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NEW LOOK APACHES READY TO COMPLETE



By JOSÉ TORRES
MANAGING EDITOR

The best word to describe the Gonzales Apaches football upcoming season is “new.”

New head coach? Check. New coaching staff? Check. New offense? New defense? New schemes? Check, check and check. Even the varsity players starting on all sides of the field are mostly new, with just four players who spent a significant amount of time in their current starting position.

“We’ve got literally a brand new football team playing on Friday nights, and that’s a factor,” head coach Mike Waldie said. “We’ve got some big hurdles. We’re going to become a good football team. How quickly is really up to us as coaches and we’ll own that. We got to do our job to get them to where they need to be.”

But there’s a sense of excitement with the word new. New means fresh and the Apaches hope to use the early part of the season to figure everything out and quickly become a force to be reckon with in District 15-4ADI.

Offensively, the Apaches will switch to a power spread offense, forcing defenses to defend the entire width of the field. Waldie wants the team to be balanced, though that doesn’t mean they’ll run the same amount of run and pass plays in a game.

“Balance means that we have made them defend the run and the pass throughout the game effectively,” he said. “That may be 60/40 split or 70/30 split one night, and the next week it might be the other way, but if we use all 53 ½ yards of the field and run a balanced attack that night, then that’s going to be a successful night for us.”

Under center will be senior quarterback Heath Henke, whose first start came late last season in November, the team’s final district game of the season. The Apaches upset Boerne to win a share of the district title, knocked off Kingsville King in the bi-district round, then lost to the eventual Region IV-4ADI champion Liberty Hill Panthers.

“We’re excited for what [Henke] brings to the table in a new offense,” Waldie said of the all-district free safety. “He’s got a lot to learn, but his leadership is off the charts.”

Center Nico Anzaldúa is another of the four starting returners. He’ll be competing on an offensive line that’s expected to be big up front, though not very experienced. However, during the offseason, the Apaches placed second at the State Lineman Challenge at Hardin-Simmons University.

A player to look out for is running back Dillen Ramos, a junior who is expected to line up all over the field.

“He’s a special player at running back, slot receiver, wildcat quarterback, as the season progresses we’re going to be able to move him all over,” Waldie said.

Wide receivers Keisey Ramirez, Coby Rodriguez and Arbreyon Dora are other weapons the Apaches hope to utilize in their power spread game.

Defensively, the Apaches will rely on what Waldie considers the strength of the team, which is the defensive line. Returners include defensive ends Diego Diaz De Leon and Lion Williamson, both seniors.

“Our defensive line experience coming back is definitely the best part of our football team right now,” Waldie said. “Lion and Diego coming back are tremendous football players, all-state caliber football players.”

Henke also returns to his position as free safety.

The team will show an odd front in what Waldie described as

FOOTBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	TIME
Aug. 16	Smithville (Scrimmage)	Away	10 a.m.
Aug. 22	Hays Johnson (Scrimmage)	Away	7 p.m.
Aug. 30	Navarro	Home	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 6	Austin Crockett	Away	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 13	Yoakum	Away	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 20	Cuero	Home	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 27	Hondo	Home	7:30 p.m.
OPEN			
Oct. 11	Pleasanton	Home	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 18	Beeville Jones	Away	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 25	La Vernia	Home	7:30 p.m.
OPEN			
Nov. 7	Boerne	Away	7 p.m.

the Katy 50, or a 3-4 defense, a big change from last year’s 4-2-5 look. The new head coach expects the talent at wide receiver to also play in the secondary.

Though it’s too early to determine the strength of the Apaches’ special teams, Waldie’s philosophy is to highlight that phase of the game as much as he does the offense and defense.

“There are parts of the game where that comes in to play but you’ll get beat quicker on special teams than any other phase so we take those very importantly,” he explained. “We don’t say ‘well he’s starting on D and O so he’s not on special teams.’ Matter of fact, if you take off on special teams you might lose your position on D and O. That’s how important it is for us.”

One thing to look forward to is the Apaches’ kicking game. Waldie has some competition there, including field goal kicking, punting and kickoff.

“Frank Benes, he’s playing outside backer, he’s playing full-back, he can kick,” Waldie touted. “He’s got a rocket of a foot, who kind of came out of nowhere.”

Overall, the team wants to do three things on the football. One is to keep possession of the ball, meaning forcing turnovers on defense and protecting it on offense. Second, the team wants to play great defense. Giving up yards is fine, so long as the team doesn’t allow scores.

“We don’t care about yardage,” Waldie said, “we don’t measure yardage on defense. We measure points as our true goal and possessions. We don’t want them to have a ton of possession and we’ve got to limit their points. They can drive the ball up and down the field, honestly, as long as we find a way to stop it and cut off the drive is the key without giving up big plays.”

Finally, the team is going to want to protect their defense. On offense, the Apaches’ goal is to catch their opponents off guard with their pace. However, there will be moments when the team slows down in order to give their defense a break.

The Apaches have a nine-game schedule this year. Waldie’s focus will always be on winning, but what matters most to him is the team’s progression.

“I will game plan every game to win it, but at the end of the day, all that matters to me is the second season, which is district, to get to the third season,” he said. “If we do that at 1-4, 5-0, 2-3, it doesn’t matter, as long as I feel like in Pleasanton, we’ve reached an opportunity to become the best we can be.”



JUNIOR-LADEN TEAM AIMS AT DEEP PLAYOFF RUN

By **JOSÉ TORRES**
MANAGING EDITOR

Despite a new head coach taking over the program, the Gonzales Lady Apaches do not lack in experience. Of the 13 listed varsity players currently in the lineup, 10 of those are juniors. The roster is rounded out with two seniors and one freshman.

Usually it's hard for a team under new leadership to immediately buy into the head coach's philosophies. However, Oruonyehu has found that her team full of juniors is very coachable.

"The team strength is that they're very positive," she said. "Even when they mess up, they get over it super quick and they keep going, and they're very coachable. All my players are coachable, and I love it and I'm so thankful to be here with them."

Early on the Lady Apaches have shown some success.

"I think we have a tough schedule this year," Oruonyehu said. "It's better for us because we're playing higher competition with these big schools. We're stepping up, we're doing better things. We're actually playing good volleyball and I think we look like a completely different team."

"I watched last year's film with the girls, and I think their transition is

great," she continued. "Their hitting is better, they're communicating well, they're just becoming one. I think it's going to get us a playoff spot. Not just one playoff [game], I think we're going to make it at least two rounds deep."

Some players to look out for include Hayley Sample and Madelynn Brown up front as hitters, freshman Kristin Baker who was recently called up, Peyton Ruddock at libero, Sam Barnick and setters Madison Pirkle and Rachel Staggs.

Sample and Brown are "big game changers" according to Oruonyehu.

"They score points when we need it the most," she said.

Defensively, the Lady Apaches will lean on Barnick and Ruddock. As for setting, Oruonyehu touted the communication between Pirkle and Staggs, which is important when Gonzales runs their 6-2 rotation.

"They're learning their hitters and they're becoming better every single day at the sets, so we can get the attacks," Oruonyehu explained.

Keeping their momentum will be key for the Lady Apaches moving forward. If this junior heavy team wants to go a few rounds deep in the playoffs, consistency will have to be key.

"Once they know and have confidence that we're going to hit that win and hit 25 every time, everything is going to come together," Oruonyehu said.



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GONZALES APACHE VOLLEYBALL



VOLLEYBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	TIME
Aug. 9-10	Wimberley Tournament	Away	TBA
Aug. 13	Yoakum/Shiner Dual	Away (Yoakum)	5 p.m.
Aug. 15-17	Schulenburg Tournament	Away	TBA
Aug. 20	Luling	Away	6 p.m.
Aug. 22-24	Cuero Tournament	Away	TBA
Aug. 27	Flatonía	Away	6:30 p.m.
Aug. 30	Wimberley	Home	6 p.m.
Sept. 3	Columbus	Away	7 p.m.
Sept. 6	Taylor	Away	5:30 p.m.
Sept. 10	Karnes City	Home	6 p.m.
Sept. 17	La Vernia	Away	6 p.m.
Sept. 20	Cuero	Home	5 p.m.
Sept. 24	Navarro	Away	6 p.m.
Sept. 27	Poteet	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 1	Pleasanton	Away	6 p.m.
Oct. 4	SA Brooks Academy	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 11	La Vernia	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 15	Cuero	Away	6 p.m.
Oct. 18	Navarro	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 22	Poteet	Away	6 p.m.
Oct. 25	Pleasanton	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 29	SA Brooks Academy	Away	6 p.m.

KNOCKING ON STATE'S DOOR

By JOSÉ TORRES
MANAGING EDITOR

Kevin Johnson might have a new job title at Gonzales ISD, but he's definitely not new to the athletic program. Longtime head coach Cully Doyle accepted an opportunity to take an athletic director's job elsewhere, leaving an opening for head cross-country coach, head girls' track and field coach and head girls' athletic director.

Filling that spot is Johnson, who Athletic Director Mike Waldie believed was the right man for the job. "This one was a no-brainer," Waldie said back in May when he announced the promotion. "I'm excited for our girls and to see his leadership grow here. Like everybody, you need your first shot, and he's getting it now. I'm looking forward to feeding off that and working together with him."

Last season, the girls won district for the third year in a row. Both the boys' and girls' teams advanced to regionals as a whole. Unfortunately, that's where the season would end for Gonzales cross-country.

"That was big time right there, just having both teams right there at regionals," Johnson said. "It didn't go as we wanted it to go, but I mean it comes with the sport. You'll have your highs, you'll have your lows, but that's a huge motivator coming into this year. The goal is not to fall short, but is to make it all the way to the state meet."

With familiar faces in the cross-country coaching staff, the boys' and girls' teams are ready to keep pushing toward district dominance and state berths.

Some runners on the girls' side to look out for include Veronica Moreno, Krisanta Esquivel, Kaylin Ramirez, Krystalynn Buesing, Shelby Davis and Stephanie Reyna.

"To have the girls constantly show that success year after year after year has been big not only for the girls' program but Gonzales as a whole," Johnson said. "Now, when people talk about Gonzales, they'll mention the girls' cross-country team as one of those teams to be looking out to, to almost kind of fear because of the fact they work so hard."

The girls' roster, as of early August, consist of 24 runners. Johnson believes the roster, just like last year, is deep. That depth is what's going to push the Lady Apaches to state.

Meanwhile on the boys' side, the team is growing in size and in willingness to buy in to the program.

"The boys' program, from when I started working with Cully about four years ago to where it is now — at one point there were a lot of guys, but there wasn't as much buy in," Johnson said. "Now we're building up guys that actually want to be a part of the program, want to strive for something like they're



getting their runs in, they're forming a team bond to be more cohesive as we go into this season. It's been a blessing to see, it's been a blessing to watch it develop over the seasons. Just to be an assistant to now being the head coach of it all, watching these kids grow as I've been growing with the program has just been amazing."

The team will lean on the leadership of Antonio Hernandez, Avery Almaguer and Avrum Almaguer. Other runners to look out for include Bark Burek and Carlos Mendoza.

The schedule is a bit lighter than in years past. Johnson believes the team needs some recovery time in order to be at tip-top shape during those important district and regional races.

"We take a couple weeks off, let their bodies actually recover a little bit more, then we hit district," he explained. "The way it's setup, we run district Oct. 8, then we don't have to run regionals until Oct. 28. That's 20 days of just recovery, rest, getting better, getting stronger, getting hungry. One thing that I've learned as being an athlete and just watching them is when you take away a meet, when you have a lull in between meets, you're hungry for a race. You're starving for it. You just want to go out there and run."

CROSS COUNTRY

DATE	MEET	TIME
Aug. 17	Gonzales Relays Independence Park	8 a.m.
Aug. 24	Yoakum Invitational	8 a.m.
Aug. 29	Schulenburg Invitational	4 p.m.
Aug. 31	Lockhart Invitational	8 a.m.
Sept. 7	FEAST Invitational San Antonio	8 a.m.
Sept. 14	Moulton Invitational	8 a.m.
Sept. 21	Pre-Regional Meet - Corpus Christi	8 a.m.
Oct. 2	Seguin Starke Park (Practice Meet)	3 p.m.
Oct. 8	District 30-4A Meet @ Seguin Starke Park	9 a.m.
Oct. 28	Region IV-4A Meet @ Corpus Christi	TBD
Nov. 9	Class 4A XC Meet - Old Settlers Park Round Rock	TBD

Expectations are high. Last year, both teams missed out on qualifying for the state meet. This year, the Apaches expect to be right in the mix for that berth.

"I know the girls are going to be going to state," Johnson proclaimed. "I know the boys are going to be knocking at state's doors. That's just the group of kids that we have here. They want that success. They see it, they've tasted it."

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TOUGH TESTS AHEAD



By JOSÉ TORRES
MANAGING EDITOR

There aren't supposed to be state-championship aspirations with a team that starts 0-7. Yet last season, Shiner St. Paul did the unthinkable by taking second in their district, then running through the playoffs and ultimately winning the state title. Head coach Jake Wachsmuth understands that though there's much work to get done before even thinking about playoffs, the Cardinals are set up to compete in what looks to be another tough schedule.

"Every year is a new team," Wachsmuth said. "You don't get a discount because you won the year before, you got to pay the full price. We definitely have some guys that made some contributions last year. We've got some young guys, so we're excited."

Despite having 11 freshmen on the roster, the Cardinals expect to return around six or seven starters on both sides of the ball from last year's team. The key for Wachsmuth and the rest of the coaching staff is to fill the holes left by a strong senior group.

"We've got a lot of returners and just hope we can find some young guys to give us some depth," he said.

Although it's a new team, Wachsmuth hopes the momentum from last year's playoff run, specifically the feeling

FOOTBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	TIME
Aug. 16	Nixon-Smiley (scrimmage)	Away	6 p.m.
Aug. 23	Flatonia (scrimmage)	Away	6 p.m.
Aug. 30	Yorktown	Home	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 6	Victoria St. Joseph	Away	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 13	Austin Saints	Home	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 20	Cypress Christian	Home	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 27	Weimar	Away	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 4	Geneva Boerne	Away	7 p.m.
Oct. 11	Brentwood	Away	7 p.m.
Oct. 18	Temple CTC	Home	7:30 p.m.
OPEN			
Nov. 1	Hallettsville Sacred Heart	Away	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 8	St. Gerard	Home	7:30 p.m.

of "we can do anything," extends to this year's Cardinals.

"I think what you take from that [state championship run] and hopefully they can take forever is no matter what's going on at the moment, you just keep plugging away at it because life is going to throw you some battles too, some adversity," he said. "You never give up. It's not always going to work out like it did, but hopefully they learned that no matter what happens his year, they got something to lean

on to say, 'you know what, we can still do it.' Hopefully good or bad they feel that way. We don't necessarily want to repeat that, but the schedule hasn't changed. Part of that last year was a couple of things. We had some injuries, but we also had a situation where we got a challenging schedule. Hopefully we can do a little bit better with it and be more ready for district with a positive record. Bottom line is what counts is district and moving forward, and I think that beginning of the season definitely gave us the feeling that we can do anything."

The schedule this season is full of playoff contending teams. But the experience of playing against teams like that will be important for the Cardinals.

St. Paul has 11 juniors and seniors on the roster. Wachsmuth notes that all of those upperclassmen were key contributors to last year's team.

"All of them, I believe, started in one way shape or form," he said. "We're a little bit bottom heavy as far as the classes, but I think the fact that we're returning those guys that had a taste of success. They were on the field in the state game. That matters."

Prognosticators such as Dave Campbell's Football Magazine are suggesting a strong season for the Cardinals in TAPPS Div. IV football. Wachsmuth and the St. Paul Cardinals hope to piece everything together to get back to that state championship game.



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Contributed photo by Lori Raabe



LADY CARDINALS UNDER NEW LEADERSHIP

By **JOSÉ TORRES**
MANAGING EDITOR

Having a new team under a new head coach isn't going to stop Shiner St. Paul from altering their expectations. No matter who steps on the court, the Lady Cardinals volleyball team have lofty goals of reaching the state tournament. And though there's going to be some growing pains early on under first-year head coach Ashytn Henkes, the Yoakum native is up to the challenge.

Although this is her first head coaching job at this level, Henkes has playing experience at the high school level for Yoakum, at the college level for Temple College and some coaching experience running club volleyball.

"I was really excited when this opportunity came because I get to show them a lot of things," Henkes said. "I've had great coaches in college and in high school that I've learned from. I have taken things from both sides, high school and college level, and put them into something I can take over and hopefully the girls can take away from."

The Lady Cardinals graduated a whopping 12 seniors, with just two returners to varsity that had significant playing time last season.

"We're an all-new team, pretty much, so the girls get to step into their new roles and that's been really exciting to watch," Henkes said.

With a new coach comes learning different rotations, different drills and a different type of coaching. Thankfully, the Lady Cardinals are "willing to learn and willing to work hard," Henkes noted.

"No one knows what we're going to have this year because it's so new," she said. "I think the girls have surprised themselves. I don't think they've realized how good they can be or how good they are. They're really humble right now and have so much room to grow."

Some players to look out for include Paige Brown in the middle, Cameron Pesek hitting from the right and two setters in Danni Blair and Mallory Pokluda.

"Those will be the returning hitters and setters to watch," Henkes said.

Early on, the Lady Cardinals face a tough schedule to prepare them for district. After all, for many, this will be the first time they'll get significant playing time at the varsity level.

"It's faster," Henkes said. "I pulled up a freshman this year, I have a lot of sophomores this year that are playing and I don't think they expected that. But I saw their work ethic and I know they can do something really good with it."

New scheme, new coaching, new players on the court, no matter. Expectations are high over in St. Paul. And these Lady Cardinals will need to figure it out before they reach district.

VOLLEYBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	TIME
Aug. 9-10	Yorktown Tournament	Away	TBA
Aug. 13	Rice Consolidated	Home	7 p.m.
Aug. 20	Flaton	Away	7 p.m.
Aug. 22-24	Rice CISD Tournament	Away	TBA
Aug. 27	Hallettsville Sacred Heart	Home	6 p.m.
Aug. 30	Yorktown	Home	4:30 p.m.
Sept. 3	SA Legacy	Away	6 p.m.
Sept. 6-7	SA Castle Hills Tournament	Away	TBA
Sept. 10	La Grange	Home	7 p.m.
Sept. 12	Hallettsville Sacred Heart	Away	7 p.m.
Sept. 19	Victoria Faith Academy	Away	6 p.m.
Sept. 20	Austin Waldorf	Away	5 p.m.
Sept. 24	Shiner High	Home	6 p.m.
Sept. 26	SA Atonement	Home	6:30 p.m.
Sept. 27	Weimar	Away	4:30 p.m.
Oct. 1	Bulverde Bracken Christian	Away	6 p.m.
Oct. 3	SA St. Gerard	Home	6 p.m.
Oct. 8	Victoria Faith Academy	Home	6 p.m.
Oct. 15	SA Atonement	Away	6 p.m.
Oct. 17	Bulverde Bracken Christian	Home	6 p.m.
Oct. 22	SA St. Gerard	Home	6 p.m.



Contributed photos by Lori Raabe

A STRONG WORK ETHIC

By **JOSÉ TORRES**
MANAGING EDITOR

There's no lack of work ethic for the Cardinals cross-country teams. Reaching the state meet is always a goal, and Beal-Sestak has noticed early on there's no lack of drive from her athletes.

"Their work ethic has been great, they came in for summer workouts working hard, really pushing each other," she said. "I can see we obviously have a strong runner in returning [Julianna] Davis who was a state champion from last year, but everybody is really trying to close that gap on her. That's been the great thing about them."

Summer workouts aren't mandatory. Yet Beal-Sestak notes that most of her runners have come to train to make sure they get back to state.

There are a few tweaks to the scheduling, with Shiner St. Paul adding Brazos to the mix of races they'll

CROSS COUNTRY

DATE	MEET
Aug. 17	Gonzales Relay
Aug. 24	Yoakum Meet
Aug. 29	Schulenburg
Sept. 7	Brazos (Tent)
Sept. 14	Moulton
Sept. 21	Shiner
Sept. 28	Weimar
Oct. 5	Round Top
Oct. 21	State (Waco)

compete in. But the main thing would be for the Cardinals to run in competitive races that will closely simulate how the state meet will feel.

"We like to stay with our solid group around here because they are all very competitive and they are tough courses," she added. "We've got to run in meets where we have a lot of hills, a lot of challenging courses and we get to see that. They're not all exactly like Cottonwood, but at the time of the year that we need them, they present the challenges that will serve us as far as preparing the kids for state."

On the boys' side, four runners from last year's team graduated, meaning Beal-Sestak is looking at "a whole new team," as she describes it.

Currently, the Cardinals have six runners, including five freshmen and one returning junior from last year's team.

"They're solid runners," Beal-Sestak said. "They'll be

young, but they were really good junior high runners."

There's a bit more experience on the girls' side with the state champion Julianna Davis returning along with Paige Brown, Rebecca Wagner and Tristin Davis.

"They all have gotten stronger," Beal-Sestak said of her 15-deep roster. "They all have goals, they all know what they have to do."

"Their goal is to make that top seven," she added. "That's what makes that top seven really good."

The depth on the Lady Cardinals will be yet another strong point for a team looking for their seventh title in a row.

"It's amazing because for me, the top times are really nice, but then I got number 5, 6, 7 and 8 that are coming in with some times that would make teams at other schools," Beal-Sestak said. "They're just pushing each other, running some good, solid 6:45 to seven-minute miles just in a timed practice run. They're doing a really nice job with that."

The Cardinals hope that the talent and depth on that girls team as well as the drive of the younger athletes on the boys team will push the program to state titles this season.



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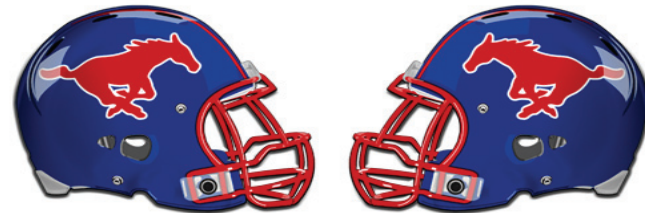
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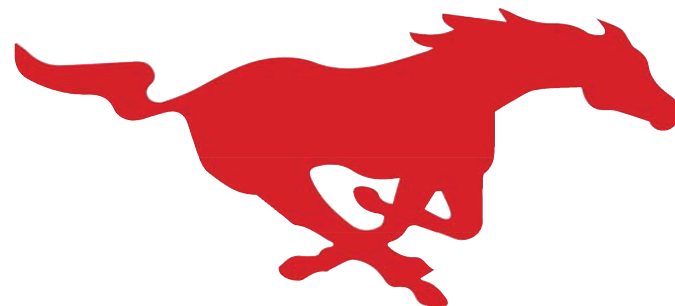
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A NEW LOOK

By JOSÉ TORRES
MANAGING EDITOR

To say the Mustangs were disappointed with last year’s results would be an understatement. Under a new head coach last season, Nixon-Smiley struggled with the team plagued with inexperience. This year, second-year head coach Pablo Ybarra is implementing some changes on the offense and the Mustangs hope to use these early games to clean up the mistakes and be ready to fully compete by the time district comes.

“Like I told the kids, we’re not looking to hit all cylinders until probably September, October, when we get to district,” he said. “That’s when we want to be hitting cylinders 100 miles per hour.”

Last season, the Mustangs went 0-10, with their closest games being an 11-point loss to Stockdale and a 13-point loss to Skidmore-Tynan. But with the experience of playing varsity football, Ybarra believes his squad is more well off.

“I think our roster is a little more seasoned,” he explained. “We do have some young kids, but at the same time, I think we’re going to be better off, just right now our biggest thing is the timing of our offense. There were some big holes [against Shiner St. Paul], we just didn’t make the right reads. That comes with video and time.”

The team’s biggest strength comes from their skill

FOOTBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	TIME
Aug. 16	Shiner St. Paul (scrimmage)	Home	6 p.m.
Aug. 23	Randolph (scrimmage)	Home	6 p.m.
Aug. 30	Pettus (Parent’s Night)	Home	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 6	George West	Away	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 13	Hallettsville Sacred Heart	Away	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 20	Cole	Away	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 27	Falls City	Home	7:30 p.m.
OPEN			
Oct. 11	Poth	Away	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 18	Stockdale	Away	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 25	Skidmore - Tynan	Home	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 1	Natalia	Away	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 8	Dilley	Home	7:30 p.m.

position. Ybarra believes the Mustangs have a strong running back corps. The team will need to be get their timing right and, above all else, stay healthy.

“We got the kids to play, we just got to get them going in the right direction,” Ybarra said. “That’s going to be our part as coaches to come in and correct what we need to fix and get it going in the right direction.”

“If our line can come around like we think they

can,” he added, “that’s when I think we’ll hit our cylinders 100 miles per hour.”

Ybarra also talked about wanting to be more consistent with the Mustangs play at the line of scrimmage. In their first scrimmage against Shiner St. Paul, Ybarra noticed that after a good play, his athletes at the line would follow it up with a bad one. “Taking two steps forward, then two steps back,” as he described it.

“The football game is won at the line of scrimmage, offensively and defensively,” Ybarra said. “Those two aspects of defense and offense, we got to work on to get better. That’s where the game is won, at the line of scrimmage.”

One key tangible the Mustangs are working on is their aggressiveness on the field.

“We weren’t as aggressive as I thought it was going to be,” Ybarra said after their first scrimmage.

But overall, the Mustangs are moving forward from last season’s mistakes.

“We’re pretty excited with what we have,” Ybarra said. “We got some good athletes, we got stronger over the spring and got a little faster. I think once we hit district, we’re going to be in a situation where we want to be, it’s just a matter of timing. It’s a learning process. We put in a new offense and somewhat of a new defense so it’s going to be timing in between now and the next five weeks when we start district. We’re going to be better, we’ll correct it as coaches.”

EYEING PLAYOFFS

By **JOSÉ TORRES**
MANAGING EDITOR

Last season's woes can be chalked up to one key aspect of their game — passing. This year, the Lady Mustangs have been “on point” with their passing, according to third-year head coach Tara Wyrwich. That improvement has pushed Nixon-Smiley to new levels.

“I’m impressed,” Wyrwich said of her Lady Mustangs. “They’ve been working, busting their butts, I think it’s paying off. They’re moving well on the court. It starts with the pass and right now our passing is on point, which leads us to running quicks and hitting the ball well. Compared to last year, we were constantly working on trying to get our passes on point.”

“It helps that the team finally has some experience on the court,” she added.

Indeed, the team’s strength will be the overall experience, with some seniors returning from last season.

“I think that helps out a lot, that leadership,” Wyrwich said.

And with a tough non-district schedule, the Lady Mustangs are hoping to sharpen their skills before competing for a playoff berth.

“Especially in tournaments, we’ll meet some real strong teams,” Wyrwich explained. “Then when I schedule other teams you want some teams that you are going to be successful and have a chance or opportunity to give the girls confidence but you also want



to challenge them so you schedule some tougher games.”

Despite the toughness that will be District 27-3A, Wyrwich wants the Lady Mustangs to not only compete for a playoff spot, but also make a run at a district title.

“With time we’ll set goals but right now it’s just been a hurry up, let’s go,” she said. “I think right now we’re just trying to get our feet under us. Of course our goal is obviously to go deep in the playoffs. It would be great that we’d actually win district. That would be a huge goal as a team and as a coach I want these girls to be able to experience that.”

One hurdle Nixon-Smiley will need to leap over is their communication. Wyrwich noted her team is too quiet.

“We play well together, but we’re quiet,” she said. “They need to communicate more. Communication is key to everything, being able to let each other know ‘hey I got this ball,’ that way we aren’t running into each other.”

The Lady Mustangs’ playoff drought has reached a decade now. But the team has been competing.

“They’re showing a lot of heart and hustle,” Wyrwich said.

If the senior leadership can help put the puzzle pieces together, Nixon-Smiley could find its way to the playoffs for the first time since 2009.

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By **JOSÉ TORRES**
MANAGING EDITOR

Nixon-Smiley’s cross-country program is growing under second-year head coach James Watkins. Last season, Watkins expressed his excitement on taking over the program and wanting to move the team forward to new levels of success. Now with one year of cross-country of head coaching under his belt, Watkins hopes to learn from last season and continue to improve the program.

One of the things Watkins is trying to implement this year is changing up the way the team practices.

“I’ve learned that we need to have innovative practices with lots of variety in what we do,” he said. “Lifting weights is important, at least twice per week.”

In order to keep up with the athletes in Luling, Yoakum and Poth, the Mustangs will need to find “innovative” ways to train.

Returning for the Mustangs are Joel Barajas and Modesto Limon on the boys’ side. Both finished in the top 30 in district. Both runners are juniors.

“I have high expectations for this

CROSS COUNTRY

DATE	MEET
Aug. 31	Lockhart
Sept. 7	Moulton
Sept. 14	Shiner
Sept. 21	Weimar
Oct. 5	Shiner
Oct. 9	Poth (District Meet)
Oct. 21	Regionals
Nov. 2	State

upcoming season to improve in our standing,” Watkins said.

On the girls’ side, Watkins believes Shayla Muñoz, another junior, is one to watch for.

Most importantly, Watkins understands that for the teams to have success in their respected race, they “need to continue to work hard, to stay focused on each upcoming race.”

Nixon-Smiley competes in District 27-3A with Luling, Yoakum, Poth, Stockdale and Karnes City.



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LADY WILDCATS WANT TO MAKE NOISE IN
PLAYOFFS



By **JOSÉ TORRES**
MANAGING EDITOR

When a new coach comes in, it can be tough early on for a volleyball program such as Waelder’s who has had ups and downs recently. However, the Lady Wildcats have done well to adjust under new head coach Rachel Tucker, and she believes this team can surprise some in district.

“Every time a new coach comes in, there’s different aspects of what they want to do in the offense and defense that they want,” Tucker explained. “Volleyball concepts are big right now, for us. They’re growing, they’ve been at a disadvantage.”

“They work hard,” she added, “they’re eager to learn and they’ve embraced what we’re trying to do. Their willingness to do that is spot on.”

A few things the team needs to work on include serve/

receive and learning how to be a unit. Tucker explained that there isn’t that trust yet.

“We have young kids, we have a lot of freshmen and they’re having to play,” she said. “Those older kids are having a hard time allowing them to fulfill their role on the team.”

To be clear, Tucker doesn’t see friction between the upperclassmen and freshmen. But once the younger athletes start to fulfill their roles, the first-year head coach believes the team will be one to beat.

“I think we’ll be ready by district,” Tucker said. “Now that I have a group that I think is going to be stable and to move forward with, we started the season with six people and to be honest I didn’t know we were even going to have that. But now I’ve got that group and they’re becoming the core of the team. I think we’re going to come along.”

A few athletes to look out for include outside hitter Jakhia Thompson, setter Raven Rodriguez, Natalia Nino and Maely Bracamontes.

VOLLEYBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	TIME
Aug. 8	Buckholts	Away	5 p.m.
Aug. 9	Austwell-Tivoli	Away	5 p.m.
Aug. 10	Pettus Tournament	Away	TBA
Aug. 13	Mcdade	Away	5 p.m.
Aug. 16	Dimebox	Away	5 p.m.
Aug. 20	Runge	Away	5 p.m.
Aug. 23	Austwell-Tivoli	Home	5 p.m.
Aug. 27	Fayetteville	Away	5 p.m.
Aug. 29-31	Snook Tournament	Away	TBA
Sept. 3	Mcdade	Home	5 p.m.
Sept. 5-7	Wimberley Tournament	Away	TBA
Sept. 10	Brazos	Away	5 p.m.
Sept. 13	Victoria Home School	Home	5 p.m.
Sept. 17	Weimar	Home	5 p.m.
Sept. 20	Prairie Lea	Away	5 p.m.
Sept. 24	Louise	Away	5 p.m.
Sept. 27	Shiner	Away	4 p.m.
Oct. 1	Flatonia	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 8	Brazos	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 11	Weimar	Away	5 p.m.
Oct. 15	Prairie Lea	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 18	Louise	Home	4 p.m.
Oct. 22	Shiner	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 25	Flatonia	Away	4 p.m.



By **JOSÉ TORRES**
MANAGING EDITOR

Last year, the word “tough” was used to describe Luling’s schedule.

Tough was an understatement. Add the fact that the Eagles had some key injuries and that all led to a young Eagles team going 0-10 under Stacey Martin, who took the Luling job last season.

Nine of the 10 teams the Eagles played made it to the playoffs, with that 10th team being their district opponent Hallettsville, who placed fifth. Luling’s opponents combined for a record of 82-40. If you take out Hallettsville’s 3-7 record, the playoff teams Luling faced combined for an impressive win record of .705.

This season looks to be the same in terms of toughness. District 14-3ADI is expected to be great again, with Yoakum and Goliad listed as state title contenders. Last season, Yoakum, Goliad and Edna made it to the third round of playoffs. Yoakum won the region, losing to Grandview in the state

FOOTBALL			
DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	TIME
Aug. 17	Poth (Scrimmage)	Away	6:30 p.m.
Aug. 22	Shiner (Scrimmage)	Home	6:30 p.m.
Aug. 30	Marion	Home	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 6	Llano	Away	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 13	Schulenburg	Away	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 20	Rice	Home	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 27	Smithville	Home	7:30 p.m.
OPEN			
Oct. 11	Goliad*	Away	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 18	Edna*	Home	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 25	Industrial	Away	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 1	Yoakum	Home	7:30 p.m.
Nov. 8	Hallettsville	Away	7:30 p.m.

semifinals. Dave Campbell’s Texas Football staff have Yoakum winning the district, followed by Goliad, Edna, Vanderbilt Industrial, Hallettsville and Luling, in that order.

Luling hopes to be competitive, if the Eagles can avoid the injury bug and they’re young players can continue to progress.

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LULING TO FOCUS ON DEFENSE

By **JOSÉ TORRES**
MANAGING EDITOR

With the Luling Lady Eagles losing two key starters from last year’s playoff team, head coach Sunny DeCamp wants to shift the team’s focus on defense, to match the skill levels of her 2019 varsity squad.

“Last year, we ran a good offense,” she said. “We were a good all-around team last year but we definitely had more of an offense going for us last year. This year our focus is going to be more on defense. If we can get that and kind of make that our focus, I think we’ll be able to come around and hang with some of those and hopefully get into playoffs.”

Luling returns five players from last year’s team, though two have varsity-level experience. The other three returners are seniors, but “didn’t play a whole lot the last year,” according to DeCamp.

“They’re new to varsity,” she added, “so we only have two true returners to varsity that have played on varsity consistently for the last few years.”

“We’re a very inexperienced varsity team,” DeCamp continued. “We do have some young ones. I don’t have a very deep team; I don’t have a lot of girls form the bench I can pull from. I’m hoping some of our JV players start to come around, start to kind of find their level of play and hopefully we can utilize some of those JV girls and pull

them up toward the middle of the season.”

Early on, the Lady Eagles will have to focus on the fundamentals of volleyball, including serve/receive.

“The two basic things we struggled with is serve/ receive and taking care of business behind the service line,” DeCamp said. “Those are the most important, pretty basic fundamentals of volleyball in order to kind of stay in it. We’re going to try to stay focused on being a more defensive team this year.”

Luling will have to lean on the varsity experience of Tara Hajovsky and Aja Holmes in order to make their way back to the playoffs.

State meet always a goal for cross-country squad

Last season, the Luling Eagles fell short of extending their state championship streak to nine straight titles. Head coach Brady Hand spoke last year about the young roster he inherited after longtime coach Mike Barnett retired. Youth is exactly what Luling was working with as the seven-man team that went to state was filled with three juniors and four sophomores. Leading the pack was Edwin Zamudio who placed second overall. The Eagles finished fifth behind Euasce, Crane, Lytle and Whitesboro.

Despite that record-breaking state title run ending, the Eagles are still fully in the mix, returning most of their runners.

VOLLEYBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	TIME
Aug. 8-10	Columbus Tournament	Away	TBA
Aug. 13	John Paul II	Home	10 a.m.
Aug. 15-17	Floresville Tournament	Away	TBA
Aug. 20	Gonzales	Home	6 p.m.
Aug. 23-24	SMH Tournament	Away	TBA
Aug. 27	Pettus	Away	6 p.m.
Aug. 30	Lockhart	Home	6 p.m.
Sept. 3	Kenedy	Home	7 p.m.
Sept. 6	Rice Consolidated	Home	4:30 p.m.
Sept. 10	Smithville	Away	6 p.m.
Sept. 13	Marion	Away	4:30 p.m.
Sept. 17	Austin Eastside	Home	7 p.m.
Sept. 24	Austin Eastside	Away	7 p.m.
Sept. 27	Poth	Home	4:30 p.m.
Oct. 1	Karnes City	Away	6 p.m.
Oct. 4	Nixon-Smiley	Home	4:30 p.m.
Oct. 8	Yoakum	Home	7 p.m.
Oct. 11	Stockdale	Away	5 p.m.
Oct. 15	Poth	Away	7 p.m.
Oct. 18	Karnes City	Home	4:30 p.m.
Oct. 22	Nixon-Smiley	Away	6 p.m.
Oct. 25	Yoakum	Away	4:30 p.m.
Oct. 29	Stockdale	Home	7 p.m.

CROSS COUNTRY

DATE	MEET
Aug. 24	Yoakum Invitational
Aug. 31	Hippensteel Lockhart Invitational
Sept. 7	Feat Patriot Flights Score Invitational (San Antonio)
Sept. 14	Runnin’ Rattlers San Marcos Invitational
Sept. 21	Island Splash Invitational (Corpus Christi)
Sept. 28	McNeil Invitational (Round Rock)
Oct. 5	Georgetown River Run
Oct. 16	District 27-3A Meet (Poth)
Oct. 28	Region IV-3A Meet (Corpus Christi)
Nov. 9	UIL Class 3A State Meet (Round Rock)

SHINER COMANCHES FOOTBALL, VOLLEYBALL, CROSS COUNTRY



HIGH EXPECTATIONS

By **JOSÉ TORRES**
MANAGING EDITOR

Even with the retirement of Steven Cerny, the Shiner Comanches athletic program remains one of the top programs in Class 2A. Last year, Shiner finished 12th in the UIL Lone Star Cup standings. The Comanches have their eyes set at postseason season success. Under new athletic director and head football coach Daniel Boedeker, who was the team's defensive coordinator last season, the expectations remain just as high.

State aspirations

The Shiner Comanche football team is one of the preseason favorites to win the Class 2A Division I state championship. With Boedeker taking over as head coach, the Comanches have used their time early on to learn some of the new tweaks to the system.

Shiner will continue to run a veer offense, as they have in the past. The Comanches have speed and will rely on their backs to get things done.

Region IV is a tough one for the Comanches. The defending state champion Mason Punchers as well as top-ranked Refugio come out of the region. The Comanches hope their tough schedule will prepare them for a deep postseason run.

Lady Comanches set to improve on last year's run

Last season, the Lady Comanches went two rounds deep in the playoffs. The roster full of juniors and seniors hope to return to the playoffs and make a deeper run, although last season, the team was state ranked early. This year, the Comanches did not start the season state ranked.

Shiner competes in District 27 along with Class 2A teams Flatonia, Louise, Wallis Brazos and Weimar and Class 1A teams Waelder and Prairie Lea.

Comanches want back at state meet

Last season, two Shiner runners competed in the state race. Senior Noah Matthews placed 81st overall while Marian Grosenbacher, a sophomore at

the time, placed 72nd.

Shiner will be tested early on with the meets on their schedule. The Comanches look to get back into the state meet this season.

FOOTBALL

DATE	OPPONENT	SITE	TIME
Aug. 16	Karnes City	Home	6 p.m.
Aug. 22	Luling	Away	6 p.m.
Aug. 30	Hallettsville	Away	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 6	Industrial	Home	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 13	Burton	Away	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 20	Tidehaven	Away	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 27	Goliad	Home	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 4	Lexington	Home	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 11	Yorktown	Home	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 18	Weimar	Away	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 25	Kenedy	Home	7:30 p.m.
OPEN			
Nov. 8	Brazos	Away	7:30 p.m.

CROSS COUNTRY

DATE	MEET
Aug. 17	Gonzales
Aug. 24	Yoakum
Aug. 31	Karnes City
Sept. 7	Brazos
Sept. 14	Moulton
Sept. 21	Shiner
Sept. 28	Weimar
Oct. 5	Shiner
TBA	District Meet in TBA
Oct. 28	Regional Meet @ A&M Corpus Christi XC Course
Nov. 9	State Meet @ Round Rock

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