

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Fethke on football Fridays: 'I love it'

All the hard work — in the plant and on the field — leads to those magical game nights

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Work, work, work. That has been Ethan Fethke's motto all summer long, whether it is at a plant in Calvert or on the football field, Fethke has been putting in the hours heading into Washington County's upcoming football season.

All the work, from Calvert to Chatom, has been for one thing — the experience of Friday nights. There is, Fethke is quick to note, nothing like it.

"I love it," the Bulldogs' senior lineman professed of Friday night football games. "This is the best part about being in high school; there's nothing that can beat playing high school football. I really look forward to all of this.

"It's really frightening a little bit. I have some big shoes to fill from last year and it's not going to be that hard but it will be a little scary to start off. But I love it."

You can bet head coach Devin Roberts loves having Fethke on his team. Aside from showing great effort all summer to make it to the Bulldogs' workouts — Fethke had an eight-hour summer gig in Calvert Monday through Friday and when he clocked out from there he went straight to strength and conditioning drills at the school in Chatom — he has shown leadership as well.

"He's had a super busy summer. He's one of our kids — and we're fortunate enough through our career tech here at Washington County High School — they scored big-time internships at some of our plants here, so he's had a full-time job all summer with his internship.," Robert said. "You can't take an opportunity like that away from a kid. He's worked really hard; he goes and works a six- or eight-hour day and he makes it back here just in time for practice and works really hard at that.

"He's going to be a really hard-working, successful man. I'm excited to see what he does this year moving over to the offensive side of the ball and being the guy who knows where he's going (as an offensive lineman) instead of the guy who is having to react (as a defensive lineman)."

Making things happen is Fethke's M.O.

"It hasn't been easy, having to get up at 6 in the morning and make it to Calvert then make it back here just in time for the start of practice and for conditioning work," he said. "But it's been fun. Learning how to operate a crane and the basics of how the mill works, it's been pretty awesome really. It gives me a good idea



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of what I want to do when I graduate."

A member of the WCHS defensive line last season, Fethke is now a key member of the Bulldogs' offensive line. The coaching staff asked him to make the move

to help fill a void on the O-line and provide some added leadership there as well.

"The O-line is key," Fethke said. "I believe that's going to be the key to our offense is how we play. That's the real key.

"I have not gotten to that comfort zone yet (as an offensive lineman). It has not been my favorite, but I'm getting there. It's the key to the offense. If you mess up you've ruined the entire play a lot of the time. It's a lot of work and it's what means the most. It's the key to making the offense work.

"Yes, you feel pressure, a lot of pressure. You can't mess up on the O-line."

And when things go right? "It's the best thing on planet Earth," Fethke said. "When it goes right, the whole thing is right and you score and you win games. It's everything."

Roberts said Fethke is making his presence known in his new role, though Fethke is also expected to make an appearance on defense from time to time as well.

"Ethan Fethke is a guy who played last year on the defensive line and he was pretty good, a two-gapper kind of plugger," Roberts said. "He'd hold a guy up and try to bottle things up at the point of attack. This year, with our scheme change on defense — we want to move more, be a little quicker up front — we're moving him over to the offensive side of the ball. He's catching on and doing pretty well.

"Last year our guys (on the defensive front) read a little more so now on the offensive line he knows pretty much what he's got to do when the ball is snapped. I'm excited to see how much faster he can play in that type of role."

Fethke said while he is still learning his new position he knows he can count on his teammates to help him along.

"We're a team, we're a family," he said. "Everybody loves each other and we have a great time on the field each day. There's no drama, everything is nice and good. ... I think we're going to do a lot better than last year.

"We're a lot better this year even though we're a lot younger. We didn't have a head coach until the end of June (before the 2017 season), so we're a long way ahead of where we were last year at this time."

WCHS opens the season at home on Aug. 24 against Class 5A Citronelle.

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