Fox thinks his biggest strength is being an every-down guy that can “block if I need to block and catch a pass if I need to catch a pass,” he said.

One of the big names to watch for the Roos in the upcoming season will be 6-foot-6, 225-pound tight end Nate Kamper who has committed to Rice.

“We’re looking for big things from him from the tight end position,” Searcy said.

Searcy believes the offense will run through Marshall and his offensive line, which has three returning starters.



HERALD | FILE

Killeen running back Kadarius Marshall, right, and Brandon Fox (3) are among several players returning for the Kangaroos offense.

Jadin Jones is returning at left tackle, Isaiah Renteria at guard and Iese Viatupa at right tackle.

With a 1,400-yard rusher and three returning offensive linemen, the Roos hope to control the game up front.

“Our offense is going to go how our offensive line goes,” Searcy said. “We have to be able to establish our running game. With Kadarius coming back ... he’s going to have to have a good night for us to be successful.”

The run game opens the door to the passing game, according to Searcy.

He said his philosophy as a football coach is centered around running the football.

“You have to be able to run the football

## KILLEEN KANGAROOS LAST FIVE SEASONS

2018: 5-5  
2017: 4-6  
2016: 5-6  
2015: 2-8  
2014: 4-6

## 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 29	RR Stony Point	7:00
Sept. 5	at Cedar Park Vista Ridge	7:00
Sept. 13	at Waco Midway	7:30
Sept. 20	Copperas Cove	7:30
Sept. 27	at Harker Heights	7:30
Oct. 4	Shoemaker	7:30
Oct. 11	at Temple	7:30
Oct. 17	Belton	7:00
Nov. 1	at Ellison	7:30
Nov. 7	Waco	7:00

**‘We’re going to have a good year. We’re going to play hard, play together and play as a family.’**

## Brandon Fox

Wide receiver

for everything else to work,” Searcy said.

The Roos will operate out of what Searcy called a spread gun offense. He said they will run sets with one running back, two backs and empty sets. The offense will show multiple looks, according to Searcy.





HERALD | FILE

Ta'Shoyn Johnson is the only returning defensive starter for Killeen in 2019. But he's a solid foundation. The 6-foot-2, 297-pound defensive tackle has committed to the University of North Texas.

# Young Kangaroo defense looks to make an impact in 2019

BY HUNTER KING

Neil Searcy understands the situation. Killeen will be pretty young defensively this season after graduating a wealth of talent from last year's team.

"We had a lot of seniors last year," the Kangaroos head coach said, "so we graduated a lot of seniors."

The only returning starter on defense is Ta'Shoyn Johnson, a 6-foot-2-inch, 297-pound defensive lineman who committed to North Texas earlier this summer.

Despite the departures, Johnson is very confident.

"We're going to have a good season this year," he said. "During spring, we

could see that our team could play a little football, and we're going go far this year."

Johnson views his strength to be against the run, considering himself a run-stopper who makes the other team change its gameplan when they see him, and Searcy said spring football was very important for their defense as a whole.

"We could really see where we were going to be defensively," he said. "I was really impressed with our young guys that came in and played this spring on defense and how they played."

Johnson echoed the sentiments.

"Everybody is going to step in and do what they need to do," Johnson said.

Johnson anticipates having a leadership role within the group, and it's something he is ready for.

"I've always been a leader," Johnson said, "I'm just going to be myself and be a leader."

And he is not shy about his expectations.

"We're going to make the playoffs this year," Johnson said. "It's going to happen this year."

"It's our time now."

While the Kangaroos defense is transforming, Searcy feels the young players are responding well.

"Early on will be the test," he said, "but I think over the long haul, we'll be pretty consistent on the defensive side





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The Killdeer High School varsity cheerleaders perform during the 2018 season.

TODD MARTIN / KSD



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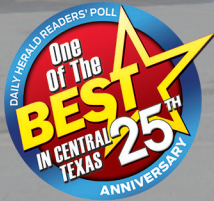


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# Grey Wolves riding momentum of strong finish to 2018 season

BY BEAU KEMP

Last season, Shoemaker produced an overall record of 2-8. Although it might not sound very impressive, it was a step in the right direction.

Just two years ago, when head football coach Toby Foreman arrived, the Grey Wolves were 11 games into a losing streaking that would reach 27.

Now, however, things are different.

"We were 0-10 when I got here," Foreman said.

## SHOEMAKER OFFENSE

but last year we broke our streak.

"It was really great for morale."

After an 0-6 start, the Wolves split their final four games, falling only to playoff-bound Copperas Cove (41-35) and Waco Midway.

Foreman believes all the hard work the players have put in and the experience the returning players have will get them even closer to a winning season.

"Last year," he said, "we played 15 sophomores, and when that happens, it pays off in the upcoming seasons."

"We're going to have lots of experience, and we've put in a lot of hard work."

Running back Devin Brown thinks the sophomores that played last year will be productive.

"They're going to bring a lot to the team this year," he said. "They're going to be offering more rotational depth."

Foreman is excited to see the improvement in the 15 returning sophomores.

"I'm ready to get the pads on and see which ones are going to surprise me in a good way and which ones are going to surprise me in a bad way," he said.

Brown feels the running backs will not disappoint.

"We're going to be good," he said. "All three of us are going to be good."



HERALD | FILE

Shoemaker running back Devin Brown carries against Midlothian during the 2018 season.

"I think our offensive line got stronger in the offseason. Our skill guys got faster and, overall, I think we got faster."

Being mentally strong will be a key to

## SHOEMAKER GREY WOLVES LAST FIVE SEASONS

2018: 2-8

2017: 0-10

2016: 0-10

2015: 9-3

2014: 6-5

## 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	San Angelo Central	7:00
Sept. 6	at Midlothian	7:00
Sept. 20	at Temple	7:30
Sept. 26	Belton	7:00
Oct. 4	at Killeen	7:30
Oct. 11	Ellison	7:30
Oct. 18	at Waco	7:00
Oct. 24	Waco Midway	7:30
Nov. 1	at Copperas Cove	7:30
Nov. 8	Harker Heights	7:30

success, according to Foreman.

"It's all mental," he said. "We had a few games where we were real close but couldn't close it, so I really do believe it's all mental."

**'Last year we played 15 sophomores, and when that happens, it pays off in the upcoming seasons. We're going to have lots of experience and we've put in a lot of hard work.'**

**Devin Brown**

Running back





HERALD | FILE

Shoemaker's Ahmad Bailey (10) and Keith Cunningham (44) close in for the tackle during Shoemaker's spring game in May.

# Shoemaker ready to tackle last season's run-game issues

BY BEAU KEMP

Last season, Shoemaker played 15 sophomores on a team that eventually snapped a 27-game losing streak. One of those sophomores was linebacker Keith Cunningham.

He played at the defensive end position last season and did not start. This year head football coach Toby Foreman transitioned him to the linebacker position where he will start for the first time in his high school career.

After an 0-6 start, Shoemaker finished last season 2-8, and easily could have been 4-6.

Cunningham feels the Wolves can make an even bigger leap in the right direction this season.

"I'm feeling good. I feel like this our year. We've been focusing on the playbook, we've been working hard and we're very young," Cunningham said.

In order for this to be the year for Shoemaker, Cunningham said the defense needs to improve on stopping the run.

"We need to improve on our run game on the defensive side of the ball. It was a big issue. We struggled a lot against the run. Especially against teams with good running backs.

"Our D-line has improved a lot over the summer and spring and we'll have good rotation and good depth at those positions," Cunningham said.

Normally a bevy of young players would be a problem, but Cunningham is not worried about the underclassmen. He believes they will provide some

needed help.

"They'll be good," he said. "They have good size, good speed. They pay attention to details, the little things. They'll mainly be role players, and they'll be giving us depth. Not many of them will start, well we'll have a few starters," Cunningham said.

Cunningham was one of the underclassmen providing support off the bench last year. Now he has stepped into more of a leadership role for the team at his new position.

"After I realized the seniors are gone, I knew someone needs to step up. Someone needs to step into the leadership role and set an example for these younger players.

I have to make sure to use word of mouth and action and make sure it all comes together," he said.





COURTESY

The Shoemaker High School varsity cheerleading team.



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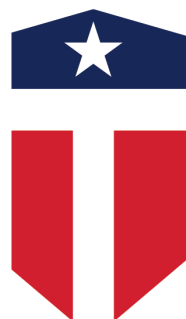




TODD MARTIN/KSD

The Shoemaker High School dance team performs Friday during the Killeen ISD convocation party at the Bell County Expo Center in Belton.





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# Gatesville native Luke Howard takes reins at alma mater

BY THADDEUS IMERMAN

For the first time in more than a decade, there's a new head coach patrolling the sidelines for Gatesville.

Gatesville native Luke Howard came home in June after being hired by former head coach Kyle Cooper, who held the position for a dozen seasons before leaving to join the Mount Vernon coaching staff under former Baylor coach Art Briles.

Howard takes over after three seasons

## GATESVILLE OFFENSE

as an assistant at the University of

Mary Hardin-Baylor. While on Crusaders head coach Pete Fredenburg's staff, Howard oversaw the running backs and tight ends, but he has new priorities now.

"Our big goal is understanding the process," Howard said.

Howard will guide Gatesville into the 2019 season with primarily the same staff the Hornets had last year, but without a running backs coach, Howard will absorb the extra duties due to his offensive experience.

One thing Howard is focusing on heading into the season is giving his underclassmen playing time on varsity.

As a whole, the senior and junior classes are small, but the sophomore and freshman classes have a lot of players, according to Howard.

With such a large underclassmen group, the younger players will be more involved, and Howard is excited about the players, who have been consistently putting in work, but he also has veteran players to rely on, including senior center Waylon Jones, who is excited to play for Howard.

"My first impression is he's a good guy," Jones said. "He seems like a guy coach Cooper held to a high standard."

Jones will be one of the most experi-



HERALD | FILE

Gatesville running back Isaiah Navejas (14) dives into the end zone for a touchdown against Lampasas Sept. 28 at Badger Stadium in Lampasas.

enced players on a young offensive line, but the group is bigger physically than last year's line.

Regardless of age or experience, the Hornets have a common objective this season.

"The main thing is learning how we play together," Jones said.

**'Our big goal is understanding the process.'**

**Luke Howard**

First-year Gatesville head coach

## GATESVILLE HORNETS LAST FIVE SEASONS

2018: 3-7

2017: 7-4

2016: 4-6

2015: 6-7

2014: 4-7

## 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at Midlothian Heritage	7:30
Sept. 6	Robinson	7:30
Sept. 13	at Cameron Yoe	7:30
Sept. 20	Waco Connally	7:30
Sept. 27	Lampasas	7:30
Oct. 4	at Glen Rose	7:30
Oct. 11	at Brownwood	7:00
Oct. 18	China Spring	7:00
Nov. 1	Stephenville	7:00
Nov. 8	at Waco La Vega	7:00



# Two Gatesville grads look to return Hornets to winning ways

BY THADDEUS IMERMAN

The Gatesville Fightin' Hornets have a new head coach and a new cornerbacks and special teams coach. Both are Gatesville graduates.

New head coach Luke Howard is a 2007 graduate, and new assistant Austin Cole is a 2006 graduate.

Cole comes back to Gatesville after time coaching in Belton.

## GATESVILLE DEFENSE

Cole will be called upon to help prepare

the young players in the secondary.

"I'm certainly excited about our young kids, coupled with our veterans that we have on the squad, and seeing what we can piece together and go do," Howard said.

On the defensive side of the ball, Howard will look to the front eight to anchor the defense.

The focus for Gatesville will be to stop the run.

"We're going to be committed to playing good defense, and that's been a staple here at Gatesville for a long time," Howard said. "You look back at the successful teams we've had, we're going to put our best players on defense, and we're going to be committed to being a good defensive ball club."

Howard acknowledged the defense has a lot of team speed. He said one of the goals defensively will be to figure out who the right guys are.

"I've got to do a great job of getting those guys to understand that the atmosphere on Friday is different from Thursdays," Howard said.

In order to do so, he will rely on senior defensive end Luke Gregory, who plays both ways and is also a tight end on offense. He said it takes a high level of endurance, as he does not get off the field much.

"About a quarter into the season, they



HERALD | FILE

Gatesville defensive end Hunter Schiff, right, helps tackle Midlothian Heritage quarterback Landon Ledbetter in the 2018 season opener at McKamie Stadium in Gatesville.

put me in, and I just went after it," Gregory said of being named a starter part of the way through last season.

Gregory has already displayed some of the leadership he will be relied on to provide.

"With my experience, I would have to say I try to help a lot of kids, get them here to workouts," Gregory said.

"We really need to work more on dependence on some of the defensive stuff," he said. "It's going to be real young both ways."

Gregory admitted the thing they need to work on the most during training camp and the nondistrict schedule is figuring out who they can rely on in tough

situations.

"We've got a pretty fresh set of secondaries. We've got almost a whole fresh D-line, besides me," Gregory said.

Although he is a senior, he said the defensive line and secondary are young units. The linebacking corps returns players with varsity experience.

Gregory will also be asked to help develop the defensive line during live-game situations.

At 6-feet-4-inches tall, Gregory can see things others can't. He pushes them hard to do everything right.

He said as long as they keep their heads on straight, they should be good there.





The Gatesville High School cheerleading team.

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The 2019 Gatesville High School Dazzlers dance team.

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# Loaded Badgers ready for an even bigger postseason run

BY CLAY WHITTINGTON

Lampasas has all the pieces. The Badgers enter the season with the potential to lead the area in scoring. They return the 14-4A, Division I All-District Offensive Player of the Year, sport multiple playmaking receivers and welcome back a running back with two years varsity experience.

Having a roster full of talent, however, is not enough, according to Lampasas

head coach Troy Rogers.

## LAMPASAS OFFENSE

“Offensively,” he said, “we can have all the weapons in the world, but if we don’t protect each other and block for each other, then it is not going to matter.”

Coming off its first trip into the area round of the playoffs in eight years, the Badgers look to ride their offense back into the postseason after scoring at least 40 points seven times in 2018.

Junior quarterback Ace Whitehead will guide the unit following a 3,049-yard, 35-touchdown campaign as a sophomore, earning him title of the district’s best offensive player.

And he has plenty of familiar options at receiver, including the senior duo of Cameron Everts and Jaylon Porter and junior Michael Murray Jr.

“We’re just so much further ahead than we’ve been in the past,” Whitehead said. “We’ve been practicing and working our stuff all offseason.

“Now, it’s all coming together.”

While Lampasas has the ability to throw, it will also utilize a ground game being reinforced by the return of senior Daunte Cuffie, who missed all of last season with a knee injury. With Cuffie sidelined, junior Jack Jerome carried the load for the Badgers last season, earning valuable experience and creating a stronger backfield this season.

Cuffie’s presence benefits the team in



HERALD | FILE

Lampasas quarterback Ace Whitehead (2) hands off to Jack Jerome during the Badgers' first-round playoff game against Freeport Brazosport in Bryan.

other ways, though.

“We have competition at positions,” Rogers said, “and that hasn’t always been the case since I’ve been here. We would have some here or there or we’d have some good players but not a lot of depth.

“When you don’t have any competition at a position, it is tough, but we have that now.”

Although Lampasas has the pieces to be strong offensively, success will hinge on the linemen, and the Badgers are only bringing back two starters — left tackle Austin Kielpinski and left guard John Long.

Despite the turnover, Everts is confident the unit will produce this season.

“People might not think we have a solid offensive line,” he said, “but I feel they are underrated. They are just as good as our skill position guys.

“We have some underclassmen who are going to have to move up and fill some big shoes, but we are going to just fine.”

## LAMPASAS BADGERS LAST FIVE SEASONS

2018: 7-5

2017: 2-8

2016: 1-9

2015: 2-8

2014: 5-5

## 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	at Joshua	7:30
Sept. 6	at Lago Vista	7:30
Sept. 13	Lorena	7:30
Sept. 20	La Vernia	7:30
Sept. 27	at Gatesville	7:30
Oct. 11	Burnet	7:30
Oct. 18	Liberty Hill	7:30
Oct. 25	at Taylor	7:30
Nov. 1	Canyon Lake	7:30
Nov. 8	at Fredericksburg	7:30



# Veteran unit more comfortable with new defensive philosophy

BY CLAY WHITTINGTON

Koby Allen does not mind being overlooked.

In 2018, everything clicked offensively for Lampasas as the Badgers averaged more than 38 points per game, garnering the attention of scoreboard watchers across the state.

Coming into this year, fans and foes alike are already anticipating another campaign highlighted by big plays and multiple trips into the end zone.

## LAMPASAS DEFENSE

And that is fine with Allen.

"I'm all right with people talking about the offense," the senior defensive back said, "because I know we are going to show up during the game."

"We're going to surprise some people."

Lampasas returns seven starters on defense, including 14-4A, Division I All-District selections Cameron Everts (DB), Ethan Rascoe (DL), Dustin Engdahl (DL), Clayton Bever (DB) and Allen along with sophomore standout line-backer Case Brister.

While the group will undoubtedly be tested by some strong offenses, including district foe and last year's state finalist Liberty Hill, Badgers head coach Troy Rogers is confident.

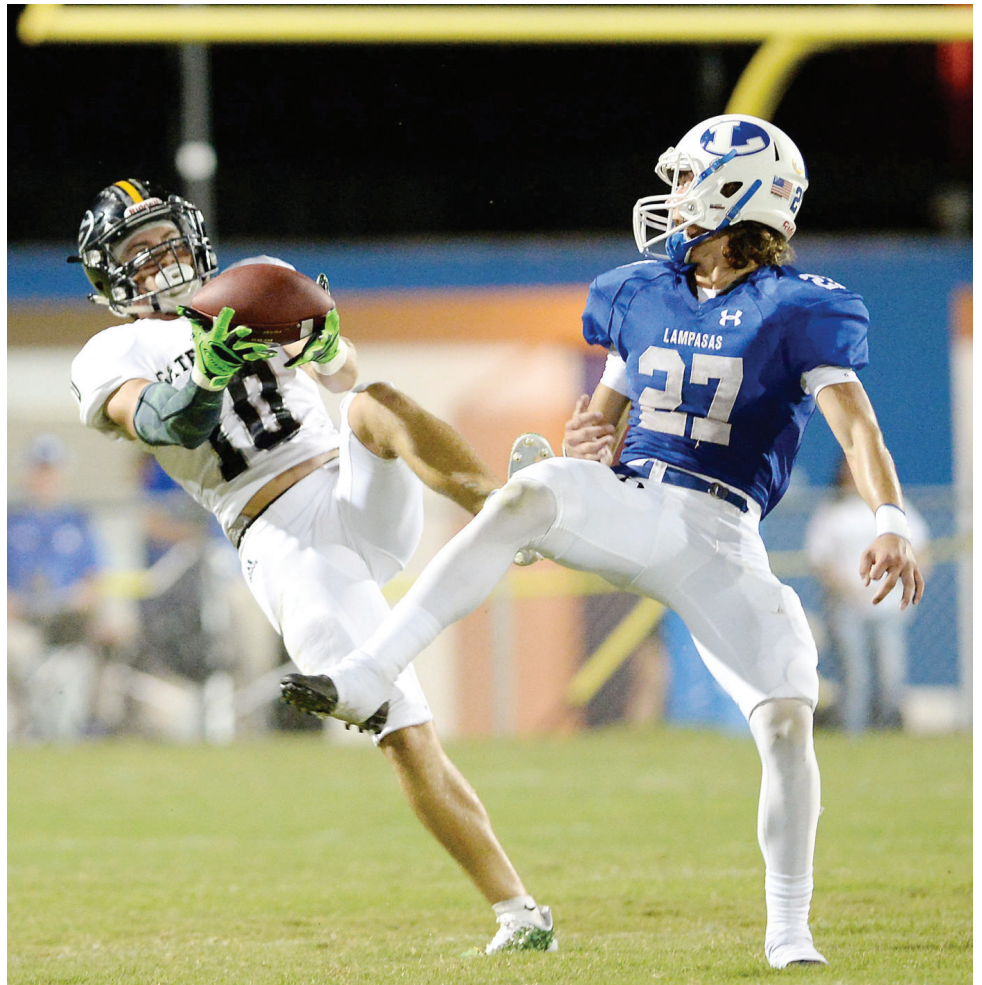
"We've got a lot of experience back on defense," he said, "and there is a lot of good leadership back."

"That is a big positive that we are excited about."

Perhaps even more importantly, however, the players are comfortable.

Prior to last season, Sam Waldrip was named defensive coordinator, ushering in a new philosophy, approach and mentality, and at times, Lampasas struggled.

The Badgers allowed at least 28 points in all five of their losses last year and gave up more than 50 points to La Vernia and the Panthers.



HERALD | FILE

Lampasas defensive back Koby Allen (27) earned all-league first-team honors last season in District 14-4A, Division I. He is one of seven returning defensive starters for the Badgers.

Things are different now, though.

"There is no more learning curve,"

Rogers said. "The guys understand what we're doing. So, guys are flying around, assignments aren't being blown and guys know where to go."

"We practice at a fast pace. We line up quick and snap the ball, and we've really been challenging our defense."

With expectations for Lampasas as high as they have been in years, the Badgers intend to deliver and return to the playoffs in consecutive years for the

first time since making trips in 1993 and 1994.

And if everything goes according to plan, Lampasas could contend for a district championship, but the key to success will be blocking out distractions, according to Allen.

"It's exciting," he said, "because we're not use to having this level of preseason hype, but we have to put that behind us."

"We're focused on our season opener, because that's the next game on our schedule."





COURTESY

The Lampasas High School marching band and color guard.

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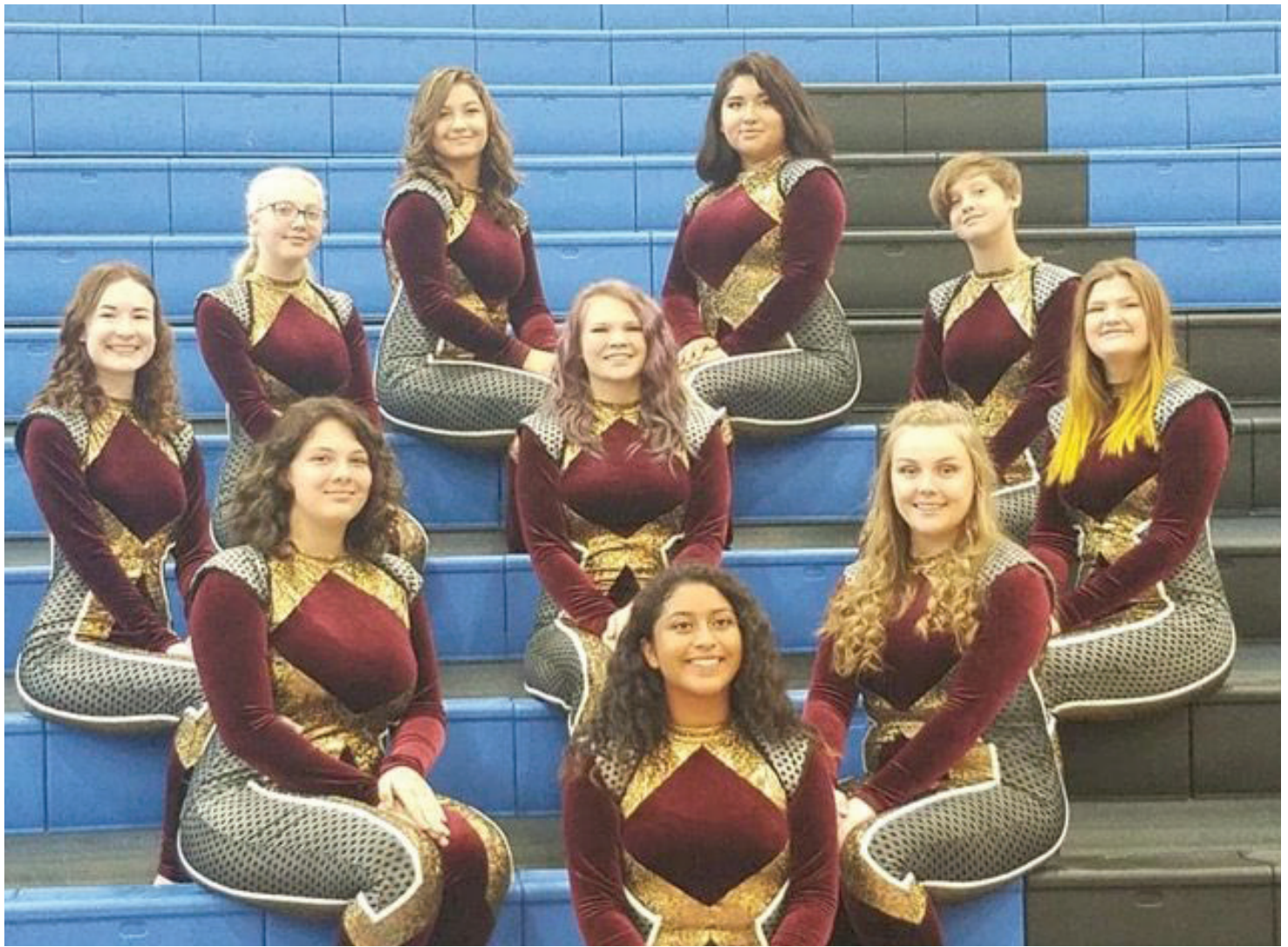




The 2019 Lampasas High School cheerleaders.

COURTESY





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The Lampasas High School color guard.

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# After 2018 setbacks, Salado ready to return to postseason

BY BEAU KEMP

After a 4-6 season Salado is still feeling optimistic

After a great 12-2 season in 2017, Salado had some setbacks and finished with a 4-6 record in 2018, but the Eagles are ready to bounce back.

The way last season went for Salado, morale should be at an all-time low. The Eagles lost two key players on the defensive side of the ball who were projected

to be the best players on the team,

they were in playoff contention all the way until the last game of the regular season before coming up short, and they finished under .500. However, all this did was motivate the Eagles for the upcoming season.

For head coach Alan Haire, low morale is never a problem and he just wants to strive to be the best.

"Whether we're 12-2, 4-6, the desire to be the best is the same," he said. "When you get a chance to influence kids, I have the chance to stand on the best platform in the world to inspire kids. Morale is not a problem for me."

Despite the hardships last season, the Eagles still had the opportunity to make it into the playoffs if they won their last game of the season and got some help in the process. Ultimately, they fell short on both counts and missed the playoffs.

It was a disappointing loss for junior back Wrook Brown, but he used it as a motivating factor for this season.

"It really did motivate me," he said. "It didn't leave a good taste in our mouths. We spent all offseason thinking about that last game. When we came back, we started working hard to prepare for the next season."

Playoff contention is something the players believe is possible this year, but



HERALD | FILE

Salado junior back Wrook Brown is ready to help the Eagles return to the postseason after dropping to 4-6 during an injury-riddled season.

some improvements need to be made on the offensive side of the ball. Senior full-back Hunter Turk believes the offense needs to improve on its teamwork to bring it to the next level.

"We need to improve on working together as a unit. I mean, we're always working together of course, but it's something that always needs improvement," Turk said.

Overall, Haire just wants this season to be a fresh start for his players.

"We don't wake up in the morning wanting to be mediocre. We strive to be the best we can be. We're just thankful for the new season coming around to start fresh because that's what the kids deserve," Haire said.

## SALADO EAGLES LAST FIVE SEASONS

2018: 4-6  
2017: 12-2  
2016: 7-5  
2015: 1-10  
2014: 0-10

## 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	vs. Troy (at UMHB)	7:30
Sept. 6	Academy	7:00
Sept. 13	Austin Travis	7:30
Sept. 20	at Taylor	7:30
Sept. 27	at Waco Connally	7:30
Oct. 4	Robinson	7:30
Oct. 18	at Lorena	7:30
Oct. 25	Madisonville	7:30
Nov. 1	at Mexia	7:30
Nov. 8	Fairfield	7:30



# Eagles counting on experience, good health for better defense

BY BEAU KEMP

After losing a pair of standout defensive starters in the first half of last season, Salado is hoping to put the past behind them and start fresh this year.

Just two seasons ago, the Eagles finished with an impressive 12-2 overall record, and they were looking to capitalize

## SALADO DEFENSE

on the performance last season but ran into some problems, including the loss of two integral linebackers.

For junior safety Wrook Brown, it was a loss, but he could still feel them playing a part in games.

“Obviously they were key players,” he said. “They were key players in leadership and on the field.”

“They still helped with leadership off field, but they weren’t able to use their talents in the field and that hurt us a little bit.”

The Eagles finished 4-6 last season, but Salado head coach Alan Haire believes the experience will be beneficial.

“Sports is about adversity and what you can overcome,” he said. “This season was just one more hill to overcome.”

“We looked at it as if it were one game at a time.”

Now, however, it is a new season with a fresh start, and the Eagles are optimistic.

“I feel really good about it,” Salado junior linebacker Peyton Miller said. “We’ve all been working super hard to prepare for this season.”

One valuable asset the Eagles possess is experience.

“Wrook Brown is a player to watch,” Haire said. “He’s started since he was a freshman.”

Additionally, multiple underclassmen were on the roster last season.

“We had eight to 10 sophomores play last year on both sides of the ball,”



HERALD | FILE

Salado head coach Alan Haire's Eagles improved by at least five wins in each of his first two seasons, but the Eagles struggled to a 4-6 mark last season.

Haire said.

“Perhaps it was earlier than they should have, but we’re going to be bringing a lot of experience back with them returning.”

The main key to success, however, is

not dwelling on the past.

“We’re going to try and start from the best possible position and get through unscathed without injuries,” Haire said. “We’re not going to let the scoreboard define us.”





The Salado High School cheerleaders.

COURTESY





The Salado High School marching band.

COURTESY



# New coach Bridges brings new style, enthusiasm to Florence

BY HUNTER KING

Florence heads into the season with a new head coach and a hope to return to the playoffs after coming off a disappointing 2-8 showing last year.

Drew Bridges takes over as Buffaloes head coach, but he has not had a lot of time to get to know his team.

He is eager to learn, though.

"I'm very excited to be the head coach here," Bridges said. "I'm really pumped up about it."

## FLORENCE OFFENSE

"I think Florence is a

great town and a great place."

Bridges, who has previous coaching experience at Bartlett, Katy Mayde Creek and Waco Connally, wants to run a pro-style, option-based scheme that will run from under center and from the shotgun.

"It's looked like wishbone sometimes," he said, "and it's looked like true spread sometimes."

"It's kind of adjusted based on the strength of the kids."

Jakobi Lewis is returning as the starting running back this year and believes the Buffaloes have a legitimate opportunity to reach the playoffs this year.

"A lot more people are buying into the football program here," he said. "The atmosphere last year really wasn't the best."

"The coaching change has made the difference."

The likely starting quarterback for the Buffaloes this season will be Dylan Tamplen, who played varsity football his sophomore year but took a year off as a junior.

"He's a good-sized kid," Bridges said. "He's got a good frame on him, and I just like his personality."

"He's ready to work hard but also enjoys himself, and I think that really fits well with me."



ANDY ZAVOINA | HERALD

Drew Bridges is the new head coach at Florence this season. He inherits a team that missed the playoffs last season after consecutive postseason appearances.

And Tamplen quickly began learning from Bridges.

"We have been over the offense and how it's going to change and how the mindset is going to have to change," Tamplen said.

**'A lot more people are buying into the football program here. The atmosphere last year wasn't really the best.'**

**Jakobi Lewis**  
Running back

## FLORENCE BUFFALOES LAST FIVE SEASONS

2018: 2-8  
2017: 4-7  
2016: 5-6  
2015: 4-6  
2014: 3-7

## 2019 SCHEDULE

Aug. 30	Thorndale	7:30
Sept. 6	at Jarrell	7:00
Sept. 13	Holland	7:30
Sept. 20	Academy	7:30
Sept. 27	at Johnson City LBJ	7:30
Oct. 4	at Chilton	7:30
Oct. 11	Lexington	7:30
Oct. 25	at Clifton	7:30
Nov. 1	Rogers	7:30
Nov. 8	at Hamilton	7:30





ANDY ZAVOINA | HERALD

Florence coach Drew Bridges talks to a defensive player about technique during an Aug. 14 practice in Florence.

# Bufs learning new, flexible defense under new head coach

BY HUNTER KING

Drew Bridges is the new head football coach at Florence High School and he is hoping to turn around a 2-8 season from the Buffaloes in 2018.

Bridges came over from Bartlett where he was the athletic director and head coach.

He was also the assistant head coach and co-defensive coordinator at Mayde Creek High School in the Katy Independent School District and an assistant at Waco Connally.

"I'm very excited to be the head coach here. I'm really pumped up about it. I think Florence is a great town and a great place," Bridges said.

Now, what will he do on the defensive side of the ball to help turn things around?

The Buffaloes will base out of a 4-3

## FLORENCE DEFENSE

defense with two safeties, according to Bridges.

"That's the system we use but it can easily be adapted to the kids. I've run it where it looks like a 3-4, I've run it where it looks like a 3-3 stack, I've run it where it looks like a 5-2. It's very adaptable and it fits our kids," Bridges said.

Bridges runs what he called a "spill defense" and he plays defense in three levels. He tries to make the game as easy as possible for his defensive linemen, and the linebackers can fix a mistake the linemen make and finally the secondary can clean up any mistakes the linebackers make.

"You use the guys behind you to make sure you're right no matter what you do," Bridges said.

He does not focus on tackles for loss but more on making sure the offense doesn't go forward.

"If we can make him (get no yards), to me that's just as good as a 6-yard tackle for loss.

Offensive stalwarts Dylan Tamplen and Jakobi Lewis are expected to play in the secondary for the Buffaloes as well.

Tamplen will play free safety and Lewis will play corner.

"I'm going to do my job and shut them down," Tamplen said.

Lewis thinks he is best as a man-to-man corner and said the coaching staff has told him he may play a little more in man-to-man coverage.

"I just want to do whatever I can to help the team win," Lewis said.

The defense may be the key to turning around a lackluster season in 2018.





THADDEUS IMERMAN | HERALD

The Florence High School Marching Band.

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COURTESY

The Florence High School cheerleaders.





# COLLEGE FOOTBALL PREVIEW



# D3 champ UMHB seeking 4th consecutive trip to title game

BY THADDEUS IMERMAN

The University of Mary Hardin-Baylor Crusaders enter 2019 as defending Division III national champions, with three consecutive appearances in the Stagg Bowl.

The offense looks to stay hot and maintain a top scoring offense that produced 53.4 points per game last season, best in D3.

The Cru enter the 2019 season without the services of their top running back and wide receiver from last season.

Markeith Miller, the third leading rusher in the country, ran for 1,864 yards and 30 touchdowns, and T.J. Josey caught 48 passes for 800 yards and 10 touchdowns. Miller and Josey earned postseason accolades — Miller as an All-American and Josey as an all-conference selection.

The Cru will have to rely heavily on returning quarterback Jase Hammack and returning wide receivers K.J. Miller, Aaron Sims and Jonel Reed.

The trio of receivers combined for 1,583 receiving yards and 16 touchdowns on 114 catches.

Miller and Sims also provide the Cru with a special teams threat. The two combined for 1,172 yards and eight touchdowns on punt returns in 2018.

On the defensive side of the ball, the Cru were stingy in 2018, giving up a paltry 8.5 points per game, second only to Monmouth (Ill.) College.

One of the key returning players is senior cornerback Keith Gipson from Ellison High School. Gipson notched 60



MICHAEL MILLER | FME NEWS SERVICE

Mary Hardin-Baylor quarterback Jase Hammack (18) uses a stiff-arm to avoid a Hardin-Simmons tackler on Nov. 17 in Belton.

total tackles, second most of the returning starters. He also intercepted four passes, tied for second on the team. He returned one of his four interceptions for a touchdown.

Gipson will head up the secondary with Jefferson Fritz, a junior safety. Fritz wreaked havoc for quarterbacks, intercepting 12 passes and earning first-team All-American honors.

The Cru look to be strong up front again as they return their entire starting defensive line that produced 24 quarterback sacks in 2018 — Khevon Shepard, Isaiah Johnson, Joey Longoria and Elijah Cross.

## UMHB CRUSADERS

### 2019 SCHEDULE

Sept. 14	Albright	6:00
Sept. 21	Belhaven	6:00
Sept. 28	Howard Payne	6:00
Oct. 5	at McMurry	1:00
Oct. 12	East Texas Baptist	2:00
Oct. 19	at Southwestern	1:00
Oct. 26	Hardin-Simmons	1:00
Nov. 2	at Louisiana College	1:00
Nov. 9	Texas Lutheran	1:00
Nov. 16	at Sul Ross State	12:00

MICHAEL MILLER | FME NEWS SERVICE

**COLLEGE PREVIEW COVER:** Mary Hardin-Baylor's Eric Blair Jr. (64), T.J. Josey, right, and teammates lift the trophy after winning the Stagg Bowl Division III championship game against Mount Union on Dec. 14 in Shenandoah. UMHB won 24-16 for its second national title.



# Belton's Shackelford at center of Texas' return to prominence

BY CLAY WHITTINGTON

Zach Shackelford is literally the center of attention at Texas.

The Longhorns senior offensive lineman enters the season with lofty expectations, landing on the Rimington Trophy watch list — an award presented to the most outstanding center in NCAA Division I — for the second consecutive year. Additionally, he was placed on the watch list of the Outland Trophy, which is given to the nation's best interior lineman, and the Big 12 Preseason Team.

While the former Belton standout is receiving lots of recognition, he deserves all of it, according to Texas head coach Tom Herman.

"We think he is as good a center as there is in the country," said Herman during the annual Big 12 Conference Media Days. "He's brilliant when it comes to making the calls.

"The center is kind of the quarterback of the offensive line, and he's really the glue that holds that group together."

Shackelford played in 10 games last season, helping the Longhorns produce a 10-4 record highlighted by a trip to the Big 12 Championship and a victory against Georgia in the Sugar Bowl, and his presence should further solidify an offense with talent all over the field.

With junior Sam Ehlinger firmly entrenched as the starting quarterback following a breakout sophomore season, the Longhorns also return receivers Collin Johnson, Devin Duvernay and John Burt to go with running backs Keaontay Ingram, a sophomore, and freshman Jordan Whittington.

"The emergence of Jordan Whittington has been remarkable," Herman said. "To come in and say, 'Hey, kid, you're going to play tailback for us, at least for this season if not longer.'

"And he took to it like a fish to water.



DAVID KENT | AP

Texas center Zach Shackelford speaks during Big 12 Conference football media day on July 16 at AT&T Stadium in Arlington. Shackelford, a Belton graduate, is one of the top centers in the country.

He's a natural at it."

Defensively, the Longhorns must replace numerous players, leaving safeties Brandon Jones and Caden Sterns and linebacker Jeffrey McCulloch as the unit's lone returning starters.

Texas opens its schedule against Louisiana Tech on Saturday before beginning its trek toward a second consecutive appearance in the conference championship game on Sept. 21 versus Oklahoma State.

"We weren't here to just have a really good season in year two," Herman said. "We were here to rebuild a program that's capable of sustaining success.

"And we feel like we're on our way there."

**'We think he is as good a center as there is in the country. He's brilliant when it comes to making the calls.'**

**Tom Herman**  
Texas head coach



# Rising Baylor Bears are a team to watch in the Big 12 in 2019

BY HUNTER KING

The Baylor Bears finished last season with a 7-6 record overall and a 4-5 record in the Big 12. Head coach Matt Rhule and the Bears look to improve on that heading into an optimistic 2019.

The Bears only lost two games of the eight they played at McLane Stadium or at a neutral site, posting a 6-2 record. However, they went 1-4 in road games.

Rhule addressed the media at Big 12 media day on July 16.

“I think we were a team last year that was good at times, not necessarily consistent but showed some flashes and finished the season the right way. We are hoping that we can become a team that week-in and week-out knows what to expect,” Rhule said.

Junior quarterback Charlie Brewer will be the undisputed starter this season after putting up solid numbers in his sophomore campaign. Brewer threw for 3,019 yards on 240-of-390 passing with 19 touchdowns to just nine interceptions.

Another key member returning to the Baylor offense is senior wide receiver Denzel Mims. The 6-foot-2, 215-pound wideout comes off his junior year where he put up 794 yards on 55 catches and led the team with eight touchdowns.

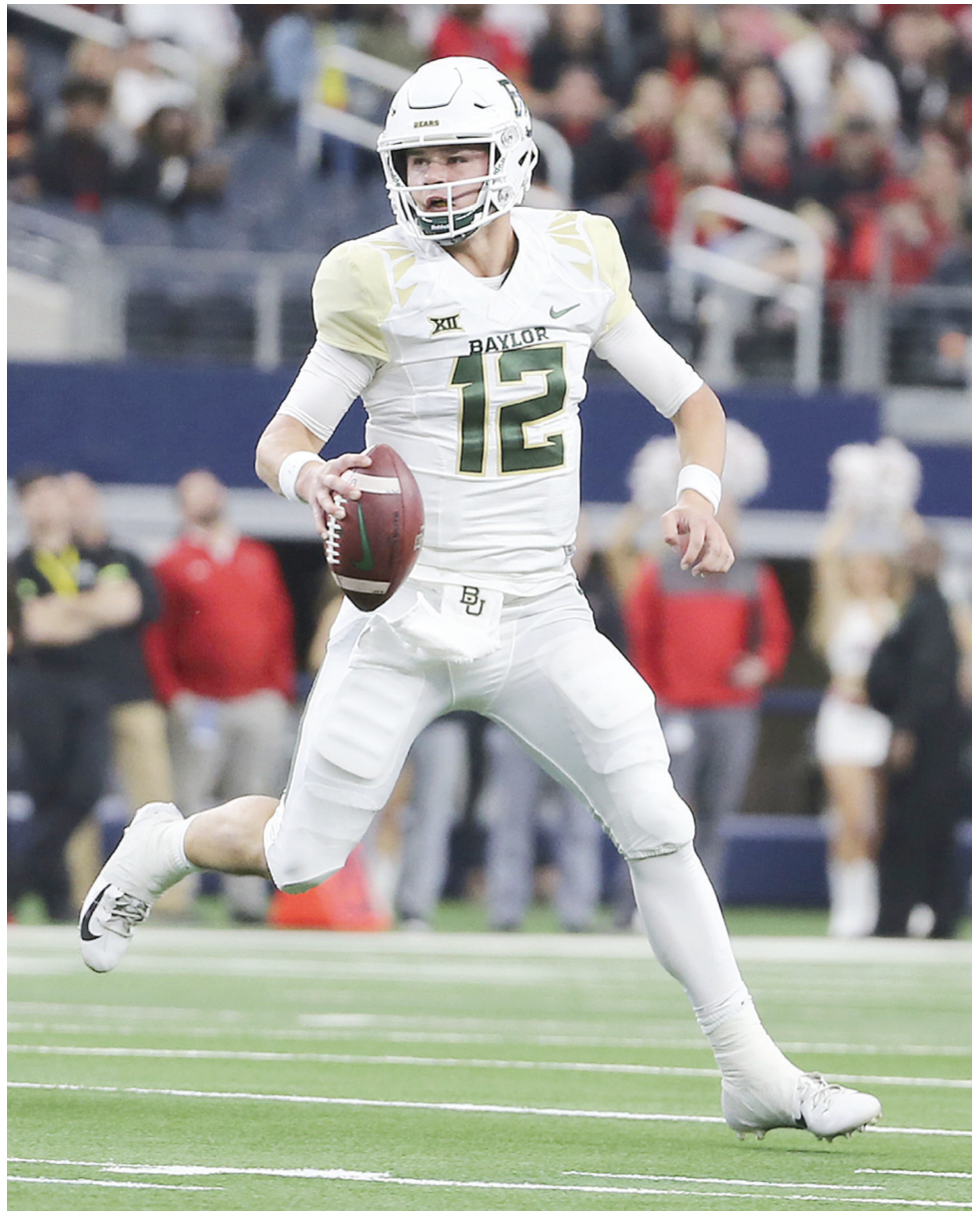
He will likely be the team’s biggest red zone threat again this year and a favorite target of Brewer.

Blake Lynch will be a leader of the Bears defense in his junior season.

He is one of the most versatile players on the team and has played five different positions in his career at Baylor.

He played in all 13 games last season as a sophomore at both linebacker and safety and he is listed as a linebacker going into this year, according to the school’s football website.

Lynch recorded 47 total tackles (31 solo) as well as four tackles for loss, 1 ½



JERRY LARSON | WACO TRIBUNE-HERALD

Baylor quarterback Charlie Brewer scrambles out of the pocket before throwing a pass in the first half against Texas Tech on Nov. 24 in Arlington.

sacks, one fumble recovery and one interception.

He will likely be all over the field for the Bears and fun one to watch this season.

The Bears are projected to finish

sixth in the Big 12 Preseason Media Poll ahead of Texas Tech, West Virginia, Kansas State and Kansas.

Baylor kicks off its season against Stephen F. Austin State University on Saturday at 6 p.m. at McLane Stadium.



# Horned Frogs looking to return to contention for Big 12 title

BY HUNTER KING

The Texas Christian University Horned Frogs head into the 2019 season after a middle of the road 7-6 season last year, 4-5 in the Big 12.

The Horned Frogs beat California in the Cheez-it Bowl 10-7 in overtime to finish the 2018 season.

Gary Patterson is the head coach of the Horned Frogs and has been since 2000.

“TCU will enter the 2019 campaign as one of just six programs nationally to finish in the top 10 in at least three (2014, 2015, 2017) of the previous five years. In 18 seasons under Patterson, TCU has posted seven top-10 finishes and 11 in the top 25,” according to the TCU website.

Patterson brought TCU to the forefront of college football and the Frogs will be competitive again this year.

They come into the season fourth in the Big 12 Media Preseason Poll behind only Iowa State, Texas and Oklahoma, respectively.

Possibly the most important returner for the Horned Frogs is offensive lineman Lucas Niang.

Niang is a senior this year and started all 13 games at right tackle last year. He was the only offensive lineman on the team to start all 13 games and he did not allow a sack.

The Frogs will also get a big boost on the defensive front from a guy that will be like a new recruit this year.

Ross Blacklock is a junior 6-foot-4, 329-pound defensive tackle who missed the entire 2018 season because of an injury he suffered in preseason camp.

Blacklock started all 14 games as a redshirt freshman in 2017 and posted 27 tackles, 6½ tackles for loss and two sacks. He was a freshman All-American that year and was named Big 12 Co-Defensive Freshman of the Year.

He will likely have a big impact on the



TOM FOX | THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS

TCU wide receiver Jalen Reagor (1) gives Oklahoma State linebacker Kenneth Edison-McGruder (3) a stiff-arm after making a catch during the first quarter of a Nov. 24 game in Fort Worth.

Horned Frogs' defensive front.

Junior wide receiver Jalen Reagor looks to build off of an impressive sophomore season that saw his teammates vote him as the team's most valuable player.

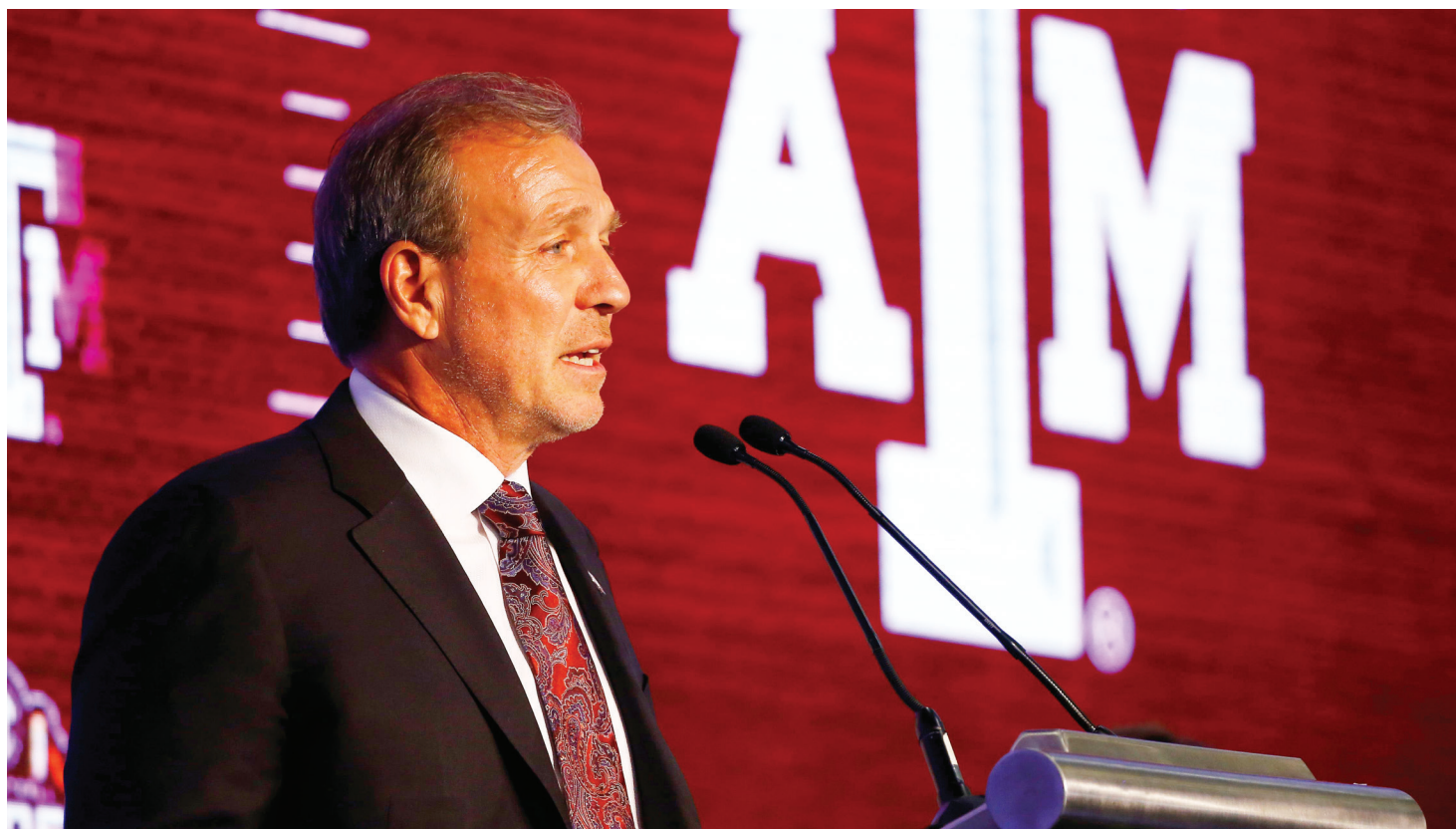
His team-best 72 receptions and 1,061 yards receiving both ranked second for a season in TCU history — 44 of his 72 catches (61.1 percent) went for a first

down or touchdown — led the Big 12 in percentage of his team's receptions at 30.1 (72-of-239), the highest mark by a Horned Frog in the 18-season tenure of head coach Gary Patterson.

TCU will look to compete in the Big 12 and return to prominence.

TCU start its season Saturday against Arkansas-Pine Bluff at 7 p.m. in Fort Worth.





BUTCH DILL | AP

Texas A&M head coach Jimbo Fisher speaks during Southeastern Conference Media Days on July 16 in Hoover, Ala.

# Fisher's success in debut, on recruiting trail excites fan base

BY BEAU KEMP

Last season the Aggies were plagued with injuries, but now that they are coming back healthy they might improve on an already good season from last year.

A lot of A&M's players had to sit out games due to injury, and they still finished the season 9-4 in head coach Jimbo Fisher's successful debut. If the players come back healthy and they don't run into the same problems with injuries, the Aggies might improve on their impressive record from last year.

A&M lost kicker Daniel LaCamera to a foot injury in the second game against Clemson and he missed the remainder of the season after surgery. Jhamon

Ausbon also suffered a foot injury in the fifth game of the season against Arkansas and missed a few games. Before he was injured, he had 221 receiving yards on 14 receptions.

The Aggies also have some returning players that should help keep them in the win column.

Junior quarterback Kellen Mond is one of the players that will be returning for the Aggies. Mond threw for over 3,000 yards and 24 touchdowns, rushed for seven TDs, and averaged 239 passing yards per game. Mond also played an integral part in the seven-overtime win against LSU, tossing six TD passes and running for another scored in the Aggies' 74-72 victory.

The Aggies also possibly secured their

quarterback of the future in July when Longview senior Haynes King committed to A&M. The four-star prospect is ranked the No. 2 recruit in Texas, behind Zachary Evans, a running back from Houston, and first in the nation at his position, according to ESPN.

King is listed on ESPN as a dual-threat quarterback with a 4.5-second 40-yard dash time. In his junior season he passed for almost 4,000 yards and rushed for more than 650 while leading the Lobos to a state championship.

A&M currently sits at the No. 11 spot for best recruiting classes with 16 commits and eight four-star recruits.

Last season the Aggies finished the season with a win in the Gator Bowl against North Carolina State.



# Holgorsen returns to Houston looking to establish continuity

BY CLAY WHITTINGTON

Dana Holgorsen is the new guy at Houston, but not for long.

Following an 8-4 showing at West Virginia last season, the Mountaineers head coach left the program after eight years to assume the same position at Houston. The move allowed him to return to the program where he spent two seasons as the offensive coordinator in 2008 and 2009.

This stint, however, will not be as short.

"We have had a lot of great success since then," Holgorsen said at American Athletic Conference Media Days, "but it has been a revolving door as well. So, we need to make sure there is

stability within my job but also all the assistant coaches as well.

"The message is, 'Look guys, we are here to stay, and we are going to build this the right way.'"

Holgorsen takes over the program from Major Applewhite, who was fired after an 8-5 season ended with the Cougars' third consecutive defeat in a bowl game, losing to Army 70-14 in the Armed Forces Bowl.

Houston returns 14 starters, including nine of offense with quarterback D'Eriq King set to build on a breakout 2018 campaign. The dual-threat senior accounted for 3,656 total yards and 50 total touchdowns.

The Cougars also sport three area players on their roster in the Belton trio

of redshirt freshman Garrison Vaughn (S), sophomore Logan Hall (DL) and graduate student Justin Murphy (OL).

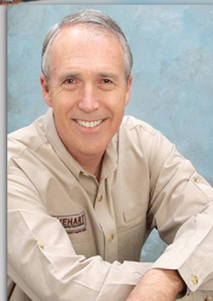
Houston will receive an immediate test to open the season, playing preseason No. 4 Oklahoma on Sunday in Norman. Then, the Cougars host Prairie View A&M and Washington State before beginning conference play against Tulane on Sept. 19.

"We just have to go up there and play our game," King said of playing at Oklahoma. "You can't go in there and try to do too much.

"It starts with me, so I have to be level headed, make all the right plays and get my teammates involved early — trust in them, trust in our coaches and play together."



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# North Texas seeking fourth consecutive bowl appearance

BY THADDEUS IMERMAN

The North Texas Mean Green enter 2019 projected to win the Conference USA West Division, according to Athlon Sports. They will be looking to make their fourth consecutive bowl appearance.

Returning star senior quarterback Mason Fine said the projection will not affect how the team plays. At C-USA media day, Fine said the Mean Green will focus on each other and focus only on what those in the meeting room think.

To Fine, the goal is to win C-USA and win whatever bowl game they go to. The Mean Green are on a three-game bowl losing streak and haven't won since the 2014 Heart of Dallas Bowl.

Fine, an unknown recruit out of Oklahoma a few years ago, has emerged into one of the key players for the Mean Green. He already owns the school record for career passing yards with 9,417. He will bolster the offense as the two-time reigning C-USA Offensive Player of the Year.

Returning with Fine are three of the top four wide receivers from last year — Jaelon Darden, Rico Bussey Jr. and Michael Lawrence.

Head coach Seth Littrell has tremendous confidence in Bussey.

"He's one of the top receivers in this league," Littrell said. "He's had a great offseason."

On the defensive side of the ball, the Mean Green lost six starters from last season — two linemen, two linebackers and two cornerbacks.

Star cornerback Khairi Muhammad is one of the top returners on defense. He is excited about how the defense will shape up. The new starters are ones who are hungry and it is their time to step up.

"I'm just excited for this upcoming season," Muhammad said at media day.



TONY GUTIERREZ | AP

North Texas quarterback Mason Fine responds to questions in an interview during the Conference USA college football media day July 17 in Frisco.

"I have tremendous confidence in (the new defenders), I trust them, and I'm ready for the season."

Littrell, who will rely on Muhammed on defense, echoed his confidence.

"I'm really excited about these young guys," Littrell said at media day. "They're going to step in and make plays."

While they are excited about the 18 interceptions they had last season, Muhammed and Littrell want to commit to stopping the run.

"At the end of the day, you have got to stop the run to be a successful defense," Littrell said.

Not only are the Mean Green replac-

ing six starters on defense, they're also replacing five coaches on Littrell's staff. Four of the five took jobs at Power 5 conference schools.

That doesn't stop Littrell from having confidence in his new coaches.

"We got a great coaching staff," Littrell said. "I'm really excited about how the spring went with our staff and our players, and really excited to get back at it Aug. 1 and get going."

The Mean Green open the season Saturday at Apogee Stadium in Denton against Abilene Christian. Kickoff is scheduled for 6:30 p.m.





AP | FILE

Texas Tech quarterback Alan Bowman throws a pass against Iowa State on Oct. 27 in Ames, Iowa.

# Question marks everywhere as Wells takes over Red Raiders

BY BEAU KEMP

The Texas Tech Red Raiders had a rough season last year with a final record of 5-7, just missing the .500 mark.

The Red Raiders finished in the bottom half of the Big 12 in the No. 7 spot.

This is likely going to be a repeat season for the Red Raiders. They have a few question marks at some positions.

One of those question marks is the running game. It needs improvement. Last season's leading rusher had only 369 rushing yards, and it was not even a running back. Quarterback Jett Duffey ran for 369 yards and had four touchdowns on 79 attempts.

To improve their chances of winning, the Red Raiders have to find a running back that can gain some yards. Da'Leon

Ward was the top running back for Tech last season. He rushed for 341 yards and three touchdowns on 79 attempts. A running back that can gain yards consistently will open up the passing game, but this won't necessarily help right now because they also have a hole at the quarterback position.

Last season, Texas Tech had four quarterbacks on the roster. Two of the four, McClane Carter and Colt Garrett, decided to transfer and play elsewhere. This leaves Alan Bowman and Duffey and it is not clear who will start.

Bowman was Tech's leading passer last season with over 2,500 yards and 17 touchdowns in eight games, but the freshman suffered a partially collapsed lung last season on a goal-line run against Oklahoma, an injury that first

occurred earlier in the season against West Virginia when he was sandwiched between two defenders.

If he can prove he can stay healthy, he could get the starting position.

Duffey passed for over 1,200 yards and four touchdowns on 154 attempts in eight games for the Red Raiders. However, he was sacked 13 times in those games. He also fumbled the ball five times and lost three of them.

The Red Raiders will also be adjusting to a new coach. Matt Wells was hired in November to replace Kliff Kingsbury, whom the school did not retain after his sixth season.

Wells led Utah State to a 10-2 record last season and a No. 22 ranking in the final Associated Press college football poll.



# CENTEX EXES — Area athletes playing college and pro football

NAME	YR.	POS.	SCHOOL	HIGH SCHOOL	NOTEWORTHY
Alejandro Aaron	So.	LB	NW Okla. State	Belton	18 tackles as redshirt freshman
Tariq Anthony	Jr.	DB	Lamar	C. Cove	Transfer from Kilgore College
Clayton Blank	Fr.	DL	Tarleton State	Belton	Redshirted last season
Trent Canion	Sr.	RB	W. Texas A&M	C. Cove	Redshirted last season
Diamon Cannon	Sr.	LB	Tulsa	Shoemaker	Returning starter with 66 career tackles
Will Carroll	So.	LB	S.D. Mines	Gatesville	79 tackles, 3½ sacks in frosh season
Zion Carter-Bryant	Fr.	DE	Northeastern St.	Shoemaker	Signed with Division II school in February
Javon Chambers	Jr.	OL	Tarleton State	Belton	Played in 8 games for LSC champs
Marquez Chatman	Fr.	DT	Northeastern St.	Shoemaker	Joins teammate Carter-Bryant in Tahlequah, OK
Khalil Corbett-Canada	So.	OL	Northwestern St.	Harker Hts	Redshirted after transfer from Trinity Valley CC
Ishmael Davis	Sr.	DE	Texas State	Ellison	Grad student had 8 TFL, 3½ sacks in 2018
D.J. Dormeus	Fr.	WR	Houston Baptist	Killeen	Turned down Ivy League offers to stay in Texas
Mitchell Dunahoo	Fr.	LB	Texas State	Belton	Redshirted last season
Josiah Dykes	Jr.	LB	E. Texas Baptist	Ellison	67 tackles (3½ TFL), 1 INT, 1 forced fumble in 2018
Cooper Edmiston	Sr.	LB	Tulsa	Gatesville	106 tackles, 3 takeaways, 2 TFL last season
Robert Griffin III	7Y	QB	Ravens (NFL)	C. Cove	Will back up fellow Heisman winner Lamar Jackson
Logan Hall	So.	DL	Houston	Belton	Played in all 13 games (3 TFL) as true freshman
Manny Harris	Sr.	QB	Arkansas Tech	C. Cove	77-152 passing, 773 yards, 3 TDs, 5 INTs in six games
Ra'Shaun Henry	Jr.	WR	St. Francis	C. Cove	8-107 receiving, 1 TD last season in 10 games
Jameel Hodges	Fr.	RB	UT-Permian Basin	Harker Hts	Redshirted last season
William Hooper	So.	CB	Northwestern St.	Shoemaker	5 tackles (3 solo) in freshman season
Chris Hughes	Jr.	OL	Kansas	Harker Hts	Has played in 22 games for Jayhawks
Marcellus Johnson	So.	WR	Lamar	Killeen	Redshirted in 2018, former QB now playing WR for Cards
Logo Kaleopo	Sr.	DE	UT-Permian Basin	C. Cove	1½ TFL, 1 sack in 11 games in 2018
Antonio Lealiiee	Jr.	RB	A&M Commerce	C. Cove	Played in 2 games as sophomore
Shamad Lomax	Sr.	DB	New Mexico St.	C. Cove	Begins final season having already started in 30 games
Remington Lutz	So.	TE	Abilene Christian	Belton	6-foot-6, 2-pounder moves from TE to WR
Peyton Mansell	So.	QB	Iowa	Belton	5 games, 83 yds passing, 8-31 rushing (1 TD)
Te'Ayveon Mayo	So.	DE	Sul Ross State	Shoemaker	7½ TFL, 3½ sacks, 1 blocked kick as frosh
Daniel McCants	Sr.	RB	Tarleton State	Killeen	2nd Team All-LSC, 1,141 rush yds, 8 TDs, 96-yd KOR
Justin Murphy	Sr.	OL	Houston	Belton	Veteran starter is grad transfer from Texas Tech
Nathalohn Nanai	So.	DT	Northwestern St.	Shoemaker	15 tackles, 1 TFL, half sack as frosh
Anthony Palmer	So.	DE	Lamar	Harker Hts	All-District 2nd team in high school
James Parker	So.	DB	Sul Ross State	Shoemaker	59 tackles, 1 INT, sack and 5-yd TD catch as frosh
Peyton Searcy	Sr.	DL	A&M-Commerce	Killeen	Played in 4 games as senior before redshirting
Zach Shackelford	Sr.	OL	Texas	Belton	First-team All-Big 12 center last season
Jameill Showers	2Y	S	Cowboys (NFL)	Shoemaker	Former star QB now playing defensive back
Jyaire Shorter	Fr.	WR	North Texas	Ellison	Redshirted after 2 games (1-15 rec.)
Michael Smith	Jr.	OL	LSU	Ellison	Former walk-on is key backup for Bayou Bengals
Durham Smythe	1Y	TE	Dolphins (NFL)	Belton	6 catches for 50 yds in rookie season
Anthony Stephens II	Sr.	DB	So. Nazarene	Harker Hts	Did not appear in any games last season
Zane Stephens	So.	OL	McMurry	C. Cove	Appeared in two games as frosh
Duke Thomas	2Y	CB	Vikings (NFL)	C. Cove	Signed with Minnesota, his 5th NFL team, on April 19
RaQuan Thompson	Fr.	DL	Tulsa	Killeen	51 tackles, 3 sacks and 33 QB pressures in 2018
Ray Thornton	Jr.	LB	LSU	Shoemaker	21 tackles, one sack last season
Timothy Twilley	Fr.	DT	S.F. Austin	Killeen	Earned 12-6A 2nd Team honors as prep senior
Alyzcha Ulufale-Hentz	Fr.	OL	Northwestern St.	Killeen	Redshirted last season
JP Urquidez	Jr.	OL	Texas	C. Cove	Did not see action last season
Garrison Vaughn	Fr.	DB	Houston	Belton	Redshirted last season
Claude Williams	Fr.	WR	Northeastern St.	Shoemaker	Second-team all-district in final HS season
Ozias Wright	So.	RB	Sul Ross State	Shoemaker	890 all-purpose yards, 2 TDs as frosh

**NOTE: This is not a comprehensive list. Some college rosters were unavailable at press time.**



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