

GAME

DAY 2025

HJ SPORTS



HOUSTON COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL



HOUSTON COUNTY AND JEREMY EDWARDS FACE FIRST SEASON WITHOUT GENERATIONAL QUARTERBACK ANTWANN HILL JR

By CLAY BROWN
HHJ Sports Editor

For the last three years, Houston County football and Antwann Hill Jr. have been synonymous.

Hill threw for 11,020 yards in his high school career, along with a school record 123 touchdown passes, including a single-season school record 44 in 2024.

The Bears’ offense has been built on his ability to blow the top off of defenses with deep, accurate throws. They’ve had star receivers pull down over 1,000 yards in each of the last three seasons — all gone on to play Division 1 football.

But without Hill to deliver those strikes, what happens to the offense?

According to head coach Jeremy Edwards, nothing will change about the way they do things.

“Next man up. Obviously it’s gonna be tough to replace

a player like him, but the two guys we got working right now have done a really good job in the spring and in the summer and we’re pretty excited about it,” he said.

Welcome to Game Day 2025:

Offense — Through the air

The two guys Edwards referenced are sophomore Ryan Maxwell and freshman Keirion Tate.

Maxwell was praised for a strong, accurate arm — something valued in an Edwards-led offense.

Tate is said to be about as talented as you can get. But, considering he played middle school football last year, the chances for him to get the starting job aren’t high.

“We’re going to do what we do. It’s no mystery to what we do,” Edwards said. “Not really anything’s gonna change as far as schematically...Obviously neither one of those guys have quite the arm strength [of Hill]...We’ll

certainly miss AJ but we’re excited about what we got and with these guys being young we got them for several years.”

Edwards said Maxwell will likely get the nod to start because he’s already been in the system for a year. HoCo also likes to keep their freshmen together, another reason to let Tate develop on the freshman team this season.

“Wins and losses on the freshman level are great, but retaining them and teaching them our culture and how we do things is most important,” Edwards said.

That being said, he didn’t rule out a two-quarterback approach, much like Perry last year (though they technically cycled through three). Tate is supposed to offer more as a dual-threat option.

One thing that hasn’t changed about the offense, though, is the stacked receiver room.

The three D-1 receivers mentioned at the beginning of

the story are Ricky Johnson (Mississippi State), Kale Woodburn (Cincinnati) and Isaiah Mitchell (Mississippi State). The top two options this year will likely be joining this trio at the top, with Kavon Conciauro committing to Duke in July and MJ Mathis holding 18 offers from a myriad of Group of Five schools and Vanderbilt.

Mathis is the type of receiver that every high school takes for granted. He pulled down 64 receptions for 1025 yards and 11 touchdowns last year, next to Mitchell, while earning an All-Region 1st Team selection.

He executes the game plan to the letter with solid route running and hands, always finding himself in open space. He can go up and get down for some off-target balls, and has good size for the position at 5-foot-11 and 180 pounds.

“He’s the most underrated receiver in the country possibly,” Edwards said. “He’s got all the ability of some

of our guys that have went on to play [Division 1 football]. Ricky Johnson, Isaiah Mitchell, I mean, he’s right up there with them in terms of the caliber of player...He certainly has the production numbers. I expect him to have a great year.”

Conciauro stands at 6-foot-3 and 193 pounds according to Hudl, but the tape doesn’t show high-point contested catches like you might expect.

His premier skill is route running, and he excels at selling the route in all areas. He sells the fake at the top of curls and comebacks and quickly stops to get open. He sells the stop-and-go on deeper routes to freeze defenders, and his size allows him to be a target anywhere on the field and helps him to protect the ball on catches.

“He’s worked very hard. He moved in last year and he was about 185 pounds maybe, and now he’s gotten into our system with our weight room and how we do things, and

HOUSTON COUNTY BEARS

VS BROOKWOOD
CORKY KELL
CLASSIC @
MERCEDES BENZ
STADIUM
8/16

@ EFFINGHAM
COUNTY
8/22

VS PERRY
CHILDHOOD
CANCER
AWARENESS
8/29

@ WARNER
ROBINS HIGH
SCHOOL
9/5

VS TIFT
COUNTY
MILITARY
APPRECIATION
9/12

2025

SCHEDULE

VS VETERANS
HIGH SCHOOL
HOMECOMING
9/26

@ NORTHSIDE
HIGH
SCHOOL
10/3

VS COFFEE
COUNTY
CANCER
AWARENESS
10/17

@ THOMAS
COUNTY
CENTRAL
10/24

VS LEE COUNTY
SENIOR NIGHT
10/31

Wishing Our Team A
Successful Football Season!

~ Coaches, Faculty & Staff

tackles, 23 tackles for a loss, 13 quarterback hurries, and seven sacks.

They do return junior Jakobe Bryant, who moves well for a defensive lineman, standing at 6-foot tall and 297 pounds. His counting stats from last year don't stand out, and on tape, he didn't seem to break through the line and catch guys behind the sticks often, but he always found himself in the play.

"Jakobe's hard to move. We go against him every day in practice and he's all as advertised," Edwards said. "He's a great football player, he's got a good motor, he's tough. We feel real good about him."

Outside of Bryant, who earned an All-Region 2nd Team selection last year, too, there isn't much that's certain.

Junior defensive end Jacob Hudson is 6-foot-2 and 210 pounds and seems to have a good burst off the line, but he appeared raw in his tape. Senior defensive lineman Alston Jordon is undersized at 5-foot-8 and 225 pounds and lacks extensive varsity experience.

Senior Barry Brown is a name Edwards mentioned, but he also mentioned that their linebacker corps is their real strength.

And you'd be hard-pressed to find a better group than HoCo has. University of Connecticut commit Westen Ard is the best of the group at middle linebacker, standing at 6-foot-2 and 230 pounds.

He tallied 123 tackles, 24 tackles for a loss, 12 quarterback hurries and nine sacks in his 2024 All-Region 1st Team season.

He's patient with his reads and keeps his eye on the ball at all times when crashing down in run support. He keys the quarterback well, too, which plays into his patience. He's always working his way to the play and constantly scanning the field.

Jase Jordan is another head of Cerberus, often manning the middle with Ard. The 5-foot-11, 215-pound senior is a Samford University commit who also tallied over 100 tackles last year (107). He also came up with 10 tackles for a loss, five sacks and a QB hurry and was selected to the All-Region 2nd Team.

Zion Paul and Kam Brown (Liberty University commit) man the outside. Brown is 6-foot-2 and 230 pounds, squatting 490 pounds. Those strong legs help him get downhill and skate past some offensive tackles, leading to a team-high 11 sacks in 2024.

Paul has decent speed and solid reach on his tackles, helping him earn a team-high 95 tackles last year.

"We got guys at linebacker all over the place, so you could see us doing some different things to get all of them on the field and do some outside of the box things to try and confuse people and try to get our best dudes on the field," Edwards

said.

Defense — The secondary

HoCo's secondary returns its top two statistical producers, but time will tell if they are an improvement on last year's product.

Of the six games, the Bears allowed 40-plus points, three of those allowed over 300 yards passing.

Senior safety and University of Georgia commit Jordan Smith headlines the group as the biggest name. He's 6-foot-3, 190 pounds and runs a 4.39 40-time, which allows him to keep up with some of the fastest receivers on the schedule as well as act almost like another linebacker.

He has long arms that also help with deep coverage, but also in his tackle reach. He stays with his assignments and makes the right reads before crashing down to help. In 2024, he tallied 85 tackles, seven pass deflections and two interceptions while being named to the All-Region 1st Team.

Senior defensive back Trey Leary is second only to Smith, and he sticks to his assignments with exceptionally quick feet and good speed. He's got an average build at 5-foot-9 and 155 pounds, but he led the team with eight passes deflected and three interceptions in 2024.

Outside of those two, the biggest contributors are yet to be determined. Some players will play both corner and safety, like Leary does.

Junior Jercoirien McCoy is 6-foot tall and 160 pounds, who played some in the slot last year, and tallied 30 tackles to go with three passes deflected. Edwards said he could play corner or safety.

Junior Dashawn Zeigler is another name, standing at a light 135 pounds, but is 5-foot-10. His solo tackle rate was outstanding in limited play last year, with 26 tackles to 22 solo tackles and three passes deflected.

"We feel like we've got a combination of guys. Right now it's kind of figuring out who can go out there and do what we're asking them to do consistently," Edwards said.

The schedule


It's the second year of the GHSA region cycle, so not much has changed on the schedule.

However, HoCo's Week 1 matchup in the Corky Kell Classic is significantly better than last year. In 2024, they played (what would end up being) a 1-9 Alpharetta — they won 57-10.

This year, they'll play Brookwood, who finished 7-4 and lost in the first round of Region 7-5A.

One interesting thing to watch in an otherwise identical schedule is whether Edwards can win against Lee County or Thomas County Central for the first time.

Last year, the Bears' offense was shut down in the second half against the Yellow Jackets, 41-31, and they couldn't come out on the winning end of a shootout with Lee County, 63-48.



LET'S GO BEARS!

THE CITY OF WARNER ROBINS IS PROUD TO BACK THE BEARS!

WARNER ROBINS



Cheers from HOUSTON COUNTY

A Q&A with coach Jessica Leaptrot



What are the team's goals and focus this school year?

One of our main program's goal this year is to "Spread the Light." We want others in our school, community, and cheer family to see us as a program of student athletes who genuinely love cheer and each other, promote sportsmanship amongst everyone, and are kind to all those around us. We're focused on lifting each other up, bringing good vibes everywhere we go, and letting our light shine through hard work, unity, and heart.

What's something unique about this year's squads: a tradition, strength, or standout moment so far?

This year's program is evenly split, half returners, half newcomers, yet the connection has been instant and real. They genuinely love being around each other, and that passion extends to how they show up for this sport. Our Big Sister/Little Sister reveal was a standout moment, and it's clear this team isn't just bonded — they're genuine, passionate, and all in.

What does a typical practice look like, and how do you keep your team motivated?

Our practices are structured, intentional, and rooted in our team values which are Vulnerability, Leadership, Intentionality, Mental Strength, and Balance. We start with a team check-in to make sure everyone is mentally present and understands our practice plan for the day. From there we move into skill-building rotations—tumbling, stunts, jumps, and choreography. Each section is purposeful, and we often finish with conditioning and team building.

How does the team boost school spirit and support athletics?

Our team takes pride in being the heart of school spirit. We lead the charge by participating in the Bear Walk before football games and hyping up players with energy and pride from us, the Band, and HOCO Locos. Every Friday, you'll catch us wearing our school colors to show unity and school pride. Beyond game days, we stay active in the school community—participating in elementary PBIS pep rallies, encouraging younger students, and building a culture of pride from the ground up. We also will be hosting a 5K for the community in the fall. Look for sign up information coming out soon!

Is there anything you'd like the community to know or celebrate about the cheer team this year?

This season, we're proud to not only bring the energy on the blue mats and football Friday nights but also excellence in the classroom. Our athletes are true student-athletes—balancing practices with academic achievement while taking Honors and Dual Enrollment classes. We're also excited to bring some fun and flair to the season with our team themes! Varsity is embracing a bold and thrilling vibe with "Are You Afraid of the Dark?," while JV is all about positive energy and radiance with "Sunshine." These themes reflect the heart of our program—intensity, passion, and joy. We will have our home competition on September 20th at HOCO.

We'd love for the community to continue supporting us, celebrating our wins both on and off the mat, and cheering us on as we represent our school with pride, hard work, and heart.

THE BLACK AND SILVER BRIGADE



A Q&A with director Kevin Britt

What is the theme or focus of this year’s marching show, and what inspired it?

Our 2025 show is called "The Times" and it’s inspired by the bustling newspaper culture at the end of the 19th century. We wanted to recreate the chaotic, high-energy atmosphere of street corner newsboys shouting the headlines. The show opens with the overture from Newsies, along with other turn-of-the-century American composers. It’s frantic, bold, and a little over-the-top—just like the news industry was back then. It’s been such a fun concept for our students to bring to life.

What’s something unique about this year’s band: a tradition, strength, or standout moment so far?

As this is my first year at Houston County High School, everything stands out in the best way. We have an incredible group of student leaders and a band full of hardworking, committed students. Even with all the rain lately, they’ve shown amazing flexibility and resilience—making the most of indoor rehearsals and staying focused as we prepare for a major performance next Saturday at the Corky Kell Classic in Mercedes-Benz Stadium. Their attitude has been nothing short of inspiring.

How do you prepare your students for performances, musically and mentally?

Our motto is “Better Every Day.” Some days that improvement is big, and other days it’s just 1%—but every bit of progress matters. That mindset builds confidence over time. Consistency is key: every rehearsal rep is treated like a performance, and that repetition builds the muscle memory and confidence needed to shine under pressure. When students prepare that way, performances become a celebration of their work, not a source of stress.

What role does the band play in boosting school spirit and supporting athletics?

The band plays a major role in creating the electric Game Day atmosphere that makes HOCO so special. Every Friday night, we’re rocking the stands, playing our signature tunes while the student section chants and dances along. We work closely with the cheerleaders to sync up our music with their chants, helping to amplify school spirit across the stadium. Our players know we’ve got their backs—on every defensive snap, we’re doing our part to disrupt the other team, and on offense, we’re cheering just as loud as any fan. The school spirit here is unmatched, and the band is proud to be a part of it.

Is there anything you’d like the community to know or be proud of about your band this year?

I’d love to recognize our other incredible director, Mr. Dillon Watkins. He’s an outstanding teacher, and the students are so fortunate to learn from him. This program is built on teamwork—between staff, students, and our amazing community—and I couldn’t be prouder to be part of it.



NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL





DANIEL WILLIAMS LAYING THE FOUNDATION AND LOOKING TO THE FUTURE IN FIRST YEAR AS NORTHSIDE FOOTBALL HEAD COACH

By CLAY BROWN
HHJ Sports Editor

Northside football has been at its worst for the last several years, including its worst record since 1964, last season finishing 2-8. The offense also had its worst performance since 1964, scoring only 105 points on the season. The defense was the worst in program history — allowing 366 points in 2024. The second-worst defensive season was 2023, when they allowed 333 points.

Not just fans of Northside, but supporters of Houston County football are hoping for a resurgence of Eagles football. New head coach Daniel Williams hopes for that most of all.

Williams led Langston Hughes to a state championship in 2022 and went to the chip thrice in his time in Fairburn. The Panthers only saw one losing season in his tenure.

Wins and losses aren’t of consequence to Williams, especially in year one in Warner Robins. Getting the players to buy in and bring the right attitude is his main goal this season.

“For me it’s never been about the wins and losses. My biggest thing is the players giving the ‘want to’ attitude,” Williams said. “I think if you go back and watch Northside where it’s been it’s kind of been lackluster in some areas. I just want to make sure we give an unbelievable effort every day. Whether it’s at practice [or] games.”

“My realistic expectation is that we have a more defined, schematic football program, [that] is my biggest thing that I want us to be able to do. Anytime somebody comes to rebuild, start the program you have to set the foundation. That’s really what I want to do.”

Even during the spring period, Williams saw near immediate and complete buy-in from his players. He said he’s seen the same thing from them this summer as they prepare for their first padded practice of the 2025 season.

“They’ve definitely attacked the summer. They did an amazing job this summer,” Williams said. “[It was] a little different to what they were used to doing. Conditioning a lot more than what they were used to from what I gathered from the previous staff...Everything I put in front of them they attack it. Yes we’re extremely young, yes we’re extremely inexperienced, but they’re attacking the things that I want to do and that’s always growth.”

It’s Great To Be A Northside Eagle:

Offense — Through the air

One of the biggest questions for most Houston County teams is who will be QB1. Northside is no different.

Last year’s quarterbacks, Jayden Wright and Aumaury Fountain, were moved to the defense as part of the 19 position changes Williams enacted.

To start the spring, there was a four-way quarterback battle between senior Peach County transfer Nick Morgan, junior quarterback Wyatt Henson, sophomore quarterback Tristan Harry and freshman quarterback JD Garman.

Since then, the battle has been narrowed down to Henson and Garman. Harry was moved to wide receiver amidst the intense competition, according to Williams. Williams said there isn’t a clear winner at the moment, and it might not even be a battle resolved by Week 1 of the season, but those two have separated themselves in his eyes.

“We measure them daily on mistakes, effort, knowing the entire playbook and just having control of the offense. Controlling the huddle, getting the play from the sideline, not forgetting the motions and all those things,” Williams said. “My QB1 [will], as all my quarterbacks have, control the game. They understand if we’re gonna run [Run-pass options] when to give it, when to throw it, all those kind of things.”

As far as who the quarterback will throw to, that’s a little more familiar.

Senior Briston Blasingame is the biggest name with great acceleration and above-average speed outside. Although the 2024 statistics are not available for the offense, as a sophomore, Blasingame secured 14 receptions for 194 yards and a touchdown.

As a junior, he was more than just a wide out, he also received the ball as a runner or on speciality plays.

Another familiar name is Braylon Price. If you only remember one thing about him, let it be that he is ready to run through a brick wall 110% of the time, and that is no exaggeration.

Whether it’s football or basketball, first or fourth quarter, Price is ready to go. He had several spectacular catches during the spring game and is a solid route runner with nice burst off the line.

Another position change was moving Javion Barker from defensive back to wide receiver. Williams praised his ability to make plays with the ball in his hand.

Rutland transfer Brandon Elliot is another addition. He played quarterback and wide receiver as a ‘Cane, but will move to full-time wide out at Northside.

There are also a lot of players with size and potential, including 6-foot-3, 180-pound junior Kaiden Little. Williams mentioned several other players, too, as potential contributors to the receiver corps. Time will tell if they’ll make their way to the field.

Offense — On the ground

Williams wants a fast, physical style of play for his football team. Those on the ground are the biggest part in setting that tone, and Williams likes what he’s seen from a young running back room on and off the field.

Arrien Smith was a standout in the 2024 spring game as a rising freshman — he flashed dominant power against junior varsity and some varsity players as he bulldozed his way for extra yards.

Jaxson Rowe is another physical runner who squats 370 pounds. Those strong legs help him push forward for extra yards.

But not only are those two providing toughness on the ground, but they’re providing something off the field, too.

“Those young guys are providing leadership. That’s crazy, right? [A sophomore] and junior are the guys in leadership roles in the running back room because it’s so young,” Williams said. “Those guys are really giving me what I need for the power game.”

Rising freshman KT Turner from Thomson Middle School has caught Williams’ eye. He even started in the spring game.

“He’s a guy we’re waiting on to see what he can develop in to,” he said.

Williams also said that the running back room will be by committee, using the term, “The hot hand gets the ball.”

Another addition to mention is Warner Robins transfer Travis English Jr, who tallied 49 carries for 317 yards and eight touchdowns in 2024.

Time will tell who separates themselves from the pack, but Williams is encouraged early.

“They’re all playing together. It’s a great group. It’s a

great problem to have that running back room,” he said. “I think we have a total of about five guys in that room that could be sufficient in what we ask them to do.”

As far as who’ll do the blocking for those runners, it’s an offensive line that doesn’t have much experience playing together.

One positive is that they seem to be gaining size; Williams estimated sophomore left tackle Jeremiah Rozier grew to 6-foot-4 and 255 pounds from 6-foot-2 and 240 pounds last year.

Sophomore Triston McKenzie was praised as one of the “meanest guys on the team,” to go with juniors James Cole (6-foot-2, 311 pounds) and Tyson Rowe rotating at center.

Williams also estimated that junior right guard Caleb Simmons has grown from 6-feet tall and 248 pounds to 6-foot-2 and around 280 pounds.

Rounding out the group is the only senior, Richard Evans, who Williams estimated to be 6-foot-2 and said he was one of the strongest on the team.

Having this much physical growth on the offensive line

would help the Northside offense significantly, though it remains to be seen how they perform together on the field.

Defense — In the trenches

While the offense is full of questions (to be fair, the defense is too), the defense has a lot more to offer in the immediate season.

The most obvious is junior defensive lineman Elijah Patmon, who, without a doubt, has the best combination of size and skill in the county.

Patmon stands at a college-ready 6-foot-4 and 292 pounds and was selected to the All-Region 2-5A 1st Team in 2024.

As a sophomore, he recorded 34 tackles (22 solo), five quarterback hurries, three tackles for a loss and two sacks. Those numbers don’t jump out at you, but seeing him on the field does.

On tape, he completely overpowered the centers he went up against. Against guards, he attacked their outside shoulder and got by with relative ease.

He likely won’t have that same easy success against beefier offensive lines (like

Houston County’s), but against many, he’ll be a monster.

“This is definitely one of the strengths of the team. My d-line is actually one of the positions where it’s senior-led because you got Shemar [Scott], Kel [Harris]...They are all firecrackers. With Elijah Patmon I think they could be really, really good.”

“They play together, they’re quick off the ball, they’re strong, all of them are strong. In most football teams you got that rack one group, that’s all that rack one group,” he continued. “These guys really hold themselves accountable...they really are the tempo and thermostat of the team.”

Shemar Scott is lined up for a big senior year after being Northside’s best pass rusher in 2024 (according to the numbers) with 36 tackles (21 solo), 10 quarterback hurries, four tackles for a loss and two sacks. He was also selected to the All-Region 2nd Team.

Scott earns that firecracker title from Williams with the way he manhandles his assignments, especially smaller defenders.

Kel Harris also looks to be a big contributor with 27 tackles (15 solo), three tackles for a loss, two quarterback hurries and one sack on his record from 2024.

Backing up the defensive linemen is another group that has promise — the linebackers.

The most experienced of the bunch is senior Markel Johnson, who was second on the team with 47 tackles (32 solo) while adding five tackles for a loss, three quarterback hurries and two sacks.

Johnson is a secure tackler and has some hard-hitting plays on tape. Though Williams didn’t use “firecracker” to describe him, he is fierce on the attack.

The pair to keep an eye on now and in the future are the Greenes — Jacaleb and Kaleal.

Both are sophomores, with Kaleal Greene having 26 tackles (14 solo), two tackles for a loss and two sacks recorded in 2024.

Kaleal Greene has good size, especially for a sophomore, at 5-foot-11 and 225 pounds. Jacaleb Greene isn’t far behind at 5-foot-10 and 210 pounds with a 425 squat.

“Those guys are gonna really be the guys that can be the nucleus...We’re talking about two upcoming 10th graders,” Williams said. “Again, so when it comes to youthfulness and this program and where we are, I think we have enough of those to put in place.”

“They’re gonna be the ones to get us lined up. Jacaleb Greene is taking on an amazing role in leading the defense and getting everybody lined up and making all the right checks, understanding what the offense is doing as a 10th grader,” he continued. “Well let me just be honest, right now, today, he’s still a ninth grader. He hasn’t taken one day of 10th grade. And He’s already understanding formations, what we’re doing on defense, what they’re trying to do offensively. That amassed in three more football seasons is gonna be, watch out.”

Defense — The secondary
Northside’s secondary (like many other units on the team) has the physical tools to be great, especially against some of the bigger receivers in the county, like Houston County’s Kavon Conciauro.

The size and length of some of those players are what Williams is looking forward to utilizing.

“I think of my four secondary guys, I got Chris Davis at 6-foot-3, Aumaury Fountain at 6-foot-2, Broderick Humphrey [III] at 6-foot-3, those guys provide length,” Williams said. “You got

guys like Kiesen Williams, you got Camari Harris, those guys are shorter in stature but they’re physical. They’re really, really, really physical.”

Another bonus is that players like Fountain and Humphrey will be around past this year. Camari Harris is a sophomore. The Greene pair are sophomores.

One thing Williams mentioned again and again was that his was a foundational year, and that getting these players experience is setting Northside up to be competitive two or three years down the line.

“Most of what I just named come back for another two, three years. So we’re only getting better,” Williams said. “A lot of these guys are in new positions. I’ve changed, I think we counted...like 19 position changes. And I think we’re putting these guys in better positions to better themselves and the team.”

The schedule

Because this is the second year in the region cycle, the schedule is the same for Northside. The only exception is that the Eagle’s Landing game (Conrad Nix Appreciation Night) has been moved to Saturday, Aug. 16.

That was one of Northside’s two wins last year, with Baldwin being a narrow second in Week 2.

The Crosstown Showdown against Warner Robins is a must-watch regardless, but this might be Northside’s big chance to stop the eight-year skid with the Demons losing a lot, specifically on defense.

It is a rivalry game so that you can throw everything out the window.

If I had to pick one more game to go to this season, it would be the regular-season finale against Veterans.

That time last year, the Warhawks were trying to avoid a winless season, and the Eagles were trying to snap a seven-game losing streak.

This year, it will be two experienced head coaches finishing their first regular season under new programs. Two Houston County teams that have struggled in recent years, duking it out under (hopefully) much better circumstances.

GOOD LUCK

HOUSTON COUNTY SCHOOLS!



Nancy Deighan,

Agent

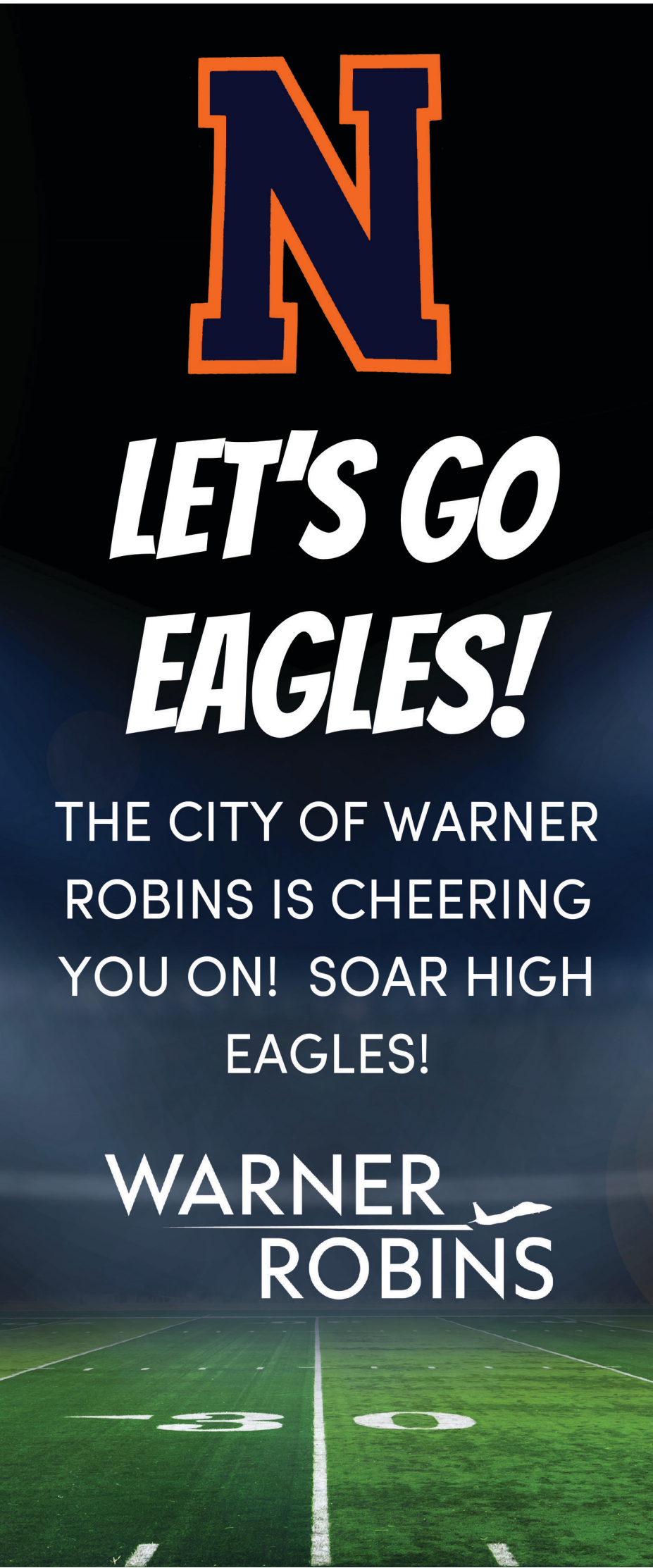
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What are the team's goals and focus this school year?
This year, our main goals are to elevate our game day presence, perfect our technique, and build stronger team bonds across both JV and Varsity. With 13 amazing seniors leading the way, we're focused on consistency, leadership, and bringing energy to every performance. We also want to continue being positive role models on campus and in the community. Our goal isn't just to cheer louder but to cheer with heart and purpose.

What's something unique about this year's squads: a tradition, strength, or standout moment so far?
One thing that really stands out this year is how excited and united our 13 seniors are. They've set the tone from day one with their energy and leadership. A fun tradition we continue is starting every practice with an Eagle Lap around the school. It gets us moving and sets the mindset. This squad's strength is definitely their spirit and drive; even early in the season, they've been pushing each other to improve and stay connected. I can already tell it's going to be a special year.

What does a typical practice look like, and how do you keep your team motivated?
Every practice begins with running, stretching, and our Eagle Lap to get our bodies warmed up and focused. Then we split into JV and Varsity to work on cheers, motions, and techniques, followed by stunts and ending with our fun band dances. When the team is really locked in, we'll reward them with a quick game to keep things light and fun. I keep them motivated by setting goals, recognizing progress, and constantly reminding them how important their energy is to our school spirit. They push themselves because they love what they do.

How does the team boost school spirit and support athletics?
Our cheerleaders are at the heart of school spirit! Whether it's Friday night lights, pep rallies, or just hyping up the hallways before a big game, the team is always bringing energy and Eagle pride. We work hard to make sure every athlete and team feels supported and seen. Cheer isn't just about the sidelines; it's about uplifting the entire student body and creating a sense of unity and pride.

Is there anything you'd like the community to know or celebrate about the cheer team this year?
Yes, this is a truly special group of athletes, and they've been putting in the work since day one. Our 13 seniors are leading with heart and setting the tone for one of the most exciting seasons we've had in years. We'd love for the community to come out, cheer with us, and feel the energy these athletes bring. Their dedication, positivity, and school spirit deserve to be celebrated!



What is the theme or focus of this year's marching show, and what inspired it?
The theme for this years show is called "Joker." My student leadership and I were throwing around different ideas for the show and this one had a lot of interest from the kids. I've found that if the kids are interested in it, they will enjoy doing it!

What's something unique about this year's band: a tradition, strength, or standout moment so far?
This year's group has a wonderful attitude. Each year I encourage the kids to get together outside of rehearsal and have fun together. I have found that students who get along with each other have a much easier time working together. This group has taken this to heart and they enjoy getting together outside of band to have fun.

How do you prepare your students for performances, musically and mentally?
I preach consistency to the kids everyday. Being in band is like any other physical activity. You have to do it the same way consistently to produce your desired results. This sounds easy to do, but kids today have a lot of mental distractions like their phones and smartwatches. Unplugging from that and getting them to focus on what they have to do is a challenge.

What role does the band play in boosting school spirit and supporting athletics?
The marching band exists to boost school spirit and support athletics! We love football and LOVE the Northside Community! We love marching in the Centerville Christmas Parade each year. It's so neat being the only band in that parade and hearing the community cheer for us.

Is there anything you'd like the community to know or be proud of about your band this year?
The Northside Band has been invited to march in the 2026 St. Patrick's Day Parade in New York. This parade will be televised on NBC. We hope everyone takes the time to watch and cheer us on!





KEVIN SMITH AND THE PERRY PANTHERS AIM TO DEFEND REGION 1-4A TITLE AMID BIG LOSSES

By CLAY BROWN
HHJ Sports Editor

The reality of high school football is that the players you have are there for a very limited time.

Not only that, but most don't reach their peak until their junior or senior year, meaning you have even less time to capitalize on that talent.

This cycle of losses means you always have to be focused on those coming up, or, as coach Kevin Smith put it in the spring, the "next man up" mentality.

"It's not reloading, it's not rebuilding...it's next guy up and the standard don't change," Smith said.

Welcome to the Panther Pit:

Offense — Through the air

The passing offense is likely going to change the most this year because of several losses; Those include quarterback Cullen McDaniel, who was one of three quarterbacks the Panthers cycled through in 2024.

That also includes Kory Pettigrew, Kiel Sparks and Rodarious Lewis, who made up 98% of last year's wide receiver receptions. The other 2% was Jalen Hall, who also graduated.

The good news is Perry returns Reid Ginn and Jhamard Cobb — the other two quarterbacks in the

rotation.

Ginn is accurate when he has time to throw, boasting a 66% completion percentage (77-for-116) for 907 yards, four touchdowns and three interceptions during his All-Region 1-4A Honorable Mention campaign in 2024.

He can throw on the run, but it's greatly preferred that he has time in the pocket to make a throw downfield.

Cobb is the bigger, more physical quarterback who was used mostly in goal-line situations as a runner. He was 2-for-3 for 7 yards throwing, but had nine carries for 84 yards and two touchdowns on the ground.

Smith said he anticipates both to get snaps this sea-

son, and in some cases, they'll be on the field at the same time.

With a depleted receiver corps, new faces are going to have to pick up the slack, and Smith included Cobb in that list as an all-purpose receiver.

His 6-foot-3, 205-pound frame already makes him bigger than most high schoolers in the secondary, and his strength and athleticism should allow for some extra yards after contact.

His hands, route running, and other aspects of the receiver game are yet to be seen by the public, though.

Other names Smith mentioned were senior Anton Overton and junior Dakarai Felder, though neither has

taken a varsity snap yet.

Overton is listed as 5-foot-8 and 135 pounds, while Felder is 5-foot-9 and 125 pounds, so it will be a departure from the tall possession receivers Perry has been used to over the last couple of years.

Smith did praise Felder's catching and route-running ability, though.

One name that remains the same is Decorrian Daniels, last year's RB2 behind Ahmad Gordon.

Daniels is unique in the fact that he is not just great catching out of the backfield, but lining up out wide as well.

He can play in the slot or outside, and he brought down 18 receptions for 300

yards and three touchdowns last season.

Offense — On the ground

Daniels' usefulness far exceeds just catching the ball, despite his doing it far better than the average high school running back.

He earned a spot as the All-Region 1-4A Athlete of the Year last year, and that athleticism aids him in every aspect of his game.

As a kick returner, he amassed 298 yards and returned several kickoffs. As a runner, he carried the ball 102 times for 571 yards and 13 touchdowns.

His agility is his greatest asset; It allows him to juke and spin away from defenders as well as stay up after taking contact without losing speed.

When it comes to top speed, he's also stellar. When he reaches the open field, a switch flips, and he takes off.

As far as who will back him up, Kam Oliver has had Smith's eye since the spring.

Oliver is listed at 5-foot-

11 and 190 pounds, but Smith said he's up to 210 pounds and provides a lot of physicality as a sophomore.

"He's showed this spring and this summer that he's capable. He's got the ability and the biggest thing with him is just get seasoned," Smith said.

It's been years since the Panthers had a running back as big as Oliver, and even then, they were 40 pounds lighter.

Senior Zavion Simmons is expected to contribute in spots, too.

The offensive line will see plenty of new faces as well, with All-Region 2nd Team selectee Jukorin Thomas and All-Region Honorable Mention Stephen Gore graduated.

Smith said sophomore Joshua Latson is the only returner from last year's varsity squad. He also said that there's a lot of competition at the position with seven names mentioned, including Latson:

Junior Johnny Clarke and seniors Caden Kinchen, Quintez Alexander, Connor

Jenkins, Harrison Cooper and Kane Kimbrough.

To get into the first five on the field, which Smith said had not been decided during the summer, all seven have to prove themselves.

Jenkins and Kimbrough have the most size at 6-foot-3 and around 240 pounds each, with Kimbrough listed as a defensive end. Clarke isn't too far behind height-wise at 6 feet tall and 260 pounds, and Kinchen is of similar stature at 5 feet 11 inches and 250 pounds.

Alexander and Cooper face more of an uphill battle at 5-foot-10, 195 pounds and 5-foot-8 and 211 pounds, respectively, but are both in the race.

Even last year, Perry had some growing pains with the offensive line, particularly in the run game; Against East Coweta, they didn't get up to the second level and hold their blocks like they should. The early weeks will tell how much growing pain they'll face with this new unit.

The good news is they return a beefy couple

of tight ends in seniors Jackson Thompson (6-foot-1, 235 pounds) and Castor Engelbach (6-foot-3, 215 pounds). Thompson in particular showed his chops against linebackers and strong safeties, which helped earn him a spot on the All-Region 2nd Team.

Defense — In the trenches

On the other side of the line, the Panthers lose one of their most productive pairings — defensive linemen Ashlon Ashley and Chayden Barber.

Both earned an All-Region 1st Team selection in 2024 and combined for 80 tackles, six sacks, five tackles for a loss, and Ashley even nabbed an interception on the season.

All-Region 2nd Team selectee Noah Clark returns for his senior season. He's faster than most interior linemen he faces at 6-foot-1 and 232 pounds, and on tape, that allowed him to rip through them on his way to 37 tackles (20 solo), five sacks and 4 TFLs.

Alongside him, Smith

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Alongside him, Smith mentioned senior Janaris Reeves, who faced injuries last year, and senior Chance Joseph, who got limited run through six games with 11 tackles (6 solo).

Junior Kyle Jones, who is still unproven at the varsity level, is another name to watch out for on the field, too, Smith said.

Defense — The secondary

The secondary returns the most experience from 2024 and has the potential to be the best unit for the Panthers in 2025.

That's not to say they didn't take a massive hit — they lost Elijah Joseph, who led the team with 95 tackles, and Devon Smoot, both All-Region 2nd Team selections.

But Johntavious Carswell, Quentin Crane and Andrew Battle all come back with a combined 100 tackles, 19 passes deflected and two interceptions. Carswell and Crane were also All-Region Honorable Mentions.

Battle is the smallest of the bunch at 5-foot-8 and 145 pounds, but he always found himself in the play last year against some of Perry's best opponents.

Carswell is quick with a listed 4.44 40-yard dash time, and led the squad with 10 passes deflected last year. His size is also suitable for a defensive back at 6-foot and 160 pounds.

Crane grew a lot last year and could both roam and help and press up on receivers, though he got beaten over the top at times because of his lack of top-end speed.

The schedule

Perry's schedule is the same as last year's, but instead of the pleasure of the Pit, they have to endure six of seven games on the road after the season opener.

That leaves the home slate looking pretty dry, but if you can make the trip to the Peach County game on Aug. 22 that one is always worth a watch.

Another game worth seeing is when the Panthers host Warner Robins on Oct. 31. Last year, that rivalry renewed for the first time in 60 years with the Demons taking the win with a field goal that just snuck over the crossbar with 0.4 second left on the clock.

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What are the team's goals and focus this school year?

Our primary goal this school year is to enhance school spirit at Perry High School. We are placing a strong focus on increasing crowd participation during games by using visual signs and megaphones more frequently. We aim to energize the stands and create an engaging game-day atmosphere.

What's something unique about this year's squads: a tradition, strength, or standout moment so far?

One unique feature of this year's squad is the renewed emphasis on incorporating signs and megaphones into our football game performances. We're also continuing a beloved Perry High tradition—the P-E-R-R-Y crowd cheer. After reintroducing it last year, it's been heartwarming to hear our alumni joining in from the stands, connecting generations of Panther pride.

What does a typical practice look like, and how do you keep your team motivated?

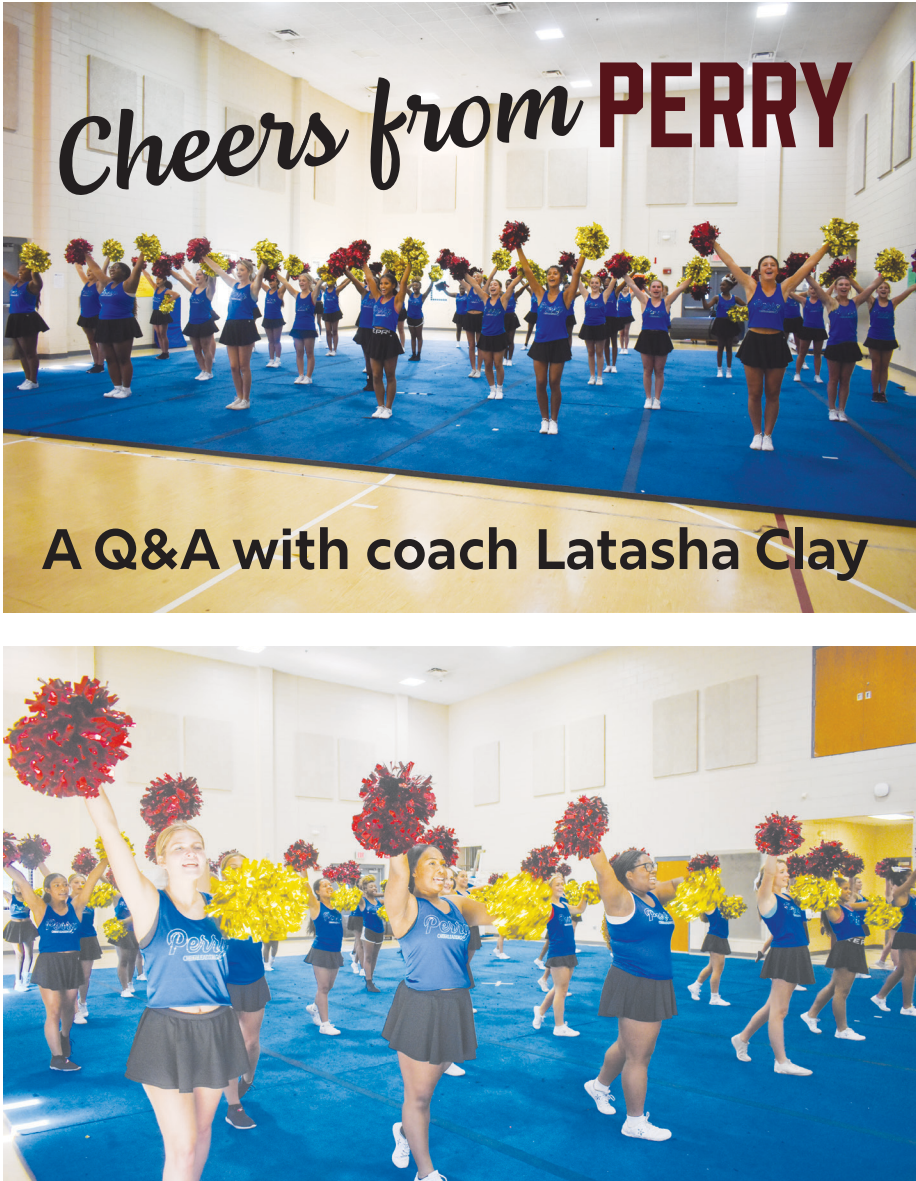
A typical practice includes focused work on jumps, chants, and stunting, with skills blended together to complement specific cheers. This year, we're adding a new element by incorporating signs and stunts into our fight song routine. Practices conclude with a moment of unity: one cheerleader leads the team in prayer, followed by another leading a spirited closing chant to keep morale high.

How does the team boost school spirit and support athletics?

Our cheer team plays a vital role in boosting school spirit by actively encouraging and engaging with the student body. We bring high energy to games and pep rallies, creating an enthusiastic environment that supports all our athletic teams.

Is there anything you'd like the community to know or celebrate about the cheer team this year?

This year, our cheer team has grown closer than ever. We've introduced a JV squad, and our Varsity team is mentoring and working closely with them. The bond among our athletes is strong, and their dedication is evident. I'm incredibly proud of their commitment, teamwork, and positive attitude. We're excited for a great season ahead!



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VETERANS HIGH SCHOOL



NEW VETERANS COACH STEVEN DEVOURSNEY LOOKING TO BRING PHYSICAL STYLE OF PLAY TO WARHAWKS FOOTBALL

By CLAY BROWN
HHJ Sports Editor



Veterans football has struggled to win consistently since its inception in 2010. It's had 11 losing seasons to only three winning seasons and has never reached double-digit wins.

The farthest they've ever reached in the playoffs was the second round in 2013 (their only region championship year, too) and 2019, and they're currently tied for their longest postseason drought in school history after missing three in a row and four out of the last five.

But after coming off of its worst season in program history, the Warhawks brought in former Griffin Bear and Cairo Syrupmaker Steven DeVoursney to right the ship.

During the spring, one of DeVoursney's biggest focuses was getting Veterans used to proper weight room habits and a more physical style of play. There has been progress, but they're not where they want to be just yet in the first offseason of his tenure.

"I think they're in better shape, I think they know how to lift now and [they're] getting stronger," DeVoursney said. "Physically they're trying to get there and understand what it takes to be there. Now as far as being physical and putting your face in there every snap, we're not there yet. That's something that's just gonna take some time to get them to do."

Let's Go Warhawks:

Offense — Through the air

The Veterans offense last year was not productive. It scored the second-least amount of points in program history and was plagued by an inconsistent quarterback rotation.

To start the year, senior Brooks Masters was QB1, but both Trey Byrd and Rowan Singleton got drives in almost every game.

Byrd eventually took over the QB1 spot, but by then the season was lost. The offense was shut out twice and held to 10 points or less seven times. The team had a completion percentage of 50 or more only twice.

When it comes to this year's quarterback battle, DeVoursney made it clear that the winner will be whoever can put Veterans in good positions. He said he didn't see that from any of his candidates during the spring.

"I think all three of them are right there together. I think all three have gotten better about trying to protect the ball and getting us out of bad positions and situations," DeVoursney said. "I think all three have something that they all bring to the table, so it's a good problem to have."

At the time of writing, the starter has not been named, but DeVoursney said they would try to pick one after their preseason scrimmage at Howard in Macon.

The three options he's referring to are junior Jake Trail and sophomores Byrd and Singleton.

Those who watched last season will be more familiar with the latter two — Trail has been with the program, but does not have any statistics or game tape listed.

Singleton had the highest completion percentage of the trio last year at 55%, but by far had the smallest sample size of passes with 27. He had some nice throws in the short to intermediate area, but it seemed laborious for him to get the ball farther down the field.

Byrd has the superior arm strength, effortlessly flicking the ball downfield, but his accuracy and decision-making were shaky at times, leading to a 36% completion percentage on 100 passes.

Making final judgments on either from their fragmented freshman season would be foolish; With the program hopefully coming out of a spiral, the pair should have more direction. Their sophomore season (and Trail's junior season) should provide a clearer picture of what kind of quarterback they are.

Regardless of who takes up the QB1 mantle, the Warhawks are not lacking in weapons.

The biggest names are senior Mouhamadou Mane and junior Kaden Gutierrez, who were staples in last year's offense.

Their 2024 statistics don't pop off the page because of how rough the passing offense was, but Mane was second to Aaron Evans with 16 receptions for 291 yards and one touchdown in his All-Region 2-5A 2nd Team season.

At 6-foot-2 and 180 pounds with a 35-inch vertical, he makes for a good safety blanket. In his game tape, he had several catches on the sideline or short side of the field with a defender in the area, rising to catch the ball before coming down in bounds. His speed, while not elite, is nothing to sneeze at with a listed 4.53 40-yard dash time and 11.3 100-meter dash time.

Gutierrez is a shifty receiver with quick feet and clean breaks in his routes, allowing him to make a defender or two stumble or catch them in a bad position while he skates around for extra yards. He tallied 12 receptions for 175 yards and a touchdown last year.

Outside of those two, though, another receiver has caught DeVoursney's eye.

"I think [Traelen] Porter's got a chance to really help us, he's just gonna be a sophomore," DeVoursney said. "He's had a good camp so far, good preseason, so we're really high on him. We're hoping he can help us out some this year."

"He's just real consistent. He runs good routes, he's always where he's supposed to be and he judges the ball really well, so he's pretty solid for a sophomore," he

continued. “He’s only gonna get better, and that’s a good thing. He’s gonna push some of these older guys for time just because he does everything the right way.”

Senior Gregory Collins is another name to watch out for when Veterans brings out an extra receiver.

Offense — On the ground
Leading the way on the ground is junior running back Tylan Glover, who carried a big load as a sophomore.

In 2024, he split carries evenly with Justin Shine, with 95 attempts for 472 yards. Glover has solid speed and can stay on his feet, facing contact, using spins or jukes to get extra yards. His only issue is injuries, according to DeVoursney.

“When he’s healthy he’s really, really good,” he said. “He’s probably our best leader on the team. But we got some other guys trying to push him, trying to make him better.”

Senior Idris Evans and sophomore Landon Brown are the ones DeVoursney referenced, each providing depth.

Evans is much bigger than Glover’s 5-foot-9, 185-pound frame at 5-foot-10 and 220 pounds, and has a more physical back considering his use as a blocking tight end.

Brown is more similar in stature to Glover at 5-foot-8 and 180 pounds and got some snaps at linebacker in 2024. How much of a role he plays remains to be seen, and likely depends on Glover’s health.

Blocking for them is a group that has potential but isn’t there just yet, particularly junior Jaden Durham.

Durham already has college size at 6-foot-5 and 280 pounds, but is lacking in the physicals.

His 5.8 40-yard dash time and 260-pound squat aren’t what you want, and DeVoursney acknowledged he’s got a lot of work left.

“Durham’s still got a long ways to go,” he said. “He needs to live in that weight room and everything else, being more physical, staying low, all that stuff. We got to get him a lot better than he is right now.”

One standout DeVoursney mentioned, though, was junior Christian Chambliss. Others have the potential to contribute too, like sophomore Tyler O’Neal, who boasts a 405-pound squat at 5-foot-11 and 262 pounds. Senior Josef Askew is another name at 5-foot-10 and 245 pounds.

Defense — In the trenches
The defensive line took a big hit with the loss of Kane Byrd, who now plays for Berry College, and

led the team with 12 tackles for a loss in 2024.

But they aren’t left without a leader in the trenches with senior Terrance Boges manning the middle at 6-foot-3 and 288 pounds. There’s a saying that mass moves mass, and Boges is big.

He has limited current tape, but showed he was plenty capable of pushing through centers and guards.

“Terrance Boges is probably our leader on the defensive line, he’s had a good off season,” DeVoursney said. “He played in one or two games last year, but he’s really stepped up to be the leader of that d-line right now.”

DeVoursney mentioned Nolan Thompson as the other anchor on the line at 6-foot-3 and 230 pounds. He played some on the offensive line last year, but it seems that he’ll be getting a lot more snaps on defense in 2025. Jaydon Barnett is another name to remember.

Where this defense’s bread and butter really is, though, is the linebackers.

The top two contributors last year were Hudson Warden and Lincoln Goode, each entering their senior season.

Warden led the team with 58 tackles (25 solo), 3 TFLs, three quarterback hurries and one pass deflection to go with an All-Region 2nd Team selection.

Goode narrowly trailed his partner with 57 tackles (31 solo), three quarterback hurries, 2 TFLs, one sack and one caused fumble.

Goode has powerful legs at 5-foot-10 and 195 pounds, squatting 465 pounds. He’s best making tackles in the gap rather than in space, and has some serious stopping power when he meets runners. When getting after the quarterback, he blows up chip blocks and running backs.

Warden is a bit bigger and slower at 6-feet tall and 215 pounds, but he bursts through chip blocks and has some power of his own, all the same.

DeVoursney expects them to continue to be big contributors on the defense.

“We’re counting on both of those guys to be big leaders for us,” DeVoursney said. “They had a good year last year, and we hope they’re gonna have a good year this year, too. Hopefully keep both of them healthy and have a great senior year.”

Junior Jackson Wall is anticipated to be a contributor behind the big two as well and can play on the edge or in the middle. Though like the others, tackling in space is not his strong suit.

Defense — The secondary
The group with the most eyes on them is no doubt the secondary.

Sure, the quarterback battle draws a lot of attention, but the potential of the Veterans’ secondary is unmatched.

They have elite size and length with three members 6-foot-2 or taller and two All-Region returnees.

Leading the pack are seniors Christian Askew and LJ Moton Jr. Askew was selected to the All-Region 1st Team with 48 tackles (37 solo), an absurd 15 passes deflected, two interceptions, one fumble recovery and one caused fumble. He’s also 6-foot-4 and 176 pounds.

Askew has the speed to keep up with most receivers, the physicality to jam them on the line, and the length to break up passes even if he’s not completely in the play. If he put on the 10 pounds of muscle DeVoursney hoped for, that could spell trouble for a lot of Houston County receivers.

Moton isn’t far behind, either, at 6-foot-3 and 175 pounds and a 36-inch vertical. He tallied 50 tackles (29 solo), five passes deflected, 3 TFLs, two interceptions and one caused fumble during his All-Region 2nd Team campaign last year.

He is quick, but doesn’t quite have that top-end speed. But his length is the same in that he bothers plays from a distance.

Not the mention senior Ricky

Houser at 6-foot-2 and 170 pounds, who had 27 tackles (18 solo) and five passes deflected in 2024.

“I think Askew and LJ are both getting better every day...I think both of them are gonna get better as the year goes on,” DeVoursney said.

DeVoursney also had high praise for senior Adolphus Jones, who he said has had the best summer of anyone in the secondary. He’s also not lacking in length at 5-foot-11.

Deric Ingram Jr. is a big name to watch with the contributions he made as a sophomore at safety.

He tallied 50 tackles (25 solo), three interceptions, two passes deflected, two fumble recoveries and 1 caused fumble.

Ingram keys the quarterback while still keeping tabs on the receivers in his area well, and doesn’t put himself in a bad position by coming down too far. He holds that same patience when he’s in the box, not committing until he has a lane to the ball. He’s also 6-feet tall and 190 pounds.


Whether the physical and mental part of being a defensive back comes together for this group this year remains to be seen. Not only did DeVoursney want them to gain muscle this offseason, but work on their game sense and cover skills, too.

If they can put that together with these big, lengthy frames, the Warhawks’ secondary will be a no-fly zone in 2025.



From All of Our Coaches, Faculty & Staff at Veterans High School


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What are the team’s goals and focus this school year?
Our main goal this year is school spirit! It's a new era of Warhawk football, and we are excited to cheer on the team.

What’s something unique about this year’s squads: a tradition, strength, or standout moment so far?
Our strength this year is our teamwork. All of our athletes are so kind and sportsmanlike to one another, and it shows on the field. We are also sporting new uniforms this year, and they really make our athletes shine!

What does a typical practice look like, and how do you keep your team motivated?
We start by practicing our cheers, then our dances, and we periodically do team-building activities. Between our JV, Football, and Competition squads, we have 59 athletes, so it's easy to get stuck in your group of friends. We hope to keep everyone motivated by introducing them to new people and building new friendships.

How does the team boost school spirit and support athletics?
We cheer on the team at games, and soon we will start pep rallies to amp up our student body!

Is there anything you’d like the community to know or celebrate about the cheer team this year?
We are SO excited about this season of football and cheer competitions. We hope to see you soon at a game!



A Q&A with coach Emma Mullis

What is the theme or focus of this year’s marching show, and what inspired it?
This year's theme is Avast! It's a pirate-themed halftime production that we hope will dazzle and excite crowds at football games and band competitions alike!

What’s something unique about this year’s band: a tradition, strength, or standout moment so far?
One major standout thing about the band this year is the tenacity and perseverance that the students have shown thus far! We had an extremely productive band camp, getting a lot of drill on the field for our halftime show, and that is hugely due in part to the hard work and effort of our fantastic Veterans Band students!

How do you prepare your students for performances, musically and mentally?
Preparation for something like marching band cannot happen without repetition. The number of times we repeat musical phrases, drill maneuvers, and marching technique is astronomical. It can be extremely easy for the students to get lost in the "one more time, run it again" aspect of band and check out mentally. We drill our students to be physically and mentally engaged throughout the entire rehearsal process in order for us to continue striving for the highest performance level we can achieve.
In terms of how we prepare the students for this, we rely heavily on our fantastic student leadership team to help be the standard-bearers for our expectations and the esprit de corps we want to see. Combined with our continual practicing of procedures and logistics, we seek the best versions of ourselves we can be!

What role does the band play in boosting school spirit and supporting athletics?
The band plays a significant role in supporting the school and our athletic programs! As much as we focus a lot of time and effort on our own competitive marching performances, another big thing we impress upon the students is the fact that we are one of the biggest outward faces of the school. The way we carry ourselves at games, in class, during rehearsal, and at athletic events is a big part of our culture. We provide spirit, energy, and joy at all events where we perform, and take that job seriously!

Is there anything you’d like the community to know or be proud of about your band this year?
We are always proud of our students who are able to juggle the busy schedule of marching band and consistently perform at the highest academic level as well. Last year the VHS Valedictorian was a marching band student, and over 10% of the honor graduate class of 2025 were marching band students as well! In addition to this, we are extremely proud of our concert band classes, notably our VHS Wind Ensemble, which has been invited to represent Georgia and our region of the country at the Southeastern United States Honor Band Clinic hosted at Troy University. There are always great things to celebrate in the VHS Band Program!

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WARNER ROBINS HIGH SCHOOL



WARNER ROBINS FOOTBALL SEES LOTS OF NEW FACES AFTER LOSSES IN THE OFFSEASON

By CLAY BROWN
HHJ Sports Editor

The nature of high school sports is that every year, you lose big contributors and have to rebuild your roster.

Some years hit harder than others, though. The 2025 offseason hit Warner Robins pretty hard — they lost 29

seniors and at least half of those were starters. That means that on both sides of the ball, they’ve got some serious rebuilding to do, though playing younger players

has been a focus of head coach Shane Sams since he arrived in 2023. Welcome to Demon Country: **Offense — Through the air**

Arguably, the biggest position that’ll see new faces is quarterback. This will make it the third year in a row that Warner Robins will have a different quarterback,

though with the options they have in 2025, that could be remedied.

The two in competition for the spot are sophomore Chandler Dyson and junior Ellison Dantes.

“Right now they’re neck and neck. They both bring different things to the table,” Sams said. “They both are good [leaders], they celebrate each other. It’s something fun to really watch and get after. So right now it’s neck and neck and we’ll see how the season goes.”

Sams said that the quarterbacks are in a similar place when it comes to throwing the ball, but one of their key differences is in mobility.

Dantes is said to be quicker evacuating the pocket to the outside, while Dyson, who is 6-foot-5 and 213 pounds, is a physical force inside.

Dantes is much shorter and lighter at 5-foot-11 and 152 pounds, but time will tell whether his mobility wins out over Dyson’s physicality.

The receiver room is one of the more familiar groups from last season, with returners like senior Ezra Goings and sophomore X’Zavier Cannon.

Goings is a big possession receiver at 6-foot-3 and 185 pounds, while Cannon thrives making plays with the ball in his hand using speed and agility.

Jacoby Parsons is another senior who saw some varsity snaps last year and offers some size at 6-feet tall. That, along with some young receivers like sophomores EJ Adside, Makhi Scott-Adkinson, Daylen Kirksey and Antavious “Tay Tay” Hawkins, make up a receiver room Sams is excited about.

“[There are] some good things that we see, we got a really good group of receivers. We’re excited about them and we’ll see what they can do on Friday nights,” Sams said.

Offense — On the ground

The running back room took some of the biggest losses from last season,

with Da’veon Latimore and Kesley Perkins graduating, while Travis English Jr and Jordan Perkins transferred to Northside and Houston County, respectively.

Not to mention Skyler Williams, who did a great deal of running for the Demons at quarterback.

That being said, there are a couple of backs that have impressed Sams and should be around past this year.

Junior Alijah Alexander is the main name at 5-foot-10 and 175 pounds. There’s not much film, and not any on varsity, but he seems to navigate his lanes well and has the size to bust into the end zone on goal-line situations.

Senior CJ Gunnings is another mentioned by name, though he doesn’t have any available game film.

“Those are two guys that we’re excited about,” Sams said. “We got a young guy in [sophomore] Jaden Hill who really shows some stuff, and we got a freshman that’s really balled out, Kamarion Smith that we’re excited about. So we think we got really good depth at running back that we’re pretty excited about.”

Some good news for the Demons’ rushing offense is they return some veterans on the offensive line.

Senior tackle Tre Glover is the most recognizable name with a commitment to Appalachian State. He’s 6-foot-4 and 295 pounds but still moves up the field well when run blocking, and is quick backpedaling in pass protection. He earned an All-Region 1-4A 1st Team selection last year.

Another experienced returner is All-Region Honorable Mention Chase Plank at center. He stands at 6-foot-2 and 280 pounds and can get it done in both run blocking and pass protection. You’ll also rarely see him commit a holding penalty — he’s very conscious where his hands are and not holding on too long when the play has advanced.

The Demons also added Houston County transfer Kasey McKever over the

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ROBINS FOOTBALL

offseason. He’s a senior at 6-foot-2 and 268 pounds and is listed as a guard.

Juniors Ayden Bourda, KJ McDavis Jr and Davious Lankford make up the others of a group the Demons are comfortable rolling out.

“We got seven guys that we feel like we can go to war with right now that’s not even including the tight ends,” Sams said. “It’s something that we feel will grow as the year goes on but we expect to be physical from the get go.”

Warner Robins’ tight ends have been big and lengthy for the last couple of years, and that doesn’t change this year.

Junior Peyton Zitterman and sophomore Johnathan Riley are the two to keep an eye on. Zitterman is 6-foot-2 and 210 pounds and looks to have some decent hands.

Riley is 6-foot-3 and 200 pounds with no available tape.

Defense — In the trenches

The Demons’ defensive line will sorely miss Isaiah Gibson, Jakai Woodford and others, but Sams seemed optimistic about the returners. Senior nose guard Daeveon Dixon has some power going into the chest of his opponents, but doesn’t have much film to go on.

Sams mentioned senior defensive end Quincy Davis, who stands at 6-foot-5 and 215 pounds and provides speed off the edge. Senior Jerron Farrow is another name Sams mentioned.

“I thought they did a great job against Peach County shutting down the run,” Sams said. “It’s a tough challenge to really step up to the challenge but I think they’ve done a great job.”

There’s a lot of competition at the second level, too, with a flurry of names Sams has to fill out the linebacker corps that lost Khaedric Edwards and others.

As far as seniors go on the outside, there’s Derrick Smith and Quon Gordon. Gordon is the bigger of the two at 6-foot-3 and 205 pounds, with Smith weighing in at 175 pounds at 6-feet tall.

Juniors Jamari Timpson and Galvin Sidney will hold down the inside of the formation with senior Montreal Daniels and junior Cordero Dugger Jr filling out the rotation.

“We feel like we got a good mixture of linebackers that are preforming...we’re excited about those group of guys,” Sams said.

Defense — The secondary

The secondary was no exception to the big losses last year, with Rasean Dinkins, Nick Linder, J’Korian Rumph and plenty of others gone to graduation.

Dinkins, in particular, was more than just a defensive back; he played everywhere. He contributed on special teams, at safety, a man-to-man corner, a receiver, you name it.

While Warner Robins doesn’t have anyone who can quite fill those shoes in this year’s secondary, there are still some players Sams is encouraged by.

Seniors Lekevious Bryant, Zayvon Burke and Justyn Hunter will be featured at cornerback. Seniors Jamarcus Allen, Demarquis Cooper and Jessie Roberson will be the last line of defense at safety.

These are just a few in the rotation, and Sams feels comfortable with several in the rotation.


“We feel like we got about seven, eight, guys that can rotate and go get it done,” Sams said.

The schedule

Warner Robins’ schedule still features some of the toughest matchups in the state, starting with a Week 1 battle against Lee County that’s been going on for four years now.

The Demons are still searching for their first win over Lee County under Sams, and 2025 will be the first time they’ll have home-field advantage during his tenure.

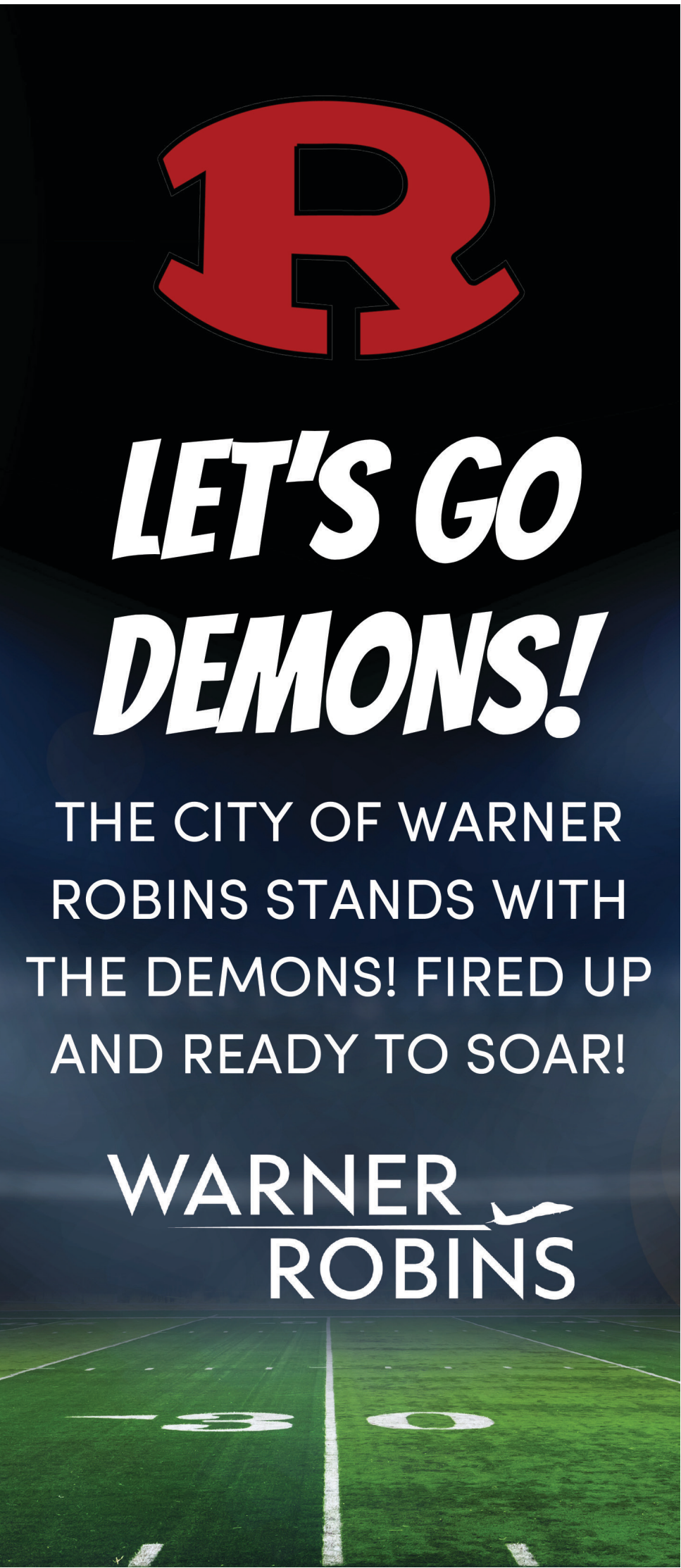
Another couple of must-see games are (obviously) the Crosstown Showdown against Northside on Aug. 29 and the rivalry game against Ware County on Oct. 24.



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WARNER ROBINS



What are the team’s goals and focus this school year?

This year, our biggest goals are building strong team chemistry, mastering game-day performance skills, and increasing our presence in the school and community. We’re also focused on leadership development—encouraging every cheerleader to step up as a role model. Whether it's in the stands, at pep rallies, or out in the community, we want to represent the school with pride, positivity, and unity.

What’s something unique about this year’s squads: a tradition, strength, or standout moment so far?

This year's squad has an incredible bond—there’s a genuine sense of trust and support between the athletes. One unique tradition we’ve really leaned into is our “Big/Little” mentorship program, where returning members are paired with newer ones. It’s created a supportive environment where everyone feels seen and encouraged. A standout moment so far was the way the team rallied together to lead practice and camps this past summer.

What does a typical practice look like, and how do you keep your team motivated?

Typical practice starts with a high-energy warm-up and stretch, followed by stunts, tumbling, and cheer or chant work. We also dedicate time to game-day routines and sideline transitions to keep everything sharp. To keep the team motivated, we set weekly goals and celebrate small wins. We rotate leadership roles in practice, so everyone has a chance to guide the group. Most importantly, we keep things fun—cheer is hard work, but the team stays positive because they love what they do and they love doing it together.

How does the team boost school spirit and support athletics?

The cheer team is out front at every major game, rally, and event. We lead the crowd in chants, perform routines that get fans on their feet, and create a welcoming, electric atmosphere that supports our athletes. Behind the scenes, we also create posters, help organize spirit weeks, and partner with the band to make sure our school pride shines. Our job is to be the bridge between the student body and our athletes—to keep the energy up no matter the score.

Is there anything you’d like the community to know or celebrate about the cheer team this year?

This year’s team is truly special, not just because of their skill, but because of their heart. They show up for each other, they show up for the school, and they take their roles seriously—as athletes, leaders, and representatives of our community. We’d love for the community to recognize that cheer isn’t just about pom-poms and chants—it’s about athleticism, discipline, leadership, and service. This team embodies all of that, and we’re incredibly proud of them.

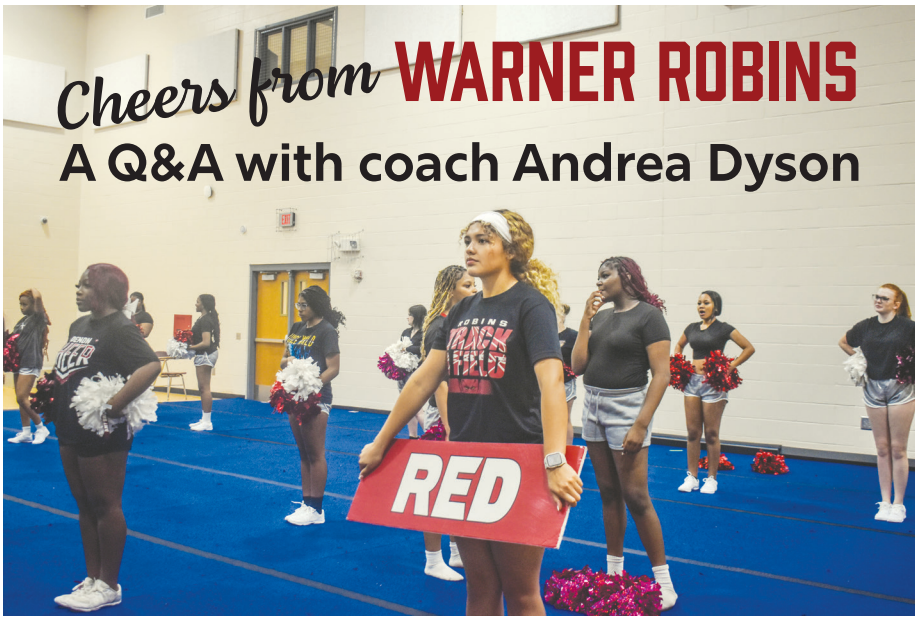
DEMON MARCHING BAND

A Q&A with director Ernest Stackhouse



Cheers from WARNER ROBINS

A Q&A with coach Andrea Dyson



What is the theme or focus of this year’s marching show, and what inspired it?

The theme for this year's show is "Salute to The King" A Celebration of the five decades of music from The King of Pop, Michael Jackson.

What’s something unique about this year’s band: a tradition, strength, or standout moment so far?

This year, the band is under new leadership for the first time in 30 years. This year's band is preparing a high energy show with music that crosses all cultural boundaries. The band has hit the ground running, already performing for over two thousand teachers at the Houston County School District Opening Session and for the WMAZ morning news on the first day of school!

How do you prepare your students for performances, musically and mentally?


We have intense rehearsals where we thoroughly work the music and marching maneuvers with hours of repetition and refinement. Then I remind them that we perform exactly the way that we rehearse.

What role does the band play in boosting school spirit and supporting athletics?

Band plays an important role in boosting school spirit and supporting athletics. We are the largest student based organization on campus so we represent the student body in ways no other organization can. Wether its the pageantry and formality of Pregame, the battle of the bands at halftime, or rocking the "R" in the stands, the band is always guaranteed to show up and show out for The Demons!

Is there anything you’d like the community to know or be proud of about your band this year?

Check out The WRHS Demon Band at all home games this year! Also, The Demon Band will be competing in two competitions this year (in Lilburn GA, and Jesup, GA) and we will perform at Disney World in Orlando in the Spring! To stay updated on all that's going on with The WRHS Marching Demon Band, visit us online at www.wrbands.org



THE WESTFIELD SCHOOL

WESTFIELD LOOKS TO BUILD ON SEMIFINALS APPEARANCE

By CLAY BROWN
HHJ Sports Editor

In just two seasons, decorated coach Chad Campbell brought his winning ways from Peach County to Perry, and now Westfield has returned to power in the GIAA.

In 2024, they won their first district title in nine years and put together a defense that allowed fewer points than even the 2013 and 2014 championship teams.

They never lost a game by more than five points, and the semifinals came to an end on a heartbreaking score with less than 30 seconds to go.

In 2025, they return a lot of weapons on both ends, including a member of last year's All-State group.

Welcome to the Hornets' Nest:
Offense — Through the air

Last year's offense was the most productive since Ronnie Jones's previous season with the Hornets (aside from an outlier 2021 season), and a great deal of the credit for that goes to Brayden Gay's transformation at quarterback.

In 2023, Gay was responsible for 14 of Westfield's 19 turnovers between interceptions and fumbles; He cut that number in half in 2024.

But now he's gone, and Campbell says two quarterbacks are fighting for his place: Junior Brock Johnson and Sophomore Cort Pearson.

"They're splitting reps right now and they'll both play early on and then I'll make a decision...I'm gonna have two of them ready to play, but Brock right now I'd say he's the starter right now," Campbell said.

Johnson wasn't a quarterback last year, though he did take several snaps running option plays. He was 4-for-7 on pass attempts for 8 yards, mainly to the flat. He did, however, also run 65 times for 426 yards and 11 touchdowns.



Avery Sports Photo

The 2025 varsity Westfield Hornets.

His legs are his most useful weapon, at least that's what we've seen so far.

Pearson, on the other hand, is a pocket passer with good awareness and a lot of intelligence, according to Campbell.

Pearson is also bigger at 6-feet tall and 170 pounds compared to Johnson's smaller 5-foot-9, 160-pound frame.

So early on, you can expect to see some different faces under center, but the wide receiver corps has some more familiar mugs.

Stone St. Clair, the younger brother of now-graduated Jackson St. Clair, is taking up the WR1 mantle with size and length.

At 6-feet tall and 175 pounds, he's able to go up and get it a little. That, paired with his solid speed, allows him to be used in a variety of ways.

On tape, he has contested catches deep down the field as well as sweeps and screens. He also returns the most receptions with 31 for 473 yards and a touchdown in 2024.

Next up is Win Hoots, who didn't play much offense last

year because of Jackson St. Clair and Mason Easom. But now he will step into the Friday night lights more often to build on his five receptions for 105 yards and one touchdown last year.

Hoots provides a similar length to Stone St. Clair, and Campbell believes both of them are going to give defenses trouble.

"Both of them are going to be difficult to cover," he said. "Both of them can run, both of them got length, both of them got great hands [and] ball skills. They're both very good."

Campbell also mentioned sophomore Sheldan Benton and senior Ben Hulbert.

Offense — On the ground

The rushing offense returns two of its top three contributors in Jackson Hair and Johnson.

Hair is the premier back offering, offering more size for the offense at 6 feet tall and 185 pounds. He also squats 350 pounds, which helps him shrug off tackles as he heads upfield for extra yards.

Last year, he had 100

carries for 652 yards and three touchdowns, and also brought down 15 receptions for 100 yards and a touchdown.

He's another versatile weapon that Campbell is glad to return.

"It's good to have Jackson back. He does have some breakaway speed and runs with some power," he said.

Another name to add to the mix is junior Drew Keller, who's historically played linebacker. At 6-foot-1 and 208 pounds, he squats 405 pounds and benches 315 with a 36-inch vertical.

He's one of the best athletes on the team and has had potential since he was at Warner Robins, and Campbell has him as one of the top dogs in the running back room this year.

More good news for the ground attack is the number of returners on the offensive line. In 2024, the Hornets had to rebuild their line entirely, but this year they bring back an experienced line with some that will even be back next year.

Campbell mentioned a six-man rotation involv-

ing seniors Maddox Davies and Law Leonard and juniors Caleb Andrews, Smisson Rigdon and Sammy McGehee.

Davies and McGehee are the tackles, though Rigdon is said to be able to slide over from guard to tackle. Leonard is the center and Reddick and Andrews are guards.

Andrews and McGehee are the biggest of the bunch at 6-foot-3 and 250 pounds and 235 pounds, respectively.

"I'm pretty pleased with those six right there. The rest of the guys are young and not ready to step in yet," Campbell said. "But hopefully maybe we can find another one or two mid-season."

Senior Matt Molina will start at tight end, providing both an extra blocker (6-foot-2, 220 pounds) as well as a threat through the air. In 2024, he pulled down 12 receptions for 220 yards and a touchdown.

Defense — In the trenches

The 2024 Westfield defense was one of the best in recent memory, and they return a lot of their top players.

All-State defensive lineman Neil O'Brien is the biggest loss, but the biggest returner is All-State linebacker Thatcher Reddick.

Thatcher Reddick is prime linebacker size for high school at 5-foot-10 and 215 pounds and he uses every bit of it.

The best way to describe his play style is that he gets after it. He's patient with his reads, but when he crashes down, he brings the hammer.

Campbell mentioned sophomore Carter Black as another inside linebacker paired with Reddick, which he described as a "really, really good combination."

The Hornets' defense is based out of the 3-4 Tite or "Mint" front. Meaning the defensive ends are aligned with the inside shoulder of each tackle rather than straight up. The nose guard is aligned with the center.

Campbell said Drew Keller is the outside linebacker who will come down and play pseudo defensive end when Westfield goes four down.

Defense — The secondary

The defensive backs see a lot more two-way players than the front seven solely because of the physical toll of playing on the defensive line and at linebacker.

Stone St. Clair, Hoots and Johnson will all play cornerback, with the first two providing that same length on defense as on offense.

Campbell said senior Jack Doster will be their nickelback (the defensive back that substitutes a defensive lineman or linebacker) after not playing as a junior due to injury.

At safety, they'll see "new" faces, Hulbert and Liam Sexton, after losing two-year starters Grayson Waller and Russ Hiley.

"Those two safeties that they replace were two-year starters. So, I'm pleased where they're at," Campbell said. "They're still in the learning process of making checks and everything because they're the ones that have to make checks and everything in the secondary for us. When we have to check certain formations or [when] motions occur and having to check from one coverage to another coverage."

The schedule

The 2025 schedule hosts the same tough opponents, both in and out of the district.

The biggest test of the year is likely on Sept. 19 against the 2024 GIAA 4A champion First Presbyterian Day, but the revenge tour against Deerfield-Windsor at home on Aug. 29 is a must-see game.

Of the two losses Westfield had last year, the Knights gave them two on the way to the GIAA 3A championship. The first was a close 33-29 battle in Albany, the other was a last-minute victory in the semifinals.

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Cheers from
WESTFIELD

A word from coach
Jennifer Marronne

“This year, the Westfield Varsity Cheer team’s main goal is to boost school spirit and create an unforgettable atmosphere at every event. We’re focused on making pep rallies more exciting and energetic than ever before, with new routines, crowd involvement, and school pride at the heart of it all. We want to get everyone pumped for football games and help bring our whole school community together through spirit, enthusiasm, and support for our football team.”

“What stands out this year is how many new cheerleaders we have. Even though a large part of the group is new to cheer, everyone has brought such great energy and excitement. They’ve been committed to learning quickly, supporting each other, and bringing a positive energy to the team. It’s been great to see how fast we’ve grown together and how motivated everyone is to represent our school spirit.”



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