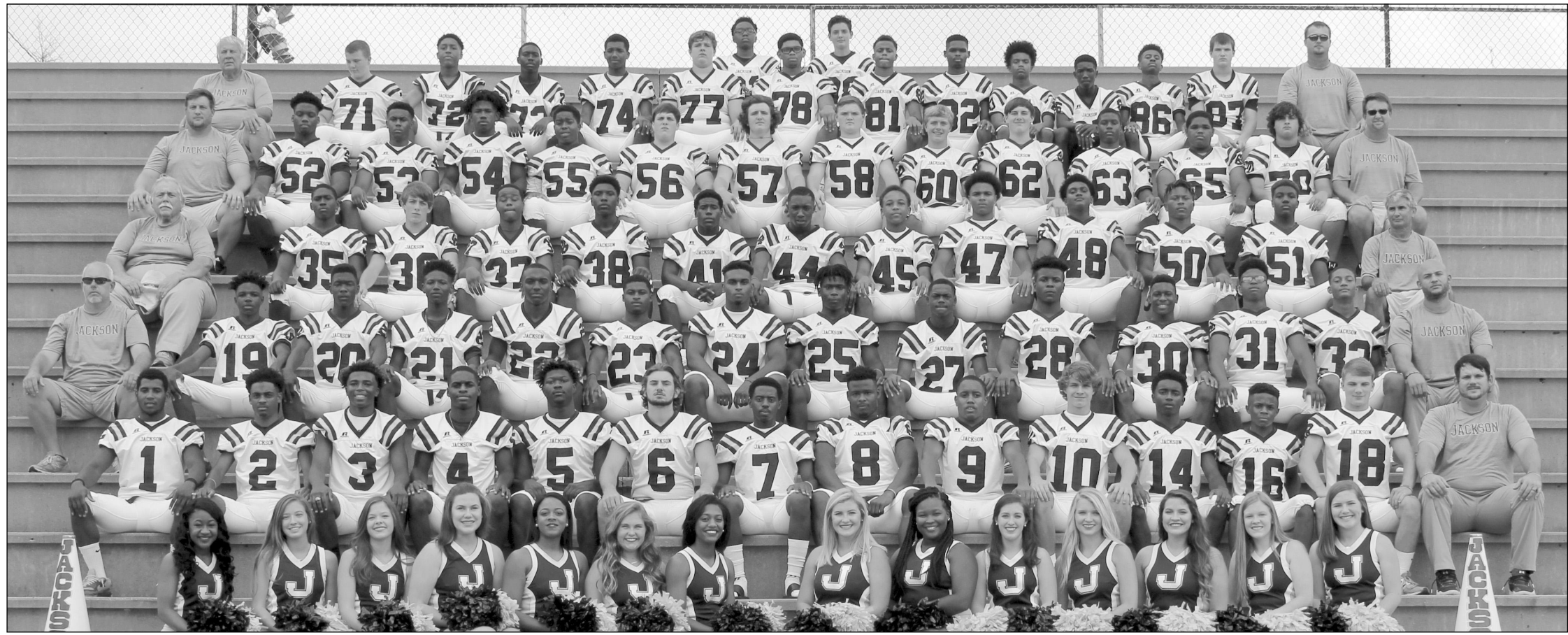


JACKSON AGGIES



The 2017 Jackson High School Aggies

Photo courtesy of The South Alabamian

Aggies seek players to step up

BY LEEQUINTON BLACKMON
Call News Correspondent

For the past three seasons, Jackson High School has been consistent with making deep playoff runs, but could never get over that Class 5A semi-finals hurdle. Each of the past three seasons, the Aggies have come up just short of returning to the state championship game since winning the Class 4A championship in 2011. To add to their disappointment, each of the three teams Jackson lost to in those semi-final games went on to win the state championship the next week.

The past three playoff disappointments are why Aggies head coach Danny Powell says his team won't focus on the past, but will approach this season with fresh mindset.

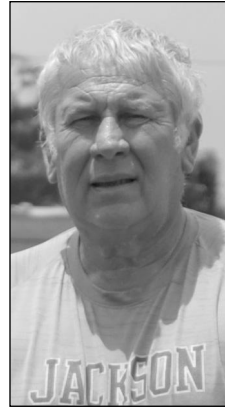
"This team coming in now hasn't won or lost a game yet," Powell said of the team's approach to the upcoming season. "They

haven't done anything yet on the good side or the bad side, so they got their own history to make or legacy to make. They've seen that we can go far because they've been on those teams that have gone to the semis, which a lot of people have never been able to get that far at all. To get there three years in a row is pretty impressive, but we would like to take that next step and get to the finals."

In order to take that next step, Jackson will have to fill a lot of voids on both offense and defense.

"This is somewhat of a rebuilding year," coach Powell said. "We lost 33 seniors and only have three returning starters on offense and four or five on defense, so it's a lot of holes to fill on this football team. We just got to see who can step up and be able to come in and make the plays."

Usually when a team ends up losing 33 seniors and only returns eight starters



Danny Powell

from the previous season, they're projected to be a relatively young team. However, that's not the case for this year's Jackson Aggies.

Despite losing over a third of their roster, Aggies head coach Danny Powell says that age really isn't the main concern for his team this year. It's actually the team's experience level that has the legendary coach watching his roster very closely as the season approaches.

"We're not going to ever be real young, because of the size of the school," Powell said. "We are kind of young in certain spots, but it's mainly inexperience. We

got several seniors starting this year that hadn't been starters before. They are seniors, but they're just kind of inexperienced and had limited playing time."

Among the 33 seniors that Jackson lost was the Aggies star safety Kendarian Handy-Holly, who signed with Minnesota. The Minnesota signee did a lot for coach Powell's defense, but also saw time on offense as a receiver. As much as Handy-Holly's leadership and on-field ability will be missed, coach Powell says he didn't have to look too far to find a replacement for him.

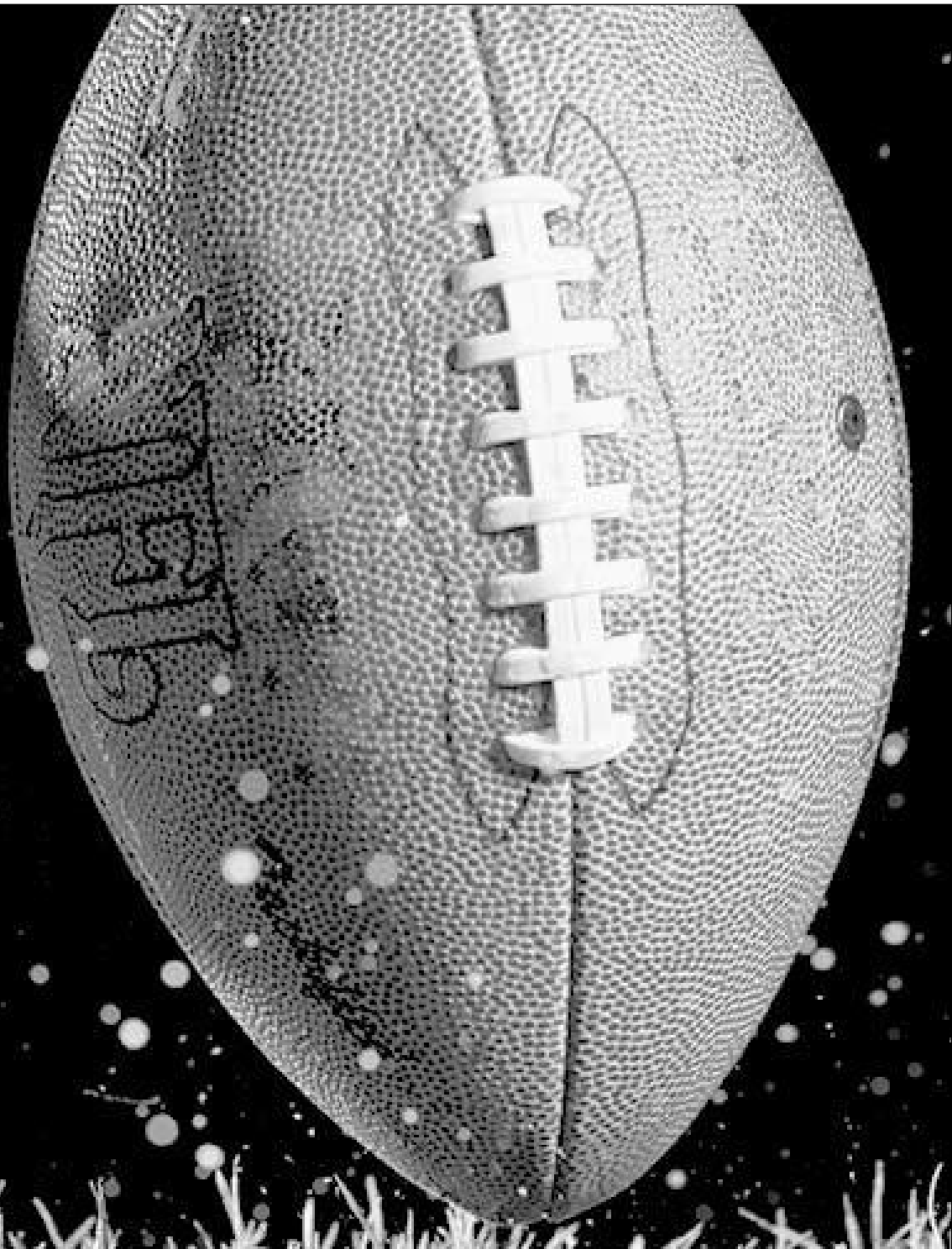
"As crazy as it seems," Powell said. "The guy replacing him is the same type of player."

Nehemiah Pritchett, who played alongside Handy-Holly last season, is a junior who already has an offer from Troy University, and is someone coach Powell thinks is

See JACKSON, 24C

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