

Forrest Rockets



Photo by Chris Siers

The Forrest Rockets will host backyard rival Eagleville for their 2022 opener.

Rockets to lean on run game, defense in '22

By Chris Siers
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Forrest coach Eli Stephenson has a couple of simple expectations for his team—play good defense and run the football successfully.

The recipe mostly worked for the Rockets a season ago as Forrest captured the Region 5-AA title and forged its way to the Class AA state quarterfinals.

Fast forward a year, the Rockets return much of that depth from a season ago and are poised to make an even deeper post-season push in 2022.

“We’ve got a lot of returning players. That last loss really left a bad taste in their mouths. We’ve really hit the weight room

hard. With our offensive line—we’re a lot stronger this year,” Stephenson said.

The Rockets return a stable of four backs, each of whom bring their own wrinkle to the Rockets’ offense.

“We’ve got three offensive linemen returning. That’s going to be key for us. We have four backs returning from last year. They do a great job, both carrying the ball and blocking,” Stephenson said.

Leading the way out of the backfield for Forrest will be Tayton Swift, Brenton Burchell, Liam Bell and Chris Davis.

“Tayton Swift is awesome. He’s a great energy guy. He’s got all the intangibles we look for. Brenton Burchell plays running back and cornerback. He led the team

in interceptions last year. We’re looking forward to seeing what he can do. He’s a great complement to Swift. He’s a little more shifty while Swift is a little more of a downhill runner,” Stephenson said.

“We’ve also got Liam Bell and Chris Davis. They did a lot for us last year. Liam is more of a bruising back and Davis has a little bit more of a twitch to him.”

One area the Rockets will look new is under center with freshman quarterback Ryan Hill.

Stephenson says, despite his youth, Hill plays beyond the typical freshman.

“He can run our offense. He’s wise beyond his years. He does a great job playing within himself. He’s got that drive

where he wants to be “that guy.””

Last season, the Rockets hung their hat on a stingy defense that allowed opponents’ to score an average of 12 points per game.

“We’ve got some big shoes to fill after McCallister Wilson graduated. He communicated out there and shut down one side of the field for us. We’ve got to replace him, but we’ve got a lot of guys returning and looking to step up,” Stephenson said.

In eight games, Forrest held its opponents to seven or fewer points last season.

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