

Covington has the tools to repeat in R7-3A

The Top Team...

1. Covington CHARGERS

The Chargers made it all the way to the Class 3A state title game and finished as the runner-up to Alcoa with a 13-2 record. Head coach Marty Wheeler, 85-54 overall, will be entering his 10th year at Covington (71-38) and has 14 returning starters. That gives the Chargers the edge as preseason favorites to repeat as the Region 7-3A champions. The Chargers have seven starters returning on offense, led by senior quarterback Brock Lomax, senior running back Cordarius Page and senior fullback Ke'Shun Gant. The offensive line will be the biggest concern for Wheeler as he lost four of his five starters to graduation.

The Rest...

2. Milan BULLDOGS

A new era is beginning at Milan as Craig Pettigrew takes over the helm after Jeff Morris retired from coaching at the end of last season. The biggest question entering the season for the Bulldogs is how they will respond to a new head coach for the first time in 22 years. There is plenty of experienced players to guide the Bulldogs under a new head coach with eight returning players on offense and seven on the defense. Senior quarterback Taylor Lockhart and senior running back Jimari Weathers are the players Pettigrew will look to for leadership this season. Weathers will have to carry the load in the run-game after Milan lost Anthony Ballard to graduation.

3. Westview CHARGERS

The rebuilding process is nearly complete for Westview and head coach Trey Cantrell. Inside the trenches will be where the Chargers are expected to dominate this season. Westview has the tools to put up some big yardage with sophomore running back Marquis Taylor and freshman quarterback Ty Simpson. See page 14 for a more detailed look at the Chargers.

4. Bolivar TIGERS

The Tigers will not be as explosive offensively this year as it has the last couple of season. Head coach Woodrow Lowe lost too much offensive production to graduation with only three returning starters back for 2018. Key losses from last season are quarterback Trey Lowe, offensive lineman Briason Mays and wide receiver Josh Sturgis. Senior Jace McKenzie will take over at quarterback and he is basically untested as he had to wait it out on the sidelines with Lowe handling the quarterback duties.

5. South Gibson HORNETS

South Gibson lost 20 seniors to graduation, but head coach Scott Stidham does not believe in rebuilding, only reloading. Stidham only has four returning starters on offense and two of them on the offensive line. Defense is where the Hornets are hurting the most with only one starter back from last season's 9-3 team. Look for senior running back Josh Kwasigroh, Devin Hardwick

6. McNairy Central BOBCATS

The Bobcats finished last year 4-6, which is a big improvement. However, they also ended up in the region's cellar at 0-5. The Bobcats finished last year 4-6, which is a big improvement. However, they also ended up in the region's cellar at 0-5. The Bobcats have not been to the playoffs since the 2008 season, but there is hope in Selmer for them to possibly sneak into the playoffs under three-year head coach Brian Franks. McNairy is 9-11 under his watch and it has

shown improvement in each of his first two seasons. The Bobcats bring back 14 starters split evenly on both sides of the ball.

Who To Watch...

- **Brock Lomax (Covington, QB, 6-1, 180, Sr.)**

As Lomax goes, so does Covington. Lomax carried the Chargers to the Class 3A state finals, where they finished as runner-up. A lot is riding on the arm and legs of Lomax as the Chargers are expected to win the region and possibly make a return trip to the state championship game.

- **Taylor Lockhart (Milan, QB, 6-0, 170, Sr.)**

It helps a first-year head coach to have a signal-caller like Lockhart. The senior quarterback can help make the transition to a new head coach so much easier with his strong, accurate arm. Milan's continued appearance in the playoffs will be dependent on how Lockhart responds to a new head coach.

- **Jace McKenzie (Bolivar, QB, 6-3, 173, Sr.)**

The Tigers no longer have Trey Lowe at quarterback, so now they will depend on McKenzie to guide the offense. The senior quarterback has so much riding on his back as he will attempt to lead the Tigers in the region, which is tough on any new quarterback.

- **Ty Simpson (Westview, QB, 6-1, 176, Fr.)**

This appears to be the year for quarterbacks in Region 7-3A and the Chargers have one to watch for the next four seasons. Simpson has a lot of upside to his game as the Chargers finally have a quarterback who reads coverages well, gives them a deep threat and is very good at running with the football.



ONE TO WATCH — Covington quarterback Brock Lomax runs off the field after the Chargers scored in the semifinals against Pearl-Cohn last season. Covington is expected to repeat as the Region 7-3A champions in Lomax's senior season and be strong contenders for a return trip to Cookeville.

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