

MILLRY

Exciting stars Warr and Mitchell make the Wildcats go

BY WILLIE GRAY
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With the start of the 2018 high school football season just a few weeks away, Millry head coach Greg Crager says he is excited to see how much his offense has improved since last season.

"I am excited to get the season started. Our guys have been working during the offseason and have been focused on getting better and I can see a difference in how well they understand their jobs and get better every day," Crager said.

As with last year, Crager will have the Wildcats' offense patterned to execute an option-style offense which will allow quarterback Tate Warr and the Cats' offense to address their opposing defenses with multiple reads and sets in both their run and passing plays.

"We are an option program and we have the guys to run that style," Crager said. "We read what the defense is doing and adjust to what they give us. Tate has learned a lot and he can make the adjustments we need."

Two of the leaders from a year ago were Warr and running back Emanuel Mitchell. Both Wildcats collected nearly 1,000 yards rushing in 2017 and both are returning this year.

"Both of these guys are exciting to watch on the field," Crager said. "They both bring a different element to the offense and complement each other."

Warr is a junior and stepped into the quarterback slot last year. Although he had never played the position before, Warr earned all-state honors for Class 1A. This season, Crager said Warr has more going for him other than just having a year of experience under his belt. The coach says Warr has gotten bigger and stronger since a year ago. Warr is 6-foot-2 and weighs in at 215 pounds. In addition to his size, Warr's speed has also been impressive, running the 40-yard dash in 4.6 seconds.

"Tate is exciting to watch run the ball because he has breakout speed and makes people miss," Crager said. "In addition to his ability to run the ball, Warr has the ability to read the defenses and adjust

to the play needed at the time. He is a good leader and we feel comfortable with him under center."

Mitchell is a 5-10, 220-pound power runner who is hard to take down.

"Emanuel is a guy who is the leader on the offense for us and sorta makes things go for us," Crager said. "When we need those tough yards we know we can go to him."

In addition to Mitchell the Wildcats will have Ben Lockhart in the backfield at times, who also will see some playing time at wide receiver. "Ben has grown as an athlete and has really good ball skills and can make really good athletic plays for us," Crager said. "We are looking forward to Ben having a good season for us."

In addition to Lockhart, the Wildcats will have their leading receiver from last year, Trey Lewis, returning to the lineup. Also known for his ability to play defense, Lewis made a name for himself as a talented wide receiver.

With talented running backs, wide receivers and a solid player at quarterback there is one element that is needed for success — an offensive line. Although Millry only has two returning starters on the offensive line, Crager says the future is bright for his team on the O-line.

"We have two returning starters and both are juniors and the others are sophomores. Physically, we are going to be bigger, stronger and a bit faster up front than we were last year. These guys have been hard workers during the offseason. They are here all the time to make sure they are getting stronger," Crager said.

"Early in the year there might be a few growing pains, but I really like the guys we have up front this year and the younger guys who are coming behind them, we are going to be solid for a few years to come."

The Wildcats finished the 2017 season at 5-6, finishing fourth in 1A, Region 1. Offensively they scored an average of 25 points per game.



Millry running back Emanuel Mitchell

Millry's defensive unit shows promise

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Last year the Millry Wildcats closed the season at 5-6, a year that included shutout victories over local rivals Fruitdale and McIntosh and wins over Class 1A, Region 1 foes A.L. Johnson and J. F. Shields in which those opponents scored just eight points each.

The Wildcats' defense also led the way in a 22-15 win over 1A power Linden. But those victories were celebrated last season. Now the Cats have to battle their way through a season with new region opponents and new challenges. While their schedule will be just as challenging as it was in 2017, Millry head coach Greg Crager said his defense shows a lot of promise and could be a major factor for his team.

One of the keys to the Millry defense is that Crager has managed to field two sets of linemen — one for offense and the other for defense — that will allow his big men up front to grab a breather here and there during games, which will be especially useful early in the season when humidity



Millry linebackers, from left: Peyton Sikes, Emanuel Mitchell, Casey Williams, Kyle Legaspi and Lane Cooley.

is high.

"It's not uncommon for 1A programs such as ours to have the same guys going both ways up front, but we are fortunate in that none of our linemen are having to go both ways," Crager

said. "We feel this will give us an edge with some of our opponents."

Anchoring the defensive front is Casey Williams, a 5-foot-11, 190-pound senior who has been a three-year starter. "Casey is one of

the kids that coaches love to have on the field. He has overcome a lot of adversities in his life and will give you everything he has on the field," Crager said. "He is one of our leaders on and off the field."

According to Crager, his defensive front will average 200 pounds with senior Zack Sims (6-2, 230) being the largest lineman. In addition to having a big group of linemen up front, the Wildcats will field some players

at linebacker and in the secondary who are expected to present challenges to every team they face.

"Our guys up front are going to be good, but I am really excited about the guys who are behind them because I think the strength of the defense is the linebackers and secondary," Crager said.

Although the linemen are not expected to have to play both ways very often, that is not the case for the linebackers and secondary. Emanuel Mitchell, the starting tailback on offense, will also be starting at outside linebacker, as he has done the past three years. Peyton Sikes, coming off an ACL injury from last season, will also be returning to linebacker. The third linebacker will be Kyle Legaspi, a young member of the Wildcats' team but a player Crager says has potential to be a major contributor to the defense.

The secondary will also include skill guys who see time on the offensive side of the ball, including Brandon Holston and Trey Lewis.



The Millry High School football team's seniors, from left, are Emanuel Mitchell, Casey Williams, Zachery Sims and Peyton Sikes.