

New coach faces old challenge at Mullin

By Mike Lee
Eagle Contributor

The Mullin Bulldogs have a new head football coach, but Regis Idemudia faces an old challenge. As in recent seasons, the Bulldogs must overcome a lack of numbers.

Mullin, which finished 5-5 last year and missed the playoffs because of a 48-46 loss to Brookesmith, has four experienced and decorated players in seniors Bobby Salinas and Dontrell Dale, junior Skyler Smith and sophomore Cody Knight. Also, Alex Porter is back with the program after last playing for Mullin in 2016. However, the Bulldogs have just four other players – all varsity newcomers, including three freshmen.

“Obviously, we have a lack of numbers, but we still expect to have a good team and make it to the playoffs. All our players will have to learn to play multiple positions,” said Idemudia, who previously was an assistant coach at his alma mater, Class 6A De Soto. Idemudia also started from scratch a six-man program at Stephenville Huston Academy and finished 12-17 in three seasons.

Idemudia is a former defensive lineman at Tarleton State. Thus, he’s hoping to bring a defensive mindset to Mullin, which allowed an average of 63 points in its five losses last year.

“We want to go get the ball

on defense,” Idemudia said. “I’m not talking about blitzing all the time, but I want us to be ball hawks. Everybody can make a play on every play if they’re running to the ball. And when we get there, we have to be good tacklers.

“I know six-man has a lot of high-scoring offenses, but you need some defense mixed in there, too, especially if we want to get to the playoffs. I believe defense wins championships.”

Salinas, a first-team all-district selection last year, returns at linebacker. “He should be our best defensive player,” Idemudia said of the 5-foot-10, 160-pound senior.

Dale, the Bulldogs’ fastest player, will play either defensive end or linebacker. Smith (6-1, 185) is a returning starter at defensive end, and the 6-3 Knight is penciled in at cornerback. Porter (6-2, 185) and newcomer C.J. Ferris (6-2, 280) will anchor the line.

The freshmen will be led by nose guard Trent Coston. Fellow freshmen Brian Moore (5-10, 160) and Travis Lytle (5-8, 160) are expected to fill line and linebacker roles.

Offensively, Salinas returns at running back after scoring 10 touchdowns and earning first-team all-district honors last season. Smith returns at center after making first-team all-district last year. Knight, a second-team all-district selection, is mov-

ing to quarterback. Dale was a state qualifier last spring in the Class 1A 100 meters.

“Bobby and Dontrell are both leaders for us,” Idemudia said. “They set the tone. Sometimes when I’m about to say something in practice, they beat me to the punchline. They hold the other players accountable.”

Porter and Ferris, a junior, will give the Bulldogs size and an upperclassmen presence in the line. The freshmen Coston, Moore and Lytle will help at end and in the line.

“One thing we need to do is run the ball,” Idemudia said of his J-Bird based offense. “We want to do it all on offense. We want to set up plays where people can block and we can run downhill. Dontrell is our speed guy. We need to get the ball

to him in the open field, either running or on dump-off passes.

“The players have really bonded. They want to work for it. Our true identity probably won’t come out until we’ve played a few games.”

Most preseason polls have picked Mullin to finish third in District 15-1A Division II behind former Division I team Blanket and Brookesmith. Sidney and Rising Star complete the district. None of the district’s five teams managed a winning record last year, and only Brookesmith made the playoffs.

The Bulldogs are seeking their first playoff berth since 2014 and their first district title since 2004.

