

SIMMONS SAYS

**JEFFERY
SIMMONS**



Pioneers need more numbers

Football season is upon us. This Friday, the Pioneers will make the trip to Smithville to renew the fierce rivalry with the Tigers.

Warren County and DeKalb County have been as even as can be since starting to play yearly in 2005. The Pioneers took a 7-6 lead in the series last fall, winning 26-10 behind a stellar defense and the playmaking of Isaiah Grayson.

Some may be shocked to see the series that close between a 6A squad like the Pioneers and the 4A Tigers. If you're one of these people, travel to Smithville Friday and bring a notepad to count the players on each sideline.

Much like the wins for each team in the series, they'll be almost identical.

Coach Tom Moore is doing a commendable job keeping everything upbeat around the program, including an encouraging week of practice after a tough outing in Tullahoma. Friday's indoor workout concluded with coaches and players chest-bumping, high-fiving and celebrating a string of successful plays.

It was the second most interesting thing I saw Friday in regards to the football program. The first had nothing to do with the Pioneers, but tells an interesting story none the less.

Matt Jackson posted his soccer roster for the spring (story on 2B). Jackson's roster has 33 players, just shy of the 37 Pioneers I counted in pads during Friday's workout.

It led me to doing some research. In May, basketball coach Chris Sullens announced two rosters totaling 33 players. Just last month, Trice Powers kept 35 players for next spring's baseball team.

The football roster has been in flux, but I feel safe in saying there's less than 10 crossover athletes when it comes to the football team.

I'm not saying kids should be made to play football. Nor do I think coaches of other sports owe it to football to encourage their players to take the gridiron (though I believe most do anyway). All I'd like to see is more multi-sport athletes.

It'd be interesting to see 6-foot-5 basketball player Brad Caten trot in as a red-zone threat. All-district outfielder Ethan Smith would probably be electric as a kick returner. John Jackson has a strong leg, perhaps he could erase returns by opposing teams with bombs into the endzone.

At the very least, I'd love to see the 90-plus kids on other teams suit up and stand on the sideline with their classmates, many I'm sure they've played sports with or against in their lives.

Their encouragement alone, much less the skills I'm sure they could add if they wanted, would be a huge boost.

There's still time to unite the Pioneers.

Taking aim at Tigers

5 DAYS TO KICKOFF

BY **JEFFERY SIMMONS**
Sports Editor for the Southern Standard
(McMinnville, Tennessee)

All was upbeat around the Pioneer football practice last week as the team prepares for the start of the season.

Warren County is closing in on kickoff against DeKalb County Friday, and all attention has been turned to the Tigers.

"We had a fair week on the practice field," said WCHS coach Tom Moore. "We've gotten a chance to start our prep for DeKalb County. It's been a good week of work."

Rain forced the team inside the final two days of the week, though it didn't seem to dampen the spirit of the Pioneers. Friday's practice finished on a bang, with the offense ripping off big plays under the guidance of quarterback Clay Thompson.

All signs point to the sophomore earning his first career start at quarterback in Smithville. Thompson played sparingly in relief of Isaiah Grayson last season, completing 6-of-13 passes for 125 yards and a touchdown.

Fellow sophomore Bryson Elrod has taken the backup snaps this week, along with getting extensive work at defensive end. It's likely the Pioneers will have multiple players starting on both sides of the ball.

Friday's practice featured 37 players in pads, but Monday should bring

good news on the injury front.

Senior receiver and defensive back Raven Lewandowski, who had a team-high 13 catches last season, should be back in uniform after dealing with some back issues. Lewandowski could be a vital part of the backend of the Pioneer defense this fall, along with being counted on to make plays offensively.

CJ Taylor also is expected to be back at work after missing a week. Taylor took a big hit to the head in the scrimmage against Tullahoma. Taylor should get extensive work at tailback and has been a difference maker at cornerback during 7-on-7 workouts this summer.

Taylor's return could spell senior Eric Haywood in the backfield. Haywood got the lion's share of the work against Tullahoma after Taylor departed and has the speed to make plays for the Pioneers.

Fans can get an early look at the Pioneers this Thursday when the Warren County football pep rally is held at Nunley Stadium. The event is set to start at 6:30 p.m.

JV FOOTBALL GAME CANCELLED

Warren County High School athletic director Todd Willmore announced Friday the junior varsity game set for Monday between the Pioneers and Coffee County has been cancelled. The game was scheduled to be played at Nunley Stadium.



Jeffery Simmons photo
Eli Buchanan turns the ball upfield during drills Thursday in the WCHS athletic facility. The Pioneers have turned their attention to the DeKalb County Tigers, their opponent in Friday's season kickoff.



Lady Pioneers strong in debut

BY **JEFFERY SIMMONS**
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The youth movement has begun for the Warren County High School volleyball team.

The Lady Pioneers, who will rely heavily on freshmen this season, started the season with a resounding win over Cannon County Thursday. Warren County took down the Lady Lions in straight sets, winning 25-9, 25-12 and 25-10.

"I'm glad to finally have our first match and win under our belts," said fourth-year coach Katie Rogers. "I have a very young team and I'm glad the younger girls have this match out of the way to calm their nerves."

Rogers threw two youngsters in the mix from the start, inserting Danika Reno and Madison Hollis into the lineup. Bella Cantrell, a third freshman, subbed in to serve and led the team with five aces.

The early contributions of the freshmen was a big boost against Cannon County.

"I'm proud of the freshmen. It would be very easy for them to get overwhelmed in this situation, but they did a tremendous job," said Rogers. "I was also proud of the senior leadership. They did a great job encouraging their teammates."

"I look forward to watching chemistry form on the court this season."

Continued on **3B**

Photo courtesy of Painted Barn Media
Sophomore Samantha Jennings was dominant in the season opener for the Lady Pioneers. Jennings finished with a team-high 14 kills in a sweep over Cannon County.

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