

# FAITH ACADEMY RAMS

## Rams' seniors lead the way



Photo by John O'Dell/Call News

### Big group is key to getting Rams into a Class 5A, Region 1 playoff spot

Faith Academy has a large batch of as many as 18 seniors on this year's team, and the veteran leadership will be crucial if the Rams are to make the playoffs in very tough Class 5A, Region 1. Since the Rams moved over from AISA to the Alabama High School Athletic Association, the football team has never been in a playoff game.

## SENIORS: Faith Academy football leaders say team and school are like a family

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**Mills:** When we head outside, we put new stuff in, we line up formations and make sure we're doing everything right.

**Elliott:** The biggest thing is in the weight room. God's blessed us, and Faith Academy has blessed us a lot. It's made a huge difference.

**Q: What did it mean to break the losing streak in the middle of the 2016 season?**

**Bell:** It was really tough, but it also motivated us to push and work harder to get out on Friday nights and give everything we have. Everybody was behind us, and it united us to want it even more, to practice harder and push each other.

**Mills:** It was hard going through that time without wins; some days you didn't want to go out there and practice. You had to push yourself to get out there and make a difference.

**Elliott:** It was a great feeling, all the hard work that we put in paid off, all that grinding. It's reaping and sowing, putting in hard work and it showed out. That's what it's all about.

**Q: Did getting the first win at home help the team for the two road victories that were to follow last year?**

**Bell:** That first one against Gulf Shores boosted our morale; even though they were road wins, it was tough but we were giving it all we had and we had so much confidence going in.

**Mills:** After we won against Gulf Shores at home, it gave us the momentum to go out and win those two games on the road. I just felt like everybody thought that now that we'd won one, we could keep on winning.

**Elliott:** Gulf Shores was definitely the turning point to show everybody how you can do this. It helped us a lot. It was tough traveling, but we did that.

**Q: What will it take for Faith Academy to move up a couple of standing levels in Region 1 of Class 5A, enough to get into the playoffs?**

**Bell:** It's going to take everybody pushing each other and coming together as one. We're a big family here where everybody loves each other. Nobody has a beef here with anybody. We're not selfish here; we're here to help everyone to get better.

**Mills:** We've got to play a full game, first through the fourth quarter, and to take everything we've learned on the practice field and put it in the game and make everything perfect.

**Elliott:** We need to be the best Faith we can be, no scoreboard watching. You play the game, every snap. It doesn't matter what adversity you face, you have to overcome it and keep playing and never give up.

**Q: Name your strongest point and the one thing that, right now, you need to work on to improve your game.**

**Bell:** Probably my strongest point is unselfishness. If I throw a bad ball or if someone drops a pass, I'm going to take the blame on me. I'm not going to talk them down. You don't want your players hating on you because you talk bad about them. I love every single person on this team. My weakest point is probably my feet. Sometimes I don't move them as fast as I need to, but that's something I can work on and get better at.

**Mills:** My weakest is probably my feet getting off the line, but I know it's something I can work on to get better. My strong point is catching balls; I spend many hours every day just catching balls, even at home throwing with my little brother in the back yard.

**Elliott:** My weakest is recognizing routes and my feet, but we always run ladders and do a lot of foot work. I say my strongest points is that I am a senior now and I've gotten stronger and a lot more physical. I'm not scared to come across the middle.

**Q: What has the Faith experience meant to you personally?**

**Bell:** We're just a big family here. Everybody loves everybody else. It's not like going to a public school where you have your cliques. We hang out with everybody here, and everybody is welcome. We don't put anybody down or talk bad about anybody here. The experience of being on the baseball and the

football team has been one that I will never forget.

**Mills:** I feel that going to Faith Academy has made me who I am. I have been going here since K-3, pretty much my whole life. Playing baseball and football has gotten me much closer to people.

**Elliott:** I have been here just about ever since I was a baby, just like Parker, and it's just been a great big family. I love everything about this school; it's great. Whether it's on or off the field and has anything to do with sports, we're a family. Everybody has a purpose, and everybody is loved and cared for.

All three said that they have roles on the football team's special teams, and Bell, during the interview, was informed by head coach Jeff Estes that the staff wants him to start taking some snaps as a punter as well.

Each player was, as were several others on hand on the interview day, particularly grateful for the new weight training center that has opened and is part of the Faith sports experience.

The weight training center came partly with generous funding from a well-known Faith Academy alumnus, Josh Donaldson, the Toronto Blue Jays' third baseman and the 2015 American League Most Valuable Player.

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