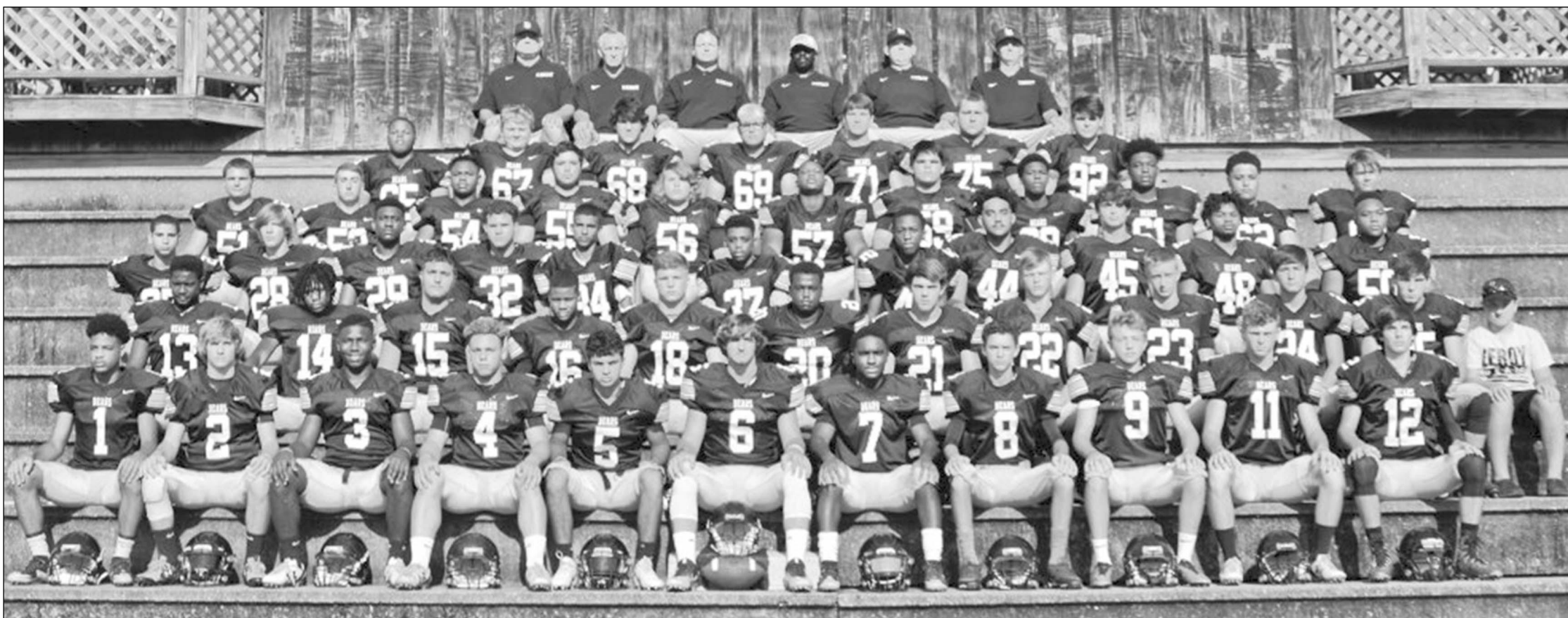


LEROY



The 2018 Leroy High School Bears

Leroy photos by William Gray/Call News

Bears expect wins with new faces

BY DARRON PATTERSON
Sports Correspondent

Jason Massey knows the score. He knows full well that being the head coach at Leroy usually comes with only one demand from the community — win.

So, Massey, a former all-state lineman for the Bears (1990-91), knows all too well that a lot of people in town could care less that he lost 16 seniors off a 10-3 team that played for the Class 2A state title last year.

He knows what they want. "We have a lot of community support," said Massey. "But the expectations are the same each year — win the region and host a playoff game. And that's good. They expect a lot from the coaches, and a lot out of the kids, too. This community is special.

"They know this is (going to be) a different team, but the expectations of them

to play hard and represent this community doesn't change. This is Leroy. You'd be hard pressed to find a lot of people at home here on Friday night."

With only three defensive starters returning and four back on offense, Massey, entering his sixth year at the helm of his alma mater, will turn to one of two guys battling at quarterback to keep the peace in town — senior Jeb Rice or junior Kade Moseley, both 5-foot-11 and weighing 175 pounds.

"Both do different things," he said. "They were both part of the program last year and both battled it out then, too. We won't make a decision on who the starter will be though until we get to fall camp."

One position where there is no competition is running back.

Sophomore Kelston Fikes (5-10, 200) returns for an encore to his incredible freshman season when he rushed for 1,980 yards

and scored 24 touchdowns and caught 22 passes for another 190 yards and a pair of scores. He also scored on a 95-yard kickoff return.

Fikes has already been named to one national preseason sophomore All-America team and is already being recruited by several Division 1 schools.

"He's added some weight and is stronger," said Massey. "He had just a fantastic year."

Massey said regardless of the personnel they have each year, his coaches "coach to their abilities."

"Players change and you have to make adjustments. If we have to change, we do. We're still a multiple (set) team. What we do depends on the game or the opponent, though some games we'll run (more) and some games we'll throw."

Senior tackle Chance Butts (6-5, 270), a four-year starter, returns for double duty

on both the defensive and offensive lines, while senior tight end-linebacker Brady Smith (5-10, 170) is back for his final year.

Massey has guided the Bears to the playoffs in four of the six years he's been there and comes into this season with a 37-23 record. Leroy lost to Lanett, 33-15, in last year's title game. Before that he was 11-10 during a two-year stint at Clarke County and was an assistant at Jackson for a year after being a 10-year assistant at Austin High in Decatur.

His team's offensive and defensive numbers have improved in virtually every season, going from 207 points scored and 278 points allowed in his first year to last season's 505 points scored to 272 allowed.

He said it's not only the Leroy community with lofty expectations.

"This coaching staff always has high expectations, too."

Star back Fikes gets even stronger

BY DARRON PATTERSON
Sports Correspondent

When Kelston Fikes was five years-old he walked into his mama's room, told her he was going to be famous, play pro football one day and buy her a big house.

Did she believe him? "I just looked at him, laughed and said 'Well, baby, if you get famous just take your mama with you,'" Lydia Fikes said.

She's not laughing anymore.

As a freshman phenom (his mom purposely held him back a year earlier to work on a speech impediment), Fikes made the nation sit up and take notice by rushing for 1,980 yards (a 7.3 yards per carry average), and 24 touchdowns. He also caught 22 passes for another 190 yards and a pair of touchdowns and scored on a 95-yard kickoff return.

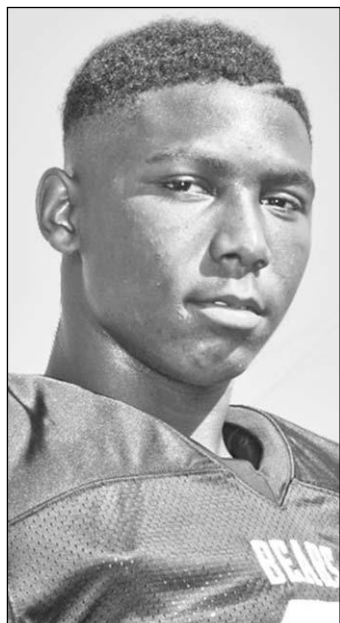
Behind his running and a stellar class of senior leadership last season, the Bears went 12-3, losing to Lanett in the Class 2A title game. Fikes was twice named

MaxPreps "Player of the Game," and has already been tabbed a MaxPreps second-team sophomore All American.

Doubters might say he did all this damage against 2A competition, but the boatload of Division 1 schools already recruiting him is an indication they obviously believe he is the next big thing in a long line of college and pro players to come out of tiny Leroy.

So, with such gaudy accomplishments already to his credit what does he want to accomplish this season?

"I just want to work extra hard on my grades and play better than



Kelston Fikes

I did last season," said the 5-foot-10, 200-pound Fikes, who has put on weight and gotten stronger in the offseason.

Are you listening Region 1?

"He really matured throughout the season," said Bears head coach Jason Massey, himself a former Leroy all-state star (1990-91). "He learned how to read and set up blocks and it showed in our playoff run."

When you talk to Fikes, there is no longer a hint of

that speech disorder his mother held him back a grade to work on. As a matter of fact, when he starts talking now his words are polished, poised and he sounds wise

beyond his years.

Or as Lydia puts it: "He's old fashioned. My uncle says he acts like he's been here before."

Fikes said his personality comes from a love of things most teens his age don't even think about.

"I like watching old movies, because most of the movies now have too many special effects," he said, admitting that his favorite is the gangster classic "Goodfellas" that was made 28 years ago.

Does watching such tough-guy stuff make Fikes fearless?

"No sir. I'm afraid of owls," he said, his voice raising like one just walk into the room.

"When I was little I was at my grandmama's house and saw an owl in a tree. I freaked out. And then, one day when I was older, me and some friends were walking down the street and there was an owl so tall standing on the side of the road that they thought it was a midget. But I knew it was an owl."

When Fikes isn't dodging owls,

he's running away from defenders, something he's been doing since the fourth grade. He says he plays the way he does for one simple reason.

"I like making people proud," he said. "I like making folks smile, and I want my community to feel good."

Lydia said her son has "another mama," Ms. Christy, as she calls the woman who's also been in her son's life for years. And she said she knows exactly why her son has grown up to be the good young man he is.

"I tore that (butt) up when he was little," said the single mother, who also has two daughters — Shiona, 22, and Ladayjia, 19 — of her discipline techniques. "I had to take on the role of mom and dad. I kept him in church and made sure he stayed humble."

It seems to have worked out pretty well.

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