

# JACKSON ACADEMY EAGLES

## JA not afraid of bigger schools

*With senior leadership, Eagles expect success again this year*

by JIMMY BOONE  
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Jackson Academy could be compared to the story of David and the Giant, only the Eagles have a football instead of some rocks.

Being the smallest school in AISA Class AA is not even seen a daunting challenge to the Eagles. They are ready to face the larger schools and expect to be successful.

"We were classified Class AA last year, and we are the smallest school in that division," said second-year coach Jacob Webb. "We were classified AA by two-tenths of a student, so just one student less and we would be the largest school in Class A."

Last year Jackson Academy finished the year with a 6-5 record and ended 2-2 in the region.

"We are always disappointed when you do not win the whole thing," said Webb. "Both state finalist were from our region, so we faced some really good teams."

The Eagles did make the playoffs, but lost in the first round to Lakeside.

"We went to Lakeside and came up a little short," said Webb. "We went to triple overtime, and on the last play I thought our guy got it, but they ruled him short, so we lost."

It is obvious that game left a sting to the Eagles, and the goal is to get back to the playoffs and go further this year.

Last year the Eagles started the season winning three of four games defeating Crenshaw 46-13, Southern Academy 20-7, and Clarke Prep 35-14 but lost to Southern Choctaw 45-21.

Jackson Academy only had one win in its next four games as it lost to eventual state runner-up Escambia Academy 56-19, Class AAA state runner-up Monroe Academy 41-27 and Class AA state champion Autauga Academy 46-7. The lone win was a 48-18 win over Lighthouse Christian.

"We were not the only ones to lose that bad to Escambia County," said Webb. "Escambia, Autauga, and Monroe were some very good football teams."

Webb says his team started out well against Escambia County and the score does not tell the true story of the game.

"We actually were ahead of Escambia 14-0, but then we had some players get injured early in the game," said Webb. "We just had too many injuries, and did not have many left standing in the fourth quarter."

The Eagles closed the regular season with a 21-20 win over Pickens Academy and 28-7 win over Patrician Academy.

This year Webb says his team is ready to be more successful.

"We may only have about 22 players out this year but eight of them are seniors," Webb said. "Three of those seniors scored the majority of our points last year. With all three of them back we think we will be able to score some points this year."

Last year the Eagles averaged 29.7 points per game while the defense gave up 28 points on average.

"We are not worried about averages, we are just worried about wins and losses," said Webb. "This is why we have been working hard to be sure everyone is in shape and ready to play."

Last year injuries were a big problem for the Eagles.

For much of the season, they had four or five players injured.

"It is what it is, and we are going to play iron man football and try to do the best we

can and stay healthy," said Webb. "We actually have a rotation of about 13 players."

Webb says the Eagles are working on preparing a varied offense.

"We will run and pass, whatever they give us we are going to take," said Webb. "We have checks at the line and we will change calls and audible during the snap count."

The opponent's defense could see a different attack each game.

"Whatever we think we can attack with, we will attack," said Webb. "We can throw it 60 times in a game or run it 60 times a game. We can play either way because we are good at both."

While the offense will be very different, the defensive schemes will be very similar to last year.

"We are not really going to do a lot different on defense," said Webb. "We are going to simplify things. The real key for us is to stay healthy."

With the small number of players, the reserves have to be ready to play.

"Last year when we played the gauntlet of hard teams, we had reserve defensive linemen playing linebacker because our best two line-

backers were injured and not in the game," said Webb. "It is bad when your two leading tacklers are on the sidelines for two weeks because of injury."

The defense is ready to play hard.

"We are going to be a lot more sound on defense, and we have several who have been

in this system for a while," said Webb. "I think they understand it much better than last year. We have some dogs who just love to play defense."

Leading the defense will be all-state linebacker Robby Busby who had more than 140 tackles last year and three turnovers.

This year Busby may have an even bigger impact on offense, where he will play quarterback, running back and H-back.

"It is not ideal for a linebacker to also play quarterback but it is what it is, a small school and you are limited to how many guys you have got," said Webb.

Busby had to play quarterback for the final four games last year.

"We changed a lot of the things we had been doing and used some empty sets," said Webb. "He can really throw the ball so we put a little emphasis on the passing game at the end of the season and were able to score a few points."

Another player who will have an impact on both sides of the ball is Trey McKee.

"Trey should have been all-state also, but did not get enough votes," said Webb. "When he gets the ball, you can expect he will do something with it."

McKee had five interceptions and returned three for touchdowns.

As a wide receiver, he scored 10 touchdowns.

He will also see action at running back.

"McKee is going to touch the ball a lot on offense," said Webb. "He is a slasher when he runs and is capable of taking over a game by himself."

The big key is for the Eagles to stay healthy and put their best foot forward

"We cant have a scout team look, unless we get some more kids to show up," said Webb. "We do not have the luxury of beating them up during practice and letting them get a lot of reps because we have to keep them healthy."

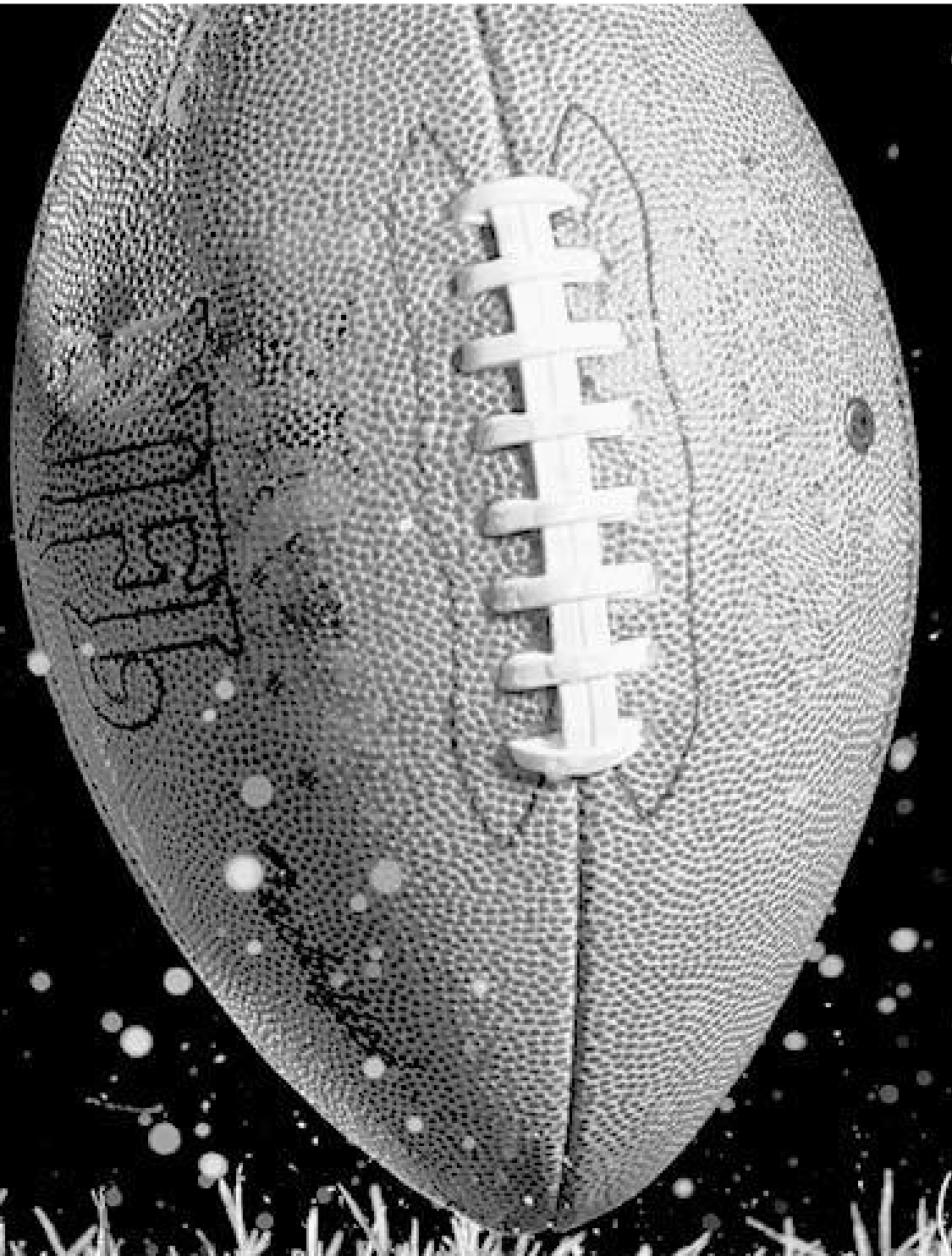
"We just want to get them to Friday."



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