

SARALAND

Chaney shines for Spartans

The two-way standout is a positive force: 'I like to bring the team up with me'

BY TOMMY HICKS
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It might be more fitting if the Saraland football equipment guy issued a hard hat to junior linebacker-running back Adam Chaney instead of a helmet. It would match the approach he has to playing the game, regardless of what position he might find himself playing.

"He's just going to be a junior but it seems like he's been here forever," Saraland head coach Jeff Kelly said of Chaney. "He has probably started every game since he walked into the high school as a ninth-grader. Adam is the kind of guy who doesn't say a whole lot but he shows up every day ready to work — work to get better, ready to improve.

"He's got tremendous physical ability and he's shown a knack on the defensive side of the ball for the first couple of years. Now he's a guy who's going to factor into our plans offensively. Coming up, he spent some time at running back as a sophomore but I think he has the potential to do some good things on both sides of the ball. He's been playing a bunch.

"He's an outstanding young man, outstanding in the classroom. He also is a guy who has gotten a bunch of offers throughout the offseason, but if you showed up and watched him practice or work out or whatever you wouldn't see it. He doesn't carry that on his sleeve at all. He just shows up ready to work."

It is Chaney's complete attitude, not just his hard work, that makes him a special player, Kelly said.

"I don't know that I've ever seen him have a bad day," said Kelly. "Of all the things that kids have to sort through in this day and time, he's a kid that strolls through with a smile on his face every day. I can't think of a time, and I can't think of a better compliment you can give a young man — especially one that is going into the 11th grade — but I don't know that I've ever had to say anything to him about effort or working hard or anything like that. That's just been a given. He comes from a great family, great parents and he just loves ball."

Chaney, 6-foot-2 and weighing 227 pounds, said he enjoys the game and always wants to be a player who leaves everything he has on the field, whether that's in practice or on a Friday night. What he wants, he said, is

to be viewed as a leader for the Spartans.

"Although I'm a junior this year I see myself as a senior in terms of maturity," he said. "I like to bring the team up with me, to keep everybody up. I like that."

It's working, along the way Chaney gets caught up in the excitement as well. He said he is looking forward to the upcoming season and what the Spartans may be able to accomplish.

"Last year, to be honest, I really don't look at that," he said of Saraland's 8-4 record last season in which the Spartans reached the second round of the Class 6A state playoffs. "I'm just looking at this year. I want us to do better than we did last year. I want to top whatever I did last year. I know I did really good last year, but I want to keep pushing and do better this year. I know there are a lot of little things that I can do to make myself better, like footwork. I don't see the success (that I've had), I just see the failures.

"The failures are way more prominent (than the successes). I remember the failures and I try to correct them. If I fix the failures it will make me a better

athlete. Failures are the things you have to improve on."

As for being a two-way player, Chaney said he likes it that way — it means more time in the game than on the sidelines. He's also happy that Kelly and the offensive staff are aiming to use as many as six running backs this season instead of leaning toward one player to be the main ball carrier.

"We have six or seven guys who can carry the rock at any time and I like that," he said. "It keeps us fresh and because I play both ways, it helps keep me fresh. I like it. If you have six or seven running backs you know we're going to be physical and we're going to be rested. We love it. We like having it that way, having all that depth."

"I'll play either way. Whatever they need me to do, that's what I'll do," he said. "If a college wants to take me, if they want me on defense or at fullback, I'll do whatever they want me to do. Same thing here. I'll play anywhere. I just want to be on the field and to help my team out."

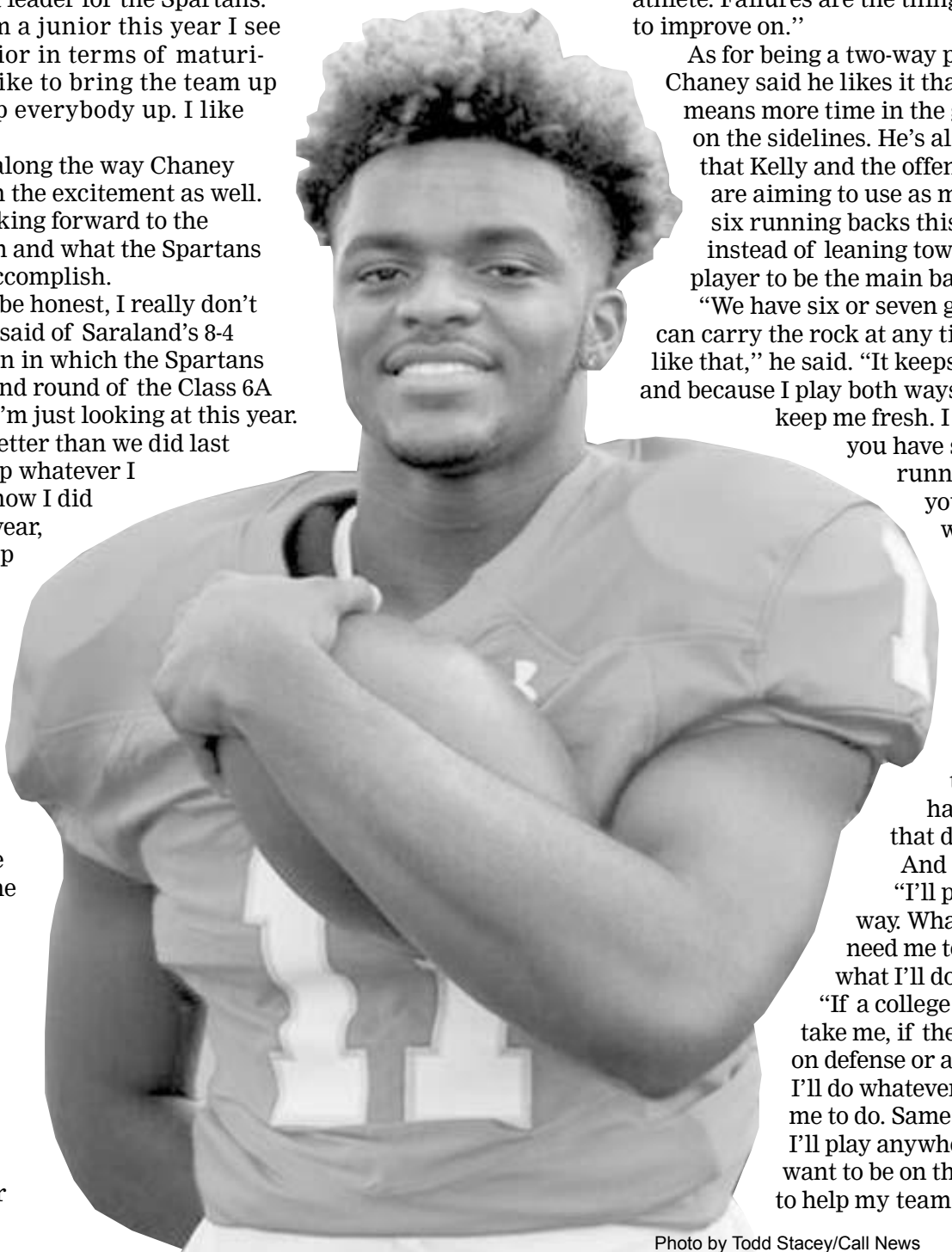


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