



New district provides new hope for Bulldogs

By Mike Lee
Eagle Contributor

A reshuffled, wide-open district should help the Mullin Bulldogs in their bid to end a one-year absence from the Class 1A Division II playoffs.

The Bulldogs also have a dozen players – about three more than usual – this year, which also brightens their outlook. Even so, staying healthy is always a key to success in six-man football.

“We would have made the playoffs last year if we had stayed healthy. We were leading Cherokee (in the playoff-deciding game) 30-6 before we got two of our running backs injured,” veteran Mullin coach Benny Weaver said.

Mullin eventually lost to Cherokee 75-36, and the Bulldogs were forced to forfeit a district game after injuries led to a lack of players. Mullin eventually finished 4-6 last season.

Mullin lacks experience this season with just five returning starters, but the UIL realignment improved the Bulldogs’ playoff hopes by moving Richland Springs to another district. Richland Springs is the defending Class 1A Division II state champion with seven state titles in the last 12 years.

Instead, Mullin is now in District 12-1A Division II with Panther Creek, Sidney, Gustine and Brookesmith. Those five

teams combined for a 15-35 record last year and none made the playoffs. The only one of the five to finish with a winning record (Sidney) has a new coach.

“With Richland Springs in the district, the rest of us were playing for second place,” Weaver said. “Now it’s wide open. We feel pretty good about our situation if we can develop five or six players.

“We’re still young. We’ll start four freshmen and sophomores on offense and three on defense. We’ll work slowly to develop them and come on strong at the end, I hope. It’ll be a learning experience, but we hope to be where we need to be by district.”

The Bulldogs will have six nondistrict games in which to develop the younger players.

Offensively, 140-pound junior Ricky Dela Rosa is expected to take over at quarterback after overcoming injuries to make all-district at defensive back last year. Jacob Lavy, a 6-foot-1, 250-pound senior, is a big target at tight end.

Newcomers will fill out the backfield, including freshman Kameron Spivey and Jiles Wooton, a sophomore transfer from Goldthwaite.

“Our quarterbacks and running backs are pretty much interchangeable. I like to do that so if we get somebody hurt, we can move somebody in there with

some experience at handling the ball,” said Weaver, whose offense averaged 62 points per game last year.

Joining Lavy at end will be freshman Jackson Wooton, a transfer who has played 11-man ball at Goldthwaite. Sophomore Bobby Salinas and freshman Alex Porter (5-11, 165) are the top candidates at center.

On defense, Dela Rosa returns in the secondary, along with senior Bryer Williams at nose guard and Lavy in the line. Jackson Wooton and Alex Porter will also help in the line.

Kameron Spivey and Jiles Wooton are the projected starters at linebacker.

Additional help could come from Salinas and sophomore Mason Spivey at linebacker, as well as freshmen Skyler Smith (6-0, 185) and Nicholas Allyn (5-9, 175) in the line. Junior Jace Porter also is a line prospect.

The Bulldogs will seek to improve a defense that allowed 69 points per game last year.

“Not being able to go six-on-six in practice really causes a problem on defense because we can’t show the kids exactly what they’re going to see on Friday night and how to react to it,” Weaver said. “If we have 12 players this year, we can do a better job of teaching them defensive techniques.”

2016 MULLIN BULLDOGS SCHEDULE

| Date | Opponent | Time |
|----------|------------------------|-----------|
| Aug. 26 | Lometa | 7:30 p.m. |
| Sept. 2 | at Rising Star | 7:30 p.m. |
| Sept. 9 | Cranfills Gap | 7:30 p.m. |
| Sept. 16 | at Veribest | 7:30 p.m. |
| Sept. 23 | at B’wood Victory Life | 7:30 p.m. |
| Sept. 30 | Rochelle | 7:30 p.m. |
| Oct. 7 | at Sidney* | 7:30 p.m. |
| Oct. 14 | Brookesmith* | 7:30 p.m. |
| Oct. 21 | at Gustine* | 7:30 p.m. |
| Oct. 28 | Open | |
| Nov. 4 | Panther Creek* | 7:30 p.m. |

* District 12-1A Division II games

Coaches: Benny Weaver, Michael Weaver, Ron Copeland and Randy Sims (Athletic Director).