

SATSUMA GATORS



The Satsuma High School running backs. "We are able to run the football," says coach Justin Thomas. "That's who we are."

GATORS: Team expects a strong running game to highlight the Satsuma offense

FROM PAGE 44C

Brown (5-11, 240) will have to step it up if that running game successfully takes pressure off Abernathy.

"We'll play-action (pass) and take our shots when the opportunity presents itself, and we'll roll him out some, get him out of the pocket to give him some confidence," said Thomas of the plan to help his quarterback.

"When he gets that confidence he's going to have a chance to be special."

While Abernathy gets a feel for things, the Gators' defense will have to hold things together.

"We have four linebackers that are really good, including Steven Moon (6-0, 218-pound senior). They do a really good job," said Thomas.

Outstanding corners

"Coming in we felt like our secondary was going to be OK. We've got two really good corners, Daniel Burrell (5-8, 165) and Deion Pickens (5-7, 162), we feel like

we can play against anybody with.

"The defensive line was probably the question mark. We lost two defensive ends and had a young nose guard last year, and we're just really trying to figure those guys out.

"If we get those guys to develop we feel good about that."

Another thing Thomas feels good about is the sudden addition to his staff of former Murphy head coach Rick Cauley, who accepted the Gulf Shores job in December but abruptly resigned in July.

"It just happened. It was just a good situation that happened for us at the right place, right time," Thomas said.

"Nobody (on my staff) was fired. It was a situation where I wanted to make a terminology change, and make a change with formations, kind of go a different direction with the offense just because of our personnel."

Cauley, a 1993 Satsuma grad, is now assistant head coach and offensive coordinator. He and wife Ashley, who still teaches at Murphy, also have three young

daughters.

So not having to make the 127-mile round trip to Baldwin County each day is a plus for him and his family.

Add to that his prowess as a play caller and it's a win-win situation for all involved, especially Satsuma's skill players.

Running QB

"Our quarterback last year was not a runner, although he'd probably disagree with you, but Nick is a runner and we'll bring Deion Pickens over from corner to play a little quarterback as well," said Thomas.

"We've got spread-type receivers and we've got more speed and athletic ability than we've ever had. Every receiver can run, and if we can just get them the ball in space we'll have an opportunity to put some points on the board.

"We're very fortunate to be a 4A-level school and I've got 10 assistants," said Thomas. "We've got somebody coaching everybody."

"One thing we can't control is whether

we're 6-4 or run a 4.4, but one thing we can control is how we do things, how we prepare and how to coach these young men up. Having a quality staff is half the battle for sure."

Hopefully, that staff can get Satsuma over the playoff hump, too.


Five times in school history the Gators have made the state playoffs (in three different classifications), and five times they came up first-round losers, all on the road.

The talk in Gatorland is of not only making the playoffs again, but actually giving the community a home playoff game.

"Now, these younger guys know it's the same expectations and the same goals that they have to live up to," Thomas said. "And they understand that Friday night is special up in Satsuma. It's a unique place with fireworks going off, especially when we're winning."


Hopefully, the Gators can give their fans a few fireworks on the field, too.

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