



Long County High School



2012 Football Preview

A supplement to the Coastal Courier



2012 BLUE TIDE COACHES



From left to right: Mitch Nobles, Tony Glazer, Eric McNair, Jerry Murray, Deshone Brock, Brian Todd, Head Coach - Ron Flott, and Jeremy Scott.

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Reclassification means new competition

Five teams move in to Region 2-AA; four teams depart

BY MIKE RIDDLE
Coastal Courier Correspondent

As a result of reclassification and its resulting region realignment throughout the state, the Long County football team will see several new teams on its schedule this season.

None of the teams joining Region 2-AA are considered easy to beat, but three of the departing teams — Appling County, Pierce County and Tattall County — dominated the region with a combined record of 18-3.

The other team that left Region 2-AA is Brantley County, which finished with a 1-6 region record last season.

Now that three of the top teams have left the region, it would appear that the region will be more competitive in 2012.

But the new teams entering the region — Bryan County, Metter, Atkinson County, Bacon County and the Benedictine Military Academy — are not pushovers and will be looking to prove themselves against their new competition.

Bryan County and Metter moved up from Region 3E-A, Atkinson County and Bacon County moved up from 2-A, and Benedictine dropped down from Region 2-AAAAA.

Long County never has played against Metter or Bacon, but the Blue Tide previously have taken on the other four teams.

Bryan County, however, is the only one Long County has played in recent years (2010 and 2011).

Long County last took on Benedictine in 2009 and hasn't played Atkinson since their single days in 2003.

With 10 teams in Region 2-AA, there won't be much time to prepare for region contests because each team has only one non-region game. Nine of 10 games are against region opponents.

The Region 2-AA lineup for the next two years

- Atkinson County Rebels
- Bacon County Red Raiders
- Benedictine Cadets
- Bryan County Redskins
- Jeff Davis Yellow Jackets
- Long County Blue Tide
- McIntosh County Academy Buccaneers
- Metter Tigers
- Toombs County Bulldogs
- Vidalia Indians

Credit: Georgia High School Association

Long County's first region opponent will come in Week 2 against the Benedictine Cadets in Savannah.

See a game by game breakdown of the 2012 football season on page 6.

FANS SPEAK OUT

"I plan on going to see them play, and I know that all of the team will play with a lot of heart, show good sportsmanship and have a real good season this year." — Jennifer Deen



"I think that all of their hard work over the summer — and even going back to last year — is going to pay off this year, and they're going to have a good season and do much better than they have in recent years." — Walt Pelton

"I hope they have a great season. I know they have been dedicated and practicing hard, and in this heat they have got to be tough to be able to stick it out." — Bevely Johnson



erly Johnson

"I know a lot of the seniors have been playing since they were freshmen and are beginning to mature. I think that maturity will result in a successful season." — Stephen Menges



"I wish the team all the luck in the world and hope that all of their hard work pays off with some wins this year." — Samantha Strickland



"I'm proud of all of the Blue Tide nation, the players, the cheerleaders, the band — everyone. I think this year is going to be a good one for them, and I look forward to watching them play." — Clifton DeLoach

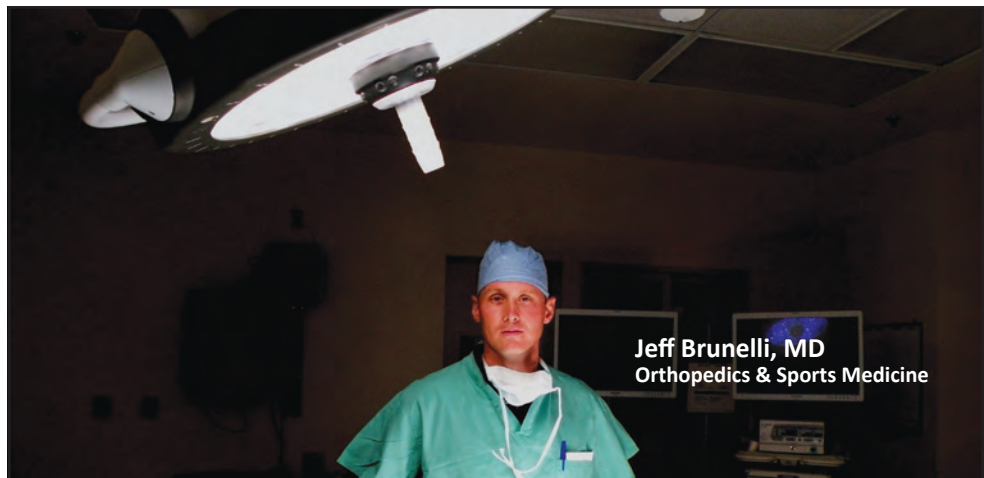


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Blue Tide look to improve wing-bone offense

BY MIKE RIDDLE

Coastal Courier Correspondent

The wing-bone offense was new for Long County in 2011. The Blue Tide previously used a pass-first spread attack, but then-new head coach Ron Flott and offensive coordinator Jeremy Scott wanted to shake things up with a much more conservative ground attack.

“We have some good depth at running back, so it fits the talent we have,” Flott said. “We also have been using it for a year now, so that definitely will help us.”

In the wing-bone offense, there are four potential runners in the backfield — two halfbacks, a fullback and the quarterback. When used effectively, it can take advantage of a defense that is inexperienced, undisciplined or weak in covering gap assignments.

It also can force the defense to pull its safeties and cornerbacks in tight to stop the run, which can open up the secondary for the offense to use a passing attack.

“It’s a good team-oriented offense, and we got four or five backs that we want to get the ball to, so it’s just a good offense for us since it affords us the

opportunity to get a lot of skill people on the field,” the head coach said.

Flott, now in his second season at LCHS, said he will depend on seniors Josh Berry, Fred Nelson, Deonte Ellis and Jallell Braggs as well as junior Vanda Varen to carry the ball this season.

Flott said he expects the passing attack to be effective as well. He added that quarterback Jacob Turner will throw to several wideouts, but Cody Fleck and Tristen Goodro will be two of the main targets.

For the wing-bone offense to work, the offensive line has to win the battle up front. Each blocker needs to be able to drive, trap and cross block effectively. Each blocker also needs to have good footwork and good upper body movement.

Flott said the line has improved after struggling at times last season.

“The depth of our offensive line right now—knock on wood — we are light years ahead of where we were last year,” the head coach said. “These kids have been working hard, and we’ve had good competition. I expect us to be vastly improved on the offensive line.”

Evan Strickland, T.J. Sims, Matt Holtz, Cody Smiley and Darius Francis are key players who will help anchor the line this season.



Patty Leon

Long County High School will count on senior quarterback Jacob Turner to help make the wing-bone offense go.

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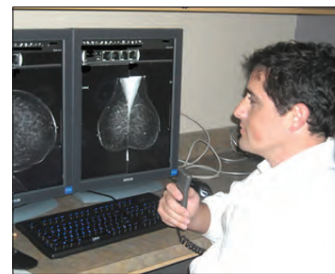
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Six seniors who need to play well for the Tide to succeed

BY MIKE RIDDLE
Coastal Courier Correspondent

Jeffery Hall, LB: Physically, Hall has it all — size, quickness, strength and leadership — and he's tough. College scouts were looking at him last year, and he will be the key player on defense this year. "He's been a good leader for us," head coach Ron Flott said. "He's motivated and has a great attitude. I expect him to have a breakout year for us."

Josh Berry, RB: Berry played in two games last season and was named the player of the week in one of those games. Imagine what he can do in an entire season. Berry has speed and strength, and he's hungry to have a good senior year. He will be one of

the premier running backs for the Blue Tide and also will see time at free safety. Berry is expected to play football in college as well. "Josh put in a lot of work over the summer — a lot of that time on his own," Flott said. "He's going to have a good year for us."

Jacob Turner, QB: Turner has matured into a fine quarterback. He also has added about 7 pounds of muscle, which will be seen primarily in his arm strength. "Jacob continues to be a great human being," Flott said. "He always says, 'Yes sir' and 'No sir,' and he leads others the right way. He is going to have a good year throwing and running the ball."

Luke Golden, TE—LB: Golden can do it all: He's big enough to block as a lineman and has the speed to go out for a pass like

a wide receiver. He probably has the best hands on the team and isn't afraid to go across the middle. He also can make the big stick at linebacker, so he can play on both sides of the ball. Throw in the fact that he is an ace in the classroom as well as on the baseball diamond, and you understand why colleges are looking at him hard this year. "Luke's coming back for us," Flott said. "I'll be using him in several positions — tight end and wideout, on defense as a linebacker and in the strong safety position."

Deonte Ellis, WR—CB: Can anyone say two-way starter? When you see Ellis, that's probably what you're going to see. He's capable of making the big plays on both sides of the ball — deep in the end zone on offense and in the secondary on defense. If the defense

is going to have a good year, Ellis will have to play big. "Deonte had some big plays for us last year, and I expect more big plays this year," Flott said. "He's a hard worker, and before it all is said and done, he may be a two-way starter."

Tyler Groover, C: On offense, it all starts with the snap of the ball, and Groover will be the center making those snaps. If the offense is going to roll in 2012, he has to be proficient with his snap, quick with his feet and able to get in good position to handle the rush. If the offensive line is going to be successful, it all starts with Groover. "Tyler is a tough guy who also has been a team leader," Flott said. "As the center, he is going to be critical to our success this year."

Week-by-week look at the Blue Tide's 2012 football schedule

Here's a week-by-week look at the Blue Tide's schedule.

Week 1 vs. Lanier County (6-4 in 2011): Long County opens its season at home against an opponent it hasn't played in almost 10 years. The Lanier County Bulldogs were among the teams Long County played in 2002 and 2003, when they were in the early stages of bringing back football to Ludowici. When they last met eight years ago, the Bulldogs won, 45-0. Series record: Lanier County leads, 2-0.

Week 2 vs. Benedictine Cadets at Savannah State College (5-6 in 2011): The Blue Tide will face a tough region opponent when they travel to Savannah to take on BC. The Cadets are coming off a fairly successful season in which they made the playoffs but were knocked out in the first round by the McEachern Indians. The Cadets left Region 3-A to drop down into 2-AA, and they will be looking to re-establish their once-dominant program with new head coach Danny Britt. The Blue Tide lost, 45-10, when they last played the Cadets three years ago. Series record: Benedictine leads, 2-0.

Week 3 vs. Vidalia High School (6-4 in 2011): When Vidalia comes to town Sept. 14, the traditional state powerhouse will be looking to return to the state rankings. The team joined 2-AA in 2009 and since then has accumulated a 9-5 region record. With the re-

alignment this year, the Indians are expected to be one of the top teams in the region when November rolls around. When the two teams met last year, the Indians easily beat the Blue Tide, 39-7. Series record: Vidalia leads, 2-0.

Week 4 at Atkinson County (1-9 in 2011): The Blue Tide will take on another old opponent when they travel to Pearson to play Atkinson County. The Rebels, who moved out of 2-A and up to 2-AA, want to show that they can play with a higher level of talent after winning one game last season. The last time the two teams played was in 2003, when the Rebels won, 49-7. Series record: Atkinson County leads, 2-0.

Week 5 vs. Bryan County (6-4 in 2011): Even though Bryan County is new to Region 2-AA, the teams are familiar with each other and are developing a rivalry. The Redskins won a 28-21 nail-biter last season. Series record: Bryan County leads, 5-3.

Week 6 at Bacon County (7-4 in 2011): When October rolls around, the Blue Tide will take on another tough, new opponent in Bacon County. The Red Raiders are coming off a winning season and a trip to the playoffs in 2011, followed by their move to Region 2-AA. They have a solid program under the leadership of head coach Bobby Johns, and Bacon County will be looking to make an impression in its new region. Series record: 0-0.

Week 7: bye week.

Week 8 vs. Toombs County (2-8 in 2011): After a week of rest, Long County will play host to Toombs County. The Bulldogs joined 2-AA in 2009 and have had the Blue Tide's number since then. Toombs County has won both contests against Long County, but the games have been competitive and ultimately were decided by Blue Tide mistakes that led to Bulldogs points. When the two teams met last year, Toombs County won, 34-14, in a game that was closer than the score indicated. Series record: Toombs County leads, 2-0.

Week 9 at Jeff Davis County (4-7 in 2011): Long County will travel to Hazlehurst on Oct. 26 to take on a familiar foe in Jeff Davis County. The Blue Tide and the Yellow Jackets have had some memorable games in recent years, with each team getting their fair share of wins. In last year's matchup, Long County missed a point-after conversion that gave Jeff Davis a 21-20 victory. Series record: Tied, 2-2.

Week 10 vs. McIntosh County (4-7 in 2011): If there is one team that is looking to bounce back in 2012, it's McIntosh County. Despite backing into the playoffs with a losing record, the Buccaneers are coming off a subpar season. McIntosh County has been a thorn in the side of Long County. The Buccaneers beat the Blue Tide, 35-0, last season. Series record: McIntosh County leads, 8-0.

2012 SCHEDULE

Aug. 31 vs. Lanier County
Sept. 7 at Benedictine*
Sept. 14 vs. Vidalia*
Sept. 21 at Atkinson County*
Sept. 28 vs. Bryan County* (RN)
Oct. 5 at Bacon County*
Oct. 12 OPEN
Oct. 19 vs. Toombs County* (HC)
Oct. 26 at Jeff Davis County*
Nov. 2 vs. McIntosh County* (SN)
Nov. 9 at Metter High School*
Note: All games start at 7:30 p.m.
(* Region 2-AA games
(RN) Long County Recreation
Department Night
(HC) Homecoming
(SN) Senior Night

Week 11 at Metter High School (5-5 in 2011): Long County wraps up its regular season Nov. 9 on the road against the Metter Tigers. It will be the first matchup between the two teams, so both will be looking to set the tone for future years. The Tigers are moving up from Region 3E-A into 2-AA. The game could have playoff implications because it's the final region contest for each team. Series record: 0-0.

-by Mike Riddle



Patty Leon

Long County coach Ron Flott wants the team to play disciplined defense and focus on fundamentals. They'll also need to bring a mean streak to the table.

Blue Tide defense aims to focus on fundamentals in '12

BY MIKE RIDDLE
Coastal Courier Correspondent

The Blue Tide defense gave up an average of 33 points per game last season, which was the worst of any team in Region 2-AA.

Head coach Ron Flott said success on defense this season will require his team to be fundamentally sound.

"I don't care what you run; if you don't have good fundamentals, you're not going to be very good at it," he said. "Last year I assumed we knew more than we did, and I shouldn't have done that, so I take a lot of the responsibility for our defense last year. ... This year we backed up a bit and went back to the basics."

Flott again will use the 50 defense. The basic formation uses a nose guard in front of the center, two defensive backs on the offensive tackles or slightly to their inside, and two defensive ends who usually are lined up on the outside.

The primary goal is to set up a wall of defenders at the line of scrimmage in an attempt to stop the run.

With five men up front taking out the run, the secondary has to play smart and react quickly.

One of the biggest keys for the defense to

be successful is to keep the running backs from getting into the secondary. Defensive backs not only have to be able to tackle, but they also have to make sure that the plays stay in front of them.

The defensive line has to be able to make tackles at or behind the line of scrimmage but also be quick enough to help the secondary finish off the tackles when a runner makes it into the secondary.

The Blue Tide had some problems in the secondary last season. The team could play with an opponent for a certain period, but then one big play would change the game — a runner getting into the secondary and getting outside for a large chunk of yardage, or an offensive receiver getting behind a defender and making a big catch for a score.

For the Long County defense to be successful this season, Flott said the secondary must be disciplined and not get pulled in.

"Big plays are usually cutbacks and balls over the top," the head coach said. "Those guys in the back have got to be disciplined and not be drawn in going after a runner."

"I would like to (be able to) tell you something else, but it all comes down to fundamental football. ... But we're doing better, and we will be better this year on defense."

TGIF

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