

CHICKASAW

Chieftains build excitement

Numbers are way up for fall season

BY ARTHUR L. MACK
alouismack@aol.com

Last season, Chickasaw made history by overcoming a three-game losing streak late in the season and defeating Washington County 42-21 to win a school-record five regular season games and making the playoffs for the first time as a Class 2A team.

Although the Chieftains lost 63-28 in the first round of the playoffs to Highland Home, there are raised expectations heading into the 2019 season. At the same time, head coach Jason Rowell said 2018 was a learning experience.

“One thing I figured out that it’s a long way from the assistant coach’s chair to the head coach’s chair,” he said. “Some of the memories we have are that our guys during the season could have tanked it. We got some injuries late (in the season). Some of our seniors got hurt in the Leroy game and we wound up losing three in a row (before beating Washington County to get into the playoffs).”

“The biggest thing that we stressed to our guys is doing the little things right. It’s the little things that we’re stressing and our identity is that we want to serve God and do the right thing. If we feel like we do those things, then success is going to come. The wins are going to come.”

Building the program has been one of Rowell’s top priorities.

“Coming in last year, we tried to address building up our program,” he said. “We dressed about 27 guys last season, and of course, it was a good season. We had our best season (in school history), and we made the playoffs for the first



The 2019 Chickasaw High School Chieftains

Chickasaw photos courtesy of Chickasaw High School

time in Class 2A since being in that classification. We really had a bad taste in our mouth after losing in the first round and it didn’t weigh very well (with our players). So we went back to work in January and started trying to get other kids in our program.”

Numbers used to be a big issue with Chickasaw. This year, there are more players participating in workouts.

“We entered spring ball with 50 kids in the program and you’re going to have some attrition through the summer,” Rowell said. “But we had about 45 guys during the summer, probably the best numbers in a summer that Chickasaw has ever had. We’ve averaged about 40 kids during summer workouts and we’re excited in the direction that things are headed in.”

Replacing players such as AJ Phillips, as well as several others who played a role in Chickasaw getting into the playoffs will be difficult, but Rowell has the answer as to how to replace them.

“By committee,” he said. “AJ was a special player, but we’ve got guys who can fill that role. They’ll be seniors and they’ll provide leadership. Not taking

anything away from what AJ did, but a lot of times last season a lot of our guys relied on AJ, which sets you up for disaster when you do that, relying on one guy all the time. So we need our seniors to come together and lead our football team. We’re asking our guys to come together and get ready to make the play.”

Rowell said the team’s strengths are on the offensive and defensive line.

“We’ll return seven starters on the offensive and the defensive line,” he said. “We’ve got only two seniors this year. They’ll be young, but they will be older. We’ve got about 18 linemen on our team and that’s going to be one of our strengths. If we’re going to be strong, I want to be strong up front. That’s where you’re going to win the battles and that’s where you’re going to win football games.”

Defensively, Chickasaw will be led by linebacker Zaqorean McDole and defensive lineman Jayson Williams. They will be heavily relied on to bolster a defense which allowed 325 points last season. Offensively, there is no shortage of running backs. In addition, Tobias Robinson, now a junior, will be expected to do even more

at quarterback, using senior wideout Quintarious Dade as a primary target.

“We’ve got about four or five backs that we’re going to rely on to get the job done,” Rowell said. “It’s just going to be by committee. We’re going to put a lot on Tobias’ shoulders. He’s a year older and he’s had those last 10 or 11 games under his belt last year, so we’re going to put a little more on him this year and hopefully expand our passing game. That should open some holes for the running game.”

In order to have a successful running game, as well as a better overall season and a longer run into the playoffs, Chickasaw will have to eliminate turnovers. Rowell said that will be a top priority.

“We’ve got to take care of the football,” he said. “We can’t turn it over as much (as we did last year). Last year it was our Achilles heel; we turned it over about three-and-a-half times a game. Defensively, we can’t be suspect to the big plays. Several times last year we would be in tight ball games with some of the upper-echelon teams in our region and we would allow that big play to be made.”



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Looking forward to a great 2019 season!



Head Coach Chieftains
Jason Rowell





Head Coach JR Chieftains
Ben Mayfield

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