

# ST. PAUL'S SAINTS

## Saints determined to beat rivals at home

BY DARRON PATTERSON  
Call News Correspondent

St. Paul's is not happy. Seriously, the Saints are very angry. They're mad at themselves, their opponents, their season, their pets, the crossing guards, cafeteria people ... just about anything the Saints can think of to be upset about the way 2016 went, they are.

And the perennial 5A, Region 1 title contenders are on a mission to do something about it.

Where do they start? "Win the home games first," said head coach Steve Mask, 58-12 overall entering his sixth season as leader of the Saints.

"We lost three games at home last year, which is unacceptable.

"AND," he continued, with added emphasis, "we lost to all three of our biggest rivals ... Vigor (for the region championship), Jackson in the playoffs and we lost to UMS.

"If we can correct those two things, winning our home games and beating our biggest rivals, we've got a chance to have a great year.

"We've got 25 seniors coming back and we've made it a point of emphasis (winning our home games), that's for sure."

Translation: St. Stanislaus (MS), Wilcox Central, Dothan, hated Jackson and Faith Academy will all be unwelcome guests at E.E. Delaney Stadium.

Arguably, the most important of those returning seniors Mask mentioned is quarterback Swift Lyle (6-foot-3, 185 pounds), thrown into the fray last year with virtu-

ally no experience following the departure of two-year starter Miller Mosley to the Air Force Academy.

"I think he's matured," said Mask. "It was tough to come in as a starter as a junior and follow what had been in front of him, with little or no game experience. But we put a little too much pressure on him."

Already pressed to be the leader, that pressure on Lyle unexpectedly increased last year when the injury bug bit his offensive backfield.

"We'd lost a couple of running backs to graduation that were pretty good, and a couple of guys coming back to fill those spots broke collarbones within four days of each other," said Mask of now junior A.J. Finley (6-0, 180), this year's starter at running back, and sophomore Jordan Ingram (6-0, 177).

"So I feel like our tailback situation is a lot better this year to take the pressure off of him."

Starting outside linebacker Daniel Beard (6-1, 194), who had 700 yards on the ground after being forced into action due to those injuries, will also get some time at running back as will sophomore Reggie Bracy (6-1, 188), who carried a few times in the playoffs as a ninth-grader.

But, make no mistake, its Mask's seniors who'll have to show up if St. Paul's hopes to regain the region crown it lost on a last-

second field goal to Vigor last season.

St. Paul's regrouped and made it all the way to the third round of the playoffs, but lost to another region rival, Jackson, 35-9, to end the season at 9-4.

Among those seniors looking to turn things around is cornerback Jalyn Armour-Davis (6-1, 174), who also plays wide receiver, returns kicks and is ranked the second-best player in the state behind Mountain Brook running back Harold Joiner according to 247 Sports Recruiting Service.

More upperclassmen who Mask said "need big years" to help Lyle include wide receiver Jarrett Eaton (5-8, 150), tight end/H-back Oliver Willman (6-4, 230) tackle Will Eiland (6-4, 275), guards Dillard Doggett (6-4, 195) and Ryan Kennedy (6-3, 210), center Clayton Elder (6-2, 190) and tight end Wilson Krause (6-2, 180).

Defensively, Louisiana-Lafayette commit Beard will start at one outside linebacker spot, while Carnes Kirby (5-11, 185) will go at strong safety.

"We had too many turnovers last year and we didn't play very good defense," lamented Mask.

"If you turn the ball over on offense and you don't play very good defense, you're going to get beat.

"We gave up way too many points overall as a team and that's one area we've got

to gain back.

"We've always been known as a tough, hard-nosed defensive team and I think we bumped our heads there a little bit last year."

The Saints will also be uncharacteristically known as a fast team this time, too.

"We don't have a lot of great bulk, but we're real tall ... we're tall all across the board on both sides of the ball, and we're fast," Mask said.

"We don't have a lot of heavy kids. We've got a lot of those 190 (pound) to 225, 235 type kids, but we're going to be a long, lanky, strong team."

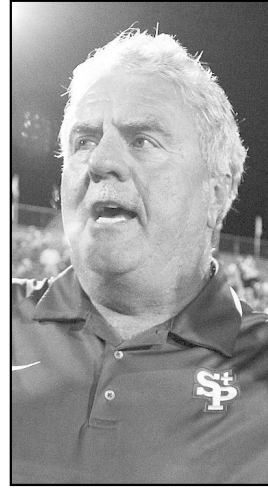
"We're going to utilize our speed on both sides on the ball. I think we can run, and I think we can score. And we're very strong in the kicking game."

One other weapon they'll bring back to the table is deadly accurate placekicker Wilson Beaverstock, who also handles the punting.

"He's back for his fourth year, but he actually started kicking as an eighth-grader. He's great as a placekicker and really great as a punter. Most kickers have to walk on (in college), but he's getting looks from some Ivy League schools, Army, UAB."

It all appears to be setting up nicely for the Saints, but you've still got to play the game, a fact Mask knows only too well.

"We're just hoping to get back to being a factor ... where we need to be. I think this team has great leadership and desire to get back to where we were and, hopefully, our appetite (to win) is better than what it was."



Steve Mask

## THEODORE BOBCATS

### Bobcat togetherness may bring victories

BY ARTHUR L. MACK  
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After last season — which could best be described as a roller coaster ride — the Theodore Bobcats feel they have something to prove.

The Bobcats went 5-5, missing the playoffs, but won two of their last three games to help create some momentum for the upcoming season. And thanks to some seniors on the team, notably defensive tackle Timaje Porter, quarterback Trevor Andrews and defensive back Tyrone Hall, Theodore is a lot closer as a team than in past years.

"This team is probably a lot closer than my previous teams," head coach Eric Collier said. "We went through the offseason with 'One Heartbeat,' and that's going to be our theme, and we're there. I feel really good about this bunch, and I told Timaje a long time ago that this team has the potential to be something special.

"They bought into everything that we tried to do, and more than anything else, it's more about others than themselves. In high school athletics, it's supposed to be more about others, and being a great teammate, put others before yourself."

"This year, we're more like a family," said Hall. "We've really gotten comfortable around each other. We feel like we can accomplish big things. Last year, (the defense) was pretty good, but this year, the bond (team-wise) is better."

Collier said that it's not necessarily making the big plays that make a successful program.

"It's the small things," he said. "It's being where you're supposed to be and when you're supposed to be there. It's about doing things the coaches ask you to do."

Offensively, the Bobcats will concentrate on the run, even though there was a lot of throwing during the summer. But against Vigor in its spring game, Theodore threw only three times.

"Our goal was to go in there and establish the run," Collier said. "We felt pretty good about that. This offseason, during June and July, we spent most of the time throwing the football and we got a lot better there. But again, it goes back to what we're going to do on offense. As long as I'm there, we're going to run the ball first.

"In my heart of hearts, I like to run the football, but as a coach, I'm smart enough to know this: Trevor's thrown for 3,000 yards in two years, and we got kids who

can make some big plays and we're going to get the ball to them."

Andrews has received inquiries from numerous schools.

"Trevor is not only a good quarterback, he's also a tremendous athlete," Collier said. "Trevor ran 4.62 (seconds in the 40-yard dash) at UAB. He can run, he's got a great arm, and he's intelligent. We're blessed to have him. I met with him when he was a sophomore and I told him that I expected him to win ball games. It's time for him to step up and take the reins, and he's done a good job doing that."

Tyler Underwood will likely see some action at quarterback as well.

Jimmy Haygood, who is former Bobcat Lamical Perine's brother, along with Devonte Washington and Roy Tookes, will spend a lot of time carrying the ball.

"All three of those guys bring something different," said Collier. "Tookes is going to be a downhill kid, while Devonte and Jimmy can run and also catch the ball out of the backfield."

Center Ashley Johnson anchors the offensive line, which Collier said could very well be the best he's had.

Defensively, Theodore, which has seven returning starters, is anchored by Porter. The Bobcats will be basically a 3-4 team and apply a little more pressure.

"Timaje has been here for as long as I can remember," said Collier. "He does a great job for us. It's been a tough five years for him. What I like about him is that he's finally learned to lead with his actions. It's a sign of maturity, and it's been a blessing for us. He's trimmed down some, he's now 315 from 330.

"My mindset now is to dominate," said Porter, who is looking at playing for Mississippi State or Vanderbilt. "Don't talk about it, be about it."

"This bunch that we have (on defense) can run, and they can hit," said Collier. "We feel like defensively, if we can go out there, get them lined up, we'll be pretty good."

Being in Class 7A, Region 1, Theodore has had its share of tough luck. But Collier has found a way to change the mindset of the team, namely, knowing what it takes to win.

"You have to be good on defense, and you have to be able to run the football," he said. "If you can't run the football, you're going to get your butt beat, and that's just the way it is."



Eric Collier

## UMS-WRIGHT

### UMS will adapt with an I-formation attack

BY DARRON PATTERSON  
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Adapt: to make fit (as for a new use) often by modification.

Terry Curtis knows the word's definition by heart, because he's lived by it for the past 29 years of his life.

Every season, the UMS-Wright head coach looks over his incoming talent, puts a plan together based on what he thinks they can or can't do, then turns them all loose on Class 4A, Region 1.

And with a career coaching record of 276-83 (77 percent winning percentage) at Shaw, Murphy and for the past 19 years at UMS, you could say Curtis' coaching philosophy has worked out pretty doggone good.

"One of the keys to surviving in this business is being able to adapt to the kids you've got," said Curtis, 199-47 as the Bulldogs' head man.

"Every kid can't do what another can, so you have to be able to figure out what they do and don't do well."

So what will "Version 19" of Curtis' Bulldogs look like after ending last season with a 20-14 loss to eventual state champ Handley to finish 9-3?

"We'll be more of an I (formation) team, running the ball downhill a lot more than last year."

Last season UMS was a quick-strike, spread formation team that could hit home runs from anywhere on the field.

But gone are quarterback Tanner Allen, the 4A Player of the Year now at Mississippi State on a baseball scholarship despite being drafted by Major League Baseball's Chicago Cubs, and lightning quick running back Michael Matthews (Jacksonville State), a threat to score every time he touched the ball.

Stepping into the spotlight at quarterback is senior Will Chapman (6-foot-0, 168 pounds), but with junior Skipper Snypes (6-0, 165) hot on his tail, Chap-

man will have to perform well week in and week out.

"Chapman will start the opener (at Mary Montgomery), but Skipper's pressing him pretty good," said Curtis.

Sophomore Keyshawn Woodyard (6-1, 173), who's drawing raves from his coaches, will start at one wide receiver, with senior Trey Gerhardt (6-3, 183) at the other.

A cadre of runners will be used to replace Matthews, with 10th-grader Simon Smith (5-5, 150) getting the start, but with senior starting middle linebacker Russ Myers (6-0, 200) also carrying the ball some and senior Dylan Casstevens (6-1, 226) also in the mix.

The offensive line will be a big question mark, with junior guard Hunter Middleton (6-2, 237) the lone returning starter.

"We've got a bunch of guys who'll have to step up for that group to be productive," said Curtis.

The defense could be surprisingly good, though, despite just five returnees from a unit that allowed a meager 10.1 points per game

last season. The experienced Myers will call defensive signals from his middle linebacker post, while the other linebackers in UMS' base 3-4 defense are sophomore Will Breland (6-2, 175) and juniors Tyler Irvin (5-11, 192) and Jeb Barber (4-8, 195).

Senior Daniel Sisson (6-2, 258) is back at nose guard and senior starting full-back Will Courtney (6-0, 256) will see action on the other side of the ball at both tackle and defensive end.

Senior Brant Dixon (6-1, 220) starts at the other defensive end, while fellow senior Trez Dixon (no relation, 6-0, 188) starts at one safety, with ninth-grader Edwin White (5-11, 157), who Curtis says "has good speed, understands the game and is going to be special" at the other.

"If these guys live up to the potential I believe they have we're going to be OK," Curtis said.

"But they've got to go out and prove it on the field."



Terry Curtis

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