

Clinton High School Arrows hope to make title run again

By Danny C. Davis

Just what will the 2017 football season bring for the Clinton High Arrows, defending Class 6A state champions?

The Arrows are coming off a dream season, going 15-1 in 2016 and winning their first-ever Mississippi High School Activities Association state championship since the playoff system started in 1981.

After graduating All American quarterback Cam Akers, a four-year starter at quarterback and a guy that smashed all Clinton offensive records and many state records, the Arrows will be a different team in 2017.

Sixth-year Arrows head coach Judd Boswell has been in a similar position before, after leading Class 3A Forest to a state championship, and knows how hard it is to repeat after losing a lot of talent.

"I do not think it will be hard to motivate this team to work hard to win another championship," said Boswell. "But the main thing is that the kids have got to play with a chip on their shoulder this year. Their drive has got to be that we do not have Cam Akers and Darius Mayberry anymore. We are going to have to prove people wrong who do not think we will be very good this year. To do

that, we are going to have as a team, play smart, and play with a little bit of an attitude."

"We are a much more balanced team this year," said Boswell. "Our strengths are on the defensive line and the offensive line, where we have the most experience."

Outside of the line on both sides of the ball, the Arrows have a lot of questions.

The number one question is, who will replace Cam Akers at quarterback? The answer will probably be two guys who are proven. Senior Walker Burchfield, who has backed up Akers for two years and played quite a bit in 2015 when Akers was injured, is a proven good running quarterback and has improved passing this summer. Junior Hunter Hulsey, a summer transfer from Madison Ridgeland Academy, is an effective pure pocket passer and an improved runner. So, that gives CHS two good quarterback options heading into the season.

The number two question is, who will replace three-year starter and



Photo by Danny Davis

Southern Miss signee Darius Mayberry at running back? The answer is three-fold. Senior Tommy Garner has been impressive in the spring and fall camps and looks to be an effective runner. Junior Ryan Davis a 215-pound linebacker convert to running back, giving Clinton the first big running back option since the early 1990s, and senior Trey Banks, who has a lot of speed and potential at running back.

The Arrows offense will also count on a couple of juniors who played big roles in last year's record-setting offense. Wide receiver Christian Johnson and Des Baker will both be

counted on to play a larger role this season. But CHS will also be counting on new players who have not played in the past to make an impact at receiver.

"We've got some young receivers who are going to be put in the position of making third down catches to keep drives going that are going to have come through for us early."

A solid offensive line returns with starters back at every position who should pave the way to put up a lot of yardage and hopefully a lot of scoring.

Last season, the Arrows scored so quickly it often forced the defense to play a lot more snaps and tire out late in the game. This year, the offense may consist more of long drives, giving the defense more of a rest.

Defensively, the Arrows have all senior starters returning on the defensive line, but at linebacker and in the defensive secondary are a lot of new faces who are going to need early sea-

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