

FALL SPORTS PREVIEW



Special supplement to the
**Wood County
MONITOR**
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County teams face tough pre-season slates

By **LARRY TUCKER**
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Due to realignment, Wood County's five football programs have set non-district schedules to fit their needs in preparation for district play. All of the county teams open the regular season Aug. 31.

Mineola and Winnsboro were both moved to District 8 3A DI where they will take on playoff favorites West Rusk, Gladewater and Tatum along with Sabine and traditionally tough White Oak.

Mineola will open the season against three Class 4A opponents, the first two at home against Wills Point and Canton followed by a road game at Farmersville, also Class 4A, and finishing the non-district slate at home against Class 2A DI Big Sandy. All of the Jacket non-district foes were playoff teams last year. The Jackets will have their hands full in the opener against a Wills Point team coming off a 6-5

playoff season with six offensive and 10 defensive starters returning.

The Quitman Bulldogs enter new territory with the wide ranging District 10—3A DII. The eight team district features the Bulldogs, Winona, Arp, Troup, Grand Saline, Frankston, Alba-Golden and Harmony. The Bulldogs open the season on the road at Cumby to take on the Class 2A Trojans, a team which went 7-5 last year falling in the area round of the playoffs. The Trojans have six offensive and eight defensive players returning this season. The Bulldogs, who are looking to reverse a four-year, 43 game losing streak, will also take on Scurry-Rosser and Union Grove before starting district play at Arp Sept. 28.

Alba-Golden finished at 3-7 last year and have one of the area's top signal callers in Zane Smith who passed for over 1,200 yards last year and scored 14 rushing touchdowns. The Panthers will host county rival Hawkins Aug. 31 followed by another home

game with Big Sandy and a road trip to Honey Grove. The Panthers open district play Sept. 28 on the road at district favorite and state-ranked Harmony.

Over at Hawkins, the Hawks will have 10 offensive and nine defensive starters coming back. The Hawks are in the six team District 10-2A DI with Price Carlisle, Alto, Big Sandy, Union Grove and Cushing. Hawkins has a tough early pre-season with their first three games on the road at Alba-Golden, All Saints (Tyler) and Beckville before getting home games against Linden-Kildare and Como-Pickton. The Hawks open district play at home Oct. 12 against Union Grove.

Winnsboro will take on Winona, Queen City, Paris Chisum and Highway 37 rival Mt. Vernon. The Raiders open at home against a talented Winona squad who made the playoffs last year finishing with a 4-7 record. Winona returns seven offensive and eight defensive starters from last year.

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COUNTY STADIUMS

By **LARRY TUCKER**
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In high school sports, home field advantage is always supposed to be worth some points. Many say playing in one's own stadium gives the home team advantages from slopes, holes and dips in the surface to the sun being a problem until the time change in the fall.

The five football facilities in Wood County have served their communities well, hosting not just football, but graduations, concerts, wrestling, band competitions and in some cases, track meets.

The newest facility is the 2,500 seat Meredith

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FALL SPORTS PREVIEW: ALBA-GOLDEN



2018 ALBA-GOLDEN VARSITY FOOTBALL

Panthers have playoffs in sight

By LARRY TUCKER
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Alba-Golden Athletic Director and Head Football Coach Derek Smith is an absolute straight shooter. He makes no bones about the Panthers’ goals for the 2018 gridiron season.

“We expect to make the playoffs. Our goal is the playoffs. Getting a number of wins is a good goal, but our main focus is to get this team to the post season,” Smith said. “The coaching staff is working hard and our players are working hard with the playoffs as our goal. The new district will make things interesting because we don’t know a lot about some of the teams.”

District 10-3A Division II includes the Panthers, Quitman, Grand Saline, Arp, Troup, Frankston, Winona and Harmony. Harmony is ranked in the state’s top 15 in most polls and is the district favorite, but Smith believes the Panthers have the talent to survive district play and clinch a playoff slot. “There is no reason we can’t be one of those teams going to the playoffs. Like anyone else, we must stay away from injuries,” Smith notes.

“The new district has more teams. Harmony will be tough while Arp and Troup will have some speed. It’s one of those districts where anybody is capable of winning on Friday night. I feel good about my kids

See PANTHERS, Page 3



2018 ALBA-GOLDEN VARSITY VOLLEYBALL

Lady Panthers take aim at postseason appearance

By LARRY TUCKER
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Alba-Golden’s volleyball mentor, Head Coach TaShara Everett, has a one word goal for 2018: playoffs. This is Everett’s 14th year at the helm

of Alba-Golden volleyball. “That is always my goal for this team, the playoffs. We missed out on the playoffs last year after going for several years and it did not sit well,” Everett said. “This team is working hard and we plan on being there. We do have some senior

leadership, but we are also young with two freshmen in the starting line-up.”

The Lady Panthers have three seniors, a junior and a pair of freshmen in their early season starting line-up. This year’s seniors are Ginny Carson, Lauren Crump and Macy Pendergrass with Ann Marie Pendergrass the lone junior and freshmen Madi Bryant and Kaylee Anglin.

Everett feels the new district will be tough. District 12-3A is composed of the Lady Panthers, Quitman, Lone Oak, Rains, Grand Saline, Edgewood and Mineola. Rains is moving down from a successful stint in Class 4A. “Everyone is going to be tough. On any Tuesday or Friday you can win or lose a game in this district,” Everett ob-

served. “You always have to bring your ‘A game’. There are no easy games in this district.”

Everett has set a competitive schedule for the lady Panthers. “We schedule good teams so it can make us a better team. We have scheduled teams who have gone to the playoffs because we want to see the good teams and compete against them,” Everett added. “The Tyler Invitational and the Brownsboro Tournament will have excellent competition. We will find out a lot about ourselves playing against those type of teams. These games will get us ready for our district.”

Carson, the team captain, is a mid-

See LADY PANTHERS, Page 3

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2018 ALBA-GOLDEN MARCHING BAND

Stadiums

From page 1

Memorial Stadium, home of the Mineola Yellow Jackets which opened in 1994. The stadium has artificial turf and a fine track facility too. The stadium has been the site of several playoff games over the years. The stadium is located at 1044 West Loop 564 just west of downtown Mineola.

One of the oldest stadiums in East Texas is Quitman's Bud Moody Stadium, opening in 1948 and seating 1,500. The stadium is grass turf and many improvements have been made over the summer to give the old stadium a beautiful facelift. The press box has been renovated and there have been major improvements to the



Meredith Memorial Stadium (Mineola)



Red Raider Stadium (Winnboro)

parking lot at the stadium. The old rock bleachers were part of an original Bulldog Field built for track.

Another older Wood

County facility is Red Raider Stadium in Winnboro. The 2,000 seat facility has been the scene of many battles with other Wood Coun-

ty schools as well as arch rival Mt. Vernon. The grass field stays in great shape year round and it is located at 409 Newsome just east of Winnboro High School about two blocks west of Highway 11.

Alba-Golden's Panther Stadium opened in 1982 when Alba-Golden got their football program started. The stadium has bleachers on the south side of the field and it seats approximately 500 fans. The stadium is located on the north side of the Alba-Golden campus on U.S. Highway 69.

Lowrance Stadium opened in Hawkins in 1975 is located on the campus of Hawkins ISD. The 1,200 seat field is named after legendary Coach Robert Lowrance who is a member of the Texas High School Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

Lady Panthers

From page 2

dle blocker along with Macy Pendergrass, while Ann Marie Pendergrass is an outside hitter and Crump right side hitter. Bryant is also a hitter and Anglin is the setter.

Team Captain Carson is ready to return to the lady Panthers winning ways and a spot in the post season. "We might not be that team that is crazy good, but we will work hard and we are scrappy. We plan to outwork anybody we play," Carson said. "We do have some younger players and I believe in the years to come they are going to be really good."

Carson said she looks forward to a different season than last year. "Last year was not a good year for us. We just didn't have a good experience last year. I kind of got burned out last season because it wasn't fun," Carson said. "This year is already different. We are more of a team and we have been working really hard together so far. It's been a lot better and it has been fun. If we really continue to put the work in and do our best to get better, then we will get back to the playoffs. The teams in the past who have always been good expect it to be given to them. We have to work for everything we get."

Carson believes competitive practice has been a key to getting better as a team. "We are really competitive in practice and I think it makes us all better," Carson said.

Everett believes cutting down on mistakes and unforced errors will give this team the opportunities to win ball games, especially the close ones. "We are already getting better cutting down on the mistakes. If we can continue to do that, we should be able to get back to the playoffs," Everett said.

The Lady Panthers open district play Sept. 7 on the road against an Edgewood squad many feel is one of the top teams in East Texas. Senior Night is set for Oct. 16 against Lone Oak. The quest for the playoffs could go down to the final two games which are both on the road at Grand Saline (Oct. 19) and Rains (Oct. 23).



Bud Moody Field (Quitman)



Lowrance Field (Hawkins)

Panthers

From page 2

and I feel good about our chances to make the playoffs this year."

The Panthers have 13 players returning, six on offense and seven on defense. Smith will be looking to his son, Zach, for leadership at the quarterback slot. The younger Smith is 6'4" and weighs in at 180 pounds. He threw for over 1,200 yards and got into the end zone for 14 scores last season.

The Panthers will be operating from a basic Slot T on offense with an emphasis on the running game, but will go to the air to use several talented receivers. "We are a run-first team and we can throw the ball pretty good," Smith observed. "We worked on the passing game playing in the Mineola seven-on-seven league. We had a good time over there and did pretty well. We beat Mineola once and they beat us once. It helped our receivers to get better and better."

Quarterback Smith will have solid targets and running backs in Tom Mitchell and Bodie Baker. Panther receivers include Matthew

Rogers and Jon Michael Chadwick. "Zach will have good targets all around," the coach added. "Some of the best hands on the team belong to tight end Chris Chabuad."

Smith challenges his team to rise to the occasion every Friday night. "Harmony is definitely the favorite. The have talent coming back and their JV teams were good last year. But I tell my kids you can play with anybody," Smith explained. "Do some places have better athletes? Sure they do, but you can play with anybody on any Friday night. It's a mentality thing and I think our kids are getting there."

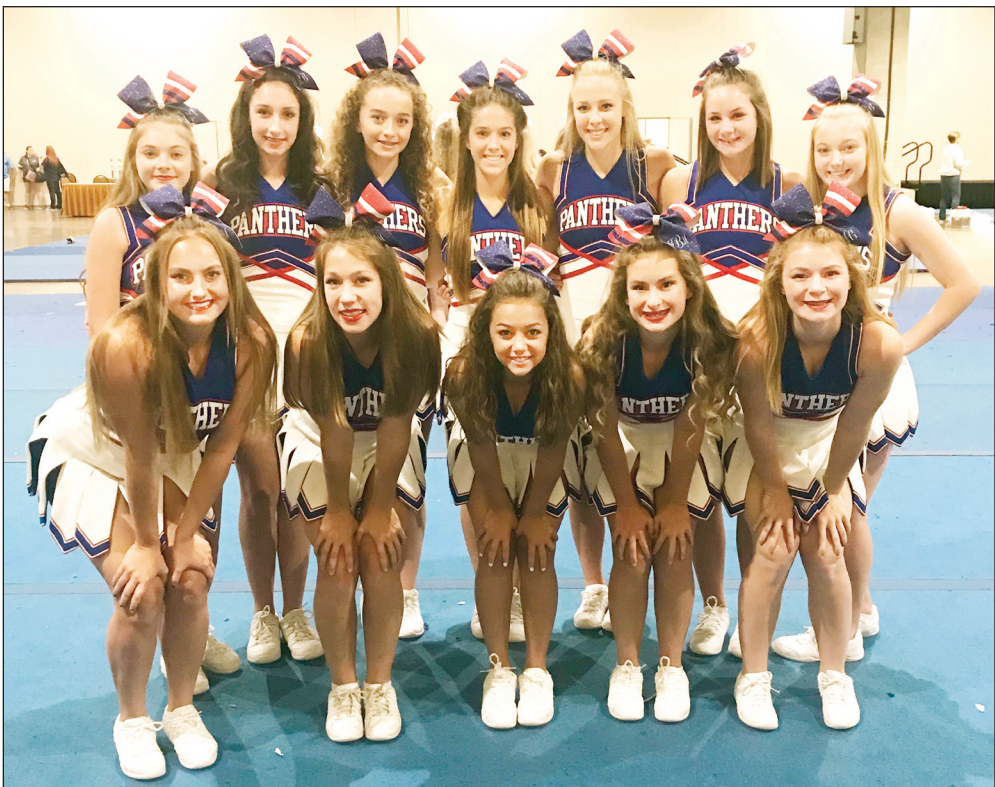
Smith is depending on the Panther defense to be successful. "We have some good defenders coming back. Tom Mitchell was second leading tackler as a sophomore and last year he broke his ankle in game one against Hawkins. It will be good to get him back at inside linebacker," Smith said. "Another really good defender we have is Dylan Arenas at free safety. He plays hard and is a very good tackler."

At the end of the regular season, the Panthers are of

one accord. "The kids want to get back in the playoffs, that is the number one thing on their mind. To set a goal just on wins is not acceptable. Going to the playoffs is what matters," Smith said. "Our immediate goals are to play better each week. We are going to play hard every game we play. We want people to know when they have played us."

The Panthers open the

2018 season at home against Hawkins followed by another home game against Big Sandy before their final non-district tune-up on the road at Honey Grove. After taking off Sept. 21 the Panthers will travel to Harmony Sept. 28 to open district play. The Alba-Golden homecoming this season is set for Oct. 5 against Winoona and Senior Night is the Nov. 2 Quitman game.



2018 ALBA-GOLDEN VARSITY CHEER

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Varsity Cheer
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FALL SPORTS PREVIEW: HAWKINS

Hawks ready to break out

By LARRY TUCKER
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Hawkins Head Coach Scott Evans preaches hard work pays off. The Hawks got a taste of the state playoffs last year turning a tough year around to make the post season after winning two important district games. The Hawks put up a good fight in bi-district before falling 47-13 to a Rivercrest team who posted a 12-1 record.

Evans returns experience to the gridiron this season with 10 offensive and nine defensive starters back on the field for the Hawks. "We have some hard working young men who are looking forward to going back to the playoffs and this time get a win when we get there," Evans said. "We only lost three of the 22 starters from last year so most of our team is back."

The Hawks embark on their 2018 journey traveling west to Alba-Golden to take on the Panthers in the Aug. 31 season opener. They are in District 10-2A DI with Alto, Carlisle, Big Sandy, Cushing and Union Grove. After the Alba-Golden game, the Hawks will finish out their pre-season slate with games against All Saints (Tyler), Beckville, Linden-Kildare and Como-Pickton.

Evans believes his defense will be improved. "We have a good front six. We have some size and we feel like we will be solid against the run," Evans noted. "We were in a lot of close games last year where we just couldn't quite get the win. We expect to win some of those close games this year. We were able to make the playoffs last year for the first time



2018 HAWKINS VARSITY FOOTBALL

in a long time and we want to build on that."

The Hawks have a tough pre-season slate to get them ready for district play. "We have a good mixture of teams to play before district. Hopefully, we will come out of the non-district ready for district play," Evans said. "Carlisle and Alto are probably the pre-season picks as the favorites in our district. Year in and year out our goal will always be to win a district championship. We have not won district since 1990 or 91 so that is a goal we have."

Evans is looking to talented sophomore Paeton Smith to call the signals for the Hawks this fall. Smith was moved up from the JV to the varsity last season as a freshman. "Smith is very mobile. He can run, but he also has a good arm and



2018 HAWKINS JUNIOR VARSITY FOOTBALL



2018 HAWKINS VARSITY VOLLEYBALL

can throw the football. We will run a triple option which has many possibilities on offense," Evans observed. "J.D. McGowan is going to be our fullback. He's a big kid, about 6'1" and 245 pounds and he runs about a 4.5 forty. We will hand the ball to him a lot when we are trying to pound it in."

Stellar defensive back Akim Richmond is a four year starter and he returns to add some spark to the Hawk offense. The Hawks are moving Tristian Garrett out wide along with Camron Taylor to give the Hawks downfield weapons for the passing game.

Evans said the Hawks will have good size on defense and expect to be able to stop the wide-open offenses they will see in district play. "We do have some size. Teddy Taylor

plays tough and he is 5'10" and weighs 330 pounds. He can really move and is a very athletic kid for that size," Evans remarked. "Tristian Garrett will be one of defensive ends and he is a good one. Most of the secondary are returning from last year so we should be alright against the pass."

Evans said the Hawks must be consistent to be successful. "Last year we did have some success, but we were not very consistent. We turned the ball over a lot last year and that is something we are really emphasizing this year, cutting down on turnovers," Evans offered. "We will be okay as long as we take care of the football and eliminate mistakes. Our kids are going to play hard and they will get after it."

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FALL SPORTS PREVIEW: MINEOLA



2018 MINEOLA VARSITY FOOTBALL

Jackets coach expects ‘intense effort’ on field

Fans of Yellowjacket football can expect to see big things from the team under Coach Luke Blackwell’s second year leadership. “You are going to see immense effort, beacuse of how hard they are going to play. We have a fun group of athletes and we will make the game fun,” Blackwell summarized.

District realignment has placed Mineola into an exceptionally competitive group of schools, which have long histories of playing hard-nosed football. West Rusk, Gladewater, White Oak, Sabine, Tatum and Winnsboro will compete with the Jackets for the District 8-3A title. Recognizing the huge challenge presented by the new alignment, Blackwell explained the team preparations will be the same regardless of the opponent. “We will control what we can control,” he explained.

Mineola will open the season at home on Fri-

day Aug. 31 against the Wills Point Tigers. In preparation for the 10 game regular season, scrimmages against Malakoff and Caddo Mills were conducted at Meredith Stadium on Aug. 17 and Aug. 24.

Blackwell described how the Jackets have added a third tenet to their team mantra. In addition to attitude and effort, the team has committed to toughness for the 2018 campaign. Blackwell explained the

players can control their attitude, their effort and their toughness, especially their mental toughness. They will work to develop and shape their commitment to these three tenets.

A Mineola native, Blackwell took a circuitous route to become Mineola’s head football coach. From his studies at University of Texas at Tyler, to the financial

See JACKETS, Page 7




2018-19 Mineola Yellowjacket senior football players (kneeling, left to right) are Devin Cormier, Marcus Riley, Cameron Bowman; (standing, left to right) Cameron Wise, Seth Kirk, Davian Sneed and Shaw Franklin.

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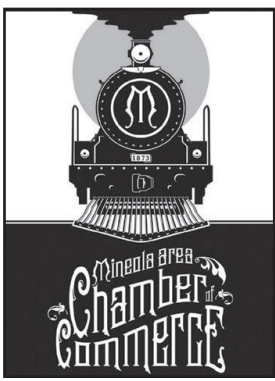

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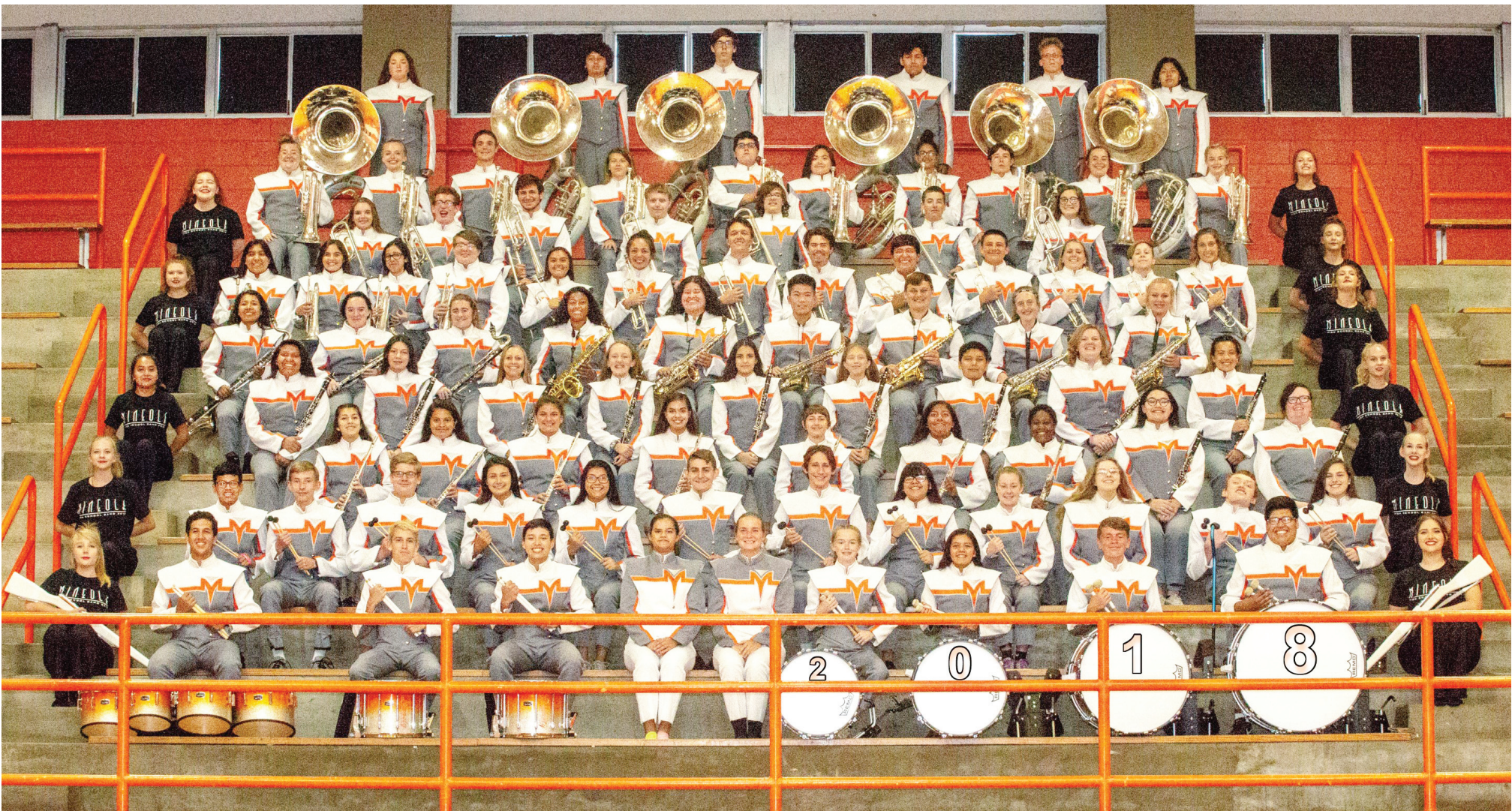


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2018 MINEOLA VARSITY CHEERLEADERS

Jackets

From page 5

world, to his initial foray into coaching with the Coldspring Trojans and finally back home to Mineola. He stated simply, “I let God take care of the big things.” Blackwell freely admitted that faith plays a huge role in his and his family’s lives.

In his 11th year at Mineola, Blackwell will leverage the long experience gained through his tenure, and is counting on the significant experience returning to the squad from last year’s successful team. “We have some gaps to fill from graduation, but we have a good number of young players returning with significant playing experience,” Blackwell commented.

Fans can expect to see a multi-faceted offense, capable of running downhill, as well as operating an up-tempo passing attack. The defense will feature a six defensive back alignment, and will be flexible enough to meet any offensive threat. It promises to be an exciting year on the gridiron.

Coach Blackwell reflected on the importance of senior leadership on the team, “We would like for all seniors to take on the roles of captain,” he explained. They will be expected to shape the season into the experience that they have worked for.



2018 MINEOLA JUNIOR VARSITY FOOTBALL

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FALL SPORTS PREVIEW: QUITMAN



2018 QUITMAN VARSITY FOOTBALL

The time has come

By LARRY TUCKER
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The time has come for Quitman to win a football game.

The last time a Quitman football team walked off the field with a victory was October 2013 when they defeated Eustace. Athletic Director and Head Football Coach Bryan Oakes has preached all the sermons and has found many ways to inspire and motivate his football team. All the steps have been taken except for one: to win a football game.

The numbers are up over last year's totals. "We have had 50 (players) out this summer and are staying steady at about 48, that's seven more than last year at this time. As with anything, we have had our ups and downs," Oakes said. "For the first time as coaches, we can see our kids growing in confidence in themselves. Our kids are finally starting to see things and



2018 QUITMAN JUNIOR VARSITY FOOTBALL

they are able to perform at higher levels of expectations. They know they have put in the work and now it is time to show it on the field."

The Bulldogs will compete in the new District 10-3A DII eight-team district which includes

Quitman, Alba-Golden, Grand Saline, Harmony, Arp, Troup, Winona and Frankston. Quitman faces a tough schedule this fall with only four home games in their 10-game schedule.

The Bulldogs will open the season on the road

at Cumby followed by a home game against Scurry-Rosser and a final pre-season tune-up at Union Grove. After taking off Sept. 21 with a bye, the Bulldogs travel to Arp for the district opener Sept. 28. Quitman will have Homecoming

2018, Oct. 5, when they host Grand Saline. They travel to district favorites Troup and Harmony on back-to-back Friday's before making it back to Bud Moody Stadium for a battle with Frankston Oct. 26. They head to Alba-Golden for the Pan-

ther's Senior Night Nov. 2 and finish the regular season at home Nov. 9 taking on Winona for Senior Night festivities.

The Bulldogs will continue with the no-huddle offense. Oakes said his

See BULLDOGS, Page 10



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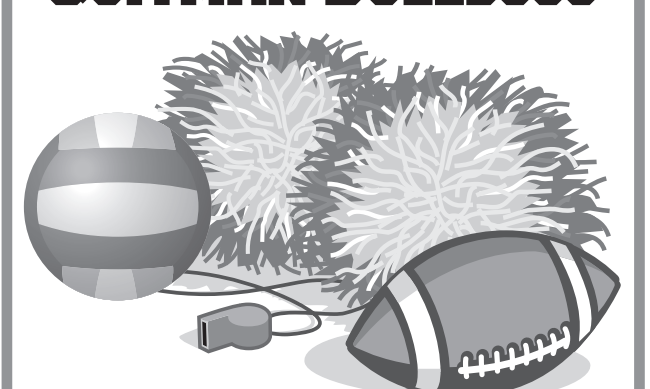
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2018 QUITMAN VARSITY VOLLEYBALL

Lady Bulldogs reload for 2018

By LARRY TUCKER
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Quitman Head Volleyball Coach Ashlee Lingo is upbeat about her team's opportunities this season. Most coaches would be worried about replacing three players who were all-region and all-state for the past few years, but Lingo is all about "reloading" and not "rebuilding."

Quitman's traditionally strong volleyball program has groomed their younger athletes to be ready to step right into varsity positions and not miss a beat. Lingo has returning and experienced seniors including outside hitter Madalyn Spears, and outstanding defenders Abby Dobbs and Emma VanBece-laere. Juniors Julia Simpkins (right side hitter), Jentri Jackson (hitter), Shelby Hayes add varsity experience from valuable court time last season as sophomores. Junior Madi Whitehurst adds strength at the middle blocker spot. Big things are expected from talented 6' 3" middle blocker Ava Burroughs who has already showed great promise

in the early matches. Newcomers Lindsey Hornaday and Lucy Brannon are a pair of sophomore talents who play at the varsity level.

Once again, Lingo's squad is in the midst of a rugged pre-season schedule loaded with quality opponents like Class 5A schools Mt. Pleasant, Pine Tree, Whitehouse, Lindale and John Tyler as well as quality Class 4A schools Carthage and Van. The Lady Bulldogs showed early promise taking second place in the Van Tournament where they beat John Tyler, Liberty, Brook Hill JV, Mt. Pleasant and Paris before falling in the championship to Van.

Lingo believes the tough pre-season slate makes the team 'grow up' quicker. "We always play a tough pre-season schedule. You can't get better unless you play good quality teams who make you better," Lingo noted. "Our girls have done a lot of growing up pretty quickly. You can step up and continue to improve or things can go south fast."

The Lady Bulldogs compete in District 12-3A against Alba-Golden, Mineola, Lone Oak, Rains, Edgewood and Grand Saline. "It's going to be a competitive seven team district so you have to beat three teams to get to the playoffs. With seven teams you get a couple of byes in there which I think helps everybody," Lingo explained. "Rains is always good and dropping down from 4A they are going to be tough. I think Edgewood is going to be really good. And you know Coach Everett and Alba-Golden will have to be reckoned with."

Lingo expects a lot from Spears. "Madalyn is an all around player. She is the 'it' factor. She can put the ball down from anywhere and he defense is incredible. Defense from my other two seniors (Dobbs and VanBece-laere) will be a key for us too," Lingo offered. "Lindsey Hornaday has surprised me. She has really stepped up for us so far. Madi Whitehurst is doing a good job. She missed a year playing volleyball but she is catching up fast."

Lingo feels her team is maturing.

See QUITMAN, Page 11



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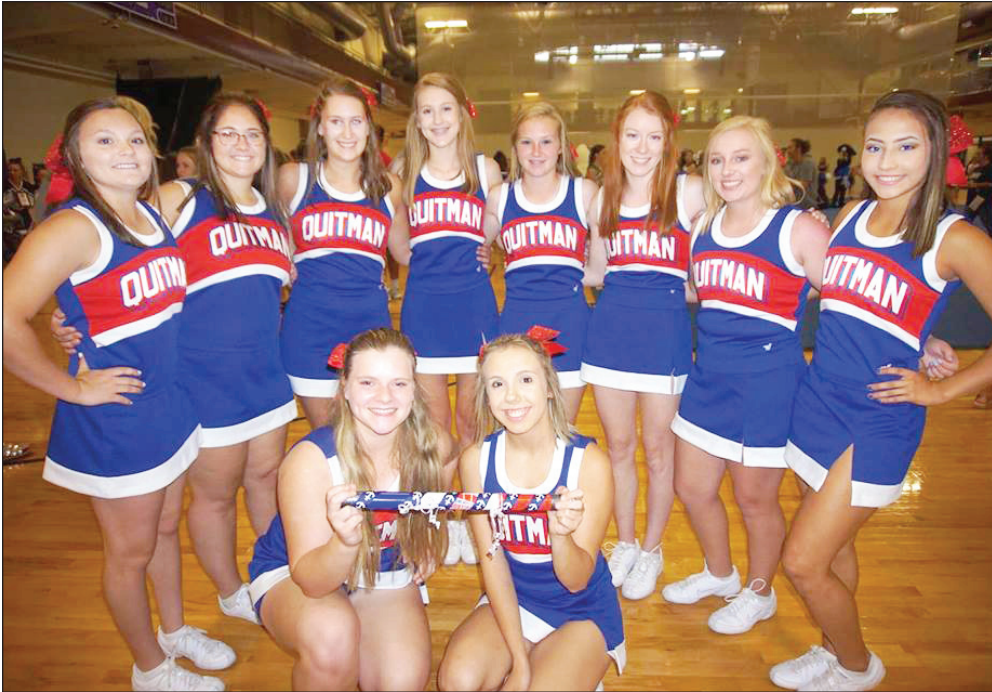
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2018 QUITMAN PROUD BLUE BAND

Bulldogs

From page 8

offensive line has been a bright spot in the early practices. “Our offensive line play right now is different from last year at this time. We have some of the same kids as last year, but this group has really stepped up,” Oakes added. “I believe it’s the continuation of what they learned last year and what they have been able to retain. We can really coach football and not just put together a system we hope works. The line knows we have the backs who can run with the football. They know if they do their jobs our backs will make plays happen. Our coaches have done a great job getting the linemen ready for battle.”

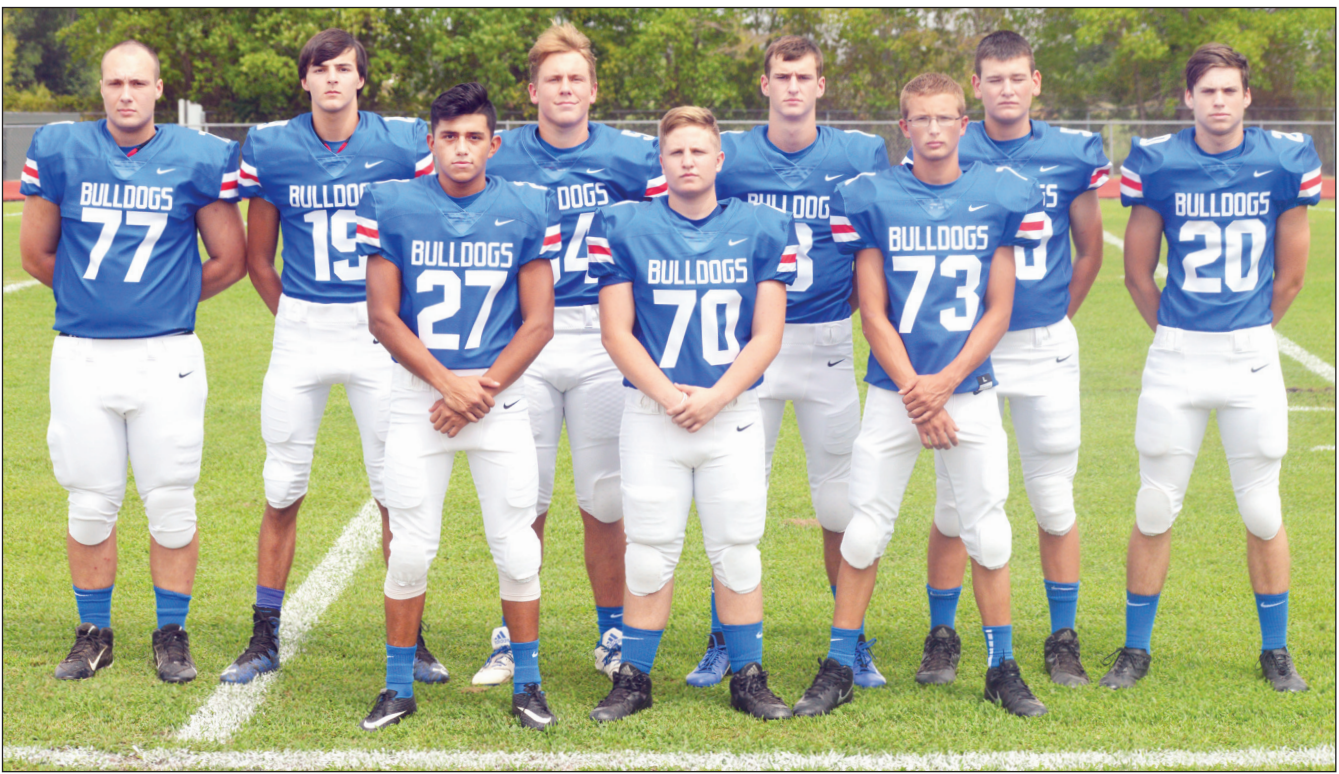
Captain and offensive center Justin Blalock anchors the line while David Tarno, Hunter Gilbreath, Hunter Huggins and Brayden Miller will each contribute to the running game with their upfront blocking.

The Bulldogs return quarterback Josh Medlin, Trey Berry and Ty Holland who each

saw time under center last year. Senior Medlin is a captain and the leader of the offense. Medlin has studied and done his homework on the QB position. Berry, a junior, showed off his speed and tough running skills scoring on a pair of long runs in the scrimmage against Hawkins Aug. 16. Medlin and Berry each brings specific skill sets to the position.

Sophomore Holland is difficult to bring down and displays the toughness Oakes is looking for in short-yardage situations. “It has been a big help to have Coach Vince Rapp coaching the quarterbacks,” Oakes noted. “We can already see the difference at the quarterback position. It helps that our quarterbacks are getting more individual instruction.”

Newcomer and running back Alex Wilson has been impressive in the early going. “Wilson is a great addition to our team. He is a solid running back and doesn’t mind mixing things up and fighting for those extra yards you need to get that first down to keep a drive alive,” Oakes said. “We feel like we have a lot more weapons this



Quitman Bulldog seniors are (front, left to right) Hugo Ramirez, Sam McCarty, Russell Lile; (back, left to right) Justin Blalock, Gavin Derryberry, David Tarno, Josh Medlin, Braden Miller and Trevor Gilbert. (Monitor photo by Larry Tucker)

year when we line up on offense. If everybody will do their job each play, we are going to be okay and we will put points on the scoreboard. And don’t forget about River Chaney, he brings a lot to the backfield, be it running and/or blocking. Bryan Morris has also been doing a good job for us. We feel like we have

more depth this year in the backfield.”

The Bulldogs return seven starters on defense and still run a basic 4-3 defense. “Our kids love to play defense. We are coaching football now. Last year we had to teach them about the things we wanted to do and why we do things certain ways,” Oakes commented. “This

year we have been able to move on more quickly because our kids have retained knowledge from last year. We are not having to spend too much time re-teaching and that has helped us move on to reaching other goals. It’s just a world of difference from last year to this year as far as the learning curve for our players.”

What are the goals for the program in 2018? “It goes beyond winning a football game. We have goals too. Our goal is to win football games and make it to the playoffs,” Oakes concluded.

Is this the “Year of the Bulldogs?” For this team, the quest for a new era begins at Cumby on Aug. 31.

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FALL SPORTS PREVIEW: WINNSBORO



2018 WINNSBORO VARSITY FOOTBALL

CREDITS: WINNSBORO FOOTBALL & CHEER
PHOTOS COURTESY THE WINNSBORO NEWS

Red Raiders looking to rebuild

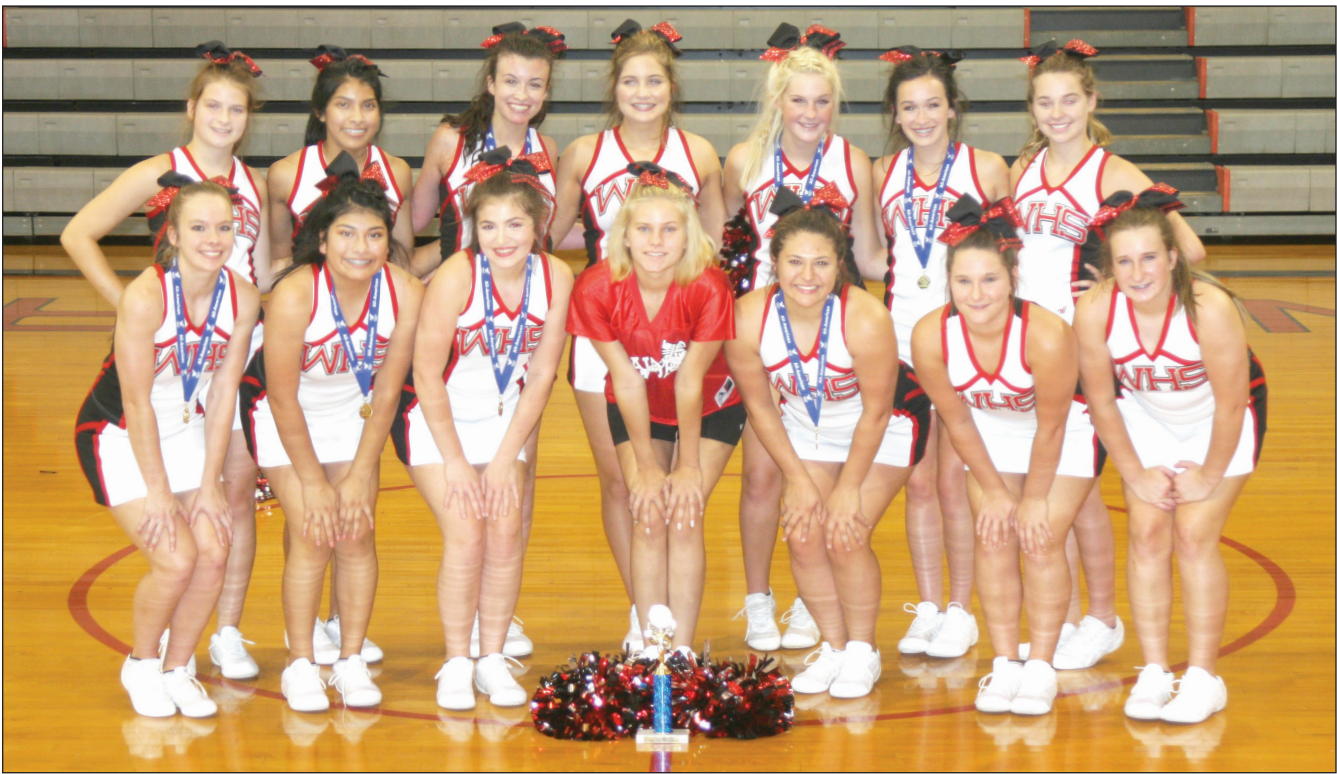
By LARRY TUCKER
sports@woodcountymonitor.com

The Winnsboro Red Raiders move to seven team District 8 3A DI where they must face Tatum, Gladewater, West Rusk, White Oak, Sabine and old Wood County rival Mineola. The Raiders missed out on the playoffs last year with the final spot decided on the last week of the season. Coach Steve Pinnell has a career record of 127-84 at his alma mater. The Raiders are normally a play-off fixture, but must rebuild this

season against a tough pre-district slate and district schedule. The Raiders start the season at home against a talented Winona squad followed by road games at Queen City and Pairs Chisum before taking on Mt. Vernon in the big Highway 37 grudge match before starting district play at home against Gladewater Sept. 28. Pinnell will look to Landry Deaton who rushed for over 700 yards last year to spark the offense. Deaton will be running behind experienced offensive linemen John McCurdy, who is 6'4" and 280

pounds, and Fernando Garcia. The Raiders boast six offensive and five defensive starters returning to the fold and the four non-district games will give the coaching staff time to find out which young players will be able to make the grade on varsity. Defensive lineman Ty Simon will also use his 6'3" 225 pound frame to gain yardage and provide blocking from the fullback position. The Raiders youth will get four games to grow into their varsity roles when district play begins.

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From page 9

"We played well in beating John Tyler and Mt. Pleasant. The girls have really started to grow up in volleyball terms. They work really hard and they continue to improve which is important this early in the year," Lingo said. Lingo schedules a lot of road games. "I think it is important to play on the road. You have to grow up fast if you are going to be successful," she added. Lingo likes the spark she sees from this year's team. "I really like what I see. This group of girls has a lot of fight in them.

They really work well together and they want to win. One of their goals is to win more than they lose in non-district," Lingo said. "We have been doing a lot more team building this year. We take some time out in practice so we can get to know each other better." Lingo says she doesn't feel like they are rebuilding. "A lot of people think we are going through a rebuilding year. I told this team I think they can be better than last year and I believe it," Lingo continued. "They are a good group. They work hard and each of them deserves their spot on the team. We have 30 girls in our overall program and I'm proud of that."

The Lady Bulldogs still have the Tyler Invitational and the rugged White Oak Tournaments left on the schedule. District opens with three straight road matches beginning at Lone Oak Sept. 7 followed by contests at Grand Saline (Sept. 11) and Rains (Sept. 14) before finally getting to play at home against Alba-Golden (Sept. 18).

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FALL SPORTS PREVIEW: YANTIS VOLLEYBALL



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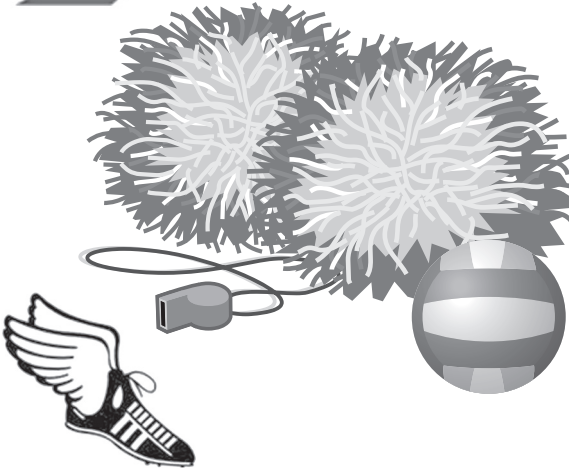


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