

MARY G. MONTGOMERY

Bumpers' goal: Be the best linebacker he can be

BY ARTHUR L. MACK

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Last season, Kerrick Bumpers was a junior defensive end on Mary G. Montgomery's football team, one of the Vikings' returning starters trying to make up for an awful 0-10 season in 2017, when he and most of his teammates were sophomores.

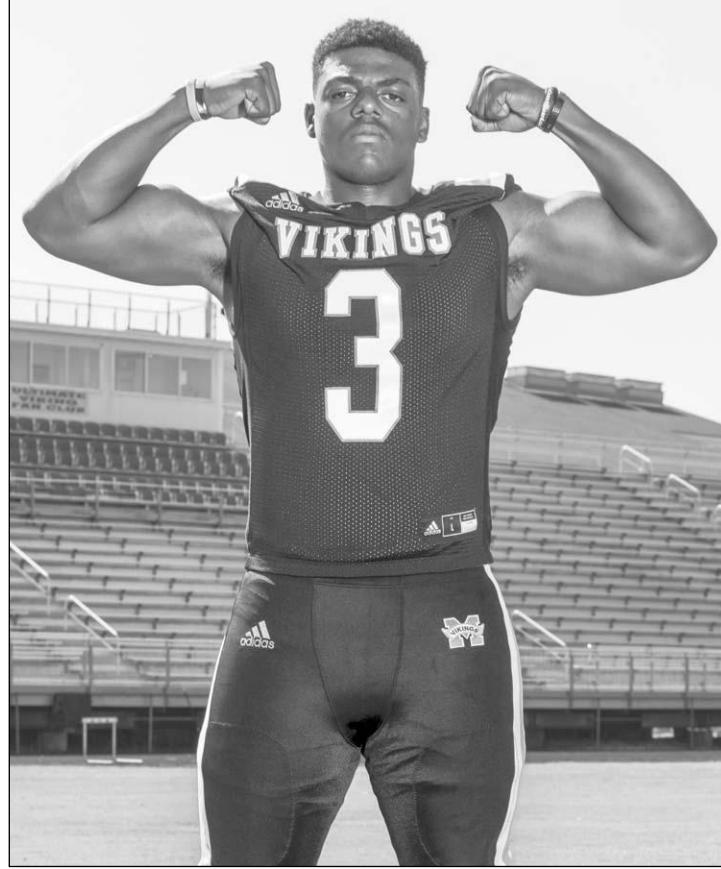
When Stan McCain came on as head coach, the Vikings managed to show some respectability, finishing the 2018 season 4-6 with a couple of heart-breaking losses to Murphy and McGill-Toolen keeping them from a possible winning season.

This season, Bumpers, now a 6-foot-3, 240-pound senior, is at a new position — outside linebacker. The move, he said, will help him and the team improve defensively. It's little wonder Bumpers suggests MGM has a chance to be even better this year.

"It's like coach McCain said, we're just working on our goals," he said. "I feel like we're improving day by day on defense and on offense, and us being somewhat better on defense. We're putting it through on the offense to make them work harder, which is making us work harder to help them get better as best as we can for the season."

Bumpers said the transition from defensive line to linebacker is a work in progress.

"It's just day by day," he said. "I'm just doing



MGM outside linebacker Kerrick Bumpers

the best I can. Athletically, when I did play it (linebacker) last season, I wasn't in coverage; I was just playing a four-man D-line, I was just standing up. I wasn't really covering, just blitzing, rushing, stuff like that. As I transition into coverage, I think I'm getting better day by day."

When asked if it was going to be up to the defense to lead the team, especially with so many starters coming back and taking pride on that side of the ball, Bumpers said he and fellow defender Connor Cates

(defensive end) were doing just that.

"We take a lot of pride on defense," Bumpers said. "MGM's players learned

many things during the 2018 season, especially after losing some games it could have easily won, particularly against Murphy (36-30), and McGill-Toolen (17-10 in overtime).

"We learned that no matter what grade you're in or how long your playing experience is, it could be your time to play and be called off the depth chart at any moment in time," said Bumpers. "In that McGill game and in that Murphy game, we could have won. Really, we should have won all of our games, but it was just the little things we have to focus on and correct."

Now, as a senior, Bumpers said the Vikings have a chance to earn a playoff berth, given the team's improvement over the past two years.

"I really can't put into words how far we've come," he said. "In the ninth grade, I played offense and in the 10th grade we got new people and new faces who worked harder and harder to be the best they can and it's really helped the team."



VIKINGS: MGM maturity needed for close wins

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thing (playing the game). If you don't make that important during the week, then it's not going to be important on Friday night. That's something that didn't just happen, it's happened over time.

I've been in this business a long time and I can tell you, it happens everywhere."

To that end, McCain said maturity will go a long way toward winning close ball games such as last year's heartbreaking overtime loss to McGill-Toolen.

"I'll bet there's not a

week that goes by that we don't get asked about the McGill game," he said. "People say, 'We thought you were going to win that game.' And I say, 'Yeah, I thought we were, too.' But I think it's a learning process for our guys and our coaches. A couple of years ago, we were playing a bunch of sophomores and they're seniors now. They're continuing to grow and get better, and I think they've kind of seen the worst of it and now they're trying to see the best of it, and they're really fighting toward that end."



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*Rep. Shane Stringer says,
"Set Goal, Plan, Work Hard, Achieve Goal!"*



Have a winning season, Vikings!

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