

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Holcombe: Trench warfare

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There was a time in Washington County’s tradition-rich history when Orlando Holcombe might have found himself in the Bulldogs’ offensive backfield or perhaps at tight end. Instead, he has come along, in his senior year, at a time when the WCHS roster is not filled with a large number of big players, and so he fills an important role on the offensive line and along the defensive front as well.

And that’s just fine by him.
Holcombe, a 5-foot-10, 210-pounder says he’s proud of the play of his teammates along the offensive line and he recognizes the importance the group holds toward Washington County’s success on offense. Likewise, he and his teammates on the defensive front — many of them playing offense and defense — recognize their value to what the Bulldogs what to accomplish this season.

For Holcombe, whatever the team needs and wherever it needs him to play, he’s ready to give his all.

“We’ve got some guys coming back from last year and I think we’ll have a good offensive line this year,” Holcombe said. “We’re working hard every day and the coaches are encouraging us to make our right blocks and the right reads. We know that we’ve got to do a good job on the O-line this year.”

Does he and his fellow linemen feel added pressure to succeed?

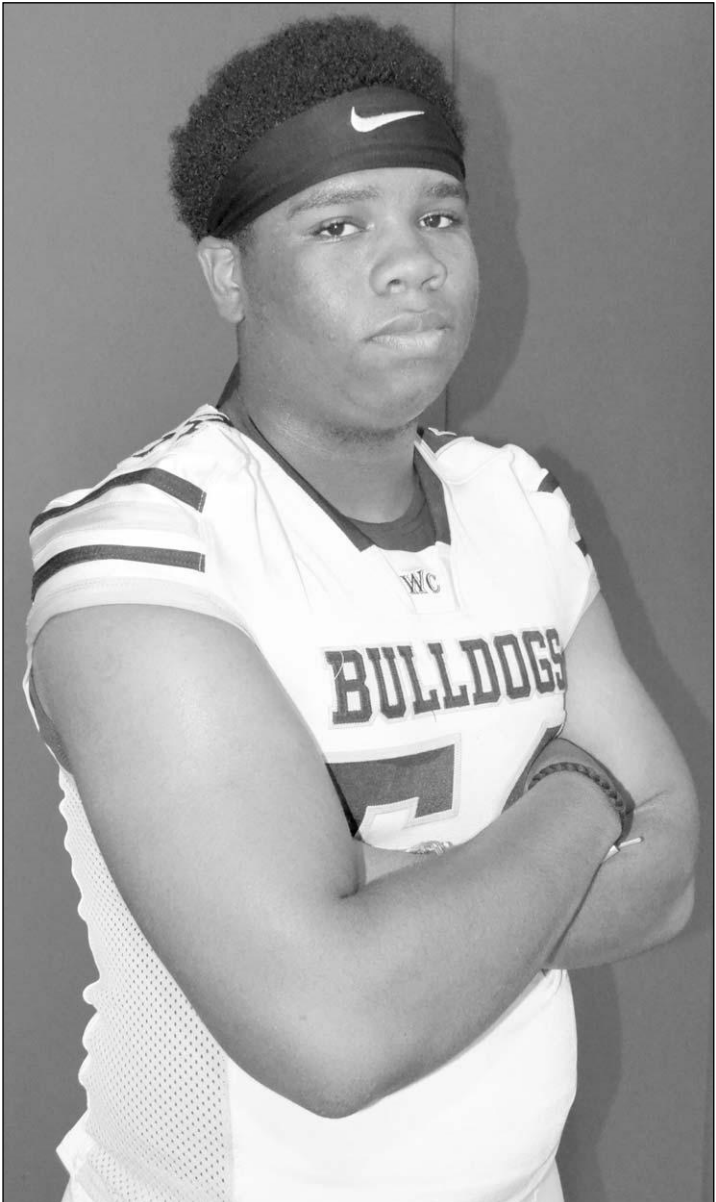
“No, we just come in, get the right reads and do our job,” Holcombe said. “We know we’ve got to do our jobs because if we mess up the whole play is ruined. We’ve got to do our job of blocking and allowing space for the running back to come through. We should be good. We have some smart guys up front — Austin Younge, John Crawford. We’ve got a pretty good group up front.”

It is a group that leans on each other just as the rest of the offense leans on them to get things started in a physical and effective manner on each play.

“Yes, we are tight,” he said. “We communicate up front and we work together up front. We know to be able to do our jobs we have to have a lot of communication up front and we’re a pretty good group.”

A year ago, the offensive line featured many of the same players who will hold starting roles this year. The difference is last season, many of those guys were playing varsity football or starting at their positions for the first time. With a year’s experience under the lights, Holcombe said the unit is more capable of handling tough situations and it is a more confident group this time around.

“Last year we only had two senior linemen,” Holcombe



WCHS lineman Orlando Holcombe

said. “This year I think we’re going to be pretty good. Austin Younge is a second-year center and a couple of us have switched positions. Last year’s group was a young group and some of us didn’t know that much. But this year we have a year’s experience under our belt and we should be pretty good.”

Head coach Devin Roberts is a strong believer in Hol-

combe and what he brings to the team, which overall remains a young team this year. His leadership qualities are equally as important as his physical skills.

“He’s a kid that in years past when Chatom was really big he may have been more of a fullback type, but he’s one of our stronger, bigger kids,” Roberts said. “Orlando is going to be a really good lineman and he’s one of those who will also play along the defensive line and at linebacker. He’s a good kid, he works his tail off in the weight room and he works hard on the field and I’m really excited to see him play. I think he’s going to make some big plays for us.”

As for his double duty on offense and defense, Holcombe said he wouldn’t have it any other way.

“I like playing both sides of the ball,” he said. “On defense I’ll be used at defensive end, nose guard or linebacker. I like defensive end because I like the responsibility and the drills. Brayden Ferguson is a pretty fast tight end and we’ve got John Crawford and others who rotate in and I go against those guys at practice as well as practice alongside them a lot of the time.”

Football, regardless of the position, has always come naturally to Holcombe, and his interest in the game started at a young age.

“I started playing when I was in the second grade,” he said. “I liked sports because all my cousins played. They played here and one of my cousins played in the state championship (game). Watching him made me start playing because I liked watching him play and it made me want to start playing.”

“I just remember the team played really hard and at the end they didn’t panic. We fought hard but didn’t come up with the win (in the state championship game in which his cousin played). I liked watching my cousin play; he played really well. He ran hard, ran routes and I remember watching him and he influenced me to start playing football.”


Taking the field against older, more experienced players when he was a youngster helped his development, Holcombe said.

“I started my 10th grade year, but I didn’t get to play a lot,” he said. “I played more on defense because I really liked defense at that point. I liked playing with those older guys and now I try to use the things that they taught me in order to be better.”


He said he wants to improve his play so he can contribute to the Bulldogs’ having a winning season.

“We can get more wins, I guarantee you that,” he said, referring to the team’s 4-6 record a year ago. “In my opinion we’re better than last year’s team and I hope we can make a deep run in the playoffs.”

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