



2026 McKenzie High School Rebels football team. Photos by Joel Washburn/The Banner

Hodge’s Rebels Lean on Experience, Consistency to Seek Another Deep Run

Coach Keith Hodge and the McKenzie Rebels are coming off another phenomenal season in 2025. The Rebels were the Class 1A runner-up with a 13-2 record.

Hodge spoke with The Banner just before the start of the 2026 campaign, reflecting on last year and looking forward to the opportunity for another deep playoff run.

He said, “I think the number one thing is, I’m super proud of the team we had last year. It always hurts to fall short, and there’s only going to be one team that doesn’t fall short. We were right there in the middle of it and went for our goal. We did a lot of good things last year that put us in that position to do that. Super proud of that senior group and their leadership and all the experience they gave. Those kids gave everything they have to McKenzie football. I’m proud of the whole team as a unit.

“When you head into a new season, you really have to reset. You really have to look at yourself and say, you’ve still got a bunch of kids back. So you do get to evaluate those kids and say, ‘what do we need to improve those kids?’ There were several things that I learned about us. I felt like we needed to hit the weight room a



Left, McKenzie High School football seniors (L to R) Front Row: Madelynn Pewitt and Brooke Murphy. Second Row: Lelan Gordon, Cole Brown, Avery Brown and Jacobi Melton. Back Row: Matteo Tabada, Aiden Essary and Aiden Orten. Above, McKenzie High School football Head Coach Keith Hodge.

little bit harder in the off-season and get bigger and get stronger. We kind of leaned on that a little bit to get us more physical. We feel like that’s helped us. We feel like going into the season that we are bigger, we are stronger. We feel like we’ve really hit the weight room hard, and the kids have bought into that and worked hard on it. “Attendance has been great. We’ve got kids there every single day, working hard and that’s what you’ve gotta have. Every season’s a little bit of a momentum builder. We built

some momentum last year and heading into this season, so we should have some confidence. I think that’s a big thing when you lose a big senior group, how confident your younger guys are, and I feel like right now there is some confidence there.

“We’ve got a lot of new faces out there starting, but a lot of familiar faces, too. So we’re going to lean on that. You’ve got to lean on your experience and develop your youth and get those guys ready to play.”

Hodge’s roster is a little

bit lighter at the top than in recent years, with just seven seniors suiting up. The coach spoke about leadership among his players.

“We felt like we really wanted to try to figure out how we can develop the right kind of leaders. That’s hard sometimes. Sometimes you have vocal leaders, sometimes you have mental leaders, sometimes you have weight room leaders. You’ve got to be able to use all those kids and try to put them in the best position possible in order for us to develop

leadership. I think that’s been another big key for us. How can we develop some leadership and lean on that, hold those guys accountable the best we can.

“We’ve got seniors coming back that have a ton of leadership qualities, that can lead this football team. They just have to take control of that and make it their own.

“And I feel like we have a lot of young leaders. We’ve got guys like Maddox Shiell that was a starter as a freshman. Hunter Winstead started every game last year and

helped us on defense too. So we’ve got some young guys that can lead also, they’ve just got to do it, and do it the right way. That’s going to be a big deal for us as we go down the stretch especially.

Offense

“We’ve got Cole Brown coming back at quarterback. That’s always a big deal when you have a returning quarterback that’s been in the system. He knows how we’re going to do things. He knows the offense backwards and forwards. Avery Brown and Jacobi Melton are back as our receivers. I think a big workhorse for us this year is going to be Jayden Callis. I think Jayden is going to be a very special runner this year that people are going to have their eye on, which might open up a lot of other areas for us.

Offensively, we’ve got a lot of good weapons in our classification. All those kids are back from last year. All those kids started last year. That’s a big deal for us.

“Lelan Gordon, he’s a heck of a football player that needs the ball in his hands also. Aiden Carrington is going to be a junior, and he’s got

See REBELS on Page 6

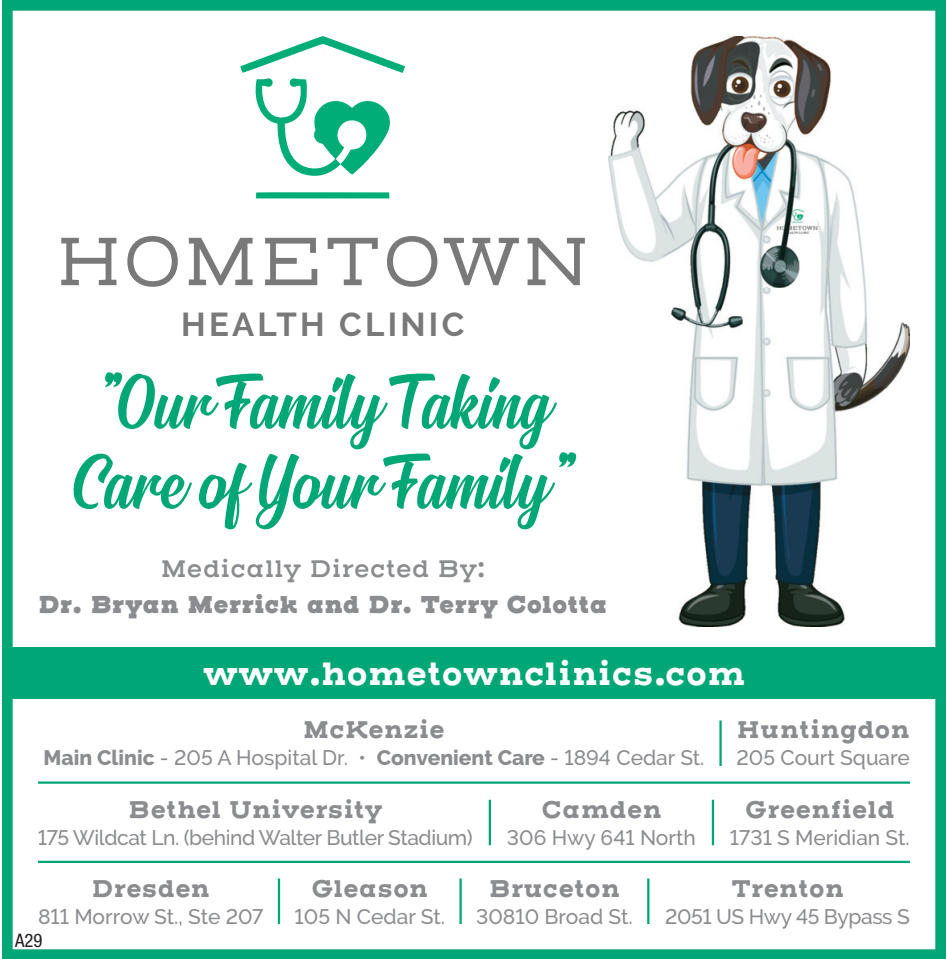


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McKenzie High School football managers (L to R) Kamyah Gordon, Sophie Cole and Kamdyn Tharpe.

2026 MHS Football Schedule

Aug. 21	@ Huntingdon	7 p.m.
Aug. 28	@ Dresden	7 p.m.
Sept. 4	Christian Co. Ky	7 p.m.
Sept. 11	Perry Co. *	7 p.m.
Sept. 18	@ Camden	7 p.m.
Sept. 25	Chester Co. HC	7 p.m.
Oct. 2	Collinwood *	7 p.m.
Oct. 9	HR-Bruceton * Sr	7 p.m.
Oct. 16	BYE	
Oct. 23	@ Wayne Co. *	7 p.m.
Oct. 29	@ McEwen *	7 p.m.

* Denotes Region Game / **HC** Homecoming / **Sr** Senior Night



Top, McKenzie High School cheerleaders (L to R) Front Row: Marlee Toombs, Brooke Murphy, Sami Mathis, Madelynn Pewitt and Olivia-Kay Pate. Second Row: Carleigh Lunn, Hadley Smith, Kinsley Wilson and Frannie Trout. Back Row: Addi Davis, Elle Hodge, Addison Milam, Lola Sumrok and Chloe Veliz. Above, McKenzie High School football coaches (L to R) Kentrell Diggs, Merritt Spence, Ben Hargett, Head Coach Keith Hodge, Trey Cantrell, Chris Wall and Austin Chapman. Not pictured are Tyler Reeder and Jacob Fussell. Photos by Joel Washburn/The Banner



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2026 McKenzie High School Football Roster

#	NAME	GR.	POS.	#	NAME	GR.	POS.	#	NAME	GR.	POS.
1	Parker Ross	So.	QB/WR/DB	19	Ryan Sherrod	So.	WR/DB	55	Jacion Townes	Jr.	OL/DL
2	Lelan Gordon	Sr.	TE/DB	20	Dawson Reeder	So.	TE/LB	56	McCoy Merrick	Fr.	LB/P
3	Cole Brown	Sr.	QB/LB/P	21	Malaki Harris	Jr.	WR/DB	57	Aiden Essary	Sr.	OL/DL
4	Lane Brown	Fr.	WR/DB	22	Alex Hughes	Jr.	RB/LB	61	Case Wall	Fr.	OL/DL
5	Aiden Orten	Sr.	WR/DB	24	Matteo Tabada	Sr.	RB/DB	62	Dallas Reed	So.	OL/DL
6	Seth Stafford	Fr.	QB/DB	25	Ryan McCann	Fr.	WR/DB	63	Bryson Hames	Jr.	OL/DL
7	Jacobi Melton	Sr.	WR/DB	27	Mason Searatt	Jr.	OL/DL	64	Parker Standridge	Fr.	OL/DL
8	Hudson Garrett	So.	WR/DB	28	Cayden Gordon	So.	TE/LB	65	Reid Warman	Fr.	OL/DL
9	Maddox Shiell	Jr.	TE/DL	30	Jayden Callis	Jr.	RB/LB	66	Hunter Shafer	So.	OL/DL
10	Aiden Carrington	Jr.	WR/LB	34	Jony Hernandez	Jr.	K	67	Kage Gwaltney	Fr.	OL/DL
11	Cooper Davidson	Jr.	TE/DL	36	Bryson Smith	So.	RB/LB	71	Kenneth Ellis	Jr.	OL/DL
12	Kason Brown	Jr.	WR/DB	40	Cooper Jones	Fr.	WR/DB	73	Javonte Piro	Fr.	OL/DL
13	Avery Brown	Sr.	WR/DB	43	Leighem Broyles	Fr.	TE/DL	75	Brenton Hickerson	Fr.	OL/DL
14	Jaden Blanton	So.	WR/DB	47	Jeremy Sims	Fr.	WR/DB	76	Ramon Vazquez	Jr.	OL/DL
15	Jake Ghyers	Fr.	RB/LB	50	Fisher Allen	Fr.	OL/LB	77	Hunter Winstead	Jr.	OL/DL
16	Jackson Barden	Fr.	WR/DB	51	Andres Hernandez	Fr.	K	78	Devin Dennie	So.	OL/DL
17	Dierks Ghyers	Fr.	WR/LB	52	Brayden Mort	So.	OL/DL	87	Jaibreon Horton	Fr.	WR/DB
18	Zayden Webb	Fr.	RB/LB	54	Ashli Winston	So.	OL/DL				

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Huntingdon High School football Head Coach Eric Swenson.

HHS Schedule

Aug. 21	McKenzie
Aug. 28	Camden
Sept. 4	Milan
Sept. 11	Halls HC
Sept. 18	@ JCM
Sept. 25	Gibson Co. Sr
Oct. 2	@ Riverside
Oct. 9	@ Harpeth
Oct. 16	BYE
Oct. 23	@ Peabody
Oct. 30	@ Union City

HC Homecoming / Sr Senior Night



Eric Swenson Wants Defending Champion Mustangs to ‘Stay Hungry’

HUNTINGDON — By any measure, the 2025 Huntingdon Mustangs made an indelible mark on the history of an already-storied football program and Head Coach Eric Swenson ascended to the heights of Huntingdon royalty by becoming the program’s all-time winningest coach and leading the squad to the school’s second state championship.

But Swenson, ever-humble and ever-focused, is aiming to keep his returning players and a large incoming freshmen class grounded and hungry for more success.

The coach spoke to The Banner before the start of the season. “The biggest thing you have to worry about when you win a state championship with a young team like we had is: Are they satisfied? Did they get totally satisfied last year? Because you can’t live off of last year. If you’ve got guys that are living off of last year, you’re gonna fail this year. They’ve got to stay hungry and try to get back to that again. That’s where you’ve just got to figure it out.”

The team lost eight players to graduation, a group Swenson praised for their great leadership. “Right now, we’re just trying to develop leadership in this group of [14] seniors. There’s a good number of them. There’s some athletes in that class, but we’re still trying to develop some leadership in that group.”

A big influx of freshmen (24) means a younger team with less experience, but Swenson is encouraged by the growth. “We knew coming in that there’s a good chance we’re going to have a big group, and that’s a good group of guys. They show up. They’re a really good group of kids, and that’s what you’ve got to have after last year, having only six come up. Your numbers bump up, and you’re having to buy equipment. That’s what you want. They’re a group of guys that just really love football. You can communicate with them. They’re personable kids. I think they’re going to be a really good group later on.”

Offense

“We’re still trying to develop some leadership on the offensive side of the football,” Swenson said. “We’ve got a bunch of those guys back. We didn’t lose many on the offensive line. The backfield should be strong with Hayes Eubanks, Colt Wood, K’Shun Carter and Kenton Smith, who was the MVP of the state championship game.



Top, 2026 Huntingdon High School Mustangs football team. Above Left, Huntingdon High School football seniors (L to R) Front Row: Taylor Jones, Nick Smith, Grant Wilson, Ashtyn Donald, Taylin Strayhorn and Kaden King. Back Row: Brayden Davis, Bryson Whiteside, Lucas Smith, Kenton Smith, Greyson Anderson, Zayden Connelly and Kylen Turner. Not pictured is Ethan Raffield. Above Right, Huntingdon High School cheerleaders (L to R) Front Row: Destiny Whitson, Aubrey McArthur, Madisyn Barton, Brylee Douglas and Greenlee Hilliard. Middle Row: Hailey Foster, McKinley Spellings, Harmony Webb, Katie Pratcher, Mary Cardon Smothers and Apryl Reindl. Back Row: Carlee Evans, Mia Villalobos, Ava Gordon, Brooklynn Brooks and Bryleigh Thorn. Photos by Joel Washburn/The Banner

“Our offensive line is back. Bryson Whiteside, Ashton Donald, Braden Davis. We’ve still got some dudes up there that can play. We’ve yet to find our gear though. I think we should be further along now than where we are. But the speed is there, the athleticism’s there. We’ve got the guys to be really good. We just need some leadership.”

Defense

“We lost a total of five starters off last year’s team,” said the coach. “They were five really, really good starters. But on the defensive side of the football, it’s the same thing. We’re still looking for leadership. We’re looking for some guys who want to take control of that side of the ball. It seems like that’s hard to find around here in the last few years. It’s hard to find kids who are willing to put themselves out there and be a leader, because that entails taking some stuff on. You’re going to upset some people. We really need that with this group.

“The secondary’s good, solid. Our linebackers are solid. The defensive line is thin, but the ones we can put up there are going to be good. So the tools are there. It’s just one of those years where you have to kind of figure out how to replace those five dudes that left. The locker room was always good. You’ve gotta replace those guys that were big time leaders. That’s tough. So we’re still trying to find ourselves that way.”

Special Teams

“It’s a weapon. The crazy thing is, there were years we had to find a kicker. We’ve got like two now that can bust it. It’s amazing. And we’ve got two freshmen coming up that are going to be good kickers. We’ve got a freshman punter that’s spinning the heck out of it. We’ve kind of turned into ‘Special Teams U’ around here. Coach [Ben] Carter does a good job with that. Greyson Anderson is a weapon. I really believe he’ll play college football. I’m hoping he can put it in the end zone 90 percent of the time. [Ethan] Raffield too. They’re just hard workers out here everyday, on time everyday. They go to camps, and they work on their craft. That’s why they’ve gotten so good.”

Region 7-2A

“Milan lost a lot of dudes, but Milan is Milan. This is exactly where they want to be. They’re in the boat we were in last year, kind of going under the radar. He’s got dudes; he’s gonna have athletes ev-

erywhere. They’re going to be well-coached, and they love football. They’re going to be dangerous. And they’re one of those kinds of teams, they’re going to be young starting the year off. But as the year goes on, they’re going to grow up, and they’re going to grow up fast. So I see them being a major player.

“I’m sure Trenton is going to be better. JCM’s going to be loaded from what I’ve understood.

It’s one of those regions where, it’s athletes. Athletic and Physical. And you’ve gotta make it through it.

“The non-region can be just as bad. Opening up with the state runner-up in 1A, McKenzie, they’re going to be an animal. Harpeth, don’t know much about them this year. I know their QB is back, and he’s a good football player. Camden is a traditional rival. And Riverside, who we went 7-on-7 with, they look good. I think they’ll regain their footing this year.”

Swenson reflected on his team’s position. “When you’re sitting there and you’re the defending state champion, you’ve got a bullseye on your chest. We didn’t have that last year. You’ve got it on your chest and your back. If you can handle that, you can succeed. It’s yet to be seen if this bunch can handle it.

“It’s a whole lot easier to win one if you’re not expected to. If you’re like we were, picked fifth, no pressure, you can just roll out there, get hot and play some football, have a big time. That’s easier than if you’re expected to win. That’s pressure. You never know. Some kids don’t do well with pressure. They crumble.”

Eric Swenson Field

Over the offseason, the school named the playing surface at Paul Ward Stadium after Swenson, which surprised and humbled the coach.

“Not even being from here,” he said. “I never would have dreamed that something like that would have happened. I never even looked at my own record until Russell [Bush] and Geno Dill sent something to me. I never even looked, because I thought that was insurpassable. The only thing I had on my radar was a state championship. I never wanted to let the community down, because we would get so close and then we don’t make it. So just to have that done is amazing. I would have never, ever, ever in my entire life thought something like that would happen. Total surprise.”



Huntingdon High School football coaches (L to R) Adam Parish, Assistant Head Coach Robbie Miller, Head Coach Eric Swenson, Bryan Dickens, Ben Carter and Trevor Burlison. Not pictured is Rick Wallace.

2026 HHS Football Roster

#	NAME	GR.	POS.	#	NAME	GR.	POS.
5	Ayden Woods	11	RB/DB	50	Haven Dillahunt	11	OL/DL
6	Keimonte Strayhorn	11	WR/DB	51	Nick Smith	12	OL/DL
7	Zayden Connelly	12	RB/DB	52	Dominic White	9	OL/DL
8	Hayes Eubanks	11	RB/LB	53	Max Kelley	9	OL/DL
9	Taylor Jones	12	RB/DB	54	Andre Hernandez	9	OL/DL
10	Davay Strayhorn	9	RB/DB	55	Phoenix Barnhill	10	OL/DL
11	Case Raines	9	RB/DB	56	Brayden Davis	12	OL/DL
12	Lucas Smith	12	RB/DB	57	Kaden King	12	OL/DL
13	Gavin Gray	11	RB/LB	58	Taylin Strayhorn	12	OL/DL
14	Ayden King	10	RB/DB	60	Dayton Miller	9	OL/DL
15/61	Bryson Whiteside	12	RB/DL	62	Grant Wilson	12	OL/DL
16	Maddox Holmes	11	TE/DB	63	Elijah Hays	10	OL/DL
18	Bryson Bolen	9	TE/LB	64	Kyle Byrd	10	OL/LB
19	Benton Norman	10	WR/DB	65	Wyatt Cary	10	OL/DL
20	Colt Wood	11	RB/DB	66	Hayden Weathers	9	OL/LB
22	Kenton Smith	12	RB/DB	67	Riley Ford	10	OL/DL
23	Kylen Turner	12	RB/DB	68	Hunter Ward	9	OL/DL
24	Elijah Harris	9	RB/LB	72	Brennen Smith	10	OL/DL
25	Myles Pelonero	11	RB/DB	73	Colt Livingston	9	OL/DL
26	K’Shun Carter	11	RB/DB	74	Liam Maxwell	9	OL/DL
27	Kingston Smith	10	RB/DB	75	Ashtyn Donald	12	OL/DL
28	Garvin Kee	11	RB/LB	76	Cash Collins	10	OL/DL
29	Iyan King	9	RB/DB	77	Colton Castleman	9	OL/LB
30	Vincent Galindo	9	RB/DB	78	Isaiah Roscoe	10	OL/DL
32	Noah Webb	9	RB/DB	80	Jake Harris	9	K
36	Noah Goble	9	RB/DB	81	Greyson Anderson	12	K
37	Garrett Fowler	9	TE/DB	82	JP McReynolds	9	K
40	Bakari Weatherford	9	WR/DB	85	Schuyler Moon	9	WR/DB
44	Layne Kyle	9	RB/DB	87	Mykel Govan	10	WR/DB
45	Nolan Tippitt	9	TE/LB	88	Ethan Raffield	12	K
47	Rush Sanders	10	TE/LB				



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Top, 2026 West Carroll High School War Eagles football team. Left, West Carroll High School cheerleaders (L to R) Front Row: Seniors Elizabeth Wascher and Summer Spain. Middle Row: Marissa Mueller, Callie Bryant, Lily Powers-Rainey, Triniti Adkisson and Heidi Windom. Back Row: Coach Kaitlin Williams, Kate Jackson, Abigail Becerra, Shaylee Bynum, Emonilyse Rodriguez, Carmyn Calloway and Coach Jacey McClure. Above, (WCHS-FB-seniors)- West Carroll High School football seniors (L to R) Front Row: Cole Mueller, Kegan Mealer, RQ Thompson and JW Rushing. Back Row: Noah Cecchini, Taytum Jenkins, Drake Westphal and Landon Wilson. Below Left, West Carroll High School football Head Coach Nick Cobb. Below Right, West Carroll High School football coaches (L to R) Ryan Schrenemar, Head Coach Nick Cobb, Chris Brackeen and John Ragan. Photos by Joel Washburn/The Banner

West Carroll High School Roster

#	NAME	GR.	POS.	#	NAME	GR.	POS.
0	Skylar Wilson	10	WR/DB	53	Emmitt Ramsey	9	OL/DL
1	Briggs West	10	WR/DB	55	Cole Mueller	12	OL/DL
3	Parker Newman	10	QB/DB	58	Levi Bogard	11	OL/DL
4	Braden Marise	11	WR/DB	65	Marcos Cruiz	9	OL/DL
7	Chris Pruitt	9	RB/DB	68	Rylan Forest	11	OL/DL
9	JW Rushing	12	RB/DB	70	Ethan Mueller	11	OL/DL
16	Ethan Walls	11	WR/DB	71	Zach Griggs	11	OL/DL
19	Jaden Rogers	9	WR/DB	74	Noah Cecchini	12	OL/DL
21	Kegan Mealer	12	TE/Nickel	75	Brayden Arnold	11	OL/DL
22	RQ Thompson	12	WR/DB	78	Landon Wilson	12	OL/DL
29	Spencer Long	10	WR/DB	79	Layton Wilson	9	OL/DL
30	Dhamyus Gilbert	9	TE/DE	80	Alex Caveness	10	FB/LB
34	Caleb Vermillion	11	RB/LB		Chance Long	9	WR/DB
50	David Coleman	10	OL/DL		Sawyer Jackson	11	OL/DL
52	Tyson Fuller	10	OL/DL		Jordan Jeter	11	OL/DL



West Carroll High School Schedule

August 21	Gibson Co.	October 2	Lake Co. HC
August 28	Fayette-Ware	October 9	Gleason Sr
September 4	@ Dresden	October 16	BYE
September 11	@ HR-Bruceton	October 23	@ Liberty Tech
September 18	Humboldt	October 29	@ South Fulton
September 25	@ Greenfield		

HC Homecoming / Sr Senior Night



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WEST CARROLL
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War Eagles Looking to be More Competitive This Season

BY MICHAEL ODOM
Mirror-Exchange

With Nick Cobb taking over as head coach, the West Carroll football team is looking to put last season's 1-9 record—the first one win season since 2016—behind them.

Cobb got promoted from assistant coach to head coach when Jay Taylor resigned.

The War Eagles have spent the summer with new coaches, and there is optimism around the program.

"The kids have come in and worked their butts off," Cobb said. "We have a bunch of hard-nosed, tough kids. They come into the weight room and attack it every day. Mentally, I am happy where we are at. After what we had last year, we had a bunch of returning kids, so we have kids that played last year. We kept the same defense as last year, so the kids didn't have to learn a new scheme. It has been more about getting the offense where it needs to be."

The roster is 28 players, which is better than last season. There are also lots of young players entering into the program.

The key will be finding a more consistent offense after West Carroll scored 134 points in 10 games last season.

OFFENSE

Playmaker Mason Taylor transferred out of the program with his 1,400 yards of offense last year, along with the quickest player on the team, Quamarion Patterson.

"We will be running back by committee this year as opposed to Taylor doing it all for us," Cobb said. "We have four kids that can all tote the rock. Just got to figure out who can do what and who is going to get hot."

Junior Caleb Vermillion is going to be one of the front-runners at running back.

"He is as tough as they come," Cobb said.

Senior JW Rushing got hurt in the spring game after not playing football during the 2025 season, but he is now getting healthy and will get time at running back. Freshman Chris Pruitt was a key part of the junior high's success last year, so he has the potential, but it will take time for him to be ready for the high school level.

Pruitt isn't the only freshman running back as Jaden Rodgers transferred in from Westview in July.

"Once the two freshmen learn, I feel like I have four guys that I can give the ball to," Cobb said.

West Carroll returns quarterback Parker Newman for his sophomore season, and having a year of starting as a freshman should be an asset.

"He struggled last year as a freshman playing high school ball, but if anybody has grown in an offseason as much as Parker that I have coached, I don't remember it," Cobb said. "Not just physically, but emotionally and mentally. He is doing a bet-

ter job running the offense."

Senior RQ Thompson is a baseball player that joined the football team at the end of last year as a scout team player.

"He finished like fifth in the state in stolen bases, and he can fly," Cobb said. "He is very athletic. We are going to put him in the slot."

Sophomore Skylar Wilson transferred in from South Side after playing tight end for the Hawks, and he will play receiver for West Carroll. Junior Braden Marise will also play as a receiver.

The War Eagles return all five of the lineman that ended the 2025 season on the offensive line.

"They aren't seeing bullets for the first time," Cobb said. "Only two of them are seniors, so we will bring three of these back next year. We have underclassmen that will come in and push those guys."

Seniors Cole Mueller and Noah Cecchini will be the leaders of the line, but sophomore Tyson Fuller played all 10 games at center last year, junior Rylan Forest earned a starting spot in Week 6 and

junior Brayden Arnold will be playing right tackle.

Freshman Layton Wilson is one that will push for playing time.

"The key for offensive success will be moving the ball and not having negative plays," Cobb said. "We are a heavy run team. If we can keep the ball from being turned over, I think we can manage games and give ourselves a chance in the fourth quarter."

DEFENSE

West Carroll brought back some big hitters on the defensive side of the ball, and that will help this year. Cobb also said that he has tried to keep things the same with the scheme.

"I feel good about where we are at," Cobb said. "I think it helped the kids a lot having the same continuity on the defensive side of the ball."

Junior Braden Marise is coming off an injury and hoping to be back on the field at safety after he led the team with 59 total tackles with one tackle for loss and one forced fumble. He

had three interceptions in the spring game.

Junior Caleb Vermillion was tough at linebacker, finishing the year with 48 total tackles, two forced fumbles and one fumble recovery.

Senior Cole Mueller was a stud on the defensive line as he finished the season with 46 total tackles, one tackle for loss, one forced fumble and one pass break-up.

So the War Eagles have a strong leader on each level of the defense with eight guys back on the defensive side of the ball.

"The defense just has to play their assignments," Cobb said. "We aren't going to create a ton of negative plays, but we have to come downhill and make tackles."

Cobb said there will be lots of rotation on the defensive line to give guys a rest.

Mueller will be the leader

on the defensive line at defensive end. Cobb said one of the biggest leaders on the team is senior Landon Wilson, and he will be a defense-only player.

Along with Vermillion at linebacker, sophomore Alex Caveness will play inside linebacker. Senior JW Rushing will also get time at linebacker.

"That duo loves physicality and loves to hit," Cobb said.

Sophomore Skylar Wilson will join Marise in the secondary and play safety. Senior RQ Thompson will join him at safety.

Sophomore Parker Newman will also play in the secondary, but the goal is to keep his time limited as he plays a bigger role at quarterback.

One area where West Carroll will really show youth is

at cornerback. Sophomore Briggs West is a first-year player, and freshman Chris Pruitt will also play some at that position.

SPECIAL TEAMS

West Carroll has two kids that have been working at kicker throughout the summer. Sophomore Parker Newman will be doing that majority of the kicking starting out, but freshman Emmitt Ramsey will challenge for time.

"For his birthday, Emmitt asked for a field goal post at his house," Cobb said. "Stafford Roditis has been working with Emmitt to try to keep him improving."

Senior RQ Thompson, freshman Chris Pruitt and junior Braden Marise have been the three getting work throughout the summer returning kicks.

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Rebels

...From Front Page

to get the ball in his hands. The thing is, there's only so many touches in a game, but we've got guys that can take pressure off the rest of the guys and play good football. We'll still be mixing the run and pass; we'll do both all season long. We feel like that opens things up for us.

"I don't think we really have a weakness. I think we have inexperience. With our offensive line, we've had to plug some kids in. I couldn't be more proud of those guys, they come to work every single day wanting to get better and wanting to be good football players. That's what it takes. You've got to develop a unit. I don't want to sell those guys short. We're going to work those guys, develop those guys. I'm proud of where they've come so far. It takes time, and from the outside looking in, you have to be patient with young offensive linemen and let them gel. It's going to take some time, but I'm looking forward to the group. It's a great group

of kids that want to be good, and as we go, they're going to get better every single week."

Defense

"Defensively, we've got a lot of returning starters. The majority of our defense is back. I think we lost two, maybe three starters. You've got Lelan back, Kason and Avery Brown. Cole's back on defense. Dawson Reeder's fixing to be back. Cayden Gordon started in the state championship. Two sophomores at middle linebacker.

"We've got almost the entire defensive line back. Aiden Carrington's going to help us on defense this year. Maddox Shiell is back, and Cooper Davidson is back after starting for us last year. Also, Parker Ross is going to step up. He's going to be one of the starters on the back end, and that's the only new starter we'll have on the back end. So, we'll mix things up. When you have that much experience, you can put a little bit more on those guys and continue to develop them. Let 'em play. Our goal with our defense is let them play fast and have fun out there, and I think we're going to be pretty tough on defense."

Special Teams

"Kicking can be tough. It's a very complicated part of the game. I try my best to take a lot of pride in that. We all do. Jony Hernandez is coming off the soccer team to come kick for us this year. I'm excited for him. He's looked good in the preseason so far. Good kid. He's been there every single day working on kicking. He wants to be good at it. Then, Andres Hernandez is a freshman kicker coming up. He looks good so far. The kicking game is another part of our game that's going to get better and better every week with confidence.

"Cole Brown comes back at punter. We've got a lot of punters, honestly. If Cole can't punt, Maddox can get up there and punt it 60 yards. Lelan can punt it. So we do have some depth in our kicking game, and it's a good feeling. In the offseason, we were really worried about it. I sat down with Jony and said I'd love to have him come kick, and he was all for it right from the start, so we're excited to have him, too."

Region 6-1A

"It's the same region we've

been in for a while now. We'll have Wayne County, a well-coached football team. McEwen seems to always have a ton of wins every year. Bruceton was 7-3 last year. Then you've got Perry County, who I think is on the climb. I think they're getting better and better every year. I think their coach does a good job over there. And then we have Collinwood, who will have a new coach this season. They had some good-looking kids over there last year, and their kids played hard.

"So you can never go to sleep on your region play. Those are huge games that set you up for the playoffs and everything. But we gotta have confidence in what we're doing and hopefully, we can do what we need to do in our region and play well against our region, like you're supposed to do."

Non-Region

"That's always tough. It's not so much about who you play, you've also gotta match the weeks. Everybody has different weeks open, and scheduling can be a bit of a booger sometimes. We worked it out pretty well. We open up with Huntingdon

and turn around and play Dresden the second game. Then we play Christian County, a big 6A school, new consolidated school in Kentucky that's going to have a lot of good football players in it. We play Camden, who has a strong tradition over there. Chester County, another 4A school we've gotta play. So it's a tough, tough non-region schedule, in my opinion, that is going to make us better.

"Our first several games of the year are really tough. We're right out of the gate playing the toughest part of our schedule. So we've got to do everything we can to stay healthy and just play hard and do what we need to do."

Coaching Style

"When I got hired, I made a decision that I'm going to be myself. I've been in a situation where it was different, and some of the people wanted me to be something that I'm not, and I decided I just can't. I'm at an age in coaching now where I just can't do that. I'm going to be myself everyday, and coach and be a part of these kids' lives the best way I know how to, and hopefully be a person they can talk to and trust and lean on when they need to and do things the right way in front of them, so they can see, hopefully, some of the right things I do, but then I also want them to see some of the bad things I do and I own up to it.

My goal wasn't to change anything about winning football games, but, like I said, to be myself and develop kids the way I know how to do it. Obviously, Coach [Wade] Comer and everybody before, Coach [Randy] Thomas, all these are great coaches that know what they're doing and know how to coach. The bottom line, what I had to do is surround myself with other

good coaches. You have to surround yourself with good coaches to be successful."

Hodge's slate of assistants is unchanged from last year. "It's a good feeling. To have a staff back again is great for us. It builds that consistency, it builds on that camaraderie that we already have. You can just continue to develop on that, because the kids know what the expectations are. They know who's got their back, and that's a big deal."

Community Support

"Then, beyond that, it's community support. Things like [the inaugural meet-and-greet event], if you can get the community behind you and what you're trying to do, and trying to win games and trying to teach these kids how to play the game the right way. And it's a lot, it is a lot to do. It's a lot to try to develop. It's a lot to try to come with new ideas to keep people excited for these kids. That takes time, it takes energy, it takes an awesome touchdown booster club that we have in order to do those things. They have done a phenomenal job this year to build this up and try to bring some new things to the program.

"That's what gives you an advantage in my opinion, when you have a good coaching staff, when you have a good community, when you have an administration like Coach [Kelly] Spivey and Coach [Zach] Tippitt that have always got your back and want to help you be successful.

We have those things in place right now, and I hope that doesn't change."

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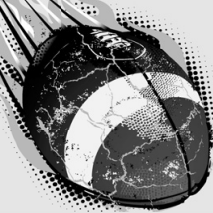
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Top, 2026 Gleason Junior High Bulldogs football team. Above Left, Gleason Junior High cheerleaders (L to R) Front Row: Ella Roney and Kalyn Collins. Second Row: Molly Harrison, McKenna Morefield and Carlie Black. Back Row: Kinley Trevathan, Neely Morton, Adeline Johnson and Stella Stephens. Not pictured is Charlotte Bargery. Above Right, Gleason Junior High football coaches (L to R) Albert Collins, Head Coach Noah Lampkins, Archie Rich and Brady Duggin. Below, Gleason Junior High football Head Coach Noah Lampkins. Photos by Joel Washburn/The Banner

Gleason Junior High School Roster

#	NAME	GR.	#	NAME	GR.
1	Liam Williams	8	18	Deacon Lehmkuhl	7
2	Jase Dilday	7	31	Jase Simmons	6
4	Cameron Sollis	8	50	Braxton Jones	8
5	Colton Morgan	6	51	Ashton Ross	6
7	Albe Collins	7	55	Shepard Hopper	6
10	Grady Pinkston	6	58	Aybel Black	7
12	Landon Aeschbacher	8	70	Landon Parsons	7
13	Blayne Odle	7	73	Nolan Orton	7
14	Travis Bailey	7	75	Blaize Burnine	7

GJHS Schedule

August 13	HR-Bruceton
August 20	Fulton County (Ky.)
August 27	@ Greenfield
September 3	@ Henry County
September 10	BYE
September 17	Dresden HC
September 24	@ Gibson County
October 1	@ South Fulton

HC Homecoming



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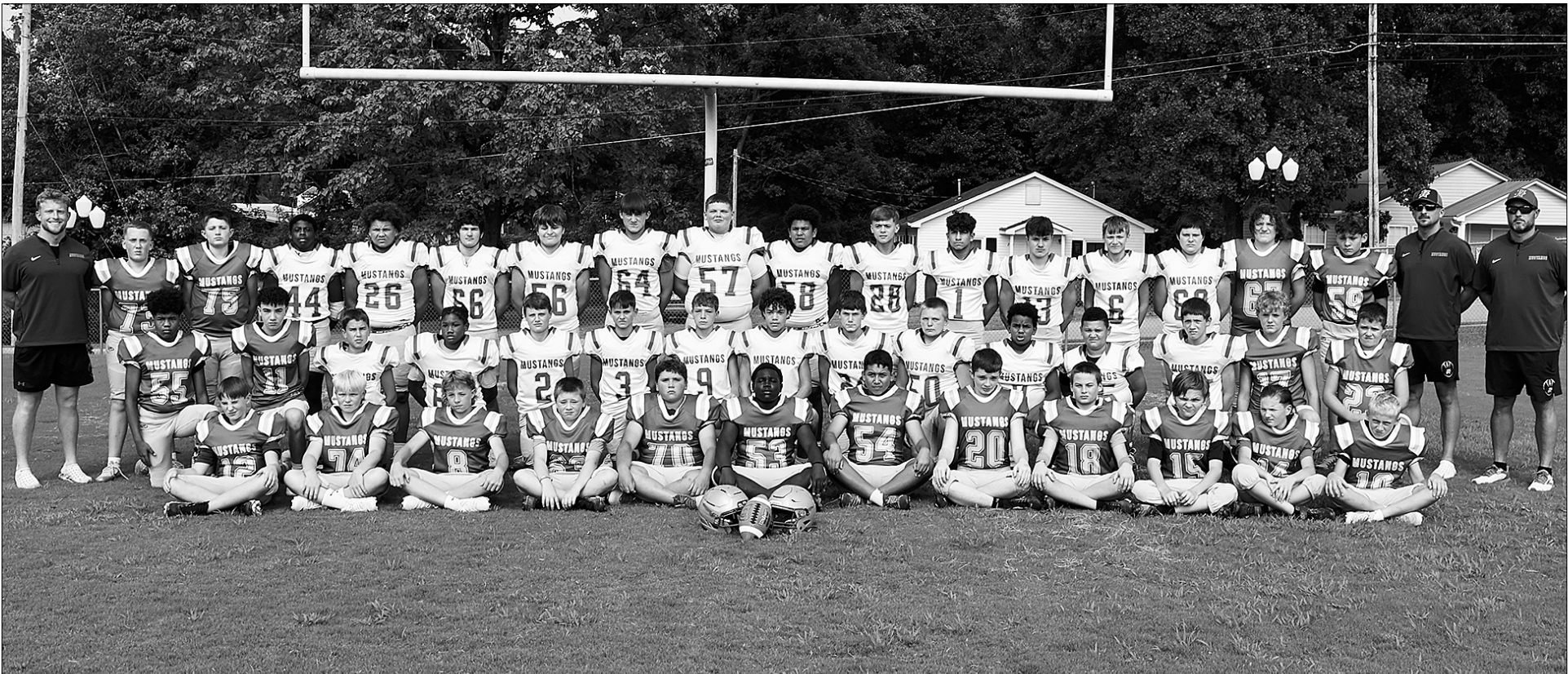
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HMS Schedule

Aug. 6	Trenton	Sept. 3	OPEN
Aug. 13	@ Dresden	Sept. 10	@ McKenzie
Aug. 20	Camden <i>HC</i>	Sept. 17	Riverside
Aug. 27	@ Milan	Sept. 24	@ Union City
			<i>HC Homecoming</i>

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Top, 2026 Huntingdon Middle School Mustangs football team. Above, Huntingdon Middle School cheerleaders (L to R) Front Row: Alina Willis, Paisley Watson, Mireya Kemp and Carlee Webb. Back Row: Kira Vick, Bennett Ramsey, Aubri Laman, Aelynn Sevarns, Acelynn King and Aliviana Davis. Below Left, Huntingdon Middle School football Head Coach Brody Franks. Below Right, Huntingdon Middle School football coaches (L to R) Josh Gray, Head Coach Brody Franks and Scott Hampton. Photos by Joel Washburn/The Banner

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2026 Huntingdon Middle School Football Roster

#	NAME
1	Tres Villalobos
2	Griffin Todd
3	Banks Butler
4	Nathan Huss
5	Jurrari Hughes
6	Jed Shelton
7	Jacob Chappell
8	Mason Watters
9	Bryce Maddox
10	Liam McBride
11	Beckett McCaslin
12	Liam Martin
13	Cohen Gray
14	Sebastian Frensley

#	NAME
15	Roland Rougier
17	Knox White
18	Jacob Reynolds
20	Preston Hilliard
23	Jack Longmire
24	Cooper Townsend
25	Bryson Collins
26	Drelyn Carter
28	Richard Lestienne
44	Brilyn Ford
45	Theo Williams (manager)
50	Hayden Haynes
54	Adrian Villalta
55	Kyler Cannon

#	NAME
56	Eli Rougier
57	Mason Smith
58	Jaylin Webster
59	Ty Villalobos
60	Javion Williams
62	Colton Ward
63	Trevor Chapman
64	Miller Holmes
66	Eli Clark
67	Riley Arnold
70	Brock Miller
73	Jackson Walker
74	Ransom Wilson
75	Tanner White

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2026 McKenzie Middle School Rebels football team.

2026 McKenzie Middle School Football Roster

#	NAME	GR.	POS.	#	NAME	GR.	POS.	#	NAME	GR.	POS.
1	James Barnhart	RB/DB	7	15	Leonardo Ochoa	WR/DB	8	58	Jaydin Belk	OL/DL	8
2	Colin Yeley	WR/LB	7	16	Payton Cox	K	8	59	Cannon Nunnery	OL/DL	7
3	Da'Von Webb	RB/LB	8	17	Deacon Barden	FB/LB	8	60	James Stavelly	OL/DL	7
4	Eilan Harris	WR/DB	7	21	Thomas Howard	WR/DB	8	61	Sam Berry	OL/DL	7
5	Makhyn Gilbert	RB/DB	8	25	Khalil Robinson	FB/LB	8	62	Easton Maxwell	OL/DL	7
6	Navadius Owens	RB/DB	8	30	Tino Piro	OL/DL	7	64	Andrew Ellis	OL/DL	7
7	Hayden Nolen	FB/LB	8	44	Dakota Staggs	FB/LB	7	65	Brycen Broyles	OL/LB	7
8	Jonah Henson	WR/DB	8	50	Reed Gaskins	OL/LB	8	67	Jordan Graham	OL/DL	8
9	Cord Wall	QB/DB	7	51	Cooper Cunningham	OL/DL	8	68	Chris Chunn	OL/DL	7
10	Mason Davidson	WR/DB	8	52	Graham Seavers	TE/LB	8	70	Luca Sczesny	OL/DL	7
11	Kenden Coleman	QB/DB	8	54	Daniel Carroll	OL/DL	8	74	Neyland Harris	OL/DL	7
12	Jaiden Owens	WR/DB	7	55	Owen Epperson	OL/LB	8	77	Nate Sweatt	OL/DL	8
13	Kash Shaw	RB/DB	7	56	Kingsten Gibbs	OL/DL	8				
14	Devin Towne	WR/DB	7	57	Bryson Poore	OL/DL	8				

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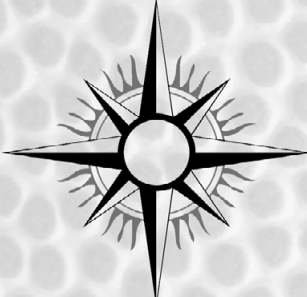
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Above Left, McKenzie Middle School cheerleaders (L to R) Front Row: Kinsly Parham, Brooke Harris, Olivia Fontana, Taylor Little, Harper Allen, Naomi Hernandez, Harper Irwin and Sonny Fuller. Back Row: Kendyl Sherrod, Tinley Smith (co-captain), Gracie Robertson, Alayna Twitty, Isabelle Long (co-captain), Brianna Ryg (captain), Callie Davidson and Maggie Nell Merrick. Above Right, McKenzie Middle School football Head Coach Jay Taylor. Below, McKenzie Middle School football coaches (L to R) Jeremy Allen, George Ognibene, Head Coach Jay Taylor, Jake Cassidy, Jacob Fussell and Cameron Kee. Not pictured is Chris Wall.

LET'S GO
REBELS!

MMS Schedule

August 6	Union City
August 20	@ Lexington
August 27	Henderson North
September 3	Stewart Co.
September 10	Huntingdon
September 17	Henry Co.
September 24	@ Camden
October 1	Dresden



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Top, 2026 West Carroll Junior High War Eagles football team. Above, West Carroll Junior High cheerleaders (L to R) Front Row: Abby Hays, Ellie Williams and Skii Crouch. Back Row: Coach Kaitlin Williams, Noah Reynolds, Madeline Finely, Maddie Martin, Kinsley Newsome, Khloe Foster and Coach Cailynn Foster. Above Right, West Carroll Junior High football Head Coach Benjamin Bane. Photos by Joel Washburn/The Banner

WCJHS School Football Roster

#	NAME	#	NAME
3	Ryker Cherry	63	Gunner Brown
5	Bentley Clements	67	Izaiah Sellers
7	Isaiah Lott	68	Gunner Jackson
20	Jeremiah Holley	70	Juan Anguiano
25	Ayden Taylor	71	Michael Dodd
35	Kevin Pryor	75	Nathan Davenport
38	Jonah McGowan	77	Owen Nelson
42	Brayden Newman	80	Hunter Seiber
50	Karson Polinski	83	Brayden Hilliard
53	Caleb Sylvester	87	Issac Green
55	Cooper Latch	88	Jameson Thurmond
60	Edward Robinson		



2026 WCJHS Schedule

August 6	@ Greenfield
August 13	South Fulton
August 20	@ Stewart County
August 27	Perry County
September 3	@ Henderson County South
September 10	HR-Bruceton
September 17	@ Halls
September 24	TBD (Championship)

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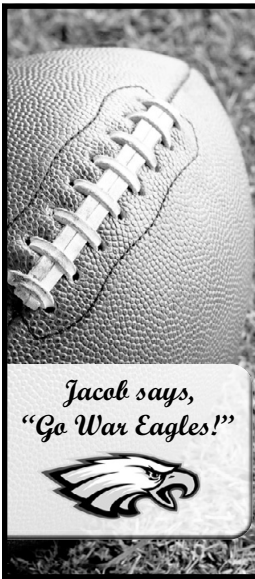
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2026 Hollow Rock-Bruceton Central Middle School Tigers football team. Photos by Joel Washburn/The Banner

CMS Schedule

Aug. 13	@ Gleason
Aug. 20	Greenfield
Aug. 27	HC South (Scott's Hill)
Sept. 3	@ Perry County
Sept. 10	@ West Carroll
Sept. 17	@ Stewart County
TBD	Bowl Game (location TBD)

2026 CMS Roster

#	NAME	GR.
3	Keylan Gregory	8
4	Channing Dougherty	7
5	Eli Parker	8
7	Skylar Jourdan	8
10	Briar Weatherly	8
14	Jaxon Oatsvall	6
15	Zepplin Mebane	8
16	Titan Whitfield	6
18	Jude Blankenship	5
26	Greyson Krutcher	6
30	Will Roberts	7
33	Kayden King	6
35	Zayden Carlson	6
48	Will Ragsdale	7
54	Scotty Whittenburg	8
59	Trace Simmons	6
60	Colton Lancaster	7
61	CJ Patterson	8
63	Colt Norden	6
67	Sawyer Hart	8
70	Henry Hollingsworth	6
72	Trenton Lowe	6
73	Xander Owens	6
74	Eli Edwards	6
75	Jaxon Giglio	6
76	Jaxon Cook	8
77	Gabe Frazee	8
	Gauge Bonee	8
	Tommy Greenway	6

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Hollow Rock-Bruceton Central Middle School cheerleaders (L to R) Front Row: Aimee Petez, Shiloh Hollingsworth and Raegan Tedford. Second Row: Kennedy Patton, Josie Oatsvall, Sadie Thomas, Whitley Walters and Paisley Floyd. Back Row: Kinze Lowe, Alaya Barmore, Presley Sterling, Lottie Brown, Ella Page and Kaylynn Barrett.

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Above, 2026 Gleason High School Bulldogs football team. Below Left, Gleason High School senior cheerleaders (L to R) Front Row: Coach Jess Hames, Shelby Mayo, Sophie Beasley and Marley Crews. Back Row: Hayden Beasley, Jaycee Goad, Kendra Caire and Chloe Buie. Below Center, Gleason High School football coaches (L to R) Albert Collins, Head Coach Noah Lampkins, Archie Rich and Brady Duggin. Below Right, Gleason High School cheerleaders (L to R) Front Row: Sophie Beasley. Second Row: Shelby Mayo and Marley Crews. Third Row: Jaycee Goad, Kendra Caire and Chloe Buie. Fourth Row: Zoe Healy, Addison Aeschbacher, Paisley McClure, Emili Tilman and Aniston Ross. Back Row: Hayden Beasley, Allie Adams, Kaylee House and Natalie Tidwell. Photos by Joel Washburn/The Banner



Bulldogs Relying on Young Talent to Develop Quickly

COURTESY MICHAEL ODOM
Mirror-Exchange

With the graduation of nine seniors from last year's team, the numbers on Gleason's roster have taken a hit.

The roster currently sits at 17 players, but there are no seniors on the team.

"It is more about replacing numbers, because they were more basketball players than football players," Gleason coach Noah Lampkins said. "We will miss Trey Mayo and his leadership."

Added to that is the fact that senior Gage Byington has decided not to play this year because of injuries.

The Bulldogs are going to have to hope for production from the young players for this team to find success.

"We are experienced up front and should be better than we were last year," Lampkins said. "We are just so thin because of numbers. It is a numbers game with us."

But Lampkins knew about the turnover, and that has been a focus from the end of the 2025 season.

Gleason is going to hit some bumps early in the season, but the hope is that as the season progresses, this team can find a rhythm and earn some wins.

Offense

Junior Bo Tyler Bailey got some time under center last year as he split time with Drake Lehmkuhl. "Bo got reps last year as he got to split some time at quarterback," Lampkins said. "As long as he doesn't try to do too much, we should be pretty good."

Freshman Sawyer Lampkins will back up Bailey.

Running back is a big hole that Gleason has worked throughout the summer to try to figure out. Gage Byington ran the ball quite a bit last year.

Sophomore Cooper Sawyers will get thrown into the fire at running back. Backing up Sawyers will be freshman Kaylor Pineda. Junior Andrew Bruce could also line up at running back.

"We are looking to be running back by committee," Lampkins said. "Cooper is quick and shifty, and Kaylor is a bigger freshman at 220 [pounds], and he is an older freshman, so we hope that helps him."

Junior James Flaurr looks the part to have the ability for a breakout season. He should be a main target in the offense.

"We are going to move James around, and he will be our go-to guy," Lampkins said.

Freshman Grant Pinkston will also be in that receiver mix, as will Sawyers when he is not in the backfield.

Gleason does have a good-sized tight end with good hands in sophomore Conner Ballew, and he should factor into the passing game, too.

The Bulldogs bring back four of the five starters on the offensive line, so that is why they will be crucial to the success of this team. Junior Brennan Cook moved to center to anchor the offensive line. Juniors Andrew Bruce and Briley Horner will most likely be the two starting guards.

"Those three have been a bright spot for us in practice as they are consistent," Lampkins said. "They know how to practice. They know expectations. They know the scheme. Brennan moving to center is a transition for him, but I believe that will make us a better team."

Those will be the three veterans as sophomore Keilyn Albritton and freshman Knox Bennett are looking to line up as the two tackles.

"We have to be healthy because our numbers are so low," Lampkins said. "We have to find creative ways to create depth. We are going to have to game-plan for substitutions."

Defense

Going into 2026, Lampkins is hoping his team takes a little different approach to defense than it did in 2025.

"We have to do our assignments and do what we are supposed to do," Lampkins said. "I believe that was the difference in us going 6-4 or 7-3 instead of going 3-7 last year. We simply had to do our job. We didn't play as a team last year."

Sophomore Keilyn Albritton, junior Brennan Cook and junior Briley Horner are going to spearhead the defensive line for the Bulldogs. Sophomore Conner Ballew will play some defensive end.

"Those guys are going to have to make it happen for us," Lampkins said.

Sophomore Ethan Lawrence will come in and provide breaks for some of the other players on the line.

Last year's graduating class

took all of the Bulldogs' linebackers, so there will be lots of new faces in the middle of the field.

Junior Bo Tyler Bailey and freshman Kaylor Pineda are two that are leading the linebacking corps right now. Cook could also drop back some and play linebacker, while freshman Knox Bennett will also be called upon in this group.

"Linebacking and defensive back are two areas where we have to finish out the pre-season with improvement," Lampkins said.

Freshman Grant Pinkston had an interception during the 7-on-7 season at cornerback. The other cornerback is looking to be another freshman in Joey Vargas.

A new player on the team—junior Caden Sollis—will also factor into the cornerback position.

Sophomore Cooper Sawyers will play free safety, while junior James Flaurr and junior Andrew Bruce will be the two strong safeties.

Special Teams

Gleason will be going for the two-point conversion after most touchdowns as the team doesn't have a kicker on the roster.

Junior James Flaurr is looking to be doing all of the kick-offs and punting for the Bulldogs. Junior Andrew Bruce can also fill into that role.

Sophomore Conner Ballew is the long snapper.

The kickoff and punt returners will be sophomore Cooper Sawyers and Flaurr, along with freshman Grant Pinkston.



Gleason High School football Head Coach Noah Lampkins.

GHS Schedule

August 21	Fulton County (Ky.)
August 28	@ HR-Bruceton
September 4	Obion County
September 11	@ Dresden
September 18	Lake County HC
September 25	@ Perry County
October 2	South Fulton
October 9	@ West Carroll
October 16	BYE
October 23	Humboldt Sr
October 29	@ Greenfield

HC Homecoming / Sr Senior Night

2026 GHS Roster

#	NAME	GR.	POS.
1	Cooper Sawyers	10	S/WR
3	Aiden Brock	10	W/DE
5	Joey Vargas	9	C/RB
7	Caden Sollis	11	C/WR
9	Sawyer Lampkins	9	CB/OB
10	Bo Tyler Bailey	11	LB/OB
12	Conner Ballew	10	TE/DE
15	James Flaurr	11	W/WR
22	Kaylor Pineda	9	RB/LB
24	Grant Pinkston	9	C/WR
50	Knox Bennett	9	G/LB
52	Brennan Cook	11	C/DE
56	Ethan Lawrence	10	OT/DT
58	Andrew Bruce	11	RB/LB
70	Jordan Irvin	9	G/DT
75	Keilyn Albritton	10	OT/DT
76	Briley Horner	11	G/DT

Go Bulldogs!



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Above, 2026 Bethel University Wildcats football team. Below Left, Bethel University football coaches (L to R) Demetrice Gilbert - Safeties Coach, Demario Cleaves - Cornerbacks Coach, Terrell Jackson - Senior Defensive Analyst, Rylan Ashe - Linebackers Coach/Equipment Coordinator, Kris Beauchamp - Defensive Coordinator/Defensive Line Coach, Chris Springer - Head Football Coach, Riley Reid - Offensive Coordinator/Offensive Line Coach, Deandre Riddick - Special Teams Coordinator/Wide Receivers Coach, Joaquin Collazo - Quarterbacks Coach, Bret Peterson - Tight Ends Coach/Director of Football Operations and Conrad Smith - Running Backs Coach. Below Right, Bethel University football seniors (L to R) 23-Brenton Hall, 16-Jordan Jackson, 97-Logan Miller, 73-Christian Harden, 78-Luke Streeter and 6-Brandon Hall. Photos by Joel Washburn/The Banner



Wildcats Ready to Roar in Year Two of Springer Era

COURTESY BETHEL ATHLETICS

MCKENZIE — Coming off a 4-5 campaign in Coach Chris Springer’s first season at the helm, the Bethel University Wildcats enter year two with optimism, a talented roster and expectations that are continuing to rise.

The Wildcats improved throughout the season last year and expect that improvement to continue.

They’re looking to take the next step.

With 51 players returning, including 11 returning starters, and 83 newcomers joining the program, Bethel enters the season with a roster filled with competition, athleticism and opportunity.

“We have a young talented roster that’s eager to compete,” Springer said. “Our veteran leaders have done a great job setting the tone, and we’re excited about the potential of this group.”

Leadership Starts At the Top

Every successful team needs leaders willing to set the standard. This will be a huge key for the Cats after losing standouts Jaden Taylor, Rayshawn Harvey and Darrien Lewis. All were all-conference selections last year.

Bethel will lean on six seniors—Jordan Jackson, Brandon Hall, Brenton Hall, Christian Harden, Luke Streeter and Tatum Oliver—as the Wildcats begin their quest to make their mark on the upcoming season.

The Wildcats have also named Christian Harden, Ryan Kirk, Clay Powell, Durrell Miller and Tatum Oliver as team captains. Miller was a first team All-MSC performer last year.

That group will be charged with setting the tone for a roster that features a blend of returning experience and a massive influx of new talent.

The message is clear. The standard is rising.

83 Newcomers. One Wildcat Standard.

The Wildcats have reloaded this offseason, bringing in 83 newcomers who will compete for roles throughout the roster.

Among the key additions are players from Tennessee, Arkansas, Florida, Alabama and Georgia, including: Isaiah Bishop, Caleb Murphy, Hunter King, Jackson Stickles, Keyden Hunt, Myles Mahan, Wyatt Wise, Keaton Beach, Keith Postell, Cordarius Johnson, Layne Vaughn, Dave Jones, Carson Kelly, Andre Small, Makai Owens, Isaiah Thomas, Anthony Carnahan, Diezal Ward, Justin Beasley and Jamarion Dowdell.



Bethel University Head Coach Chris Springer.

The new Wildcats aren’t coming simply to fill roster spots. They’re coming to compete.

“Our newcomers have added quality depth and competition across the roster,” Springer said. “We made it a priority this offseason to improve our depth on the offensive line, added length and speed at wide receiver, and feel really good about our linebacker core.”

Defense Ready to Set the Tone

If there’s one area where experience could make an immediate difference, it’s up front.

The defensive line enters the season as Bethel’s most experienced position group, giving the Wildcats a veteran presence in the trenches. But experience doesn’t mean anything is guaranteed.

Competition will be fierce at the secondary and offensive line positions, where players will battle throughout the season for opportunities to make their impact felt.

That competition could become one of Bethel’s biggest strengths as the season progresses.

Keep an Eye on Ryan Kirk

Every season has players ready to break through.

For the Wildcats, Ryan Kirk enters the season as one of those players.

Kirk has been identified as a player poised for a breakout season, while Justin Bruce and David Williams have earned recognition for their improvement heading into the new campaign.

And with a roster this deep, Wildcat Nation could see plenty of new names emerge as the season unfolds.

Young. Talented. Hungry.

Several newcomers will have the opportunity to make an immediate impact, including Isaiah Bishop, Caleb Murphy, Hunter King, Jackson Stickles, Keyden Hunt, Myles Mahan, Wyatt Wise,

Keaton Beach, Lamarkus Grigsby, Keith Postell and Cordarius Johnson.

For Springer and his staff, the challenge is turning that talent and competition into a team that continues to improve every Saturday.

Every Saturday Matters

The road ahead won’t be easy. Bethel’s non-conference schedule provides a strong test, while the Mid-South Conference remains one of the most competitive environments in the country.

“We’re excited about this year’s schedule,” Springer said. “Our non-conference slate is strong. The Mid-South Conference is always well rounded and highly competitive, so we know every game will prepare us to be at our best.”

Every game will matter. Every practice will matter. Every rep will matter.

The Goal: Compete For a Championship

Bethel wants to put itself in position to play for a conference championship.

“Our expectations are to compete at a high level every day, continue improving throughout the season, and put ourselves in position to compete for a conference championship,” Springer said. “We have a group that’s willing to work and we’re excited to see what we can accomplish together.”

The returning players know what it takes. The newcomers bring competition. The captains bring leadership.

As Coach Springer enters the season with a team ready to find out just how far it can go, he will do it with several new faces and key returning veterans on his coaching staff. Look for details on the staff at www.bethelathletics.com.

Wildcat Nation –It’s Time

Coach Springer and the Wildcats know the work ahead will be demanding, but they’re embracing the challenge.

“We are excited for the upcoming season and grateful for your continued support,” Springer said. “Our team is working hard with passion, discipline and commitment to represent Bethel University the right way.”

A solid foundation was built in year one.

Now, the Wildcats are ready to build something bigger.

Year two starts now.

For a complete look at the 2026 schedule and other info on the Wildcats, visit www.bethelathletics.com.

2026 Bethel University Schedule

August 29	Lane	6 p.m.
September 12	Keiser	3 p.m.
September 19	@ Webber International (FL)	12:30 p.m.
September 26	@ Pikeville (KY)	2 p.m.
October 10	Faulkner	1:30 p.m.
October 17	Cumberlands * HC	1:30 p.m.
October 24	@ Georgetown *	12:30 p.m.
October 31	Campbellsville * Sr	2:30 p.m.
November 7	@ Lindsey Wilson *	1:30 p.m.
November 14	@ Cumberland *	1:30 p.m.

* Conference / **HC** Homecoming / **Sr** Senior Day

Bethel University Football Roster

#	NAME	GR.	POS.	#	NAME	GR.	POS.
0	Travis Shaw	JR	DL	60	David Williams Jr	JR	OL
1	Micah Jones	JR	WR	61	Matt Dooley	FR	DL
2	Amarie Gilchrist	JR	DB	62	Jackson Stickles	FR	OL
3	Ryan Kirk	JR	RB	63	Evan Briggs	SO	OL
4	Silas Teat	SO	QB	64	Kayden Hunt	FR	OL
5	Durrell Miller	SO	DB	67	John Spurling	SO	OL
6	Brandon Hall	SR	DB	68	Josiah Arcadipane	SO	K
7	Clay Powell	SO	TE	70	Ramonie Bradford	FR	OL
8	Jose Joiner	SO	LB	71	Bryson Shreeve	FR	OL
9	Stephon Sellers	JR	WR	72	Keaton Beach	FR	OL
10	Jaylan Brown	SO	QB	73	Christian Harden	SR	OL
11	Zhalyn Copes	FR	LB	74	Aaron Robinson	JR	OL
12	Detarius Douglas	SO	DB	75	Wyatt Wise	FR	OL
13	Justin Bruce	FR	DB	76	Caleb Murphy	FR	OL
14	Nathan Clemmer	FR	QB	77	Isaiah Bishop	FR	OL
15	Zion Bryan	SO	WR	78	Luke Streeter	SR	OL
16	Jordan Jackson	SR	DL	79	Taylor Blackwood	SO	OL
17	Kealan Polk	FR	WR	80	Mekhi Brown	SO	WR
18	Maxwell Erb	SO	QB	81	Jaylan Young	FR	WR
19	Darius Caver	FR	QB	82	Eli Burciaga	SO	K
20	Anthony Carnahan	FR	DB	83	Carson Howell	FR	WR
21	Keith Postell	FR	DB	84	Carter Rutherford	FR	WR
22	Terris Smith	FR	RB	85	Jamarion Dowdell	FR	WR
23	Brenton Hall	SR	DB	86	Harrison Brownlee	FR	WR
24	Hezekiah Amick	FR	DB	87	Cole Crockett	FR	WR
25	Diezal Ward	FR	RB	88	Ezekiel Waycaster	FR	TE
26	J'Corey Cox	SO	DB	89	Navaar MacDonald-Risner	FR	WR
27	Andre Small	FR	DB	90	Harris Manning	SO	DL
28	Owen Waggener	FR	LB	91	Lamarkus Grigsby	FR	DL
29	Chris Rogers	JR	DB	92	Corbyn Harris	FR	DL
30	Andruw Hodge	SO	TE	93	Donta Sawyer	FR	DL
31	Isaiah Robledo	FR	WR	94	Jd Vincent	FR	DL
32	Jaiden McDonald	FR	DB	95	Jaivyn Patton	FR	DL
33	Scottie Roddy Jr.	SO	LB	96	Eric Cowen	FR	DL
34	Rakarius Lacy	SO	RB	97	Logan Miller	JR	K
35	Myles Mitchell	FR	DB	98	Keltauran Taylor	FR	DL
36	Makai Owens	FR	DB	99	Darrell Howard	FR	DL
37	Deuce Greenhill	FR	DB		Justin Aikens	FR	DB
38	Bakary Sonko	FR	DB		Tayshun Bowers	FR	WR
39	Preet Chaudhari	FR	P		Eli Climer	FR	LB
40	Jessie Patrick	FR	P		Alijah Darnes	FR	OL
42	Phillip Snow	FR	TE		Bryson Donald	FR	RB
43	Jayden Tate	FR	LB		Mason Duke	SO	TE
44	Deshawn Love	SO	DL		Henry Flowers	FR	LB
45	Tatum Oliver	JR	LB		Anthony Jones	FR	DB
46	Justin Carrethers	FR	LB		Detrell Kinney	FR	DB
47	Layne Vaughn	FR	RB		Jake Knox	FR	LB
48	Evan McGowan	SO	LS		Isaac Leavy	FR	LB
49	Zachary Clutch	SO	K		Nate Mathis	FR	TE
50	Dave Jones	FR	LB		Ja'Majah Mayes	JR	RB
51	Jayden Woods	FR	LB		Joshua Miles	FR	LB
52	Xavier Knight	FR	LB		Rashad Rankin	FR	LB
53	Nathan Redman	FR	LB		Silvio Rizzo	FR	LB
54	Carson Kelly	FR	LB		Demarcos Ross	FR	LB
55	Adrian Fisher	JR	OL		Nate Stephens	FR	TE
56	Myles Mahan	FR	OL		Brayden Tabbs	FR	RB
57	Isaiah Thomas	FR	LB		Kelby Taylor	FR	DB
58	Hunter King	FR	OL		Jaxon Vinson	FR	TE
59	Michael Jenkins	SO	OL		Kymani White	FR	DB



Top Left, 2026 Hollow Rock-Bruceton Central High School Tigers football team. Top Right, Hollow Rock-Bruceton Central High School football Head Coach Clay McMackins. Above Left, Hollow Rock-Bruceton Central High School football coaches (L to R) Cody Knuutila, Tim Williams, Garrett Graves, Head Coach Clay McMackins, Dr. Shannon Walters, Brayden Frye and David Thomas. Above Right, Hollow Rock-Bruceton Central High School cheerleaders (L to R) Front Row: Stella Higdon, Leah Bradley and Taylor Graves. Second Row: Jessica Gipson, Kaitlyn Burza, Ollie Cole, Avery Hollingsworth and Ava Finley. Third Row: Kaylyn Gray, Abigail Floyd, Carrie Owens, Alayah Hill and Audrina Castillo. Back Row: Kylie Craig, Bentley Blankenship, Emily Melton and Haven Neely. Below Left, Hollow Rock-Bruceton Central High School football managers (L to R) Adalynn Williams, Emma Scott, Lily Giglio and Nathalie Allgood. Below Right, Hollow Rock-Bruceton Central High School football seniors (L to R) Front Row: Timmy Haggard, Drake Whittenburg, Braxton Hampton and Carter Lowe. Back Row: Kaydince Banks, Tanner Walters, Daegan Collins, Johnny Tilley and Zander Stepp. Photos by Joel Washburn/The Banner

McMackins’ Tigers Look to Build on Last Years’ Turnaround

The Hollow Rock-Bruceton Central Tigers are coming off of a huge growth year. Head Coach Clay McMackins’ tenure began two years ago, and the Tigers were 1-9 for the third consecutive season. Last year’s squad improved to 7-3, a remarkable turnaround for a 1A program.

In a preseason interview with The Banner, McMackins attributed the success to the commitment of the players. “A lot of the leadership from last year finally bought into what we wanted to do as a program,” he said. “We knew that first year we were going to have some growing pains and some struggles trying to get the train back on track, so to speak. Last year, we grew through a lot of the growing pains really fast, faster than what I was really expecting. That was a big thing, just finally getting a buy-in from the whole program across the board.”

Leadership

“A lot of my leadership this year is on the defensive side. Of course, we all play both ways at this level, but a lot of them were primarily focused on the defensive side last year. So the defense this year is pretty mature vs. the offense, who’s a little younger. I don’t think there’s any lack of talent on the offensive side, just a little bit younger, and it’s more things we’ve got to reteach and go back through. But I’m really excited because the leadership here has now been with me all four years. And they’re really ready to take that next step after as many as we’ve taken so far to get where we’re at.”

Offense

“In our backfield, Korbin Brown and Daegan Collins are two really good backs that we have that have

been a staple of our offense for a while. Our wide receivers, Tanner Walters and Carter Lowe, had some phenomenal years behind, respectively Brady Roberts and Seth Thomas, who are number one and number two all-time in our school’s history. Tanner and Carter stepped up later in the year when everybody wanted to cover up Brady and Seth and they put on some pretty good shows. So I’m excited to see what they do.

“We’ve got some young quarterbacks battling it out right now, Easton Bullington and William Holder. [Last year’s QB] Braxton Howard was a D1 athlete, took a full-ride scholarship to Stetson University as a quarterback, and I think between these two freshmen, there’s not really going to be too much of a drop-off.

“It’s been fun, because my first year we had Caden Dean and we had Braxton Howard who were both fighting for it every single day. Each one of them threw for a thousand yards, respectively, in individual seasons. So I’ve tried to emulate that with these two and push them each day. I’ve worked with a lot of quarterbacks in my previous college coaching career, so I take pride in the position and leadership.”

Defense

“One big thing for the defense this year, we were able to hire Cody Knuutila as a defensive coordinator. Last year, I called both offense and defense. He’s coming over from South Gibson; he’s a hometown guy. He played at Morehead State before an injury sidelined him. He’s got a long resume as a coach at Camden and Lake County, and he just left South Gibson. He’ll be call-

ing the defense. I think he’s a very good fit for the style of defense we play this year. So far, he has added more growth to it than what I was able to do calling both sides.

“As far as the players go, Liam Piersol is an upcoming sophomore that got some playing time as a freshman last year. He’s really grown up this year. I think he’s ready to make a statement. Korbin Brown is coming on as a free safety for us. My linebacker core across the middle, Carter Lowe is a Mike [middle], Daegan Collins is a Sam backer [strong side], and Johnny Tilly is our Will backer [weak side]. Those are three seniors that kind of spearhead the whole defense. There’s a couple more seniors, but those are really the nucleus of what keeps our defense running and operating as it goes.

Special Teams

We’ve got a great kicker in Tanner Walters. He’s had some record-setting kicks. Two years ago as a sophomore, he kicked a 47-yarder. Last year, he had a 28-yard game-winner versus McEwen. He’s had phenomenal punting stats all three years. We’re excited to see what he does this year.

Region 6-1A

“I feel good about the region. When I first came in and really got to study the region, we played every run-heavy offense that’s been invented in football since the 50s. If you go to McEwen, you see the Maryland I. At Collinwood, they’ve got the triple-option flexbone. Perry County, they’ve got the single wing. Wayne County’s got the veer. McKenzie’s always got their heavy run with a little bit of power spread into

it. Of course, we’re another power spread team ourselves.

“This year, we’ve really tried to spend a lot of offseason focus on bulking up. That’s tough to go against just heavy run every single week, and that’s really been a big focus for us in the offseason in the weight room. Can we endure? Can we get our bodies to endure seeing that run and run and run and run every single week? That’s been a big focus for us, trying to not have a bitter taste in our mouth when we see region play this year. Last year, we kind of made one mistake that sidelined us from the playoffs, and the seniors this year really want to correct that mistake.”

Non-Region

“We were able to put West Carroll, which is a county rivalry game for us, back on the schedule. We lost them out of region play when they moved over. Scotts Hill is a 2A school. I like seeing how we go against 2A schools starting off at the beginning of the year. Then we’ll see Gleason, Greenfield, West Carroll, Liberty Tech. Just trying to get some good competition that can help us focus on our region, but also give us some different looks for playoffs.”

In conclusion, McMackins said, “I’m really just excited to see how this year pans out. It’s been a really exciting offseason, coming off the year we had at 7-3. The program has not been in that kind of situation for the last couple of years. To see the kids want to stay involved through the offseason. To see their dedication and discipline through the offseason has been a really fun thing to watch. I’m excited to see how we can capitalize on that this year.”

CHS Schedule

Aug. 21	Scotts Hill
Aug. 28	Gleason
Sept. 4	@ Greenfield
Sept. 11	West Carroll
Sept. 18	@ Wayne Co.
Sept. 25	Collinwood HC
Oct. 2	@ Liberty Tech
Oct. 9	@ McKenzie
Oct. 16	BYE
Oct. 23	@ McEwen
Oct. 29	Perry Co. Sr

HC Homecoming / **Sr** Senior Night

2026 CHS Roster

#	NAME
0	Dalton Howard
1	Korbin Brown
2	Johnny Tilley
3	Daegan Collins
4	William Holder
5	Kaydince Banks
6	Corben Wortham
7	Layden Mayberry
8	Drake Whittenburg
9	Cam Foster
10	Braxton Hampton
11	Mason McGee
12	Tanner Walters
13	Easton Bullington
14	Niko Golden
15	Carter Lowe
17	Zayden Williams
18	Cole Baker
20	Trent Brickman
21	Timmy Haggard
22	Tuff Wortham
24	Emmett Pierce
44	Hunter Deaton
51	Gage Patterson
52	Liam Piersol
53	Jacob Schaefer
55	Gibson McEwen
57	Jake Pardue
59	Isiah Sadler
62	Zander Stepp
64	Carter Gooch
70	Ty Edwards
71	Chase Massey



GOOD LUCK

TO ALL AREA TEAMS THIS SEASON!



Tandy

DARBY

State Representative

A8694

JOSEPH G. BUTLER

CARROLL COUNTY MAYOR

GOOD LUCK



A13

PROTECT YOUR GAME

Benefits of Being a SUBSTANCE FREE ATHLETE

ATHLETE BENEFITS:

Best chance for optimal health
– physical, mental & emotional.

Potential for maximum athletic performance.

Eliminates distractions.

Perform at highest level possible.

Experience real connection with teammates.

TEAM BENEFITS:

No competing interests among substance users & non-users.

Team reputation is not compromised.

Ideal team unity.

Limited distraction from performance and team growth.



Department of
**Mental Health &
Substance Abuse Services**

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Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services.