

JACKSON AGGIES

QB Christian 'proven winner' for Jackson

BY LEEQUINTON BLACKMON
Call News Correspondent

According to Jackson head coach Danny Powell, there is only one way to describe senior quarterback Cooper Christian.

"He is a proven winner," Powell said, "And I think he has shown that."

Christian showed everyone that Powell's description of him was an accurate one when he became the full-time starter last season and let Jackson to their third straight appearance in the Class 5A semi-finals.

Despite the success that Christian had in his first season as the Aggies' starter, he says becoming the starting quarterback wasn't an easy transition to make.

"Coming in off of JV and replacing a player like Demarcus Williams isn't easy," he said. "It's a lot of pressure, and I just had to learn how to handle it and play under pressure."

Even though Christian was coming into a pressure packed position, Powell said that he was confident in the young signal caller's ability to play under that pressure and lead Jackson.

"He did a good job for us last year," Powell said. "He started all the games last year. So, he has a lot of experience. We wanted him to come in and play his type

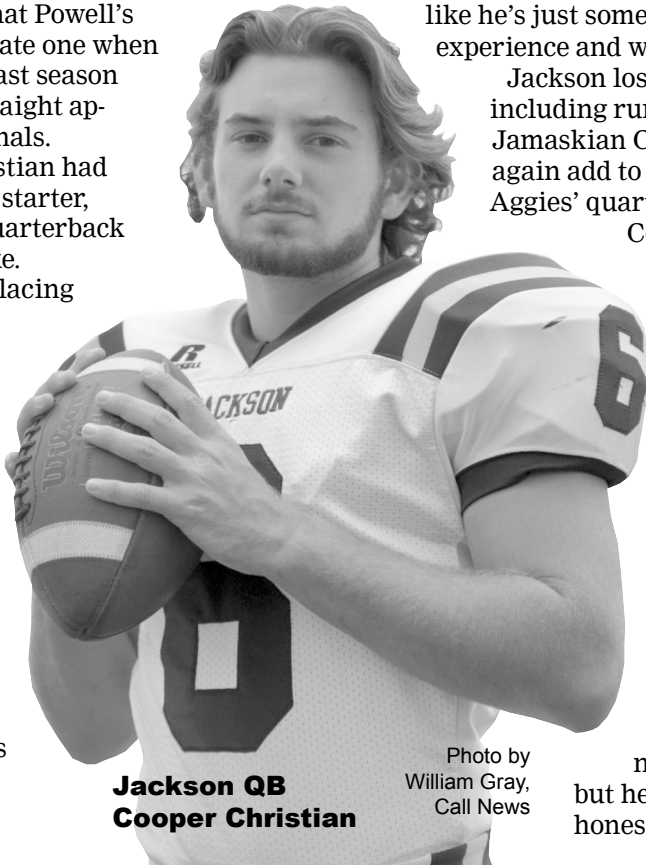
of game. He's a little bit of a different player than Demarcus was, because he's not that type of runner. But, he's a very accurate passer who's able to throw the ball long and short and can get us in what we need to be in offensively. Our offense is really based on the quarterback having to make good decisions, and he showed that he could do that.

Last year he did carry us to the semi-finals, so it's not like he's just somebody off the block. He's got a lot of experience and we're confident in him."

Jackson lost a lot from their offense last year, including runningbacks Michael Phillips and Jamaskian Chapman, which is going to once again add to the pressure Christian faces as the Aggies' quarterback.

Considering the possibility that Jackson is going to utilize a 'runningback by committee' approach this season, Powell says that Christian will be counted on to add some scrambling ability to his game.

"Cooper knows he's got to be a leader on offense," coach Powell said. "I think he'll probably run it a little bit more this year than he did last year. He put on some muscle, so he's probably about 15 pounds heavier than he was last year. I think he's stronger and more physical this year, so we'll let him run it a little. He's not going to be the primary runner, but he'll be somebody to keep the defense honest."



**Jackson QB
Cooper Christian**

Photo by
William Gray,
Call News

JACKSON: Aggies have several runners vying for time

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Jackson's best prospect heading forward.

"He's a lot like Handy when you look at him," coach Powell said. "He's 6'1, 6'2, runs well, makes plays on the ball, and he's going to be that guy that comes over and plays offense, similar to what Handy did. He had a couple of touchdown catches in the spring game, which was the first time he had ever been on offense. I wouldn't say he'll be a clone or anything, but he'll be our 'Ken Handy' type guy this year."

Even though Pritchett will help Jackson maintain some of its familiarity on defense, the Aggies' offense will be a different story.

Jackson relies on an effective run-pass option to get the ball moving on offense. Senior quarterback Cooper Christian will be leading the way for the offense once again this season, but the running back position is among a few positions that still has yet to be settled. What this means is that Aggie fans may have to wait a while before they can see that every down type of running back they're

used to seeing.

"We've still got to battle for a lot of positions," Powell said. "One of those positions is running back. I don't think we'll have that one guy at running back this year. I think it'll be two or three guys coming in the game for us. It may be one guy this week that stands out and gets the majority of the load, and next week it might be another one. I might get fooled once we get in pads and we may have one emerge ahead of the other ones. But right now, we feel good with three or four different guys back there."

"I feel fine in what we can do on offense this year," Christian said. "I have faith in all of our runningbacks. They've been putting in the work, so we'll see this year. But we're still a team and I think all of us have to come in as better players than we were this time last year."

Aside from adding 15 pounds of to his frame over the offseason, the 5'10 QB has also been working on improving his game. While most quarterbacks are focusing on getting faster and throwing harder, Christian says that he placed his focus on getting better at doing the little things.

"I've basically been working on the mechanics, the footwork, and my posture in the pocket," he said. "I know that doesn't sound like a lot of fun or anything like that, but those are the kind of things I knew I had to focus on over the offseason. With me, it's all about the little things that most people really don't think about from the quarterback position, but it's very important to focus on the small things. The small things are just as important as the big things. Everybody likes to focus on arm strength and speed, which is important, but footwork and going through your progressions are just as important."

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