

2026 FOOTBALL PREVIEW **KICK OFF**



MALVERN LEOPARDS

focus to keep
legacy, tradition
progressing.

Indians

bringing the 'Roll Tribe'
effect as 2A contenders
for 2026 under
new leadership.

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ready to make it
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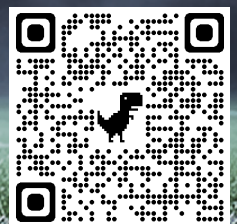
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aim for more title
achievement.

Bismarck Lions

defending two-time
3A-7 league champions
focused for another
trip back to
War Memorial.

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Featured Teams

The Fab Five In-County Football Programs

Hometown Malvern Leopards

Glen Rose Beavers • Magnet Cove Panther

Bismarck Lions • Poyen Indians

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2026 HSC Football Preview produced
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*Wishing everyone
a winning season!*



MALVERN SCHOOL DISTRICT
"WHERE PASSION, PRIDE AND EXCELLENCE IS EXPECTED"



No Excuses: Leopards focus to keep legacy, tradition progressing

By GERREN SMITH
Sports Editor

The tradition of Malvern Leopard football continues for another big year on the gridiron for the upcoming 2026 season.

Malvern football head coach John Fogleman emphasizes this season will be a together team effort—“No Excuses” in order to be an effective unit with a challenging year of opponents.

The Leopards are young in several big positions and everyone will have to contribute.

“We always want to be a good football team and be better at the end of the year,” Fogleman said. “We’ll be young this year but I think if our young kids can keep their heads up and be tough—we can be alive for the playoffs,” Fogleman emphasized about the Leopards upcoming football season.

Malvern comes into this season with a

heavyweight non-conference schedule, but Fogleman believes these first three opponents—Warren, Stuttgart and Harmony Grove of Haskell prepare the Leopards to compete productively in the powerhouse 7-4A Conference.

“We’ll use our non-conference schedule to prepare us for conference play—which will be tough,” Fogleman said. “I think our non-conference schedule helps us with that.”

The Leopards successfully made a playoff push last season finishing fifth and began league play 3-0 with dominant performances that led to keeping the tradition of playing in the postseason.

The Leopards have a tough year ahead, but the passion, pride and excellence for representing one of the historic high school football programs in Arkansas surges the hometown gridiron players to excel for greatness in 2026.



LEADING THE CHARGE

John Fogleman returns to lead Malvern Leopard football for another challenging season in 2026.

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Team camp workouts were very beneficial for the Leopards in their preparation for the upcoming 2026 football season.



OFFSEASON

The Leopards have worked out in Benton, Razorback Stadium in Fayetteville and at Catholic High in Little Rock—going against some of the biggest powerhouse football programs in the Natural State.

Fogleman has been pleased by the senior leadership thus far. Already the leadership has taken command by the weight room training and workouts. Wesley Morley has been squatting more than 400 lbs., while Jeremiah Jimerson and Sam Bowen have really shown productive leadership by their weight lifting training Fogleman emphasized.

Also the lineman have shown a lot of progress—Zane Hathcock is squatting nearly 500 lbs., and bench pressing 335 lbs. The lineman's strength continues to increase throughout each weight lifting workout and Fogleman hopes this progresses into the summer and up to the start of football season.

Others that have been improving well in the offseason—Gerard Bailey, Bentley Bobo and Aaron Williams, plus Brice Mitchell that's a huge plus to return to the Leopard football program.

"I thought the offseason went really well and our kids were a lot more invested," Fogleman said.

The Leopards have more younger guys and underclassmen for the upcoming season and Fogleman plans to schedule more junior varsity games due to the production of offseason participation.

"We'll be young on the field this upcoming year," Fogleman noted.

"I hope we can build off a really good offseason and need our kids to be committed and show up—being accountable and dependable," Fogleman said.

OFFENSE

Seniors Wesley Morley and KD Shields will help impact the Leopards' run game from their experience as playmakers at running back.

"Wesley has shown he can make plays with his speed—KD also makes plays well knows how to be effective once he gets in space," Fogleman said.

LINEMAN/OL/DL

Fogleman notes the offensive line will be key—"Most of our linemen are sophomores but they have the ability and will grow and learn to be smart," Fogleman said. Sam Bowman, Joseph Mickels and Zane Hathcock will lead the lineman from their experience. Malik Brown, Jeremiah Locke, Brice Mitchell, Bentley Bobo, Aaron Williams, Andrew DeVore, Alex DeVore, Carlos Ross, and Hayden Hanscom make up for the line.

RECEIVERS

"We have a lot of guys that will be active at this position," Fogleman said. "Tyrese Osborne, Gerard Bailey and Tyriq Jacobs all have good hands."

WIDE RECEIVERS

Elijah Hogan has shown to be effective with the ball in space Fogleman says. Westin Goyne, Davis Black, MJ Collins, Jayden Baugh, Elliott Hinton, Curtis Simmons, Terrence Hawkins, Jaiden Baker, Dalton Anderson fulfill roles at wide receiver.

IMPACT PLAYMAKERS

Brad Saling and Jarrett Hathcock also are going to be lined up in the backfield for key roles from their ability to impact the offense—"We'll expect Brad to play running back as a part of multiple guys who can run the ball and Jarrett to provide a different look for us in the backfield," Fogleman noted.

THE UNSUNG HERO ROLE

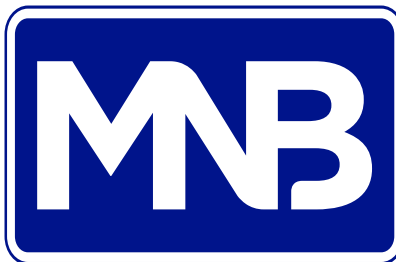
Henry Ivy is expected to return from the injury reserved list and Fogleman feels he'll contribute to help make the execution productive. Ivy finished last season as one of the

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key leading tacklers with 50 plus as a sophomore—making this year's role even bigger for the junior.

QUARTERBACK

Junior Aaron Pinkston and sophomore Trevor Hodges are the quarterback duo for the Leopards this season. Both have shared reps during the offseason and showcased productive ability by their playmaking in practice, team camps and 7-on-7 workouts this offseason for spring, summer and fall camp.

"Expect both guys to get playing time early at quarterback and hopefully they'll expand," Fogleman said.

DEFENSE

Pinkston will be one of the main threats defensively for the Leopards. "Aaron is one of our best defensive players," Fogleman said.

Along with Pinkston, Saling and Jarrett Hawthcock bring experience as dynamic two-way players for the Leopards.

LEADING THE DEFENSE

Returning All-Conference standout (LB/RB) Jeremiah Jimerson will provide the vocal leader and presence of the defense. Prior to the first round of the 2025 class 4A state football playoffs, Jimerson led the team with 92 tackles, igniting stats in sacks with an interception. Jimerson finished his junior season with 100 plus tackles and going into his senior year fulfilling the leadership role of the defense. Fogleman feels confident in Jimerson's ability to lead the defense from his experience as a key starter.

LINEBACKER

Solomon Toney, Jeremiah Jimerson, Brad



The hometown Malvern Leopards put in the hard work throughout the heat in preparation for the upcoming football season during their summer and fall campaign.

Saling, Brody Wheatley, Jaidan Sandidge, Noah Clary, and Henry Ivy look to command an effect in the Leopard defense.

SECONDARY

Fogleman notes Malvern has got several guys that'll need to emerge in the secondary this season.

MJ Collins has shown a lot of promise. "MJ's a good defensive back and receiver as well—he's very physical." Westin Goynes will be back there Fogleman says and he's not afraid to tackle. "They're showing more zest and that's what we want for our football team."

KICKING SPECIALIST

Alan Cervantes returns as the specialist kicker for his senior season. Cervantes earned

All-Conference last season and has been the X-factor for PAT's that'll always be a major factor. "Alan is a good kicker and thrilled to have him for his senior season," Fogleman said.

Sophomore Alex Torres will fulfill a key role for the Leopards' kicking unit this season.

SEASON OF CHALLENGE

The benefit game and scrimmage opponent will be Bauxite, who is predicted to be one of the top teams in 4A. After facing a pre-season juggernaut of the Miners, the Leopards will kick start the 2026 football season hosting the Warren Lumberjacks that anticipates to be a huge battle of the orange and black for Leopard nation fans to witness to open Week 0 of high school football mania in the Natural State.

THE MALVERN LEOPARD FOOTBALL COACHING STAFF



John Fogleman (Head Sr. High Coach)
Brian Hembree (WR/DB),
Austin Warford (Head freshman coach),
Stephen Barber(OL),
Darius Clarkson (DB),

Drew Smyly (DL),
Shaun Mitchell (RB) (Head 7th Grade Coach)
Darryl Baker (OL)
Trent Wilson (LBs defensive coordinator)

"Anytime you have experienced coaches like them, it's always good to have a guy to lean on.."

— Coach Fogleman

LEADING THE TRADITION

The hometown Malvern Leopard football coaching staff share a close bond together with a veteran experience to guide the program into the right direction.



Senior Jeremiah Jimerson with Malvern defensive coordinator Trent Wilson march on the field during fall camp as the Leopards prepare to be a strong unit in the defense.

THE LEOPARD SENIORS

"I HOPE THE TEAM CAN ACCOMPLISH A WINNING SEASON ALONG WITH RECOGNITION FOR THE SENIORS AND THE UPCOMING CLASSES. THE LONG TERM WE'RE LOOKING FOR IS TO HAVE THE RING AND WIN STATE BUT CURRENTLY WE'RE FOCUSING TO ACCOMPLISH A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE GAME FOR OUR YOUNG PLAYERS SO WE CAN HAVE THEM HELP OUT IN WINNING EACH GAME ONE BY ONE UNTIL EVENTUALLY REACH PLAYOFFS THEN STATE..."

— JEREMIAH JIMERSON
SENIOR LEADER OF THE LEOPARD DEFENSE IN
TACKLES
ALL-CONFERENCE LAST YEAR



















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THE POWERHOUSE 3A 'MIGHTY' GLEN ROSE BEAVERS



Four-time unbeaten league champion Glen Rose Beavers aim for more title achievement

By GERREN SMITH
Sports Editor

The new era on the gridiron at the Beaver Dam has begun with veteran and seasoned longtime coach Bryan Weatherford ready to lead the grind of powerhouse 3A football at Glen Rose.

Weatherford, a longtime head junior high football coach at Glen Rose won several league titles—now steps in as head coach following the successful reign of Steven Kehner's achievement that led to four consecutive 4-3A Conference championships unbeaten.

The journey back to become state champions again since 2007 ignites the county's 3A powerhouse football program at Glen Rose for the upcoming 2026 season.

The Beavers are the defending 4-3A Conference champions and haven't lost a



BRYAN WEATHERFORD
MOTIVATED TO BEGIN THE NEW ROLE
AS HEAD COACH OF THE GLEN ROSE
FOOTBALL PROGRAM

game in league play for the previous four seasons—which Weatherford hopes to guide to a fifth straight, but finish out the year at War Memorial in December again.

**Good Luck
Beavers!**

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THE BEAVER FOOTBALL SENIORS....



OFFSEASON

The Beavers football program hosted its annual spring game scrimmage at Beaver Stadium.

The Beavers Red Team and White Team finished with a 7-7 tie of two 20 minute quarters of continuous running clock.

All-State returning quarterback Gage Hood performed as the game's QB for both teams and scrambled for the White teams touchdown—while completing a TD pass reception to stout playmaker Darrin Bowdle for the Red Team that ended up being the final play of the scrimmage.

The tradition of the Beavers powerhouse of physicality wasn't absent as both teams brought aggressive play to the gridiron. Also Jonathan Vann and Bowdle both ignited interceptions for big defensive plays—while both the White and Red Teams kept the intensified play electric for the proud Beaver fans to watch at Beaver Stadium.

Weatherford was pleased by the outcome from Monday night's scrimmage and spring drills heading into their summer campaign.

Weatherford says the scrimmage went good for just having practice for four days.

"OUR SENIORS ... SPECIAL GROUP ... VERY IMPORTANT AND VITAL TO THE TEAM"

— COACH WEATHERFORD

"Had some bright spots." Sebastian Williamson, Riley Cox anchored the middle, [Jon] Vann and [Darrin] Bowdle had a great scrimmage tackling, running and receiving the ball, Weatherford noted. Also, Peyton Swayze and Carson Harrison had a great night running the ball, he added. "Overall, it was a good night for the Glen Rose Beavers."

The Beavers kept the grind on the gridiron lifted up by its powerhouse 3A effect from their first two summer workouts in preparation for the upcoming football season.

The Beavers surged aggressively in 11-on-11 football competition while participating in team camp workouts hosted in Rison. Then, the Beavers took to their skilled players workout and competed well in the Small Town Shootout 7-on-7 Tournament hosted in Poyen.

It's been a while since the Beavers competed in a 7-on-7 competition, but the talent didn't disappoint according to head coach Weatherford.

The Beavers were amongst 16 teams scheduled to compete, with 15 present to compete. In the shootout, the Beavers battled Baptist Prep in a tough defeat 16-7, tied Carlisle 9-9, defeated Bearden 30-7, and finished in a close defeat to Atkins 23-21 for a good quality outing of competition in 7-on-7 action.

Weatherford was very pleased by the Beavers' performance in the shootout. Weatherford noted, "It was the first one in a while for us, but had several bright spots."

The college quarterback prospect [Gage] Hood took command to air out the pigskin to showcase his accuracy to connect and hit several targets.

"[Gage] Hood threw some great passes and Darrin Bowdle, Leyton Baldwin, Jonathan Vann, and Carson Harrison did a great job gathering the ball," Weatherford said.

Defensively, Weatherford noted [Jonathan] Vann, Bowdle, and Peyton Swayze all had good days. "We still have a lot to improve on to accomplish our goal."

Prior to the 7-on-7 workout in Poyen, the Beavers had several impact players provide productive performances during team camp hosted in Rison. Weatherford says Glen Rose had a good camp. Leyton Baldwin, Carson Harrison, Vann, Riley Cox and Bowdle and a whole "Dam" full of Beavers had a good day.

The Beavers have participated in team camp workouts at Rison and Malvern—while hosting their own team camp at Beaver Stadium. Also, as a part of the summer campaign workouts, the Beavers participated in 7-on-7 action hosted in Poyen to allow the skills players grind out their abilities to be intact for the upcoming 2026 football season.

Weatherford looks forward to the upcoming year and is excited about guiding the football program to keep its standard of powerhouse aggression and physicality as a contender in 3A.

The Beavers showed some good progression into their 2026 summer football campaign as Weatherford has fulfilled the head coaching role of the Beaver Dam football program thus far.

SENIOR LED BY ITS SPECIAL 16

Important Vital Roles

College prospects Riley Cox leads through his play Weatherford says—while Leyton

Baldwin is very vocal and energized—and the sole leader and quarterback [Gage] Hood has grown and will be the dual-threat playmaker to lead the Beavers.

Sebastian Williamson—“The grittiest and nasty and gets after it,” Weatherford says. Gavin Quantz—“Will run the ball, play defensive end and expect to have a great year—all returning starters.”

Chase Milroy—“Returning lineman and has improved.” Peyton Swayze—“Strong in the weight room and will be a weak side safety on defense,” Weatherford says.

Jon Vann—“He’s fast, big and strong and very special for us by the ability to play multiple positions.”

Darrin Bowdle—“Inside receiver, catches

well and plays inside linebacker.” Braxton Burget—“Has great potential, started on the offensive line and is one of the four seniors coming back there.”

Carson Matthews—“Big body and may play defensive end and receiver because he’s capable,” Weatherford said. Ace Best—“Always where he needs to be and does a great job.” Weatherford emphasized these guys have to play well and great every week in order to go deep into the playoffs.

UNDERCLASSMEN

Liam Stevens—“Plays center for us and really has grown and got bigger and stronger,” Weatherford says.

Zayne Schumacher—“Helps us on the

defense and the offensive line.”

Carson Harrison—“Plays running back for us and is just a pretty good one and plays outside linebacker/while Conner Youngman will help a lot—“We have to have a great attitude when we step on the field,” Weatherford says.

THE START TO SEASON ACHIEVEMENT FOR 2026

The Beavers will face powerhouse 4A Arkadelphia for its benefit game August 18 at Beaver Stadium. The season-opener is scheduled Aug. 29 on the road against Bauxite.

GLEN ROSE BEAVER FOOTBALL COACHES



The Glen Rose Beaver football coaching staff are fully committed to keep the longtime tradition of building a winning program that's been established as a legacy at the Beaver Dam.

Wade Matlock, Assistant Head Coach

Offensive Coordinator, “Will get us in the perfect formation and play for every situation.”

Brandin Natzke, Assistant Head Coach Defensive Coordinator, “Will get us the ball back quickly so we can go score again.”

Eric Ottoson, Offensive Line Coach, “Will prepare our OLine to be a physical, well oiled machine on every play, run or pass.”

Camryn Wood, Inside Receivers/Passing Coordinator,

“Will get our receivers to be dominant blockers and receivers.”

Westyn Dearen, Secondary/Corners, “Will get our corners to be physical and great in coverage and physical when we fit the run.”

A special thanks to **Coach Mark Kehner** and the rest of our administration for allowing us to coach our great student athletes...

— Coach Bryan Weatherford
Glen Rose Sr. High Football
Head Coach



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Panthers ready to make it happen for 2026 season

***Head Panther Coach Dean Adams
keeping football program solid
for deep postseason run***

By GERREN SMITH
Sports Editor

MAGNET COVE — A strong mentality with determination has been the focus for the upcoming 2026 football season for the Magnet Cove Panthers.

The offseason proved the Panthers are ready to ignite success on the gridiron and make a deep run in the postseason.

The Panthers return a talented core of playmakers, and several stout seniors who are leading by their work out to make the 2026 year something special.

Magnet Cove football head

coach Dean Adams anticipates a big year of PPRD excitement by the Panthers. Adams has guided the Panthers into the playoff picture since his reign as head coach. The tradition of the football program is special at Magnet Cove and Adams looks forward to the team making some noise as legit contenders in 2A.

“We plan to compete for a championship this year,” Adams said. “We want to have a 10 win season and be playing after Thanksgiving — That is such a special time of year and it’s a time when only the best are playing,” Adams said.

“Every player and coach should strive to be playing at that time of year. Those things are not easy to do and it requires playing tough mentally and physically and making the most of every opportunity,” Adams says. “Our seniors told our underclassmen that they don’t want easy. They want to work and earn it.”

THE PREPARATION TO SUCCESS /OFFSEASON

The PPRD spirit of the gridiron has impacted at the Cove. The Panthers got after it for their spring football to get geared up for the summer and upcoming 2026 football season.

Adams was pleased by the spring workouts and impressed by the freshmen that really stepped up to showcase their maturity on the varsity level.

“Our spring football was more of an evaluation for the freshmen and upperclassmen,” Adams said.

The depth chart looks improved from last season Adams mentioned and he had around 36 or more to work out—“That’s the most we’ve had since I’ve been here.”

Adams thought spring football created some good competition and the workouts allowed them to implement schemes and formations they’ll utilize during summer camps against the competition.

“We’re excited about the season and having more depth this year. The ninth graders really stepped up and will be our incoming sophomores that really had a great spring,” Adams said.

Returning starting running back Nehemiah Norwood has improved in the weight room and has gotten stronger, Adams noted. Also Aiden McK-inney, Braxton Ballentine, Hayden Jones and Zane Cardenas all showed productive workouts during spring ball that stood out.

Also upcoming sophomore Joey Conklin did a good job catching the football and Adams was impressed by his early maturity to perform productively on the senior high level. Harper Wilson stood out as well on the line Adams says.

In the first summer football workout on the gridiron, the Panthers put the PPRD effect into execution while hosting a team camp squaring off against Spring Hill and in-county neighbors Bismarck for an 11-on-11 series of action at Kenneth W. Hammons Stadium.

Adams was pleased by the Panthers’ performance in their first taste of summer combat on the gridiron in preparation for the 2026 football season.

“We did better than I thought we would this early,” Adams said. “I was proud of the physical running from our running backs and our execution.” Adams says they still have a long way to go and need to get in better shape. “Overall we are heading in the right direction.”

The Panthers matched the physicality and aggression brought by their workout teams—looking forward to a special year for the return to 2A football again. The summer football campaign progressed well for the Panthers going into fall camp.

The Panthers had one of their most efficient workout experiences from their outing in Hazen.

Overall, the Panthers displayed positive play in their execution on both sides of the ball—offensively and defensively that led to a very efficient trip in preparation for the upcoming 2026 season.

“I was proud of them—Best we’ve done so far,” Adams noted about the Panthers’ workout in Hazen.

Adams says the team got a little sloppy late in the camp when they got tired and fatigued but overall performed well. As the season is beginning to come closer, the Panthers anticipate to have one of the best seasons and return to being a threat in 2A as once was before moving to 3A the past few seasons.. In earlier team camp workouts, the Panthers performed well in their own home camp before the dead week period. Adams was impressed by how productive the team battled, executed and the aggressive style of contact showed against their competition.

Adams felt the Panthers matched the physicality and aggression brought by their workout teams that the upcoming season on the gridiron will



Head coach Dean Adams was very impressed by how sharp the Panthers stood out in their execution at team camps to build excitement for the upcoming season.

sizzle to a big year returning to 2A football again.

When August arrived, the Panthers are ready to crank up the intensity level to provide the PPRD effect for their football fans.

GOOD LUCK PANTHERS!



Photo by: Phil Hobby

**We hope all of our athletes, coaches,
cheerleaders, band members &
staff have a great year!**



MAGNET COVE
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PANTHER PRIDE RUNS DEEP

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THE PANTHER PRIDE SENIORS**THE SENIOR PANTHER LEADERS**

"We have a big group of seniors this year," Adams said. "They mean a lot to me and our program. I have seen them grow up and develop into a tight knit group. They are the strongest group that I have ever had as a coach and the leadership that comes from some of them helps hold our team accountable," Adams says.

The Head Panther coach [Dean Adams] added, it's always special to have a big group of seniors like this and it gives him confidence as a coach each Friday night knowing that he has a ton of experienced players on the field.

NEW LEAGUE OF CHALLENGE

Adams aims for a league championship now that the Panthers have returned to the 2A Classification. Magnet Cove has secured conference titles in the past and Adams believes this core of Panthers are ready to nab a league championship that hopefully leads to a deep run to the state finals at War Memorial.

"We are looking forward to a competitive non-conference—Gurdon, Jessieville, Poyen, and Foreman," Adams noted.

"The conference is new to us since we are now the 2A-1 but there are

some good teams in our conference and a championship caliber team in Mount Ida," Adams says.

"Hackett also joins the conference and they are bringing back quite a few players that will make them a conference championship competitor—Bigelow won a state title game not too long ago and Hector was a top ten team at one point last season," Adams says.

Although there is some rich history of football tradition in the conference, Adams remains confident in the ability of the Panthers' play to still be contenders.

"We are looking forward to our new conference and can't wait to get the year started," Adams said.

WHERE THE JOURNEY STARTS FOR 2026

The Panthers will travel to Spring Hill August 18 for their benefit and scrimmage game—then return to the Cove to host Gurdon Aug. 28 for the season-opener at Kenneth W. Hammons Stadium.

Last season, the Panthers were unstoppable on their home field and went unbeaten during the non-conference and conference schedule—despite their only home loss in the playoffs against McGehee. The Panthers believe this is the year they can make it happen.

MAGNET COVE FOOTBALL COACHES

"Great Group of men and it's a pleasure to show up everyday and work by their side. They work hard and take pride in their work..."

— Coach A.

Dean Adams, head football coach

"It's always special to have a big group of seniors like this and it gives him confidence as a coach each Friday night knowing that he has a ton of experienced players on the field..."

**— Coach A.
Dean Adams**



The Panther football coaching staff anticipates another productive season for Magnet Cove in 2026...

Dean Adams
Head Coach

Robert Webb
D-Line / O-Line Co DC

Eli Dawson
Linebackers/ Running backs /
Co DC

Grady Jones
DB / WR / Head Jr High

Kevin Henson
O-Line / D-Line

THE RETURN OF 'THE ROAR'

THE BISMARCK LIONS READY TO MAKE SOME MORE ROARING NOISE FOR 2026



Defending two-time 3A-7 league champions focused for another trip back to War Memorial for 2026

By GERREN SMITH
Sports Editor

The Bismarck Lions are back with that electrifying roar of greatness again as 3A title contenders for the upcoming 2026 football season. Bismarck football head coach Daniel "DJ" Keithley has been impressed by the offseason production that the Lions have shown and believes they're capable of making some noise for the 2026 season.

From their previous seasons of success, the Lions are becoming an historic football program from their first ever trip to War Memorial.

With high expectations again, the Lions are set to make a deep post-season run in the 3A Classification football for 2026.

After falling short in a championship game two years ago and then to Mansfield last year has left a bitter taste and these boys are hungry," Keithley said. "I fully believe we compete to win the 7-3A, but also I believe we have as good of a shot as anybody to win a state championship if these boys

Bismarck football head coach Daniel "DJ" Keithley believes the lions are ready for a state title run again...



"After falling short in a championship game two years ago and then to Mansfield last year has left a bitter taste and these boys are hungry..."

—DJ Keithley

come together and play like I believe they can."

The Lions have captured two consecutive league titles unbeaten and aiming to go for a third straight conference championship.

"It would be awesome to win three consecutive titles. It's something I'm not sure has ever been done in Bismarck's history, but now we have our sights on a state title. Obviously, in order to do that it starts with taking care of business with our conference foes," Keithley said.

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THE BISMARCK LIONS SENIOR LEADERS FOR 2026



BUILDING A WINNING FOOTBALL PROGRAM

“Building a tradition of winning and setting those high expectations can be the difference between good players turning into great players— But the reality of having year after year dominance is simply also having the most talented players,” Keithley says.

“Any coach that tells you otherwise is full of themselves and lying. We’ve been blessed to have some really good players come through these past few years and we’ve done a great job as a coaching staff of taking advantage of that,” Keithley said.

OFFSEASON CAMPAIGN

The Lions wrapped up spring drills with limited days of workouts due to the success of track and baseball seasons going into lengthy postseason runs in their respective sports. The Lions were able to finish up spring drills in their annual spring game, but it was a wet outing because of the rain. Overall, Keithley was pleased by the participation and time they managed to practice and believes the upcoming season will be another big year for the “blue roar” in the Lions football program.

“We only got about six days of spring ball in because of track and baseball. Still had a sloppy game in the rain and felt it went well,” Keithley said.

With the Lions returning several key pieces from last year’s team Keithley believes they’re ready to surge the newcomers with the upperclassmen to keep the progression of dominance in their execution.

“When we combine them all together on one team I feel pretty good about our

chances in making some noise this year,” Keithley said.

Throughout summer 7-on-7 workouts and tournaments, the Lions finished their outing in the championship games—winning two and runners-up twice. The Lions finished runner-up in the Small Town Shootout 7-on-7 Tournament in Poyen—which they fell short to Prescott in an overtime duel that ended their previous two-year reign. Also the Lions won the 7-on-7 tournaments hosted at Mena and at Lake Hamilton. Bismarck made a third consecutive trip to the championship game as the defending Southwest Arkansas 7-on-7 League Tournament hosted at Hammons Stadium in Hope. The Lions have won the league shootout competition the previous two summers, and advanced to the finals again this year, but fell short to Prescott—ending their stellar dominant reign.

OFFENSE/KEY PLAYERS

Keithley noted, junior Kayden Burch is their returning quarterback. Burch accounted for more than 2,000 yards of offense last year and is faster, more athletic and throws the ball with more confidence this year. “Last year he didn’t win the starting spot till week 3, but this year he has received all the first team reps and I believe will be one of the top QBs in 3A,” Keithley said.

Clayton Martinez returns as the running back. “Last year Caedmon [Keithley] took more of the spotlight as our top rusher, but Clayton is a bruiser and will surprise you with his speed,” Keithley said.

“Ethan Hughes and Ethan Keithley will lead the receivers as what I believe to be the best duo of receivers in our league.”

Coach Keithley says Ethan Keithley is currently nursing a fractured ankle bone, but

hopes to get him back by the time conference play begins.

DEFENSE/KEY PLAYERS

Clayton Martinez is returning at Mike Backer and as the team’s leading tackler. Keithley noted Parker Hughes is a defensively minded individual that plays smart and will stroke your head. Also Matthias Martinez returns at nose tackle and squatted 515 lbs. this summer. “He has a low center of gravity and gets off the ball well, he is an absolute nightmare for centers,” Keithley said.

THE SENIOR ROAR FOR 2026

“Ethan Keithley, one of our best WRs that knows the game and can be plugged into any skill position and excel whether it is quarterback, wide receiver or running back. He is also a key leader on the team, leading with both his words and his actions,” Keithley said.

“Ethan Hughes not sure who our actual best receiver is but it would be between the two Ethan’s for sure— Ethan Hughes is the quieter one, but don’t let that fool you when he steps on the field he is a force to be reckoned with.” Coach Keithley says Ethan Hughes is one of the most consistent players that you can count on when you need a big play. Matthias Martinez returns as a key player on the D-line. “As the strongest Lion he is almost unblockable with a motor to go with it. Landon Frazier is a newcomer from Glen Rose. Keithley says he will compete to play that much needed defensive end position as well as rotate at running back with Clayton Martinez.” “We are still figuring out how good he could be but so far he has been a quality addition.”

Zander Rowdybush is one of the hardest workers in our weight room, Keithley noted. "He is a kid that shows up everyday pushing these guys to compete."

Ivan Diaz is not really big but like his older brother Johnny Diaz he is an example of how big things can come in small packages — "He is one of the toughest hard nosed kids I've had the pleasure to coach." Cole Stiles is a new addition to the team and Keithley says even though he is new to football he maintains a great attitude, cheers on and lifts up his teammates, and shows up and works hard everyday.

THE SEASON OPPONENTS

"We schedule all three non-conference games against some of the best teams in the state. Starting off with the No. 3 ranked in 4A Nashville is going to be a big test Keithley says. "We've been able to slip by them in 7-on-7, but we all know that it's a different game once the pads come on — We follow Nashville up with 4A Haskell who has been much improved over these last few years. And then we end non-conference play with No. 4 ranked Glen Rose in 3A.

"Glen Rose returns some good talent from an already talented team from last year and I'm sure coach Weatherford is going to have those guys amped up to play Bismarck

simply because these are two teams that "Love to Hate" each other," Keithley said.

DEFENDING THE LEAGUE CHAMPIONSHIP

For conference play, Keithley says Prescott is always going to be the tough out in conference play. "They will be much improved and if you don't think there is not some bitterness over the past two years you are kidding yourself — Smackover returns lots of athletes on the offensive side of the ball and will be a tough out as well. Coach Harrison does a great job down there and he'll have them ready," Keithley said.

BISMARCK LION FOOTBALL COACHES



Daniel Keithley Head Coach, QBs and Offensive Coordinator

Cameron Brown Defensive Coordinator, LBs, and RBs. Coach Brown is going to bring energy. "He has a great knack for the game and even though he's the DC I will lean heavily on his suggestions when it comes to in game play calling. He's one of the best coaches I've had the pleasure to coach with."

Bryan Lee is the O-Line coach and Jr High Offensive Coordinator. "He's a great resource for bouncing off ideas for how we want to attack opposing defenses and adjusting blocking assignments."

Russell Carter coaches the D-Line. "He is the newest addition to the program and has been an excellent one. He also is in charge of our weight room and he keeps these boys in line. A former head coach himself coach Carter has proved himself to be invaluable to this program."

Brad Loy is the Jr high head coach and coaches our WR and DBs. Coach Loy is a key factor in why we have had the success we have. "He has proven himself with several JR high undefeated seasons and preparing these boys to step in at the Senior high level."

— DJ Keithley



The Bismarck Lions have developed a strong bond together that's led to a roaring success as 3A title contenders in their football program.



THE 'PRIDE OF THE TRIBE' POYEN INDIANS FOOTBALL 2026 IS READY TO ROLL FOR A DEEP PLAYOFF RUN



The Poyen Indians are fearless again to create some noise on the gridiron for the 2026 football season.

Indians bringing the 'Roll Tribe' effect as 2A contenders for 2026 under new leadership

Keith Barrett ready to take leading role as head coach of the Indians

By GERREN SMITH
Sports Editor

The pride of "Tribe" greatness continues even with a new commander-in-chief taking over the Poyen Indian football program for 2026. Keith Barrett, former defensive coordinator and now head coach of the Poyen Indian football family, who knows he has big shoes to fill after replacing longtime successor of younger brother Vick Barrett. "I know I

have some big shoes to fill as head coach," Barrett said of replacing brother Vick. "I just hope I can keep the success going in the football program," Barrett said.

OFFSEASON

The Poyen Indians look to go into their summer football campaign wrapping up a productive spring session with a lot of returning success from last year.

Barrett feels blessed and excited about fulfilling his new role as Poyen football head coach. Barrett felt a lot of the several returning players from last season really stepped up with a strong secondary to make the defense one of the team's strengths for the upcoming 2026 football season.

After losing several key seniors, Barrett is excited about the players that will fulfill important roles and positions.

GOOD LUCK INDIANS!

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"I believe the strength of our team will be our defense," Barrett said. "We have several returning starters back from our secondary and defensively, we should be ahead then we were last year," Barrett added.

Barrett emphasized during spring drills, the Indians worked on a variety of fundamentals. "We went back to the basics and I think everything went good for our spring workouts—defensively."

The Indians have a lot of returning linemen—"This area needs to be our strength," Barrett said.

Several key pieces will be important from linebackers and the defensive side of the ball—such as defensive end and middle linebacker.

Barrett also noted that they worked out in several offensive areas such as quarterback, which will be a competition throughout summer camps and workouts—but with key returning receivers will enhance a well prepared execution scheme to continue a long tradition of being 2A contenders for the playoffs.

[Keith] Barrett had a lot of success as defensive coordinator under former head coach and brother Vick Barrett, which surged the Tribe to a playoff appearance for many consecutive years.

Barrett is ready to take on this new head coaching position with a good staff—Adam Leatherwood, Chad Baxley and the new addition of Blake Benson, who's coached at

NATE PENNINGTON RISING STAR

The sophomore lineman will be a major difference maker for the Indians. Pennington moved up last year in the middle of his ninth grade season to play senior high and his ability will play a much bigger role this season.

— Gerren Smith, Sports editor

England and Arkadelphia.

Barrett has enjoyed the experience thus far as head coach and feels it's been a blessing to coach alongside with his brother Vick.

IMPACT/KEY PLAYERS

Offense: Kaden Townley - SR - WR, Walker Smith - JR - WR, Michael Marranto - SR - OL, Hayden Murray - SR - OL, Nate Pennington - SO - OL

Defense: Kalit Sanchez - SR - DL, Michael Marranto - SR - DL, Hayden Murray - SR - DL, Blayton Puckett - JR - DL, Baylor Grooms - SO - LB, Kaden Townley - SR - LB/DB, Layton Russell - SR - DB, Ethan Parrault - SR - DB, Keaton Bradley - SR - DB



"WE'RE EXPECTING HUGE THINGS FROM NATE THIS YEAR..."

— KEITH BARRETT

THE POYEN INDIAN FOOTBALL COACHES



The Poyen Indians coaching staff returns with a sense of urgency to guide the football program to success in 2026.

Keith Barrett - Head Coach
- 15th year at Poyen, First Year as Head Coach

Adam Leatherwood - O-line/D-line - 5th year

Chad Baxley - WR/DB - 5th year

Blake Benson - RB/LB - 1st year

SENIORS

"This group of seniors means a lot. They have all contributed to the success of this program since they were sophomores. They always show up and do what is asked of them without hesitation. I can't wait to see what the season holds for them," Barrett said. "These seniors mean everything to this program. They have been through the battles and know what is expected of them. Their leadership means everything."

SEASON EXPECTATIONS/GOALS FOR 2026

"For us this year our goal is to be competitive in every game and give ourselves a chance to win," Barrett said. "We ultimately would love to make the playoffs and compete for a conference championship, but the most important thing for us is to be competitive and have a chance to win each game."

THE TRIBE'S QUEST OF CHALLENGE

Season Opponents

I think all the teams on our schedule



SENIOR KADEN TOWNLEY

"AS A TEAM, I HOPE WE PERFORM WELL AND DO WHAT WE DID LAST YEAR AT THE SAME LEVEL.."



SENIOR HAYDEN MURRAY

"I HOPE WE MAKE A RUN TO THE PLAY-OFFS AND GET FUTHER THAN LAST YEAR.. "

present a different challenge and are all going to be tough games. We take the season week by week and try to give ourselves a chance to compete each week. The non-conference schedule—Mountain Pine, Spring Hill,

Magnet Cove will prepare the Tribe for a tough league to compete. The 4-2A Conference schedule consists of Bearden, Episcopal, Hazen, England, Hampton, Baptist Prep and Carlisle.

The poyen indians football seniors mean a lot to the program and believe they can lead this team deep into the playoffs ...



The Poyen Indian seniors believe it's their time to shine for a huge year on the gridiron in 2026.

"These Seniors mean everything to this program. They have been through the battles and know what is expected of them. Their leadership means everything. .." — Keith Barrett



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TO ALL TEAMS THIS YEAR!**



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New head coaches inspired to lead football programs for 2026

KEITH BARRETT POYEN INDIAN FOOTBALL

"Following in Vick's footsteps is going to be tough. He has set the standard of Poyen Indian Football means and is. As a new head coach I would be crazy to come in and try and change what we have done the past 14 years. We will continue to do what we have been doing with a few wrinkles here and there. I think the key to continuing the success we have had in the past is to continue what we have been doing. We will continue to play disciplined and balanced football. We will also adjust to what fits out players. I think another key to our success is the support of our community. Our administration, our faculty and staff, and our fans are the absolute best and they are a big reason



for our success. I have to give credit to my wife Dana, and my 2 boys Brantley and Brenner for all their support and their unselfishes to support me and the team. All this plays a crucial role in the success we have had in the past and the success we hope to continue in the future...."

— Keith Barrett

BRYAN WEATHERFORD GLEN ROSE BEAVERS

"I've been the head junior high head football coach and this is a new experience ...Glen rose is very special to me and i just want to continue the success we've had. the timing was right, and i felt i needed to do this and felt like the lord led me into doing this. As the new head coach it's been fun, the kids have been good and working hard. they're capable of doing well and i know they'll continue to grow. It's rewarding to me to see them grow. i look up to coaches jim myers and al harrell. i coached with these guys and learned a lot from them during my time coaching at bismarck...."

— Bryan weatherford



Good Luck Teams!



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