

FRUITDALE



The 2018 Fruitdale High School Pirates

Fruitdale photos by William Gray/Call News

Pirates getting in ship-shape

Bucs may sail to winning season with help of weight-room workouts

BY LEEQUINTON BLACKMON
Sports Correspondent

If you happen to talk to anyone associated with Fruitdale’s football program today, you wouldn’t know this is the same team that failed to win a single game last year.

The reason for that may be the growing optimism the Pirates have developed based on the stability at the head coaching position, which allowed them to have their first real offseason in years.

When Fruitdale head coach Mike Davis joined the program last year, he barely had enough time to learn the names of his players before they rushed into the field for their first game of the season. Heading into this season, things are a lot different as the Pirates are finally able to go into a season feeling like they’re on an even playing field with the rest of the teams in their region.

In past seasons, once the season ended, the football program was put on hold until August. That wasn’t the case this year as Davis implemented a conditioning and training program to help the Pirates stay in shape during the offseason.

The system revolved around a mandatory weight lifting program that all Pirates players were required to take part in if they wanted to be a part of the team in the spring. This is a new system for the Pirates simply because it’s something that Fruitdale didn’t

undertake in previous seasons, a shortcoming that especially hurt them last season.

“We’ve been able to be in the weight room year-round,” Davis said. “Our principal was able to work the schedule around to where we had high school P.E. and we were able to get the athletes in that class. They’ve been lifting year-round and we’ve gotten stronger. We feel really good about that part of our development as a team.”

Whether or not the year-round weightlifting program has helped isn’t really going to be seen until the Pirates get into the heart of their schedule.

“The thing we’re hoping for the most is that being stronger is going to help with (avoiding) injuries,” Davis said. “We were just decimated by injuries last year and we’re hoping that now that we’re stronger, that that’s going to help with that. Hopefully, all the work the guys put in over the offseason will help out so that we don’t have so many injuries to deal with this year.”

The Pirates have about 21 players on the varsity roster, which isn’t where they want to be, but they do feel good about the fact all 21 of those players have been heavily involved in the offseason program.

“We had spring training and a full summer of workouts with all of our players,” Davis said. “That’s made a lot of difference for us, be-

cause we’re way ahead of schedule as compared to where we were last year around this time. We’ve gotten most of our offense in, which is good. We still have a few tweaks that we need to make here and there, but we like where we are offensively.”

As the season quickly approaches, Fruitdale is still trying to figure out some things on the defensive side of the ball after a major coaching change left them without a defensive coordinator, Dawson Tuberville, who returned to coach at his alma mater, Excel.

In the meantime, Davis has had to coach the defense along with one of his assistant coaches, Kevin Hollingshead.

“I’ve always been an offensive guy, so defense is something that is kind of new to me,” Davis said. “Don’t get me wrong, I’ve coached defense before. I’ve worked under guys and coached certain positions on that side of the ball, but I just haven’t coached it to the extent that I’ve coached offense, as far as being an actual coordinator.

“It’s going to be new for me, but I’m actually looking forward to coaching the defense. I think it’s going to be a fun. I do have some help, because coach Hollingshead is going to be very instrumental in what we do this year, but right now it’s just us until we can get someone hired to be our full-time defensive coordinator.”



Fruitdale quarterback Daylon Hill

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