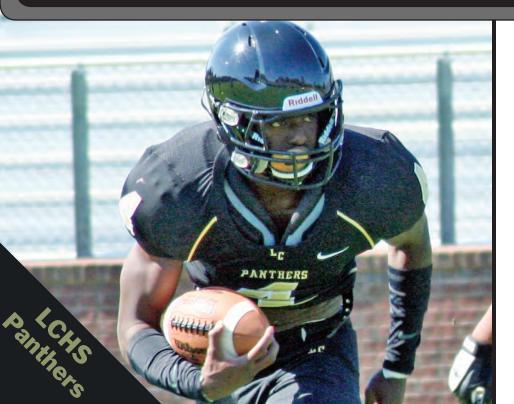




2014 HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PREVIEW

Bradwell Institute Tigers • First Presbyterian Christian Academy Highlanders • Liberty County High School Panthers



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2014 HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PREVIEW PRODUCED BY THE COASTAL COURIER WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2014



BRADWELL TIGERS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2014

2014 HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PREVIEW

PACE '

Changes abound as new staff takes over

Former GSU QB brings winning tradition, new assistants to Bradwell program

By PATTY LEON

pleon@coastalcourier.com

It's another upcoming football season with yet another new head coach for the Bradwell Institute Tigers.



Greg Hill Bradwell head coach

Former head coach Adam Carter came in last year and reinvigorated a football program that many in the community felt needed a jump start. The community responded, as did the players, who helped

Carter post a 4-6 overall record, the program's best since 2009.

Carter turned the program around and got the fans back in the bleachers at Olvey Field, just one year after it was completely rebuilt. The Tiger Touchdown Club was born to replace the defunct Harvey Overton Booster Club. But after the season, Carter took a position as the defensive coordinator at Rinehardt University.

The search for a new head coach quickly ensued, and in late February, the Tigers tapped former Georgia Southern quarterback Greg Hill for the job. He arrived at Bradwell in mid-March.

Hill led the Eagles to a 1998 NCAA Division I-AA runner-up finish and the national championship in 1999. He was inducted into the Georgia Southern Athletic Hall of Fame in 2010.

For the past 10 years, he's been an assistant high school coach, most recently as the offensive coordinator at Central High in Carrollton. Hill served as an assistant coach at Statesboro High for eight years, working with the receivers and running backs

Hill brought in several new assistants to help build the team this year. Among them is former Portal High head coach David NeSmith, who is now the Tigers' offensive coordinator and strength and conditioning coach. Hill also hired Ross Couch to manage the running backs and special teams.

Former Liberty County High School defensive coordinator Derek Sills is now running the defense at Bradwell. Sills, a GSU alum, is the president of the Coastal Eagles Club in Midway. He was the main person responsible for securing the finances needed to erect the new life-size statue of legendary Eagles coach Erk Russell at their new football operation center in Paulson Stadium.

Sills is thrilled about the opportunity to work with Hill.

"I can't tell you how much respect I have for Greg Hill," he said. "He has coached college football; he's won a state title while on the staff at Statesboro. He went to Central last year. ... They had no success in the past, and they made it to the third round of the playoffs.

"Then he brought in folks like Coach NeSmith, who is a heck of a weightlifting coach, and he also has a championship ring with Statesboro. My secondary coach, Chris Johnson, has two national championship rings from Georgia Southern. ... There is a history of success there, and that is what we are trying to create here."

Sills also brought former Panthers assistant Leonard Hall with him to join the Tigers' staff.

Meanwhile, Chris Shutts, retired from the military, was hired to coach the defensive line.

Returning from last year's staff is Da-Brent Nobles, who is working with the defensive ends; Duane Johnson, working with the running backs; Franklin Akin, who is working with the offensive line; and Joseph Smiley.

Size, strength highlight revamped defense

By PATTY LEON

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The Tigers have a new defensive coordinator this year in former Liberty County High School assistant coach Derek Sills.

Sills and new head coach Greg Hill are looking to revamp the Tigers' former 3-5 de-

fensive look this year.



DEREK SILLS
Bradwell
defensive
coordinator

"We are basically running a 4-4 with a cover 3," defensive backs coach Chris Johnson said. "That will be our base defense, and we will run more out of that."

The defense is led by senior Isiah Barnes.

"He loves playing. . . . He is having fun with it, and he's been here every day," Hill said. "That is the guy you look to be your leader on the defense and have the others guy follow."

"(Barnes) will be our leader, and he is one heck of a linebacker," Sills added. "I also have two excellent corners in Terrius Crimiel and Lorenzo Brinson. Those two can play. Lynwood Spaulding and Stephon Green will also be leaders on the defense. Ty Young will be one of our outside linebackers, and he is another good ball player. There are pieces there, and they are working.

"What we are going to promise you is that we are going to get lined up, run and be physical," he continued. "There are some ball players here, and Greg has got them working."

Hill said a few players from the defensive line might be borrowed to play on offense.

"Some guys are going to have to go both ways," he said. "We have a lot of bodies but not a lot of depth on the offensive and defensive line."

Defensive line coach Chris Shutts agreed.

"We are not going to be very deep, but the players that we have are very strong, and they worked very hard during the offseason gaining weight and muscle mass, which is going to help them down in the trenches," he said. Shutts said he has learned to adjust his former military training to help steer the Tigers' defense in the right direction.

"I came up from the military for 20 years, and dealing with soldiers is a lot different than dealing with high school kids," he said. "They need discipline, but they also need a lot more guidance."

Defensive backs coach Chris Johnson added that his secondary is young as well.

"For a lot of them, this will be their first year playing, but we have some good athletes back there. If they buy into what we are teaching them, they will be solid," he said. "The biggest improvement is that the guys are picking up the new defense pretty quick. We are trying to keep it pretty basic in the secondary ... and as a whole, they are picking things up pretty good."

Johnson said he helped the players improve their speed during the summer.

"We did a lot of form running, and we used the ladder so we can have quick feet," he said. "You need to have quick feet and be able to move your hips in the secondary."

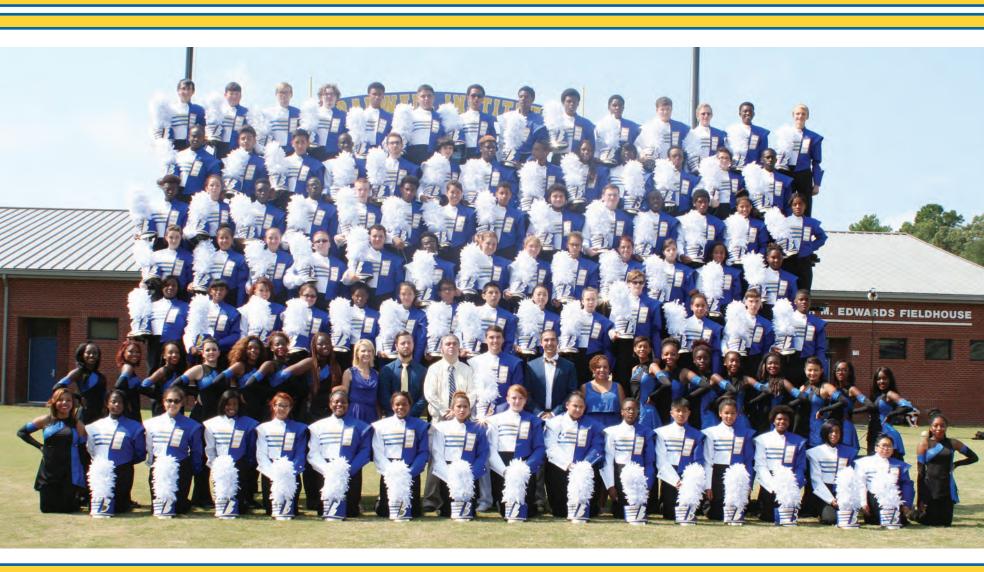
Coaching the defensive line and ends, Da-Brent Nobles said he is looking for leadership from Green and Spaulding.

"They are seniors and have shown great leadership," he said. "Behind those two, we are young. We have Willie Milner. He is a freshman, but he has a lot of potential; he just has to work hard."

Nobles said his group has been working on their hand skills.

"We need to be violent with our hands to push up front and find the football and make plays," he said, adding that he is looking at the first game of the season against Liberty County to set the tone for the remainder of the year. "That's our kickoff game for the season. We have a scrimmage game to fine-tune things, but Liberty is going to be a big deal for us. We are going to try and smash them in the mouth, and hopefully that can drive us through this tough region by beating them out of the gate."

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2014 TIGERS GOACHES



Left to right: Joseph Smiley, Duane Johnson David NeSmith, DaBrent Nobles, Leonard Hall, Greg Hill, Chris Johnson, Franklin Akin, Chris Shutts, Ross Couch, Derek Sills



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Tigers look to secure QB, adjust to different scheme

By PATTY LEON

pleon@coastalcourier.com

Under former head coach Adam Carter, the Bradwell Institute Tigers started to develop more of a balanced offense last season that included a much-improved passing game. It helped, of course, that former quarterback La-Baron Anthony already had spent three years in the varsity system and had a talented arm.

Anthony played in all 10 games last year, completing 73 of 134 attempted passes for 682 yards and two touchdowns.

This year, new head coach Greg Hill said his base offense means the kids competing for the starting quarterback job will need to be just as talented.

"We will have an option look," he said. "I don't know how far along we will get with it. We may stay really primitive with it right now as we grow and mature in the quarterback position. We plan to bring them along slowly and not put too much on their shoulders at the start."

According to offensive coordinator David NeSmith, Duane Johnson and Evan Crystal are the top two competitors. Stephen Felton was in the mix earlier in the summer, and Hill said the slot is still wide open.

"They are still competing, and we will not name a starter until the end of camp, but I think competition is good. ... All the players in that spot are competing against each other, and that is what we want because it brings out the best in them," Hill said. "We will keep working all of them as if they are all the starters."

NeSmith said the Tigers' offense will be multifaceted.

"We do a little bit of everything," he said. "We run the option; we run the power plays and the wing-T — a little bit of everything."

NeSmith said that will give opposing defenses a fit. It will force opposing defenses to shift quickly into a new coverage, which likely will confuse the players and give the Tigers' offense an advantage.

"It's a diverse offense, but it is still power football, and it's still about being able to block and execute and run the right track and being precise in what we are doing," he said.

NeSmith offered a little hint on who might step up as the new starting quarterback.

"There is still a battle going on, but right now, Duane Johnson has the edge," he said. "He's had a little bit more experience and got the most reps. Evan Crystal has also come along. He is starting to feel better and more



assistant coach Leonard Hall, kneeling, and head coach Greg Hill, right, work with the quarterbacks during a recent workout. **Bradwell** will have to replace QB LeBaron Anthony, who graduated in the spring.

Patty Leon

comfortable in what he is doing. ... Both of them have gotten better during the course of the summer. ... We've been able to complete some passes here and there. We still have to work on it, but we are getting there, and the kids are starting to see it."

Johnson, an incoming junior, was the junior varsity quarterback last year and Anthony's backup on the varsity squad. He saw action in three varsity games, where he was a perfect 4 for 4 for 17 yards.

Crystal is an incoming sophomore this year.

Offensive line

Meanwhile, Hill said the offensive line is young with only two returning starters from last season: seniors Kendrick Harris-Bennett and Daylan Baker.

"Daylan Baker and Kendrick have improved tremendously as football players," offensive line assistant coach Franklin Akin said. "They helped us out a lot last year, but they are much better players this year."

"The rest are young guys with no gametime experience, so we are looking to create some depth up front," Hill added. "At the same time, we are looking for some guys to step up and be starters."

NeSmith said he has seen vast improvements in Harris-Bennett and Baker. He added that Baker had a minor setback, which will keep him out for a few weeks, but otherwise looks strong.

NeSmith also mentioned Nathan Wal-

lace, Jarvis Payton, Rashawn Berry and center Shawn Strickland as players to watch on the line.

"Rashwan Berry improves every week in practice to the point where he may have worked himself into a starting position," Akin said. "He also has the ability to play every position on the line."

Playoff motivation

Akin said the majority of the returning players on offense have really bought into the program this year.

"There are a lot of players who have come back this year who have had time to digest the end of the season last year," he said. "They realize they left the playoffs on the 8-yard line at Effingham County. Those players that have come back have come in with a bad taste in their mouth because they want the playoffs and they realize it was right there. ... We let it slip through our fingers. They want more."

"We want them to play hard all the way to the whistle," NeSmith added. "They have really picked it up the last couple of days. We are getting a little more aggressive; we are getting physical. We aren't completely there yet, but we are getting there. I am seeing that these kids want to keep fighting."

Running backs

Developing a solid line up front is necessary to give the running backs the openings they need when the Tigers opt to run the ball.

Last year, the main rushers were seniors and since have graduated.

Running backs and special-teams coordinator Ross Couch said he has some viable candidates to run the ball.

"Stephen Felton, Leonard Jackson, DeAngleo Smith and Luther Echols are going to be solid," Couch said. "They are high intensity, strong, quick and very coachable."

Echols shined during his freshman year, leading the team in rushing yards under former head coach Jim Walsh Jr. Last year, Echols only saw action in one game while healing a broken ankle for the rest of the season.

Smith had 14 carries for 65 yards and one touchdown last season. Felton and Jackson both saw limited action on varsity last year.

Anticipate seeing sophomore Terrius Crimiel play both ways this year. Last year as a freshman, he rushed for 66 yards and one touchdown on 14 carries, caught a 13-yard pass and tallied 26 tackles for the defense.

Offensive scheme

The coaches said the biggest adjustment for the players is learning the new system.

"Our returning seniors have some experience, but what they've done in the past and (what) we are planning on doing this year are completely different," NeSmith said.

"From what I've seen, they were more of a zone team last year," Couch added. "We are more of an attack-first team. They will have both hands in the dirt, and we will need to be more physical. We will be trying to run the ball straight at people. We are trying to control the clock, control the ball and keep it as much as possible.

"As far as scheme goes, it is a lot of learning in a short amount of time. ... The system we run is not easy to learn, but the guys are trying to stay focused," Couch continued. "They are asking good questions, and they are working hard and doing the best they can. They are doing a great job of listening to what we are saying, taking our coaching and applying it to what they do."

Receivers

The Tigers will return their leading receiver, incoming junior Deion Stewart.

"Stewart is the man on the perimeter this year," wide receivers coach Duane Johnson said. "He has the body and all the tools we are looking for. ... We are running a lot of the same routes from last year, so they are getting better at the routes. He can put up some big numbers; he has all the tools that a quality receiver need."

Johnson said another junior, James Rose, is developing as well.

Bradwell to see new talent in region play

By PATTY LEON

pleon@coastalcourier.com

With a new head coach and new Region 3-AAAAA opponents, the Bradwell Institute Tigers are looking forward to the upcoming football season. Here is a quick breakdown of the 2014 lineup as listed in maxpreps.com and ga.prepcountry.com.

Aug. 15 at Toombs County (preseason scrimmage)

Editor's note: Due to early publication deadlines, this preview was written before the preseason scrimmage.

Although preseason games primarily are useful tools in helping the coaching staff determine where their teams are at, it is still a game that coaches wish to win. The scrimmage in Lyons pits the Tigers against an unknown variable in the Bulldogs. The Tigers are 4-4-1 in the series against the Bulldogs in games that took place from 1954-67. Nearly 50 years later, the two teams will meet on the gridiron once again.

Both teams are ushering in new head coaches. Former Richmond Hill football coach Lyman Guy is now the head coach and athletic director at Toombs. In 2013, he guided the Wildcats to their best season to date at 10-2, including a second-round run at the state playoffs. Guy replaced Robert Verspille, who was dismissed after one season amid allegations of misconduct.

Last year, the Bulldogs finished 4-6 overall, as did the Tigers under former coach Adam Carter. New Bradwell coach Greg Hill has a slew of returning players that while young last season, still broke the .500 mark.

Aug. 29 vs. Liberty County High School

If you expect to get a seat, you better buy your tickets to this game now. The in-county rivalry is the talk of the community weeks ahead of kickoff. Bradwell held the crown and completely dominated Liberty in games from 2001-04. The games were halted in 2005 due to security issues and rambunctious fans. Later, the two schools were allowed to scrimmage each other.

Then in 2012, the rivalry was revived as the games were placed on the regular-season schedule. That year, the Bradwell fans were celebrating the newly renovated Olvey Field, and the Panthers opened up the game with a 90-plus-yard kick return for a touchdown and the ultimate 13-7 win.

Last year, the Panthers followed up with a 35-17 win at Donell Woods Stadium.

The Panthers rushed for 290 yards and passed for 60 against the Tigers last year. They also had a 33-yard interception. The Tigers had 81 passing yards and rushed for 152 yards, but three critical fumbles led to their

However, the Tigers are still ahead, 11-3, in the series in regular games recorded from 1994-2013. In 1970 and '71, Bradwell went 2-0 against the old Liberty County High.

Sept. 5 at Calvary Day

This is another game that has unknown variables. It appears that the Tigers and the Cavaliers never have met on the gridiron.

According to maxpreps.com, the Cava-

liers had a spectacular 11-3 overall season last year, albeit in the Region 3A-A private class. This year, the Cavaliers are moving to Region 3-A. Their coach, Mark Stroud, has guided the Cavaliers since 2008 and currently holds a 46-22 overall mark for the team.

Sept. 12 vs. Richmond Hill*

Despite being from neighboring counties, Bradwell and Richmond Hill didn't meet on the football field

until 2012. The Wildcats since have gone 2-0, outscoring the Tigers, 77-14. This game will be the Region 3-AAAAA opener, which ups the ante for their competition this season.

Since Lyman Guy left to be the new head coach at Toombs, the Wildcats tapped assistant coach Josh Eads as the new head coach this season. He served as the offensive assistant under Guy.

Last year, the Wildcats were 10-2 and lost in the second round of the state playoffs.

Their big loss was quarterback Nick Fitzgerald who completed 33 of 78 attempted passes for 671 yards and 11 touchdowns in his senior year. Fitzgerald also rushed for 1,517 yards on 178 carries for another 25 touchdowns. It's unknown whether the Wildcats will go with Troy Fortson or Xavier BryantLong at the QB spot.

Should Ronnie Harris return, the Panthers will need to contain him as well. He rushed for 668 yards and six touchdowns on 85 car-

AJ Vandergrift and Tommy Washington could cause problems for BI's offense. Vandergrift netted 70 tackles and 2.5 sacks last year. Washington had 65 tackles for the season.

Sept. 26 at Ware County*

The Gators have dominated the Tigers in the past two outings, outscoring Bradwell, 87-6. The Waycross team, coached by Ed Dudley, went all the way to the third round of the state playoffs last year, capping off an 11-2 season and staying undefeated in Region 3-AAAAA at 7-0. But the Gators lost five

> starters from their offensive line, both of their veteran quarterbacks and a few of their key defensive players.

According to the Georgia High School Football Historians Association, the Ga-

tors are 6-4 in the series, which stretches back to 1972.

Oct. 3 vs. Glynn

Academy*

GHSFHA, the Tigers

and the Red Terrors

have played each

other every year with

According to the

NOTES

• Home games, in bold, will be played at Olvey Field.

Bradwell Institute Tigers

2014 football schedule

Aug. 29 vs. Liberty County High School

Sept. 5 at Calvary Day

Sept. 12 vs. Richmond Hill*

Oct. 3 vs. Glynn Academy*

Oct. 24 at South Effingham*

Oct. 10 at Effingham County*

Sept. 26 at Ware County*

Oct. 17 vs. Statesboro*

Oct. 31 vs. Brunswick*

Nov. 7 at Coffee*

- *Denotes region game.

All games start at 7:30 p.m. Friday.

the exception of the 1987 season. Dating back to 1978, the Tigers are 19-17 against Glynn Academy. But the Glynn team leads the series, 7-5, since 2001.

Oct. 10 at Effingham County*

The Rebels made it to the first round of the playoffs last season before falling to Lee County, 28-6. Coach Buddy Holder guided the Springfield team to a 6-5 overall record. The Tigers played the Rebels in 2002 and '03 and won both games. In 2012 and '13, it was the Rebels' turn to take the victories, tying the

Effingham has key players returning to the offense in running back Nieem Bartley and main wide receiver Ashton King. The Rebels moved former quarterback Kemuan Tillman

out to the wide receiver spot and have two incoming juniors who display talent in the skilled position in Phillip Brown and Jake Dangerfield.

Oct. 17 vs. Statesboro*

The Blue Devils went 10-2 last season, falling in the second round of the state playoffs. But this year, they are rebuilding a team that has lost their two-year starting quarterback, three of their top defenders and their best rushers to graduation. Coach Steve Pennington described his team as young, and many incoming juniors, sophomores, and few select freshmen will be tapped to fill big voids this

Oct. 24 at South Effingham*

The Mustangs went 5-5 last year. Expect the return of starting quarterback Tyler Pullum, who played in all 10 games as a sophomore last season. He completed 126 of 213 passes for 1,667 yards and 10 touchdowns. Mustangs running back Patrick Brown also was a sophomore last year when he rushed for 1,013 yards and 11 touchdowns on 166

The Mustangs had a balanced attack last year, and Hill will look to employ the tripleoption offense to keep them off balance.

According to the GHSFHA, the last two times the Tigers played the Mustangs were in 1996 and '97; the Tigers won both games.

Oct. 31 vs. Brunswick*

The Pirates and the Tigers have seen action against each other since 1978, although not in consecutive seasons. According to ga.prepcountry.com, the Tigers are 3-2 against the Pirates from 2001-05. The Pirates struggled last year, posting a 3-7 overall record.

Nov. 7 at Coffee High School*

According to the GHSFHA, the Tigers are 1-7 against Coffee from 1980-2007. The Trojans went 5-5 overall and 1-5 in Region 1-AAAAAA last season.

This season, the Trojans join the Tigers' region. Coffee was able to secure some solid wins against solid teams last season, including Ware County, Burke County, Whitewater, Mundy's Mill and Valdosta. While the Trojans will lose nearly all their starting offensive linemen, they played with quarterbacks who will be returning seniors and sophomores this year. They also anticipate the return of Chris Swinson, who rushed well last season.

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FPCA HIGHLANDERS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2014

2014 HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PREVIEW

PACE (

Eager, young team shows determination

FPCA coaches excited about players' positive attitudes

By PATTY LEON

pleon@coastalcourier.com

Second-year head coach Jamie Sharp is ready for First Presbyterian Christian Academy's third football season to begin. Once again, he knows he will contend with a small roster, but he said the players and the addition of a few assistant coaches have generated an exuberant feeling about the upcoming games.

FPCA offensive coordinator Michael "Ice" Jones and defensive coordinator James Sharp Sr. are returning to help coach the team. Two former coaches from Faith Baptist Christian Academy in Ludowici, Terry Middleton and William Herdman, will debut as assistant coaches for the Highlanders. Also joining the staff as an assistant is John Blocker, who has coached football for the Liberty County Recreation Department for the past three years.

The Highlanders will have to do without starting quarterback Domonique Kirkley, all-around players Ahman Muhammad and James Moon and kicker Dylan McGarry, all of whom graduated. They also lost standout athletes George Mitchell and D'Angelo Streeter mid-season last year due to transfers/ family moves, but the younger players and the true spirit of the team forged ahead to finish the season.

This year, the team is still small in numbers and young in age, but the determination is apparent to the head coach and his staff. The incoming group of sophomores and new freshmen are the keys to the team's future, and they are willing and ready to stick it out for the long haul.

"Every sophomore that is out here now was playing on the line last year as freshmen," Jones said. "They played every game and they never quit. ... Now they are 10 pounds heavier and 20 pounders stronger, so they know what they are doing. They know what they want this year."

The Highlanders have a record of 0-20 after going winless in their first two seasons. The program had some stiff competition against well-established teams. The Highlanders knew they would take their licks, but they all have toughed it out. They're expecting their first win to come this season, and they have hopes beyond that as well.

"I would like to at least hit a .500 season. ... To win one game is a blessing, but if we can get to .500, it would be a real gift," Jones said. "All these young players have told us they are committed to being here in the future, meaning that by the time



Patty Leon

Despite a small, young roster, the Highlanders — including Jameson Golston, pictured above — are showing plenty of determination and enthusiasm this season.

they get to their senior year, this team will be unstoppable. They have already said they are willing to take all their bumps and bruises because they know, in time, they are going to make a difference."

The head coach agreed, adding that while the younger players still have to develop better football IQs, the returning Highlanders have plenty of live-action experience.

"These kids have experience at a young age. ... A lot of

freshmen don't get the opportunity to play varsity football ... so for them, last year was an eye-opening experience," Sharp said. "They've come back smarter and they've been trying to get better, sometimes without the coaches' influence. The biggest asset of having these younger guys come back is the fact that they have nine or 10 varsity games under their belt, something most freshmen will not experience for two to three years."

The head coach said that the younger players' decisions to return, knowing in advance it would be a small team and a tough road ahead, have inspired the coaches to do the best they can in preparing the players for the season ahead.

"They've come back and still want to play despite our small numbers. ... That is probably the most exciting thing I've seen all summer," he said.

And Sharp isn't the only coach who is excited about the upcoming season.

Middleton, who served as the head coach at Faith Baptist Christian Academy last year, said he had met with the FPCA head coach and they began discussing football.

"I like the camaraderie. ... There is a good atmosphere here and a lot of good people," Middleton said, adding that when Sharp asked him to join the FPCA staff, he felt good about accepting the invitation. "The kids have good attitudes and are very receptive to everything we've got going on."

Middleton, who works with the quarterbacks and wide receivers, is learning the system just like the players are. He said he likes what he sees.

"This is a great foundation. ... This program is only two years old, and we have a bunch of young guys here. ... We are overloaded with freshmen and sophomores, only a couple of juniors, and when you talk about senior leadership, it's maybe one or two kids," Middleton said, noting another observation. "Looking at it from this standpoint, we are going to win some games this year."

"What I like the most about these younger players is that they seem to be taking it all in — just like a sponge," Blocker added. "Everything we've been dishing out to them, they've been soaking it all in and turning around and putting it into action as soon as possible. They are young, but they are eager."

Herdman, who previously coached at Faith Baptist, said his old program is just now transitioning from eight-man football to 11-man football.

"It is exciting to be working with an 11-man program. The weakness right now is just overall football IQ," Herdman said about the Highlanders. "You can tell it's a new program ... but the athleticism is here, and they just need to get the reps in and do the work."

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REFRESHMENTS WILL ALSO BE AVAILABLE

FPCA to face new opponents, maintain simple schemes

By PATTY LEON

pleon@coastalcourier.com

There are several new teams on First Presbyterian Christian Academy's schedule this season, and second-year head coach Jamie Sharp said some of it was intentional plan-

Gone from the schedule are Bethesda, St. Andrews, Curtis Baptist, Frederica Academy and Fullington Academy. Those teams were replaced this season with Bulloch Academy, Briarwood Academy, Georgia Christian, Pinewood Christian and Southwest Georgia

Familiar opponents this year are Region 2-AA foes Memorial Day, David Emanuel Academy and Robert Toombs Christian Academy. FPCA also will play Crisp Academy again this season in a non-region contest.

"Some of it had to do with the region changes, but it was also about seeing different opponents," Sharp said about this year's schedule. "We saw good teams last year, and we played teams we had the ability to beat. This year, we have a different schedule, still against talented teams, but with a different schedule, you get different looks on defense and offense. So we will not be expecting the same looks, and it allows us to stay on our toes and learn even more."

FPCA has young players, many with varsity experience from last year, but young nonetheless, and the Highlanders will be comprised of several freshmen and sophomores this season. Teaching the fundamentals and keeping things simple will be the best way for the squad to approach the season, according to the coaching staff.

"It's going to be a whole different thing this year," defensive coordinator James Sharp Sr. said. "These kids have really gotten into the program, and you will see that on defense. We are going to start off with a 4-3 and work ourselves into the 3-4 at times. It's about keeping it simple, easy, fundamentally sound, and that will help them play well and still enjoy

Defensive line coach John Blocker said starting with the 4-3 is conducive to the personnel on the field.

"The 4-3 defense deals with basic steps, basic slants and pitch moves," he said, adding that it will just take some time to get the players used to each other and playing off of each other's energy. "We are getting the fundamentals down first — footwork, assignments

FPCA Highlanders 2014 football schedule

Aug. 22 at Bulloch Academy Aug. 29 at Briarwood Academy Sept. 12 vs. Georgia Christian Sept. 19 vs. Pinewood Christian Sept. 26 vs. Crisp Academy

Oct. 3 vs. Southwest Georgia Academy Oct. 17 vs. Memorial Day*

Oct. 24 at Toombs Christian Academy* Oct. 31 at David Emanuel Academy*

NOTES

- All games start at 7:30 p.m. Friday.
- Home games, in bold, will be played at Long Bell Stadium.
- *Denotes region game.

—then we can start to move on from there." Blocker said the defensive and offensive lines, much like the entire team, will play iron-man football.

"The lines have strength," he added. "They are in the weight room every day, and they are getting stronger and faster. The only weakness that we have is inexperience. But they just need to learn how to play together as a unit and they will be OK."

William Herdman, who coached at Faith Baptist Christian Academy last season, recently joined the FPCA staff. He said he's been working with the defensive corners and safeties.

"My main objective with the corners is to make sure they are physical," he said. "I don't like the wide receivers to get off free, and I don't like timing routes. If we can knock the receivers out of their timing routes, then the defensive linemen will have time to create all kinds of chaos in the backfield."

Meanwhile, the head coach said he is eager to see how several of his players have developed on the field since last season.

"We are probably more versatile, more athletic and deeper in positions than we were last year," Sharp said. "I will have a couple of running backs to draw from, a deeper receiving corps than I had. ... I am excited."

Last year, the offense was led by senior quarterback Domonique Kirkley. He was the first and only quarterback the Highlanders could draw from after D'Angelo Streeter moved away from the area mid-season.

"We will be a two-quarterback system this year," Sharp said. "Bolan Crane is a junior, and Dylan Stewart is a sophomore."





Junior Bolan Crane, left, and sophomore Dylan Stewart, right, will be part of the Highlanders' two-quarterback system this season.

Offensive coordinator Michael "Ice" Jones said Stewart is a recent transfer student from Long County and that Crane has a great arm.

"Both are outstanding, so we are ahead of that curve right now," he said of the dueling quarterbacks.

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Jones said he plans to keep the offensive scheme simple.

"We will be primarily a spread offense running out of the I-formation, but we also have the pistol and veer package we can implement," he said.



FPCA's schedule includes several new matchups

By PATTY LEON

pleon@coastalcourier.com

The First Presbyterian Christian Academy football team opens its third season with a busy schedule and another small roster, so expect to see a lot of iron-man play. As the Highlanders seek that elusive first win, here is a quick preview of their 2014 opponents.

Aug. 22 at Bulloch Academy

This will be the first matchup between the Highlanders and the Gators. Bulloch went 3-7 last year but had strong wins against St. Andrews (45-0), Bethesda (34-0) and Trinity Christian (14-9). Last year, the Highlanders fell in close games to St. Andrews (36-20) and Bethesda (48-21).

Aug. 29 at Briarwood Academy

Briarwood is another newcomer to FP-CA's schedule. The Buccaneers did extremely well last season, finishing 6-5 overall and 3-2 in Region 2-A of the Georgia Independent School Association.

Sept. 12 vs. Georgia Christian

The Generals are expected to experience growing pains as they relaunch their football program after a 46-year hiatus. Much like the Highlanders, they have a small roster and will have to adapt to continuous changes should injuries or illnesses occur. However, the Generals stem from Valdosta, an area with a rich tradition in winning football games and a wealthy pool of talented prospects.

Sept. 19 vs. Pinewood Christian

The Patriots from Bellville went 6-4-1 last year, and based on stats posted on maxpreps.com, they posted some impressive numbers. Last year, the Patriots were led by senior quarterback Dalton Johnson, who completed 99 of 173 passing attempts for 1,532 yards and 18 touchdowns. The Patriots now have big shoes to fill at the quarterback position, but backup quarterback Brenley Hagan is expected to return as a senior this year. He completed 3 of 10 passing attempts for 15 yards and a touchdown last season. More importantly, he showed his ability to run with the ball, rushing for 106 yards and two touchdowns on 18 carries. Hagan also played defense, leading the team in tackles with 61. Also expected to return is rusher Preston Campbell, an incoming junior who



Patty Lec

The FPCA Highlanders run a defensive drill during a recent workout. Because of their small roster, some of the players will see time on both offense and defense.

rushed for 586 yards on 136 carries and four touchdowns last season. If receiver Josh Barnard returns, he likely will be the Patriots go-to guy in the air. He had 24 receptions last season, good for 454 yards and seven touchdowns. John Michael Thompson is another threat with 10 receptions for 127 yards and two touchdowns last season as a sophomore. It's the first time the Highlanders will play the Patriots on the football field.

Sept. 26 vs. Crisp Academy

The Wildcats are 2-0 against the Highlanders, outscoring them 106-28. The team from Cordele went 6-5 last year and was 2-2 in Region 2-A of the GISA. FPCA and Crisp were in the same region last season; however, FPCA moved to Region 2-AA this season, along with Memorial Day, Toombs Christian Academy and David Emanuel Academy.

Oct. 3 vs. Southwest Georgia Academy Southwest Georgia Academy is another

new addition to FPCA's schedule this year. The Warriors, who went 6-6 last year, were four players deep at the quarterback position. Leading the pack was sophomore Quinton LaGuardia, who completed 18 of 45 passing attempts for 270 yards and five touchdowns in seven games. The Warriors excelled at the run, amassing 2,410 yards on 497 carries. If Perry Bridges returns, the incoming senior needs to be stopped in his tracks. He rushed for 651 yards and eight touchdowns.

Oct. 17 vs. Memorial Day*

The Blue Thunder Matadors were last season's state champions. They finished the year at 12-1 despite a roster of only 22 players. But the team has lost its starting quarterback to graduation and will have to make do without its top two rushers. In fact, the Matadors lost nearly all their starters last season. There are only a handful of juniors expected to return, and the rest of the team will be fielded by underclassmen. But the team has yet to have a losing season under Michael

Thompson, who took over as head coach in 2008. This matchup marks the opening of region play for the Highlanders.

Oct. 24 at Robert Toombs Christian Academy*

Coach Thomas Smith guided the Crusaders to a 10-3 season last year, including a 55-0 thumping over the Highlanders. The team from Lyons made it to the third round of the GISA state playoffs before losing to Curtis Baptist, 26-14.

Oct. 31 at David Emanuel Academy*

The Eagles are 2-0 against the Highlanders. Last year, the Highlanders fought hard but came up one touchdown short. The Eagles finished 6-6 last season and 4-2 in the region. They were knocked out of the playoffs in the first round by Frederica Academy, falling 45-14.

NOTE

* Denotes region game



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LCHS PANTHERS

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 20, 2014

2014 HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PREVIEW

PACE 1

Defense strong with youthful talent

By PATTY LEON

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Many would think that losing a five-star linebacker like Raekwon McMillan would cripple the Liberty County High School defense. While the coaching staff agrees those are some big shoes to fill, they have confidence in their returning defensive starters.

"You just don't replace a guy like Raekwon with just one kid ... and we also lost Jeremy Caldwell-Fabregas, another all-region player," linebackers coach Ryan Books said. "It takes a group of kids, and this year we have a pretty solid group."

But despite missing two of its star players, the team is ready to take advantage of its depth. Books said Jeremiah Gilbert and Tucker Lyda have earned the right to move up from the junior varsity team. Gilbert played in eight games last year, netting seven tackles and a sack.

Calvin Holmes is another returning player. He had 44 tackles in 17 games. Also returning is senior Joaquin Lemapu, who had 64 tackles and three sacks last year.

"We have some depth as a unit," Books said. "We have about 10 guys that we feel pretty good about as far as varsity and JV. We need to get bigger and develop speed ... but all the guys that are returning from last year like to hit and are physical guys."

Head coach Kirk Warner is confident in his young team as well.

"We will be young but talented on defense," he said. "Our secondary is still young, but when you consider we have Richard LeCounte back there — he is a young kid, but it seems like he's been playing for more than one year."

LeCounte caught the attention of several college scouts due to his performance on defense and special teams last year as a freshman. He has more than a dozen offers from Division I Bowl Championship Series teams.

"He's about 20 pounds bigger and will



Patty Leon

The Panthers will focus on their youthful talent and depth to replace star players Raekwon McMillan and Jeremy Caldwell-Fabregas, who graduated in the spring.

be much better this season," defensive coordinator Tony Glazer said. "He is faster, stronger and much more of a leader. Last year, he knew what his assignments were as a free safety. This year, I want him to know what everybody is doing so I can move him around a lot. We plan to use his talents as best we can. His job on defense will be to make plays."

Glazer said one of the defense's biggest strengths is at the front line.

"We have everyone from last year," defensive line coach Corbin Stripling said. "We are still really young, and we have some freshman coming up that might get some varsity time this year."

Glazer said returning starters include Jacari Roberts, DaShaun Hudson, A. J. Stewart and Brandon Course. And Stripling said he expects big things from Antonio Golden and Tremel Walthour.

"We have to work on some technique issues and fix them," Stripling said. "We went

from a four-point stance to a three-point stance, and getting those guys to where they swap hands every now and then is a lot for some of the kids. For the most part, we look pretty good because we are more experienced. ... We are hoping to really bring it this year, especially up front."

Warner said the defense will run a base

"We will be running the same defense that we've used the last six to seven years," Glazer added. "We base it all out of 4-4, and we run a lot of blitz packages out of it as well as a lot of multiple formations."

Warner said the Panthers' formations will depend on their opponents' tendencies.

"We will run some three-man front depending on the teams we play," the head coach said. "When you play a lot of spread teams, you can't keep eight in the box ... but that will be determined by the team we play from week to week."

Younger players step up to replace star graduates

By PATTY LEON

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After finishing at 8-3 overall and making their first trip to the postseason since 2009, the Liberty County High School Panthers are ready to hit the ground running in 2014. But the Panthers will have to perform without many of the key players who helped to move them into the first round of the playoffs last year.

The biggest loss is obvious. The Panthers will have to do without five-star linebacker Raekwon McMillan, who is slated to start as a freshman at Ohio State.

During his high school career, McMillan had 1,009 rushing yards off 141 carries, good for 17 touchdowns. He also made four receptions for 81 yards and two touchdowns.

But he shined twice as much on defense, where he tallied 456 tackles, 75 for loss of yards, as well as 16.5 sacks. McMillan also had 18 pancake blocks, hurried the quarter-back 24 times, had one interception for 31 yards, deflected five passes, recovered two fumbles for 63 yards and caused 10 fumbles

Linebacker Jeremy Caldwell-Fabregas also graduated after posting 107 tackles and seven sacks last year.

The team will have to make do without their former quarterback, Jordan Waters. Waters emerged as the starter in his junior year after seeing action in only two games as a sophomore. Waters completed 76 of 170 passing attempts for 1,313 career yards and 11 touchdowns.

The Panthers' leading rusher, Trentice Williams, also graduated after posting a season in which he rushed for 919 yards on 146 carries and scored nine touchdowns.

GRADUATES continues on 16

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Sophomore, 2 seniors compete for QB spot

By PATTY LEON

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The biggest question for the Liberty County High School Panthers is who will replace Jordan Waters as the team's starting quarterback

During spring training and summer conditioning, incoming sophomore Jaalon Frazier started to get a lot of attention from the coaching staff. At first, he was only competing with incoming senior Michael Moore for the quarterback position. But a few weeks ago, incoming senior quarterback Walker Franklin transferred to Liberty County High School and quickly added to the competition.

Earlier this summer, quarterbacks coach Julian Stokes said the competition between Moore and Frazier was very close.

"I really don't think we have our set starter yet," Stokes said. "They've both been working hard, and it should be an exciting season for both of them. They both have experience; they both know the offense. ... No matter which one we put in there, I feel we will be successful on offense."

Moore sustained a broken hand earlier this year, which hindered his spring training. But by summer, he was fighting back and giving Frazier a run for his money.

Meanwhile, Franklin played for Wayne County High School last season, primarily as a backup quarterback to Malique Jackson, who signed with Florida State. Franklin also played as a wide receiver.

Panthers offensive coordinator Ryan Glazer said he was immediately impressed with Franklin, who is now getting more reps in practice

"All three of them are competing. ... All three of them will probably play in the scrimmage, and we would like to have someone set in that spot by the first game of the season," Glazer said. "We told both the seniors that if



Sophomore quarterback Jaalon Frazier, running with the ball during a drill, is competing with seniors Michael Moore and Walker Franklin for the starting spot.

Patty Leon

they are not head and shoulders above what Jaalon is as a sophomore, then we would rather put Jaalon in and have him for three years. Right now, all three are working hard."

Running backs

Another big question regarding the Panthers' offense is who will emerge as the top running back. Last year, seniors Trentice Williams and Raekwon McMillan led the team's running game.

"We have JaMarcus Latson," Glazer said, adding that Latson's playing time was limited last year due to a slight injury.

The incoming senior was fifth on the team in rushing yards with 243 yards and two touchdowns on 30 carries.

"He has to have a big year for us at the running back position," head coach Kirk Warner said.

Glazer said Jacquez Williams and Tracy White both will play running back as well.

He added that incoming junior Jarquel Richardson is returning this season and has improved his speed vastly.

"Jarquel Richardson is one of the fastest guys we have," speed coach Nathan Mims said, adding that the team has used resistance training and different movements to improve the players' hip flexors and hamstrings. "The kids really don't know how to run, so we are trying to teach them the correct form through resistance, through plyometrics and through other means.

Offensive line

Warner and Glazer both agree the strength of this year's offense is the line.

"Those guys are seasoned veterans, and they've played a lot of football for us," Warner said. "They need to step up into the leadership role and carry this team as far as they can take us."

Offensive line coach Josh Davis said the line is more well rounded this season.

"We have four returning starters in Chandre Mells, (who) squats 500 pounds and will play left guard; DeVante Jerenigan is returning after an ankle injury; and Daylan and Dalton Bryant," he said. "There is still some competition at right tackle, but I think we have a good unit. The hogs have been working really hard this summer. This year, we are more of a complete unit. Last year, we had a couple of guys that really carried us, and this year there isn't really a weak link in that front line."

Receivers

The team lost most of its top receivers to graduation as well, but Warner said Gyri Durant is starting to step up as a wide receiver after catching four passes for 41 yards last season.

"He moved in kind of late, so he was behind the eight ball a little bit last year," the head coach said. "But once he learned our system, he led us in receptions in our playoff game, so we are expecting some big things out of him."

Jacquez Williams likely will be thrown in as a receiver, too, as he led the team in catches last year with 16 for 290 yards and a touchdown.

Versatile talent

The Panthers also have their all-around guy: multifaceted incoming sophomore Richard LeCounte, who caught the attention of several college scouts last season and has more than a dozen offers from Division I Bowl Championship Series teams. Offensively, LeCounterushed for 192 yards on 21 carries and caught 11 passes for 203 yards and two touchdowns.

Offensive scheme

The Panthers know what works well for them, which is why they're keeping their offensive scheme the same this season.

"We are going to be a base-spread team," Warner said. "We have a few athletes — we don't have a lot of depth — but we have our starting guys that can spread the field and cause some havoc.

"We will still jump into a power game when we need to. ... I like being able to jump into a power game if there is inclement weather or if things are not just going right," the head coach continued. "We will have our wishbone package, and we will have our spread-zone read package."

Glazer said there is no reason to change the scheme. The players know it and it is effective.

"This is my fifth year running the offense, (and) the yards and point totals have gone up every year, so we will keep doing what we've been doing," Glazer said.

GRADUATES

Continued from page 14

Other notable players who since have graduated include Jonathan Britton, who provided a big body with big hits on the line; Xavier Tunstall; and Freddie McSwain, who was a prolific receiver.

This year, the Panthers have a good balance of returning seniors, juniors and soph-

omores who are completely capable of picking up where they left off last year.

In speaking with the Panthers' coaching staff, certain names kept cropping up as players to watch.

Incoming senior JaMarcus Latson and junior JacQuez Williams are expected to make big plays on the ground for the Panthers' offense. Head coach Kirk Warner and offensive coordinator Ryan Glazer added that Gyri Durant and Chris Helvie will provide

some depth to the receiver corps.

The offensive and defensive lines will be strong with the return of Daylan and Dalton Bryant, Chandre Mells, Jacari Roberts, DeVante Jerenigan, A. J. Stewart, Brandon Course, Antonio Golden and DaShaun Hudson, according to Panthers defensive coordinator Tony Glazer.

Linebackers McMillan and Caldwell-Fabregas led the defense last year as seniors. This year's group, which features a wealth of

talented juniors, is led by senior linebacker Joaquin Lemapu, who also is the team's kicker. Jeremiah Gilbert will add to the linebackers corps, as will Calvin Holmes.

Meanwhile, Jarquel Richardson saw limited playing time last year but has improved his speed and skills since then.

And while McMillan was the man to watch last season, all eyes now will be on incoming sophomore Richard LeCounte, who already is receiving college offers.

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LCHS faces combo of old rivals, new opponents

By PATTY LEON

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The Liberty County High School Panthers have fewer Region 3-AAAA opponents to contend with this season. But they do face a few new teams in a busy schedule this year. Here is a quick breakdown of the 2014 lineup as listed in maxpreps.com and ga.prepcountry.com.

Aug. 15 vs. South Effingham (scrimmage)

Editor's note: Due to early publication deadlines, this preview was written before the preseason scrimmage.

The Panthers and the Mustangs have a long history, and right now, the Panthers are on the short end of the stick. Although the Panthers beat the Mustangs, 41-17, in Guyton last year, South Effingham leads the series, 8-2. The teams played each other from 2000-07 and then again in 2012 and 2013.

The Mustangs went 5-5 last year, while Panthers head coach Kirk Warner led his team to an 8-3 season that included a state playoff game. Both teams lost more than a dozen players each to graduation.

Aug. 22 vs. Effingham

The Rebels will arrive at Donell Woods Stadium for the Panthers' regular-season opener. Last year, coach Buddy Holder led the Rebels to a 6-5 season. Effingham has key players returning to the offense in running back Nieem Bartley and main wide receiver Ashton King. The Rebels are 4-2 against the Panthers, according to ga.prepcountry.com.

Aug. 29 at Bradwell

If you expect to get a seat, you better buy your tickets to this game now. The in-county rivalry is the talk of the community weeks ahead of kickoff. Bradwell held the crown and completely dominated Liberty in games from 2001-04. The games were halted in 2005 due to security issues and rambunctious fans. Later, the two schools were allowed to scrimmage each other.

Then in 2012, the rivalry was revived as the games were placed on the regular-season schedule. That year, the Bradwell fans were celebrating the newly renovated Olvey Field, and the Panthers opened up the game with a 90-plus-yard kick return for a touchdown and the ultimate 13-7 win.

Last year, the Panthers followed up with a 35-17 win at Donell Woods Stadium. The Panthers rushed for 290 yards and passed for



Patty Leon

The Panthers' offense works on a drill during a recent workout. The team will get to reignite some old rivalries this season while taking on a few new teams as well.

60 against the Tigers last year. They also had a 33-yard interception. The Tigers had 81 passing yards and rushed for 152 yards, but three critical fumbles led to their demise.

However, the Tigers are still ahead, 11-3, in the series in regular games recorded from 1994-2013. In 1970 and 1971, Bradwell went

2-0 against the old Liberty County High.

Sept. 5 at McIntosh County Academy

The Panthers and the Buccaneers faced off from 2002-11 with the exception of the 2006 season. In those nine matchups, the Panthers have won only twice. But this year, the Buccaneers are young. They lost their starting quarterback, a running back and three big receivers to graduation. Last season, MCA broke even with a 5-5 record overall.

Sept. 12 vs. Benedictine

The Panthers are 3-1 against the Cadets, but that was from 2004-07. Last year, the Cadets went 9-0 in Region 2-AA and made it all the way to the state semifinals before falling to

Lamar County High in a heated 10-7 loss.

The Cadets have returning quarterback Stevie Powers driving the offense. Last year, Powers completed 65 of 97 attempted passes for 1,500 yards and 16 touchdowns and threw six interceptions. Incoming senior Chance Jackson rushed for 785 yards and 18 touchdowns last season.

Sept. 20 at Monroe

(Albany)

went 6-5 overall last

year and were elimi-

nated in the first

round of the state

playoffs by Wayne

County High School.

The long bus trip to

Albany will give the

Panthers a taste of

what it is like to play

the caliber of teams

that come from the

northern part of the

state. The consensus

among the LCHS

coaching staff is that

this is one of three

opponents that likely

will give the Panthers

Tornadoes

Liberty County High School Panthers 2014 football schedule

Aug. 15 vs. South Effingham (scrimmage)
Aug. 22 vs. Effingham County High
Aug. 29 at Bradwell Institute

Sept. 5 at McIntosh County Academy

Sept. 12 vs. Benedictine

Sept. 20 at Monroe (Saturday game) Sept. 26 at Wayne County*

Oct. 10 at Burke County* Oct. 17 at Thomson*

Oct.24 vs. Windsor Forest* Nov. 7 vs. Richmond Hill

NOTES

- All games start at 7:30 p.m. Friday unless otherwise noted.
- Home games, in bold, will be played at Donell Woods Stadium.
- *Denotes region game.

a big challenge this year. It is the first time these two teams will play each other.

Sept. 26 at Wayne County*

The Panthers open Region 3-AAAA action

in Jesup against the Yellow Jackets. Wayne County went 11-3 overall last year and fell in the state semifinals to Griffin, 25-20. While the Panthers have a few wins against the Yellow Jackets, those were only scrimmages. During regular-season matchups, Wayne County has eked out four wins; the largest point differential was last years' 34-26 win over LCHS.

Oct. 10 at Burke County*

The Bears won a state title in 2011 and have returned to the playoffs every season since. The last time these two teams met in the regular season was in 2009, when the Panthers edged out a one-point win. The Bears are back in the Panthers' region, which should reignite the intense region rivalry that was developing between these two squads.

Oct. 17 at Thomson*

The Bulldogs are another team that the Panthers are all too familiar with. During the 2004, '05, '08 and '09 seasons, the teams were in the same region, and the Bulldogs finished 3-1 against the Panthers. But the Panthers have improved dramatically over the past four years, and Thomson finished 3-7 overall last year.

Oct. 24 vs. Windsor Forest*

The Knights dropped from Class 5A to join the Panthers' region, and it is the first time the Savannah team will play LCHS. While the Knights went winless last year, the team was primarily junior and sophomore heavy, meaning many starters will have more livegame experience this season. Quarterback Donovan Meekins is a versatile athlete and track standout who can tuck and run with great speed.

Nov. 7 vs. Richmond Hill

The Panthers will close the regular season in a non-region contest against a familiar foe in Richmond Hill. The Panthers are 8-3 against the Wildcats from 2001-11. However, the Wildcats flourished the past few years and finished 10-2 last season. They lost in the second round of the state playoffs. Their big loss was quarterback Nick Fitzgerald, who completed 33 of 78 attempted passes for 671 yards and 11 touchdowns in his senior year. Fitzgerald also rushed for 1,517 yards on 178 carries for another 25 touchdowns.

NOTE

* Denotes region game

2014 PANTHERS COACHES



JR McMahon (manager), Corbin Stripling (DL), Josh Davis (OL), Julian Stokes (QB), Ryan Glazer (OC and Assistant Head Coach), Kirk Warner (Head Coach), Tony Glazer (DC and DB's), Daryl McCulley (special teams and LB), Ryan Books (LB), Tony Bowden (manager), Nathan Mims (RB)









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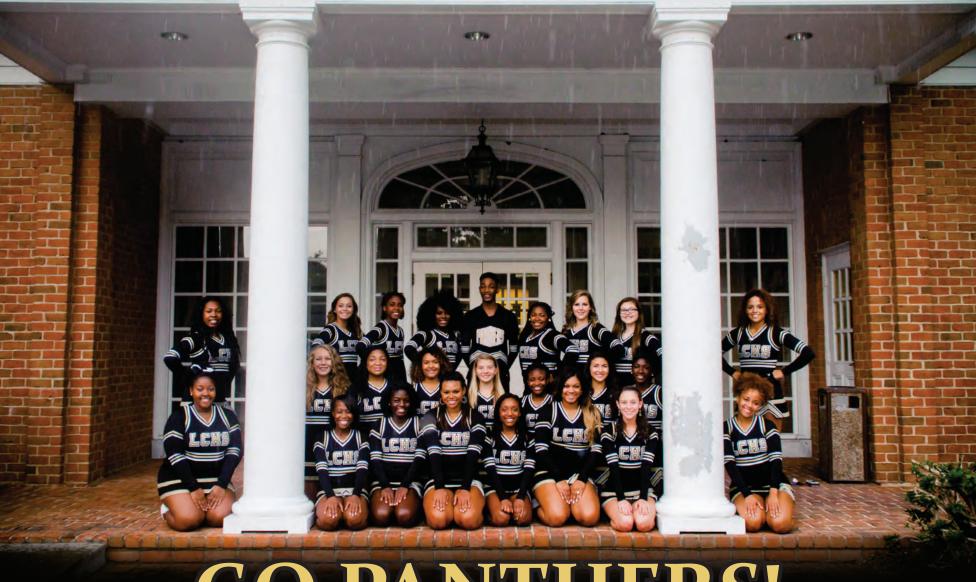
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