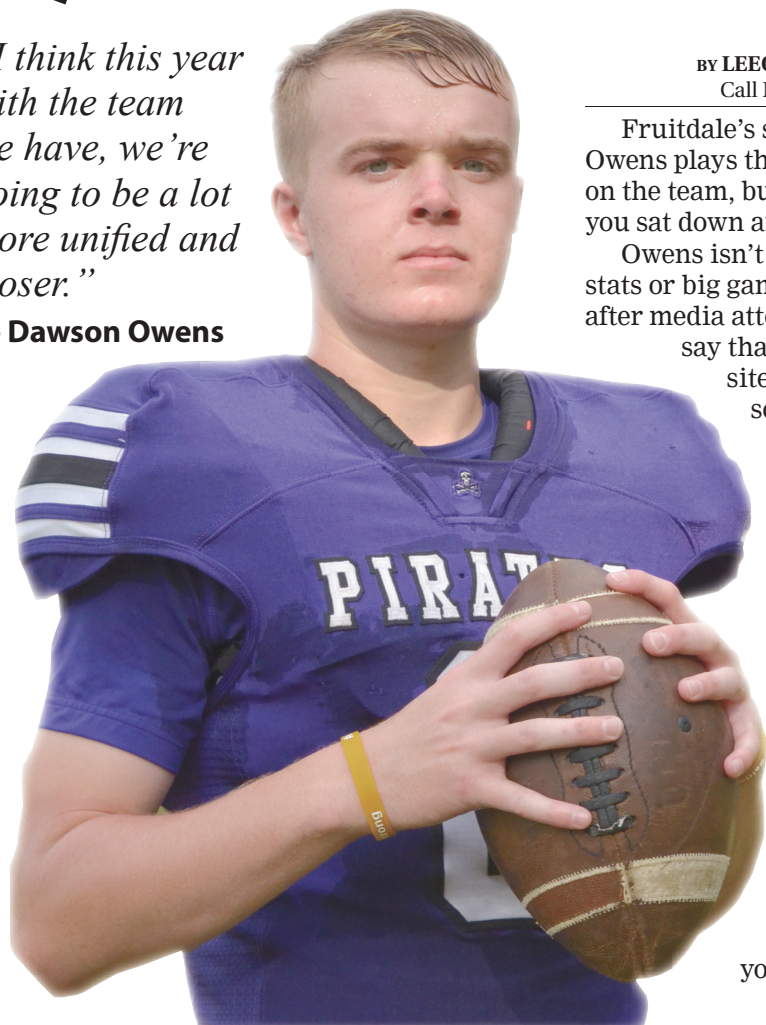


FRUITDALE PIRATES

QB Owens: 'Ultimate team guy'

"I think this year with the team we have, we're going to be a lot more unified and closer."

— Dawson Owens



BY LEEQUINTON BLACKMON
Call News Correspondent

Fruitdale's senior quarterback Dawson Owens plays the most important position on the team, but you wouldn't know it if you sat down and talked to him.

Owens isn't someone who talks about stats or big games, and he doesn't chase after media attention. In fact, some would say that Owens is the exact opposite of the stereotypical high school quarterback, and he's perfectly fine with that.

Despite touching the ball on every possession and being the leader of the team, Owens has gained a reputation of being the most selfless player on the team—which is something Pirates' coach Mike Davis immediately noticed when he first met Owens this summer.

"He's the ultimate team guy," coach Davis said of the senior quarterback. "He's what you look for, not just in your

quarterback, but in a leader in general. He's very vocal in the weight room. He's the first one there and the last one to leave, and all the kids like him. He's just that type of kid that has that personality and charisma that draws people to him."

Aside from his personality, Davis has also seen a glimpse of the type of player Owens can be on Friday nights, once the bright lights are turned on.

"You just look at the way he approaches things right now and you can tell what kind of player he's going to be," coach Davis said. "He approaches everything with 110 percent effort right now, and I don't have any doubt in my mind that that's what I'm going to get come game time."

Owens is one of only three seniors returning for the Pirates who have varsity experience, so he knows himself just how important his leadership is to the team this season. With that in mind, Owens says that his approach to leadership is different than others. For him to be an effective leader, Owens doesn't set statistical goals for himself.

"Most of the goals I set are for the team," Owens said. "I really don't like to set individual goals for myself, because it

takes away from what's really important, and that's the team. We win together as a team and we lose together as a team, so my goals are always for the team to get better. I know I'm a senior now and I have to be a leader for these younger guys, so my goal is just see them get better and learn more this year."

Dawson has been a part of the Pirates football team since his freshman year, so he's seen the ups and the downs, as well as the coaching changes. Even with all the uncertainty that surrounds the team each year, he says that he believes this team is primed to have a better season than they did last year.

"Being on the teams in the past, there wasn't a lot of unity," Owens said. "Last year, the seniors that were there, they argued a lot. I think this year with the team we have, we're going to be a lot more unified and closer. We grew up together and we played little league ball together and we're just closer as a team this year. I feel like there's going to be more communication, and there's not going to be any blaming each other for different things. I feel like everybody is going to hold themselves accountable, and we're going to pick each other up and not tear each other down."

Davis wants to build a winning tradition

BY LEEQUINTON BLACKMON
Call News Correspondent

Most first-time head coaches consider their dream jobs to be in a bigger city, at a much bigger school than the one they previously coached at. However, that wasn't the goal of Fruitdale's newest head football coach, Mike Davis.

Davis has been in coaching and education for 21 years, and most recently spent the past 14 years as an assistant coach at Beulah High in Lee County. After being just a cog in coaching staffs for so long, Davis realized that it was finally time to step out on his own — and for him, Fruitdale was the perfect place to do that.

"One day I was on the TeachAlabama website," Davis said. "And I saw that Fruitdale had an opening for a head football coach. I went online and did some research and found out that it was a small school in a small community, and that was kind of the setting that I was looking for. I went to a small school, and my first job was at a small school. I'm not real interested right now with my career being at a big 5A, 6A, 7A school. I felt like I could step into a situation like this at a small school and be comfortable."

When Davis applied for the job at Fruitdale, he says he was well aware of the Pirates' recent struggles. The Pirates have only had one winning season since 2010, and this will make the third straight year they'll begin the season with a new head coach.

To most coaches, this wouldn't seem like an ideal situation for starting a head coaching career, but Davis says Fruitdale's struggles didn't intimidate him at all during his job search.

"That really wasn't a major player in it," Davis said of Fruitdale's struggles over the past decade. "I just felt like it was a good opportunity for me to take a shot at being a head coach and play some good football teams down here in this area. I know that we have to compete



Mike Davis

against teams like Linden and Sweet Water, who have a tradition of winning, but my goal is that when people talk about football in this area, I want them to talk about Fruitdale just as much as they do Linden and Sweet Water."

In order for Fruitdale to get back to that 9-3 winning form they had back in 2014, and be mentioned with the likes of Class 1A, Region 1 big dogs like Linden and Sweet Water, Davis says it's going to have to start with him.

"We've got to have sta-

bility here," he said. "My plans are to stay here and try to build a program. The places where I've been that have been successful, there has always been a system in place for several years. That's what I want to do. I want to bring stability to the program, and hopefully that'll pay off in the long run."

Davis was hired on May 15 and started with the team June 12, so the Pirates have had somewhat of a late start once again this year, due to coaching changes. Since coming on to campus and meeting the team, Davis says his goal has been to earn the trust of the players and let them know that he's invested in the program.

"I tried to get across to them that I want to be at Fruitdale," he said. "I wanted them to know that I don't want this to be a one-and-done or a two-and-done type of situation. I want to stay there and work this thing out over time and let them buy into the system, and have some success. I know that sounds cliché, but that's really the basis of what I wanted to get across to them this summer."



These players will provide veteran leadership for Fruitdale. From left are running back **Eric Boykin**, linebacker **Noah Rivers** and wide receiver **Gage Dingman**.

Customer Service from your Electric Cooperative: A Powerful Connection

Wishing you a great
2017
football season!!

Clarke-Washington Electric
Membership Corporation
A Touchstone Energy® Cooperative
Since 1936

GET YOUR WORK DONE, AMERICA AND SAVE MORE

Shown: 4550

Mahindra TOUGHEST TRACTORS ON EARTH

7 YEAR LIMITED POWERTRAIN WARRANTY

Save on MODEL 4540
\$317.35 PER MONTH (Plus Insurance & Taxes)
0% down 84 months

J&K TRACTORS
5461HWY 43. • Satsuma, AL
251-679-8677

*With approved credit. Program restrictions may apply. See dealer for details. All offers expire October 1, 2017.

Mahindra Tractors