



Mineola varsity football team

Yellowjackets set return to playoffs as goal

By JOHN ARBTER
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Coach Luke Blackwell's 2020 Mineola Yellowjackets are poised to become yet another in a long line of successful football teams which have called Meredith Memorial Stadium home.

"We have had a record number of kids out this summer," stated Blackwell. "It speaks to their level of commitment."

The Jackets will be looking to remove any doubt that they are a playoff-caliber team.

Blackwell described the crushing season-ending loss to Winnsboro. The loss sent the Red Raiders, not the Yellowjackets, on to the playoffs.

As the playoffs unfolded, Mineola players and fans saw Gladewater, whom Mineola dominated in district play, defeat Winnsboro and fall one game shy of a state championship matchup.

"That was tough," conceded Blackwell, "but the team understands just how close we were."

Due to redistricting, the challenge this year will be the same but with a number of new opponents.

After pre-district matchups against Canton, Wills Point and West Rusk, the Yellowjackets will travel to Winnsboro to open their campaign.

The rematch in Winnsboro has the makings of an instant classic. If anything,

both schools will begin the season with even stronger teams than the two that met last November. Circle the date. If last year's throwdown was an indicator, this year's Sept. 25 matchup may be among the best games of the year.

After Winnsboro, the Jackets will host Bonham, travel to Mt. Vernon and battle Pottsboro.

The Oct. 16 home contest against the Pottsboro Cardinals will be another chance for the Yellowjackets to show that they have ambitions beyond just making the playoffs.

Mineola finishes the season visiting Howe, hosting Rains, and on the road at Commerce. With the four-team playoff system, those

last three games could be critical to season success. Although all three late-season opponents are projected at the bottom of the district, local fans know that 3A football is above all else, unpredictable.

Those familiar with Coach Blackwell will recognize the qualities of leadership, discipline and persistence which characterize his teams.

"We focus on what we can control," he summarized.

What is known about the '20 Yellowjackets is that they have a strong group up front, good size, and excellent game speed. The possible backfield combinations of Thomas Hooten, T.J. Moreland, Trevion Sneed and Dawson Pendergrass will

give defensive coordinators fits.

As with any season, the team will be identifying their leaders through the early practice sessions and pre-district games. The limit to scrimmages will make each snap critical in building the team.

Facing new opponents with a hungry team, Blackwell admitted, "I have high expectations, and these kids have high expectations."

As the season begins, Blackwell and his staff will be working to identify and build leaders.

"We emphasize leadership above all else," stated Blackwell. "We want to build productive young men through our program."

Football	
1	Thomas Hooten
2	Jaxon Holland
3	T.J. Moreland
4	Coy Anderson
5	Gustavo Sanchez
6	Julian Ramos
9	Drew Robertson
10	Riley Fowler
12	Levi Bowden
15	Lindley Trent
20	Dee Elshehaby
22	Dawson Pendergrass
23	Trevion Sneed
24	Kobe Kendrick
32	DJ Newsome
44	Oliver Barnes
50	Hunter Wright
52	Nate Griffin
53	Dawson Elmore
55	Kaleb Barton
56	Jackson Anderson
58	Kejuan Fite
60	Jesse Bowden
63	Joseph Martinez
99	Nathan Rojas

Volleyball	
1	Tahjae Black
2	Brittany Pickle
3	Valerie Garcia
4	Jaiden Gardner
5	Mylee Fischer
6	Alyssa Lankford
7	Madison Bloodworth
8	Riley Weekly
9	Kozbie Riley
10	Caidyn Anderson
12	Audrey Dowdle
13	Jojo Whitehead
14	Gracie Finely

Cross Country (boys)	
David Amador	
Dalton Crowson	
Cris Alejo	
Fernal Ventura	
Tristan Wells	
Omar Galaz	
Marco Medina	

Cross Country (girls)	
Keiley Riley	
Kapri Riley	
Riley Weekly	
Hannah Zoch	
Julianne Stanley	



Mineola varsity volleyball team

Mineola volleyball seeks leaders to replace grads

By JOHN ARBTER
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The Mineola Lady Jackets volleyball team is looking for its leaders.

The volleyball program lost the majority of the players from last-year's senior-heavy squad.

Coach TaShara Everett is confident though in the group that has committed to the program.

She notes that the number of athletes in the program is up from last year, with 38 players stepping forward to participate.

Four players, Tahjae Black, Mylee Fischer, Valerie Garcia and Brittany Pickle, are returning to the varsity squad.

Each had significant varsity playing time in 2019.

They will be joined by Caidyn Anderson, Jayden

Gardner, Alyssa Lankford and Riley Weekly. Several open spots remain, and the competition to round out the team is intense.

The influx of new faces to the team is exciting for Everett.

"Some of these kids have been coming up all summer to work on their individual skills," she commented, "and there is obvious improvement."

Everett's enthusiasm stems from her high energy level, a characteristic she expects from everyone on the team.

"We must have the same high energy level on Oct. 23 as we do at the season-opener," she explained.

The excitement of the upcoming season is amplified by the reassignment to a new competitive district.

The teams vying for the

district title are Harmony, Mt. Pleasant Chapel Hill, Mt. Vernon, Quitman and Winona.

The usual tournament-laden early season, and the delay of the start of the season for 5 and 6A schools necessitated a different approach to Mineola's pre-district season.

"We have had to travel more to secure matches for our pre-season," Everett ex-

plained.

Mineola also hosted a three-team round-robin to fill the void. On the 22nd they competed against Dangefield and Crossroads.

District play commences Sept. 22 as the Yellowjackets host Mt. Vernon.

The month-long district season concludes Oct. 23 at home against Chapel Hill.

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Mineola cross country anticipates banner year

By JOHN ARBTER
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Anticipation of the upcoming cross country season could not be higher for first-year Mineola head coach Shelby Turner.

Turner, who assisted with last year's team, is readying for what should be a historic year in Yellowjacket cross country.

"We have all of our girls returning, and they not only have a chance to go to the state meet but a chance to place in the state meet," Turner explained.

Led by stand-out performer Juliana Stanley – who qualified for state on individual merit – Turner described the team as a group who continually push themselves. "They are simply lights out," he noted.

In addition to the returning district champion girls team, Mineola will be fielding a full and competitive boys team as well.

The cross country pro-

gram is alive and well at Mineola schools.

Full varsity teams will be fielded. Junior varsity teams should be nearly full. Junior high participation is expected to be around 20 student-athletes.

With the UIL having pushed the start of the cross country season one full month to the right on the calendar, structured workouts did not commence until school convened.

The initial meet of the season will be Thursday, Sept. 10 at Hallsville.

The Jackets will host their annual Yellowjacket Invitational, Sept. 17, as one of four races before the district meet at Mt. Pleasant Chapel Hill on Oct. 24.

Mineola's program is structured on athletes clocking targeted times based off of the runners base times.

According to Turner, goal-setting, mental toughness, competitiveness and nutrition are the ingredients to cross country success.

A cross country athlete in



Mineola varsity cross country team

his youth, Turner is an exceptionally-strong proponent of the sport.

"This sport is completely you vs. yourself," he explained. "You can see who

the real competitors are as they must fight through the pain and agony of running distances at pace...it is one of the toughest things a person can do."

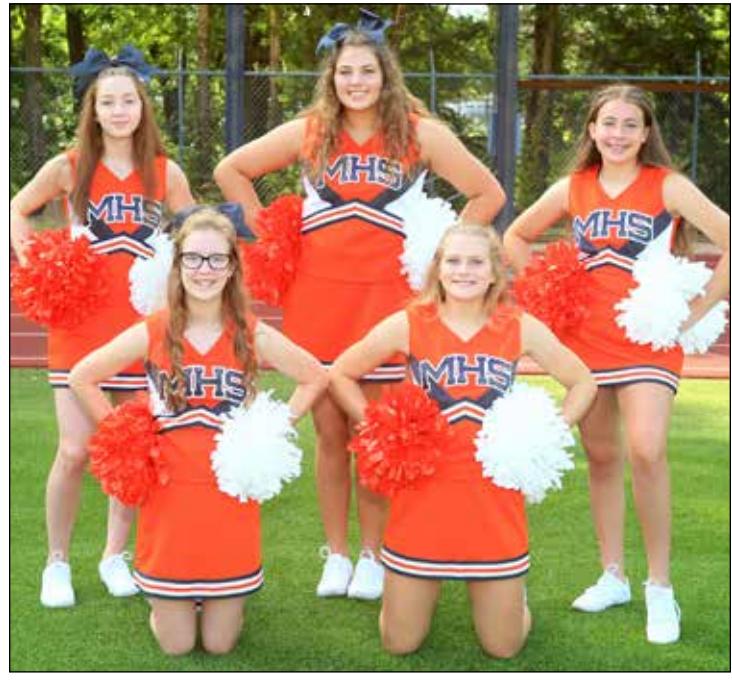
As with all sports this fall, there will be some virus-related logistic challenges. Fortunately, meets will remain open to spectators.

For a memorable glimpse

of the face of competition, one cannot go wrong by watching a cross country race in person.



Mineola varsity cheer squad



Mineola junior varsity cheer squad

A fall sports season unlike any other



After a spring and summer which seemed to last forever, fall is finally upon us. The unique environment in which we have lived for the past six months should lead to one of the most compelling and competitive fall sports seasons of all time.

There will surely be the collective memory of just how quickly sports (and life) can be taken from us. Athletes will be pushing to take advantage of every tick on the game clock. Also, with limited organized training having only recently commenced, the playing field will be as level as we could wish for.

Add to those circumstances, the significant changes brought about by UIL redistricting, and we have the conditions for an amazing fall campaign.



Mineola junior varsity football team

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Young Bulldogs seek to build on JV's success

By LARRY TUCKER
editor@wood.com

A young Quitman Bulldog team has high expectations for the coming football season. The Bulldogs have just seven seniors out for the team this year. There are high hopes sparked by last season's successful junior varsity team which hopes to step up to the varsity level. The Bulldogs are again short on numbers with a total of 45 players in the program which means there will be 20 to 22 players on varsity.

With the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, a lot of things have changed around the locker room and on the field. The Bulldog coaching staff set up protocols all summer with temperature checks, numerous water breaks and constantly checking on the player's health.

Athletic Director and head football Coach Bryan Oakes said his team had a core of players who are excited to be playing.

"We took the COVID-19 threat seriously, and our staff did a great job of taking care of business with the health of our student-athletes," he said. "We had a good summer and I was proud we had 13 kids who did not miss one day of our summer program. We also had several who just missed a day or two due to having



Quitman varsity football team

to work or family obligations. I am very proud of the young men who have been here and stayed faithful to our program."

The Bulldogs have moved to District 9-3A, Division II where they will face old foes Harmony, Arp, Troup, Grand Saline and Winona along with new member West Rusk. West Rusk drops to Division II after a successful run in Division

I, and the Raiders are one of the teams favored to win the district title.

"There is nothing easy about our district. Each week is going to be tough and we will have to be prepared. Our biggest problem will be our depth so we have to stay away from injuries," Oakes added. "We feel like we will be able to compete with anybody and we are ready to get started."

Junior Wyatt Hightower is expected to carry some of the load on offense. The speedy Hightower is an excellent runner and has good hands for pass catching skills, too. The quarterback position is two-deep with junior Gavin Oakes and sophomore Garin Kisinger taking snaps from Christian James. Oakes is a junior and a solid runner while sophomore Kisinger can also move out to wide receiver.

Senior Ty Holland may also see time taking snaps in certain formations. Holland will be the Bulldogs' go-to receiver when they pass. Holland has been on the varsity since he was a freshman and brings leadership and talent to the team. Junior wide-out Ford Tannebaum is also a bright spot in the receiving corps with his speed and ability

to make difficult catches.

Oakes feels the offensive line will be a strength this year with seniors James, Jonathan Lacy and Hunter Batchelder returning with each of them expected to see time on defense, too. Hayden Batchelder, Justin Mathews and Gavin Hammack will also be counted on for offensive and defensive

See QUITMAN Page 4B



Brooklyn Marcee



Addison Marcee



Maddy Pence



Lindsey Hornaday



Carley Spears



Ashley Davis

Tough new district faces Quitman

By LARRY TUCKER
editor@wood.com

The 2020 version of the Quitman Lady Bulldog varsity volleyball team will be much younger than in the past. This year's squad has just three seniors and very few players with extensive varsity experience.

The seniors are Lucy Brannon, Lindsey Hornaday and Halie Davis. Brannon has yet to be able to work out and play due to health problems (not COVID-19) which have plagued her since a bout with pneumonia earlier this summer.

The Lady Bulldogs are now in District 13-3A with Mt. Vernon, Harmony, Mineola, Mt. Pleasant Chapel Hill and Winona.

This also means a shift in the foes Quitman would face in the playoffs if they are one of the district's four teams to make it. District 14-3A has teams from New Boston, Hooks, Atlanta, DeKalb, Paul Pewitt, Redwater and Queen City.

Due to the COVID-19 problem, gone from this year's schedule are Class 5A and 6A teams who have yet to be able to begin their sea-

sons. Also, no tournaments are being allowed as teams turn to more dual matches involving three schools.

Filling out Quitman's team this year are juniors Brooklyn Marcee, Carley Spears, Ava Burroughs and Alexis O'Neal. Younger players will be expected to contribute strongly this year.

Talented sophomores Maddy Pence and Kaysi Parker along with freshmen Ashley Davis and Addison Marcee will see playing time.

Coach Ashley Lingo said the non-district schedule will allow the team to settle on effective rotations.

"Right now, we are using several combinations of rotations to find out who to put where," she said. "We do have experience with Ava, Lindsey and Lucy. Most of our juniors have had some varsity experience. We are working on finding a setter. We have used four different setters so far."

"Not having the usual off-season has been a problem," Lingo said. "Normally, we would have our positions and rotations set going

into the season and we are just now getting the time to practice. It was tough because after March we didn't even get to see each other. Practice is always important, but I feel like with all that has gone on, practice has become even more important. We need to get a lot out of our practice times."

The COVID-19 problems also kept many of the Lady Bulldogs from playing club ball or getting to go to volleyball camps this summer.

Although small in stature, Lingo said Addison Marcee has been impressive.

"I was impressed with Addison in our games at Hawkins. She's a little spitfire and is not intimidated very easily, she is definitely a spark plug out there," Lingo added.

Lingo said her junior class is talented.

"Ava has the most experience of anyone," she said. "Brooklyn always gives you everything she can in the way of hustle and determination. Carley has continued to improve and will be a big help and I am pleased with Alexis and her play on the back row."

Lingo said the ladies just

need to keep working.

"We still have a lot to work on at this point. I knew that going in, that we were going to be young," she said. "Not having a lot of off season hurt us. I really believe we can be competitive as long as we stay in the gym and work hard. Normally at this time we would have already played 10 games instead of just two."

This is Lingo's 10th year in education and her eighth year as head volleyball coach at Quitman.

"The new district will be tough," she said. "Mt. Vernon is always well-coached and talented. Harmony will have a good team. Chapel Hill has a new coach, but he is also the basketball coach who led them to a state championship. He is just a good coach. Mineola is going to be pretty good, but they have missed a lot of practice because of being quarantined, and Winona always has talented athletes."

What is the key to the season? "Staying healthy is our key for the season," she said. "I definitely think we can be a playoff team. We need to keep working hard



Kaysi Parker



Ava Burroughs



Halie Davis



Alexis O'Neal

and we must stay healthy and not have to ever quarantine. We will be competitive!"

District play will begin Sept. 22 when the Lady Bulldogs travel to Harmony. There will be 10 district

games with the season ending Oct. 23 at Winona.

Gone from district play for Quitman are Edgewood, Lone Oak, Grand Saline and Rains as they are in District 12-3A.

Volleyball

- 1 Brooklyn Marcee Jr.
- 2 Addison Marcee Fr.
- 3 Maddy Pence So.
- 4 Lindsey Hornaday Sr.
- 5 Carley Spears Jr.
- 6 Ashley Davis Fr.
- 9 Kaysi Parker So.
- 13 Lucy Brannon Sr. (not pictured)
- 14 Ava Burroughs Jr.
- 15 Halie Davis Sr.
- 10/20 Alexis O'Neal Jr.



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Hard work key for QHS success

By LARRY TUCKER
editor@wood.com

Quitman Cross Country Head Coach Mike Scott has taken over as girls and boys coach after spending the past few years as the Lady Bulldog mentor.

The Quitman boys team made the region finals the past two years, and Scott has four veterans who will be joined by three newcomers to the team.

Returning runners for the boys are Brandon Jimenez, Matthew Smith, Diego Osornio and Jack Tannebaum. Newcomers are Dakota Jimenez, Weston Pence and Christian Plata.

"My boy's team is really looking good with the guys I have running," Scott said. "I don't have any seniors this year so I have another year to work with these guys. They made it to regional the last two years, however, with the new district alignment we know that we have to work twice as hard to make it to region again."

That new district includes Harmony, Mt. Pleasant Chapel Hill, Winnsboro, Mineola, Mount Vernon, Winona and Quitman.

Scott is looking forward to a big year from his Lady Bulldog runners.

Returning girls are Madysen Pence, Alexa Flores, Citlaly Flores, Cristina Ramirez and Bonnie

VanderSchaaf. Newcomers are Addison Marcee, Mykenzy Miller and a returning runner from a year off is Cristal Plata.

"Madysen made it to regional last year as an individual runner," Scott said. "The girls are working hard to make it as a team this year. The seniors made it to region their freshman year and are trying to make it back."

Scott credits his runners with a desire to put in the hard work. "I know that with the new district everyone is in the mix for the top. We just have to work and put in just as much hard work as everyone else does and let the chips fall where they may," Scott noted. "This is my first year to do boys and girls together and I am very excited to have the opportunity to work with these kids that I have known for several years. They are great kids to be around."

Scott added he was happy with his runners' work ethic. "I am very pleased with the dedication that the kids have to the program," he said. "It shows every morning when they show up for practice. They may be tired and still asleep, but when I say go they are wide awake."

The District 13-3A meet will be Oct. 24 in Mount Pleasant.



GIRLS CROSS COUNTRY

Quitman varsity girls cross country team



BOYS CROSS COUNTRY

Quitman varsity boys cross country team



VARSITY CHEERLEADERS

Quitman varsity cheer squad

QUITMAN

From page 3B

sive line duties.

"We don't have a lot of numbers, but we do have experience on the offensive line. Christian James has moved to center and with the Batchelder brothers (Hunter

and Hayden), and Jonathan Lacy we should be able to move the football on the ground," Oakes said. "We expect a lot from our kids and they have responded good despite all the COVID stuff and missing out on a full off-season program. Our togetherness as a team will take us a long way."



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Expectations high for the 2020 Panthers

By JOHN ARBTER
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The excitement in the Alba-Golden field house is palpable.

"We have the chance to accomplish something really special," shared Head Coach Drew Webster. "All we need is the opportunity to play."

The reasons for Webster's excitement are many fold. Coming off a 2019 campaign which was plagued by significant injuries, the Panthers competed, but fell far short of their objectives.

However, those young underclassmen who fletched up due to injuries garnered valuable experience. They have also matured, both physically and mentally.

Webster expects his 30-man roster to be chock full of 185-pound athletes, many of them already tested by tough competition.

Offensively, the Panthers will expand on their traditional scheme. They will retain their patented fly toss, inside trap and sweep, but will allow quarterback Blake Weissert plenty of options to throw as well.

Webster leaned forward

as he spoke about the defensive line-up he expects to put together. Two defensive end stalwarts in Ryan Jackson and Boedy Baker combined with an extremely active linebacking corps of Michael Gaskill, Ethan Salinas and Sean Gaskill should make it tough sledding for Panther opponents.

The Alba-Golden coaching staff has applied the lessons from 2019.

"We have been focused on finishing – scoring from inside the red zone – since the end of last season," Webster explained.

Lastly, the team will start the season with a solid "two deep" lineup.

Alba-Golden's realignment from 3A to 2A doesn't lessen the challenges of the 2020 campaign at all. The district favorites field strong, well-prepared, mature teams.

Rivercrest, Wolfe City and Honey Grove are as tough as they come. Celeste, Cooper and Como-Pickton will challenge the Panthers with spread, pistol and slot T offenses, respectively.

Four pre-district games are on tap: the opener at Prairiland, home vs Big



Alba-Golden varsity football team

Sandy, away at Union Grove and home vs Cumby. That sets up the initial district match-up at Wolfe City Sept. 25.

The Panthers will then face Celeste and Cooper before a bye week. The remaining three district games (hosting Rivercrest, at Honey

Grove, and the home finale against Como-Pickton) will determine a playoff ticket.

Now in his second year at the helm, Webster and his staff have initiated a character-building program which is paying huge dividends among his athletes. The program endeavors to

reward positive character attributes while charging athletes to exercise responsibility for one another.

The positive changes among the young athletes have built an environment where there is "texture behind the excitement," Webster stated.

Webster described his team as the most unified group of kids he has been associated with in a long time.

Most importantly, he summarized, "The kids want to be here."

Indications all point to a memorable season for the Alba-Golden Panthers.



Alba-Golden varsity volleyball team

Lady Panthers putting the fun back in volleyball

By JOHN ARBTER
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Coach Jamie Webster's Alba-Golden Lady Panther volleyball side will have a new look this fall.

"We have significantly changed how we play the game of volleyball," she remarked.

Webster explained that although those changes are technical in nature, the real

change is that "we have put the fun back in it."

The 2019 volleyball season started with much promise.

Excellent showings in the early area tournaments against some strong competition held out much hope for the season.

As the season drew on, however, the inexperience of the young team frustrated their efforts.

Webster explained how

adversity in district play led to a creeping loss of confidence in their game.

The Lady Panthers were not able to restore their confidence during the season. Playing without confidence zapped the enjoyment from the game.

An off-season of reflection resulted in the two-pronged approach for the 2020 campaign: reinvigorate the enjoyment of the game, and

fundamentally change the method of playing volleyball.

Judging from a recent volleyball clinic, the team has bought in to both changes.

The Lady Panthers will have plenty of opportunity to excel.

District 18-2A is a combined volleyball district, with both 2A and 1A schools. Alba-Golden will play each 2A school

(Cumby, Como-Pickton, North Hopkins and Quinlan Boles) twice in district competition, while playing the four 1A schools once.

A month of pre-district single games – UIL has canceled the tournament season – commenced Aug. 7.

District play begins for the Lady Panthers on Sept. 8 at Miller Grove and wraps up Oct. 23 at home against Quinlan Boles.

Coach Webster reflected about her initial season with the Lady Panthers and shared that "we did not all believe in our abilities at the same time."

She has taken decisive action to remedy that situation.

In anticipation of the new season, she stated, "We have instituted new things to awaken the passion of volleyball."

Alba-Golden Football

2 Micah Smith	12 Thai Peterson
3 Aaron Graham	13 Nick Hallman
4 Kason Trimble	14 Jack Patton
6 Donald McVay III	15 Matthew Brewer
8 Caleb Anderson	22 Glenn Hartley
10 Blake Weissert	33 Boedy Baker
11 Hunter Wright	44 Ryan Jackson
	50 Ethan Salinas
	51 Dodge Gaines

12 Thai Peterson

13 Nick Hallman

14 Jack Patton

15 Matthew Brewer

22 Glenn Hartley

33 Boedy Baker

44 Ryan Jackson

50 Ethan Salinas

51 Dodge Gaines

54 Tyler Perez

55 Michael Gaskill

57 Shawn Gaskill

60 Eli Nivison

62 Eathan Thorn

64 Delivine Jones

65 Dakota Anglin

75 Jayden Green

88 Jerry Skinner

Volleyball

2 Skyler West

3 Kalli Wright

4 Amanda Stewart

5 Hope Wiley

6 Abby Hallman

7 Kayli Covey

9 Kaylee Anglin

12 Crimson Bryant

13 Cacie Lennon

22 Kamrin Wright

23 Autumn Whitten

Cross Country (girls)

Grace Knight

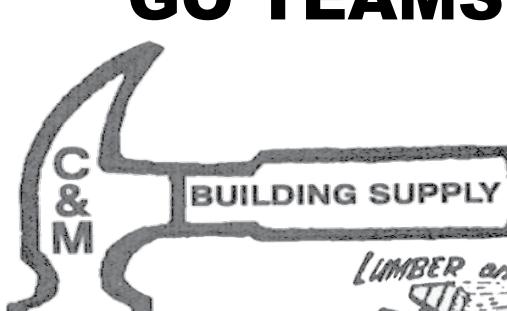
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AG cross country has high hopes

By JOHN ARBTER
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Alba-Golden cross country coach Corey Hass has high hopes for his charges in the upcoming season. "We will benefit from redistricting this year," he noted, "and more importantly, we have a strong group of runners."

The Panthers will be welcoming back two veterans, brothers Joey and Denver Beck, on a full boys team this fall, while four girls will also be competing.

The season commenced Aug. 29 at Gladewater. Meets at Canton (Sept. 11), Quitman (Sept. 17), a return meet to Gladewater (Oct. 3) and North Hopkins (Oct. 8) precede the district meet on Oct. 14.

Cross country is enjoying increased popularity

throughout East Texas, and Alba-Golden is no different.

"It is a great method for multi-sport athletes to stay in top shape," commented Hass. All of Hass' runners are multi-sport athletes.

The present public health environment will have a large impact on the conduct of cross country meets this year.

In addition to no free roaming of the course by spectators, the meets will be run on strict schedules which limit the number of runners present at any location.

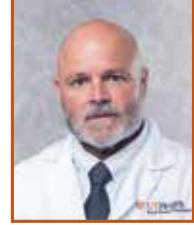
With this in mind, Hass is looking to create a cross country course on school property south of the softball field for next year.

Creating a course, he explained, would make cross country competition more manageable.

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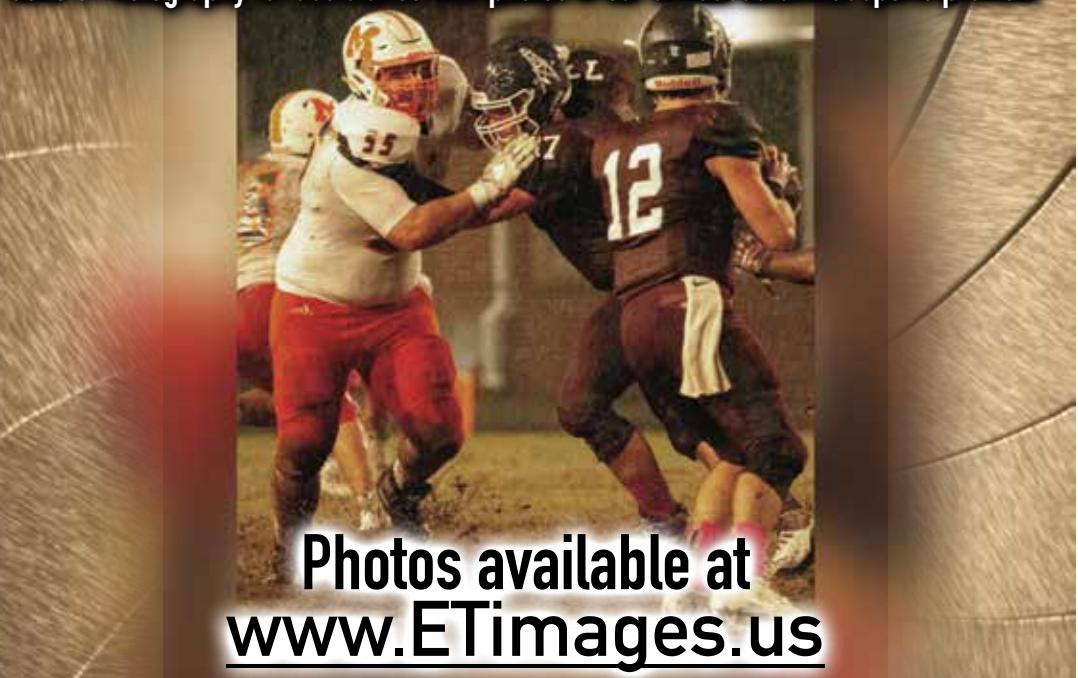


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The Wood County Monitor gratefully acknowledges the contributions of Gary Bright, Gene's Photography for assistance with photos in our annual autumnal sports preview.



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