

MARY G. MONTGOMERY



Photos by John O'Dell/Call News

MGM quarterback Lucas Harwell fires a pass during the 7-on-7 tournament hosted by Alma Bryant, and **wide receiver Zach Lewis** grabs a pass for a touchdown in the same event.

Trust is a key ingredient for McCain

BY ARTHUR L. MACK
alouismack@aol.com

When you talk with new Mary G. Montgomery head football coach Stan McCain you can sense an air of optimism. Which is interesting as he was the defensive coordinator under previous head coach Chris Wilson last season and saw first-hand how the Vikings struggled to a winless 0-10 record.

So when Wilson was let go after one season, McCain would up with the head coaching job. But in case one feels he is being thrown into the fire, remember this: McCain has head coaching experience and said he feels he will be able to bring some stability to a team that has seen more than its share of head coaching changes.

"I kind of got an idea as to who fits well at each place in getting to know these kids," McCain said of his stint as defensive coordinator at MGM. "It was a real blessing to me, because I think they trust me, and when they trust you and that trust goes back and forth to them also. It makes it a lot better."

That trust will certainly have to go a long way. McCain is the Vikings' sixth head coach in eight years. Brad Lowell had a 7-23 record from 2010-12, Al Jones was 2-8 in 2013, Mike Dean — who was fired just before the last regular season game of 2014 and succeeded by Tim Hardegree on an interim basis — was 4-6 and Brian Seymore was 8-12 from 2015-16.

McCain spent 11 seasons as head coach at West Lauderdale, Miss. From there, he went to Kosciusko, Miss., and had three seasons as head coach there before returning to West Lauderdale to be head coach for five more seasons. After retiring from the Mississippi High School system, he came to MGM two years ago to assume duties as defensive coordinator under Wilson. During his first stint at

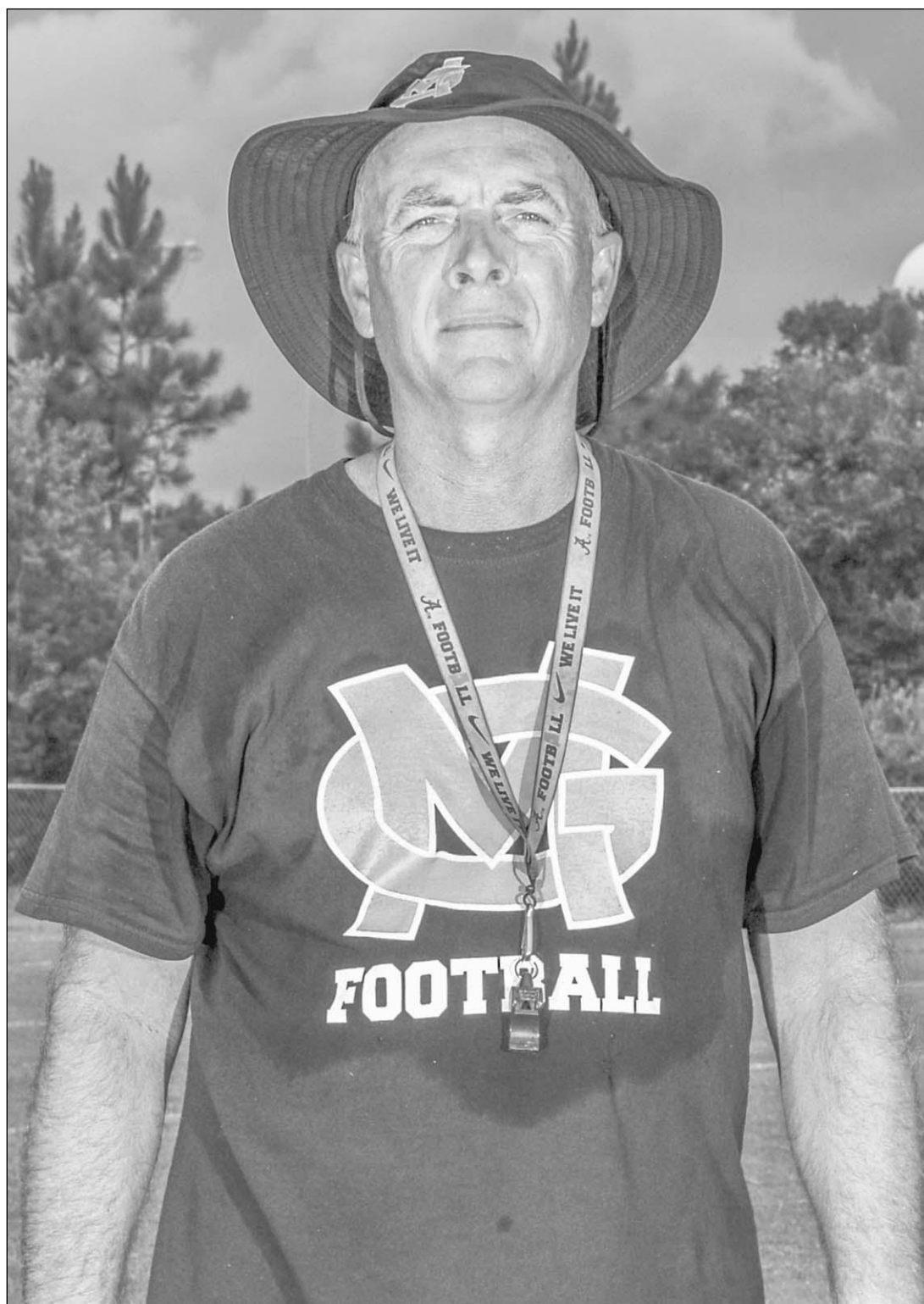


Photo by John O'Dell/Call News

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— MGM coach Stan McCain

West Lauderdale, McCain had a 78-50 record, which included a state runner-up finish in 2004 and a 12-1 mark the next year when the team was eliminated in the state quarterfinals. However, during his time at Kosciusko, his teams won only 12 games, including an 0-11 season in 2011.

In his second stint at West Lauderdale, McCain suffered through a 2-8 2012 season, but made the playoffs three times in the next

four years. In 2016, McCain's final season with West Lauderdale, the Knights went through the regular season undefeated, and lost in the second round of the Class 4A playoffs to Purvis.

When asked about the difference of the caliber of football between Mississippi and Alabama, McCain said, "I told my coaches that the teams we faced (here at MGM) they were SEC-caliber sidelines, and I didn't see a

lot of that where I was at. But football is football; I'm a firm believer in that if you can control the running game and not turn it over, you've got a chance to win."

McCain said he feels there's an opportunity for the Vikings to taste success, especially for the juniors on the team. Last year, MGM had 44 sophomores that saw a lot of action, but not victories.

"From what I under-

stand, these kids have never won, even from seventh, eighth and ninth grade," he said. "It's going to be a new experience. We tried so many people out there on Friday nights that had never played a Friday night football game. Not to make any excuses, but when you play in the league that we play in, it's kind of tough."

"You just didn't know what you were going to get from week to week, and these guys were learning as they went. Not only our coaches, but our players were learning from week to week, and whether it was good or bad, they were learning."

Since taking over as head coach, McCain said he's received nothing but support

from the community.

"I think I've been received really well," he said. "Our community is hungry; they're hungry and more than anything they want somebody who's stable, not only coaching-wise but in our whole administration."

"If you look back, we've had some turnover, and I think hopefully that's over with now. I think we're going to be there a while and when the kids can see that they don't have to come in here and learn one year after the next something new. I retired in Mississippi and I don't have any plans to go anywhere else. I like the community and I like the kids. We've got good, solid kids, they just need a little love."



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