

# LEROY

## Chance Butts has bright future, but his focus now is on Bears

BY DARRON PATTERSON  
Sports Correspondent

Some Division 1 schools probably have big future plans for Chance Butts. But, he has some unfinished business first — to lead this year's edition of the Leroy football team that came up one game short of a 2A state title last season.

"I just want us to have a good season," said the massive, 6-foot-5, 270-pound two-way tackle. "I want to see how far we can go again. But it's not just me that's going to make that happen. It's going to take a whole team effort."

Butts, a four-year starter, said there's one thing he'd change from last season if he could. And if you

expect him to say he'd reverse the outcome of the 33-15 loss to Lanett in the state title game, you'd be wrong.

"I wish we could've won homecoming," he said, a slightly dejected tone creeping into his voice as he recalled the 38-35 loss to then-Region 1 rival St. Luke's. "We had four or five turnovers in the first half. We dug ourselves too big a hole and just couldn't come back from it. If we'd not done that we probably could've won that game."

Butts won't get an opportunity to avenge that loss to the Wildcats, who drop down in class to 1A this season and aren't on the Bears' schedule.

If nothing else, the pain of losing a Leroy homecoming game in front of fans and past players who come back

for that game each year shows just how much respect Bears players have for their football-mad community.

"That wasn't a good feeling," he said.

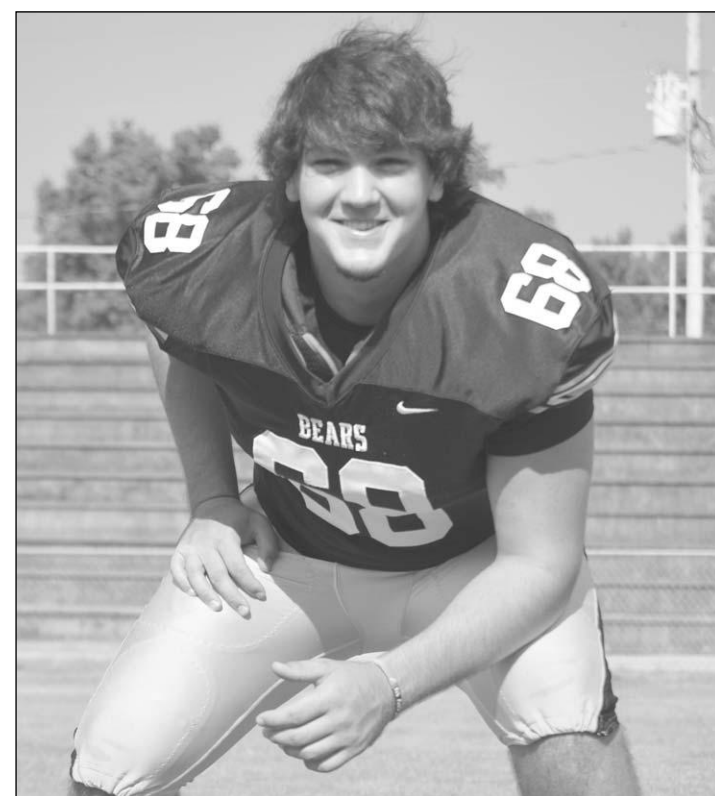
Butts said he's always busy doing something when he's not on the field.

"I'm always working, doing something," he said. "I work a lot."

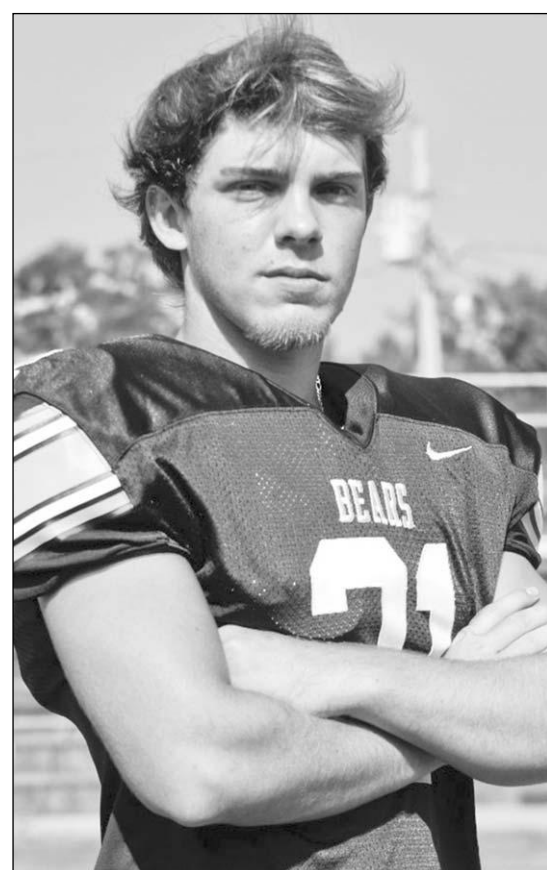
He says there's nothing special about him. He's just a regular guy.

"I'm not complicated. I'm just a regular guy," he said. "I'm a Christian guy who believes in the Lord. By the end of the year, I want to have at least two offers from Division 1 schools," he said. "That's a goal of mine."

Most believe Butts won't have to worry about reaching his goal.



Leroy tackle Chance Butts



Leroy linebacker Brady Smith

## Engineer-to-be Brady Smith works on fine-tuning his linebacker skills

BY DARRON PATTERSON  
Sports Correspondent

Brady Smith is one of thousands of high school players across the country who know this could be the last year they suit up to play football. At 5-foot-10 and 170 pounds, he is not your prototypical college linebacker or tight end, two positions he plays very well for the Leroy Bears.

If he does get some looks from a few schools, he'll be happy. If not, "I want to be an engineer. An architectural engineer," he said.

First things first though. Smith immediate goal is to help the Bears map plans to yet another winning season.

Does he have any personal goals?

"Not miss so many tackles," he confidently said. "I had quite a few missed tackles last year — too many — so I've got to work on my (tackling) technique, breaking down (at the point of impact)

and my footwork. It's details and small things I've got to correct, but it can be corrected."

Smith said he actually uses his size to his advantage, particularly when playing against larger guys.

"They underestimate me a lot," he said. "I may be smaller than them, but I'm pretty strong. In the weight room I'm stronger than a lot of other guys. I work at it a lot."

If there's one thing Smith learned from last year's near miss, losing in the state championship game, he said it was a renewed sense of what teamwork was all about.

"We had good teamwork," he said. "I already knew what teamwork, leadership and a sense of community was all about, but we used it all to go as far as we did."

And now, with 16 seniors gone off that team, what does Smith see his role being?

"Be more physical and use my head more," he said.

When asked what his favorite movie was, Smith said "the original Pacific Rim."

Of course it is. Why wouldn't a 5-10 tight end-linebacker who plays physical and is stronger than a lot of players larger than him love a movie where gigantic robots controlled by smaller men inside were created to fight off a bevy of huge monsters?

"It's an awesome movie," he said with a laugh.

It also kind of sums up his own personal philosophy, don't you think? A smaller person having to be stronger to fight off bigger folks.

There might as well be a marquee banner over the Bears' stadium on Friday nights this fall that says: Now playing, "The Brady Smith Show."

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