

25TH ANNIVERSARY

1993 Eagles were a near-perfect team for their era.

By Mike Lee
Eagle Contributor

Twenty-five years ago, the Class 2A state champion Goldthwaite Eagles were a model team for the times.

During an era when Texas high school football was still dominated by power-running offenses that moved the first-down chains and suffocating defenses that won championships, Goldthwaite had the near-perfect small-town team.

After being upset by archrival San Saba during the regular season, Goldthwaite won 10 straight games by an average of 27 points

on the way to the school's second state championship. During those 10 games, the Eagles shut out six opponents and allowed only 25 points. None of the final 10 opponents came closer than 10 points of the Eagles.

Goldthwaite was a smaller Class 2A high school, with just 19 varsity players before JV call-ups were added for the postseason. Still, the Eagles dominated the playoffs before there were Division I and Division II brackets. The Eagles shut out Jim Ned, Idalou and Springlake-Earth. The Eagles allowed seven points to Wall, seven to Pilot Point and eight

to Omaha Paul Pewitt in a 21-8 decision for the state championship.

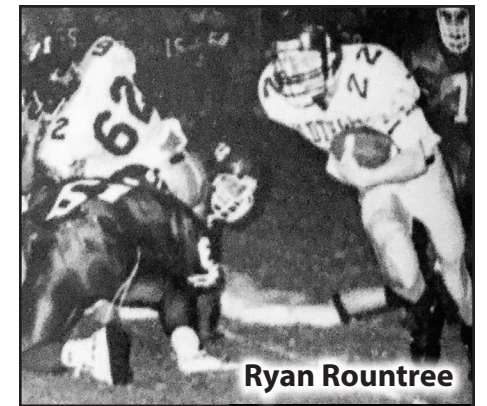
The Eagles had talent. The last two Goldthwaite players to play Division I college football are Keith Cockrum and Andy Beard. Cockrum, who later started for Texas Tech's defense, was the Eagles' quarterback and a defensive back in 1993. Beard, later a deep-snapper for Rice, was Goldthwaite's full-back and middle linebacker in '93. Bryan Jernigan, a receiver and defensive back, played college ball for a while at Division II Angelo State.

Behind Beard, Cockrum and Jernigan was a hard-nosed group of small-town football players straight out of Central Casting. They weren't lightning-fast, but most were tall and rangy. They were tough, stubborn and determined – the type of players 2A teams in the 1990s needed to win on Friday night. Players like linemen Jory Sutherland and Travis King, halfbacks Ryan Rountree and Heath Nuckolls, linebacker Michael Geeslin, tight end Jon Robello, and monster (rover) Cheyenne Horton.

"Nobody cared who scored the touchdowns as long as we won. It was a team deal," Jernigan said. "We played hard for each other and our coaches. There just weren't any huge egos."

Many 1993 players mention their coaches, especially head coach and offensive play-caller Gary Proffitt and defensive coordinator Tim Spradley. They were opposite personalities – Proffitt was quieter and kept to himself while Spradley was more vocal and wore emotions on his sleeves. Together, though, they formed a dynamic duo, and both were in their coaching prime in 1993.

The '93 Eagles were coming off a surprise appearance in the 1992



state championship game, but the Cinderella season had ended with a 35-20 loss to Schulenburg.

"We found motivation from the year before," Rountree said. "We were not even picked to win our district in 1992, but we went to state. A lot of that momentum carried over. We were ranked No. 1 or No. 2 in the state going into the '93 season, depending on what poll it was.

"But we still had something to prove. We still had to finish the job."

Suddenly, though, state-ranked Goldthwaite found itself in a must-win situation after a stunning 13-6 loss to San Saba left the Eagles with a 2-1 district record with four games remaining in the regular season. Only the top two teams from each district made the 2A playoffs in 1993.

"The realization was that our season could be over the next week. We couldn't lose another district game or we were out of the playoffs," Rountree said. "From that point forward, football was serious."

Goldthwaite finished the regular season by beating Albany, Dublin, Cisco and Bangs by a combined 137-3. The Eagles won district after San Saba suffered injuries and didn't even make the playoffs.

"My biggest fear was basketball season," Sutherland said.

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