

CHICKASAW



Photo courtesy of Chickasaw schools

Chickasaw High School head football coach Jason Rowell, center, poses with his coaching staff. From left are David Brockway, Anthony Carpenter, Javarris Drinkard, Rowell, Johnny Carpenter, Carvel Jones and Heath Laney.

CHIEFTAINS: Team's biggest edge? Linemen are solid, averaging 250-plus pounds

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weaknesses was size. However, what was once their biggest weakness seems to have become their biggest strength heading into this season.

According to Rowell, the Chieftains have had an influx of young players coming to try out for the team and that has boosted the overall roster size of the team. As of the July 23 media day session, Chickasaw had 32 players on the varsity roster, averaging about 260 pounds on the offensive line and 250 on the defensive line. No doubt, those weight averages gives it a pretty formidable size advantage against many teams, especially Class 2A, Region 1 teams.

"We feel like that's our biggest strength," Rowell said. "Those guys have really worked hard in the weight room and with their conditioning and we plan to lean on them a lot in this upcoming season."

For most of the spring and summer, Rowell has been the only coach on campus, but the Chieftains have recently hired six full-time assistant coaches in whom they have a great deal of confidence. Even with a well-rounded coaching staff, Rowell believes player-led teams are the most successful teams, and he believes he has that in this team with seven seniors returning to the starting lineup.

Among those returning seniors none is better equipped to lead the team than South Alabama commit AJ Phillips. Anyone who watches Chickasaw football knows what Phillips is capable of on the field, but his dominance on the field starts long before the ball is kicked off on Friday nights.

"I would say I'm a smart player," Phillips said. "I study a lot of film, so I would know what a player is doing even before they call the play. I would know the scheme of a play as soon as a team lines up across from me. That's one of the things I've tried to pride myself on is studying film."

"You can't just be a good player on the field, you've got to be a good player outside of the football field as well. I go home and I study teams and I try to get better not just as a player, but as a person too. Football doesn't last forever, so I want the younger guys to know how important it is to not just be successful on the field, but off the field too."

It's unknown exactly where Phillips will spend a majority of his time on the field, as he's played quarterback, running back and defensive back—sometimes all in the same game. However, Rowell and the Chieftains feel good about their chances to compete for a championship as long as their



Photo by Mike Kittrell/Call News

AJ Phillips is a dominant force for Chickasaw, whether he's playing quarterback, running back or another position.

star player is on the field.

"We're going to go compete for a region championship," Rowell said. "We have the players to do it and we have the type of leadership from those players to do it. That's what we set our goals to do and we're not going to change our goals because of the region we're in."

"Our guys have bought in and they've worked as hard as anybody this off-season, and they deserve a chance to be successful. We're not backing down from anybody. We're going to go compete for a region championship."



Photo by Mike Kittrell/Call News

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Good Luck Chieftains. May you have a successful season.

Senator Jack Williams, District 34

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