

2016 Non-District Eagle Opponents

By Mike Lee
Eagle Contributor

Mason Punchers

Enrollment: 217 (Class 2A Division I).
Last Year's Record: 11-1, 6-0 in district.
Last Playoff Appearance: 2015.
Last District Title: 2015.

Head Coach: Kade Burns, sixth year at Mason; eighth year overall.

Head Coach's Record: 75-11 overall, 60-5 at Mason.

Returning Experience: 14 lettermen, 5 offensive and 6 defensive starters.

Players to Watch: RB-DB Haddon Hudson, 5-10, 170, Sr.; OL-DL Michael Jefferson, 5-10, 240, Sr.; FB-LB Baylee Owen, 6-0, 190, Sr.; OL-LB Riley Pape, 6-1, 200, Sr.; RB-LB Americo Alvarez, 5-10, 165, Jr.; RB-DB Emanuel Martinez, 5-8, 170, Jr.; QB-DB Bode McMillan, 6-0, 150, Jr.

Strengths: tradition, physicality, work ethic.

Weaknesses: speed, inexperience at offensive skill positions.

Key Stats: The Punchers lost 17 seniors from last year, including QB Seth Hudson and decorated lineman Luke Gillespie. RB Haddon Hudson rushed for 878 yards and 18 TDs last year, but was slowed after a

Week 8 injury. He has rushed for 25 TDs in the last two seasons. LB Riley Pape made 102 tackles last year while DL Michael Jefferson added 65 stops. ... Mason averaged 41 points per game last season and allowed 8. The Punchers' defense logged five shutouts last year, and allowed only 54 points in the first 11 games before allowing 42 in a playoff loss to Refugio.

Noteworthy: With 90 wins over the last eight seasons, including 17 in the playoffs, Mason is enjoying its best eight-year run in school history. ... Mason has won 27 straight district games, dating to a 42-7 loss to Goldthwaite in 2010. During that streak, the Punchers have outscored their district opponents by a combined 1,285-217. ... Mason leads its series with Goldthwaite 23-22, but the Punchers have won the last five games by an average of 41-11.

Jim Ned Indians

Enrollment: 335 (Class 3A Division I).
Last Year's Record: 5-6, 3-3 in district.
Last Playoff Appearance: 2015.
Last District Title: 2004.

Head Coach: Jerod Womack, second year at Jim Ned; second year overall.

Coach's Record: 5-6.

Players to Watch: RB-LB Pierce Atchi-

son, 6-2, 200, Sr.; WR-DB Conner Akins, 6-1, 165, Sr.; QB-DB Dillon McCoy, 5-11, 160, Jr.; WR-DB Coalby Rives, 5-11, 155, Jr.; FB-LB Tyler Lockley, 6-2, 190, Sr.; OL Chandler Smith, 5-10, 205, Sr.

Strengths: taste of success last year, improved numbers.

Weaknesses: inexperienced offensive skill players, lack of tradition.

Key Stats: Jim Ned lost a 2,000-yard passer, a 1,100-yard rusher and three receivers that combined for 80 catches last year. WR Conner Akins returns after catching 16 passes for 3 TDs last year. Dil-

lon McCoy combined for 272 yards rushing and receiving last year, but may move to quarterback. DB Coalby Rives had 65 tackles and 2 interceptions last year while LB Pierce Atchison made 76 tackles. LB Tyler Lockley made 30 stops last year while DB Akins intercepted 2 passes. ... Jim Ned averaged 28 points per game last year, but allowed 35.

Noteworthy: Goldthwaite and Jim Ned have played seven times previously, with the Eagles holding a 5-2 advantage.

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Eagles, continued

around returning letterman Coleton Watson, along with Henry Valencia, Elderton, Perez, Gaspar, Horton and Hohertz.

An experienced secondary is led by Christian Valencia, who intercepted three passes last year. Garcia made 53 tackles last year as a sophomore, and Williams was starting last year before his injury. Seward has started the last two seasons when healthy. Jones and Schwartz will provide secondary help.

"Just in knowledge of the defense, we're

way ahead of where we were last year," Howard said. "We had a lot to teach last year. We have better overall team speed on defense this year, and that excites me."

To defend its district title, Goldthwaite must beat Crawford, which has eliminated the Eagles from the playoffs the last two years. Crawford, a state semifinalist last year, and Valley Mills joined District 7-2A DI this year along with returning members De Leon, Goldthwaite, Hamilton, Hico and San Saba.

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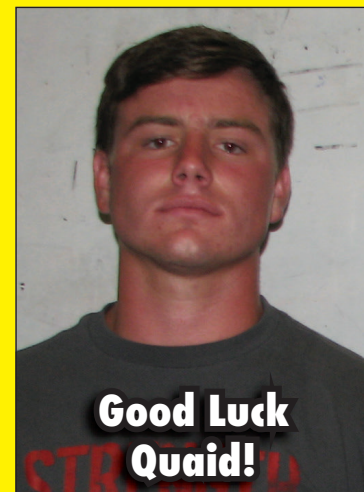
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