

MARY G. MONTGOMERY VIKINGS

MGM's Daniel ready to take the reins as QB

BY ARTHUR L. MACK
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It has to be tough when you have to replace a quarterback that gave you a big offensive boost with his arm and legs and got you to within two minutes of getting a playoff berth.

But with Cullan O'Shea having graduated, senior Jacoby Daniel will be relied upon to pull the trigger for the Vikings.

Daniel, who was out last season because of injury, is back at 100 percent. And he would like nothing better than to prove that he can be a solid signal caller—not to mention putting behind a bitter, season-ending loss to Baker, which dashed the Vikings' playoff hopes.

"During the game, I was still being vocal on the sidelines, trying to get everybody up," he said. "After we scored the go-ahead touchdown, everybody was happy and we thought we were going to the playoffs. I was just trying to keep their minds focused. The learning experience was that you've got to play every down, you've got to win every down."

Now that this is 2017, the quarterbacking job falls on Daniel's shoulders.

"It feels good (knowing that I'm the starter), but I'm ready to get to the season and see what we can do (as a team), and see how far we can make it," he said. "I think we can make it pretty far."

Daniel learned a lot, especially playing behind O'Shea.

"I've been a quarterback for my whole life, but when I got to high school I learned more things," he said. "Cullan taught me a lot of things at quarterback, and my past quarterback coaches helped me on reading defenses and about footwork. Now that I've got the keys, I've got to go to work."

"He's big and strong, and he's a good decision-maker," said new Vikings head coach Chris Wilson.

"He doesn't have a lot of in-game experience, and we're trying to deal with that. But he's handling himself with the offense."

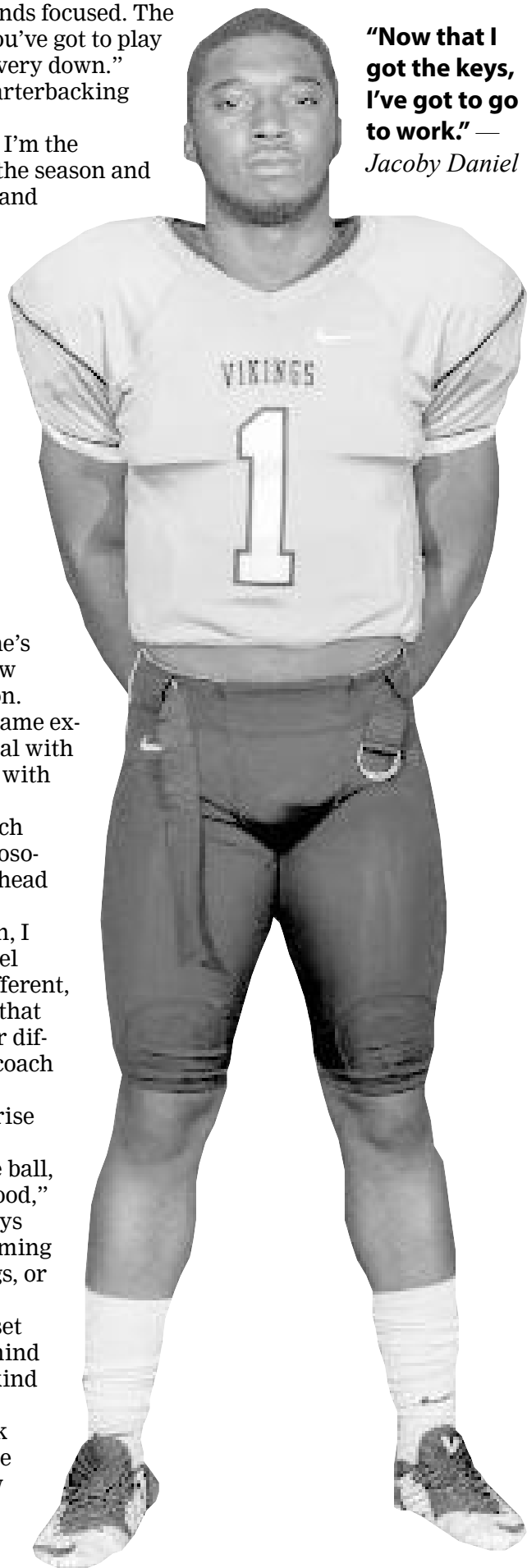
Daniel said there wasn't much of a difference in coaching philosophy when Wilson took over the head coaching duties.

"When coach Wilson came in, I felt he was already there," Daniel said. "He wasn't trying to be different, he was just himself, and I liked that about him. There were no major differences between his style and coach (Brian) Seymore's style."

Daniel said MGM will surprise some people offensively.

"On the offensive side of the ball, I think we're going to be very good," he said. "We have some good guys coming back, and some guys coming in. I might beat you with my legs, or I might beat you with my arm."

"I think that my greatest asset is that I can beat you with my mind also," he said. "It's going to be kind of hard to stop us. The primary thing about being a quarterback is to be a great leader and set the example. But you've got to show up, you've got to be there at the big moments."



"Now that I got the keys, I've got to go to work." — Jacoby Daniel



"We can make one phone call, and in 20 minutes we can have some parents that are willing to come out." — MGM coach Chris Wilson

Can Wilson make Vikings a winner?

It can happen, and veteran coach says having an engaged community is key

BY ARTHUR L. MACK
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When Chris Wilson took over as Mary G. Montgomery's head football coach in late February after Brian Seymore resigned to take over as head coach at Demopolis, he knew that helping the Vikings get on the winning track would take some time.

After all, Wilson was the fifth head coach for MGM in five years, and getting in a new system was going to take top priority.

"I've seen some of the struggles in the past seasons and (I want) to try and mend some of those things and create some stability. I think all this program needs is stability at leadership positions, and it'll begin to take off on its own."

It's a tall order, but Wilson has the background to make it happen. He spent the last two seasons at Class 3A Straughn High School, located in Andalusia, making the playoffs both years despite having losing seasons.

Wilson, though, is bet-

ter known for his success at Washington County, where the Bulldogs had a record of 57-12 during his five seasons there. While at Washington County, his teams reached the 2A championship finals in 2012 and 2013—losing to Tanner each time 28-14 and 21-13 respectively—and the 2A semifinals in 2014, losing to Elba 21-14.

After talking with several people who were connected with Mary G. Montgomery, and the fact it placed him closer to family, Wilson was more than ready to take the head coaching job.

"I had a strong belief after meeting with the administration and talking to a lot of people," he said, "and I had the luck

of meeting several people who previously attended MGM, so I talked with a lot of people who were involved with the program, not just athletically but in the band and other organizations and asked them if they liked having their kids go there."

The question is, with MGM being a community school as are Washington County and Straughn, is a playoff berth in the cards for the Vikings this year, after they came within one win last year of making the playoffs for the first time since 2002?

It could happen, especially if the community is involved.

See **WILSON**, 30C



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