

# Choctaw defense taking shape

By Ryan Horton  
Staff Writer

Choctaw High School will have the athletes to make big stops this season.

Choctaw is in good shape with plenty of returning talent, but coaches say unprecedented conditioning will make the Yellowjacket defense elite.

Entering the second season since the coaching system change a year ago, Choctaw's coaches say the team has now fully bought into the program and reached a physical peak.

"We still have **Greg Bryant** as our defensive coordinator, and in my opinion he's hands down the best defensive coordinator in the state," said CHS football head coach **Jake Corbin**.

"They're in the best shape they've ever been in their lives. It's not even close. I'm telling you, I guarantee this was the toughest summer in the history of Choctaw."

Coaches are confident with the physical condition of athletes moving into the fall, and believe Choctaw's defense will be able to outwork the opposition at every position.

Choctaw will return plenty of linemen, and coaches say that those players are bigger, stronger and faster than ever.

"The defensive line will be led by **Jaloni Thayer** at nose," Corbin said. "He's a senior and just has been a huge part of the team and had perfect attendance over the toughest summer ever. You can't break this kid."

**Isaiah Sumlin, Jayden Brown, Devin Brill, Jaden Muskrat** and **Mason Bussell** will also be in the mix on the defensive line.

CHS will feature a long list of versatile inside and outside linebackers. A hard-hitting and quick-thinking lineup should allow the Jackets to



-Staff photo by Ryan Horton

**The Choctaw High School defense hopes to see the benefits of new offseason conditioning.**

continuously make big stops.

"We'll have a lot of depth at inside linebacker," said Corbin. "I feel we're very deep at that position, and just have a lot of guys."

Those in the fold include **Brysn Hunt, Wes Leclair, Jack Funderbrugh, Brayden Harper** and **Dylan Ward**.

Outside linebackers include **Cole Smith, Caden Young, Donnie Wingate, Wes Leclair** as well as **Gaige Holmes**.

"Cole is a great team leader with a great attitude," said Corbin. "We feel all those guys can compete for a spot."

Choctaw has some hard-hitting playmakers set to make an impact as cornerbacks this season.

Jacket fans can expect to see **Gabe Johnson, Micajah Cooper, Jordan Mukes** and **Torrion Montgomery**

making big plays on defense this year.

"At corner we return Gabe Johnson. Who in my opinion is one of if not the best player on the field anywhere we go. That's because of his work ethic. He's about 40 pounds heavier than he was a year ago. He looks like a little ball of muscle and he can fly. He's also a standout wrestler and is just what we call a program changer. He'll go out there to win every sprint and pushes everyone every day. He's looking really good," said Corbin.

"On the other corner, we feel real comfortable with Micajah Cooper. He played safety for us a year ago and has switched to corner. You could argue with him and Gabe, but he's one of the hardest hitting corners you'll find. For more corner depth we have sophomore **Jordan Mukes** who has a chance to play some on Fridays,

and also Torrion Montgomery who is a track kid we've turned into a real ball player. He's a great learner and teammate."

Choctaw has several physical and skilled players they'll put to work on both sides of the ball.

Stepping up to make big plays on safety are **Angel Ackerman, Deysean Moore** and **Cade Sanford**.

"Angel has elite speed that we'll feature on offense as well. He's added about 25 pounds of muscle and really worked hard with perfect attendance this summer," said Corbin. "Deysean is another great kid to be around. He's got his speed down and gotten bigger physically, about 190 pounds. He's always encouraging and just really cares about team success. Cade Sanford will also get some time as safety when he's not on offense."