

# SATSUMA



The 2019 Satsuma High School Gators

Satsuma photos by John O'Dell/Call News

# Gators ‘in a great place’

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SATSUMA — One thing the Satsuma Gators collectively will tell you is none of them wants to let ghosts from the end of the 2018 season dictate their 2019 fortunes.

“I think right now we’re at a great place,” Gators head coach Ray Nelson said. “We’ve got a lot of young men who have been committed, working hard in June and July. Right now our motto is ‘Sustain.’ Last year we started really fast, but we didn’t sustain in the back end of the season.”

Last season, the Gators began 4-2 and were 1-2 in Class 5A, Region 1 but got hit

with key losses via injuries after midseason. None, at least in many players’ minds, was more striking than the Oct. 5 double-overtime 34-31 home loss to Citronelle. What followed were losses to LeFlore, and then a home loss to Faith Academy, 14-13, that put the Rams in the playoffs for the first time ever and locked out the Gators. A non-region loss to Bayside Academy put an end to what turned out to be a 4-6 season.

“We have a lot of young men coming in with the right attitude and I think right now we’re in a good spot,” Nelson said.

A lot of what will bring Satsuma to a better place this year is on the coaches, and Nelson recognizes that. “Most coaches

agree when you talk about a football team that normally you get better from Game 1 to Game 2. I am hoping that as a coaching staff that we get better from Year 1 to Year 2,” the coach said.

“We had a lot of young coaches and myself, a first-year head coach, and it was a learning experience for us. We put a lot of energy, a lot of juice, trying to start fast, and it kind of hurt us at the end of the season. But I feel as a coaching staff we’re matured.”

Nelson said the team’s defense will be a key to the Gators’ overall success this sea-



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Satsuma coach Ray Nelson

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