

LEROY



The 2019 Leroy High School Bears

Leroy photos by Willie Gray/Call News

Strong Bears face tough schedule

Veteran squad should be contender again, but Massey warns: It won't be easy

BY WILLIE GRAY
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Although the 2018 football season ended sooner than he would have liked, Leroy head coach Jason Massey said this year's team has an opportunity to return to the playoffs again this season. Last year, the Leroy Bears closed their regular season with a record of 7-3 and advanced to the third round of the Alabama High School Athletic Association Class 2A playoffs, ending with a 9-4 record.

"I feel good about our chances to win some games this season, but it is not going to be easy at all," Massey said. "The teams in our region are all expected to be better this year than they were last year. Cottage Hill was good last year and they have a lot of talent coming back this season, so we

know they are going to be a challenge. Southern Choctaw will always be a tough game because they are well coached and their kids play really hard.

"Chickasaw is on the upswing and they have some additional players who have joined their team and they are going to be tough. J.U. Blacksher and Chatom (Washington County High) are going to be pretty good and even Choctaw County is going to be better. Choctaw County has hired coach (Gary) Banks and



Jason Massey

they have a lot of kids out (for the team) so they will be athletic.

"When you look at the non-region teams we play, it is not easy for us there either because we have Jackson, Citronelle, Millry and Thomasville. All four of these teams are good but we do that for a reason. When we get to the playoffs we will have played teams as good or better than we will see in the playoffs. They will prepare our guys and I look forward to getting the season started."

While the expectations for this year's Leroy team are high — the Bears were picked No. 2 in the Alabama Sports Writers Association preseason Class 2A poll — Massey said the road ahead will be a tough one for his team to negotiate.

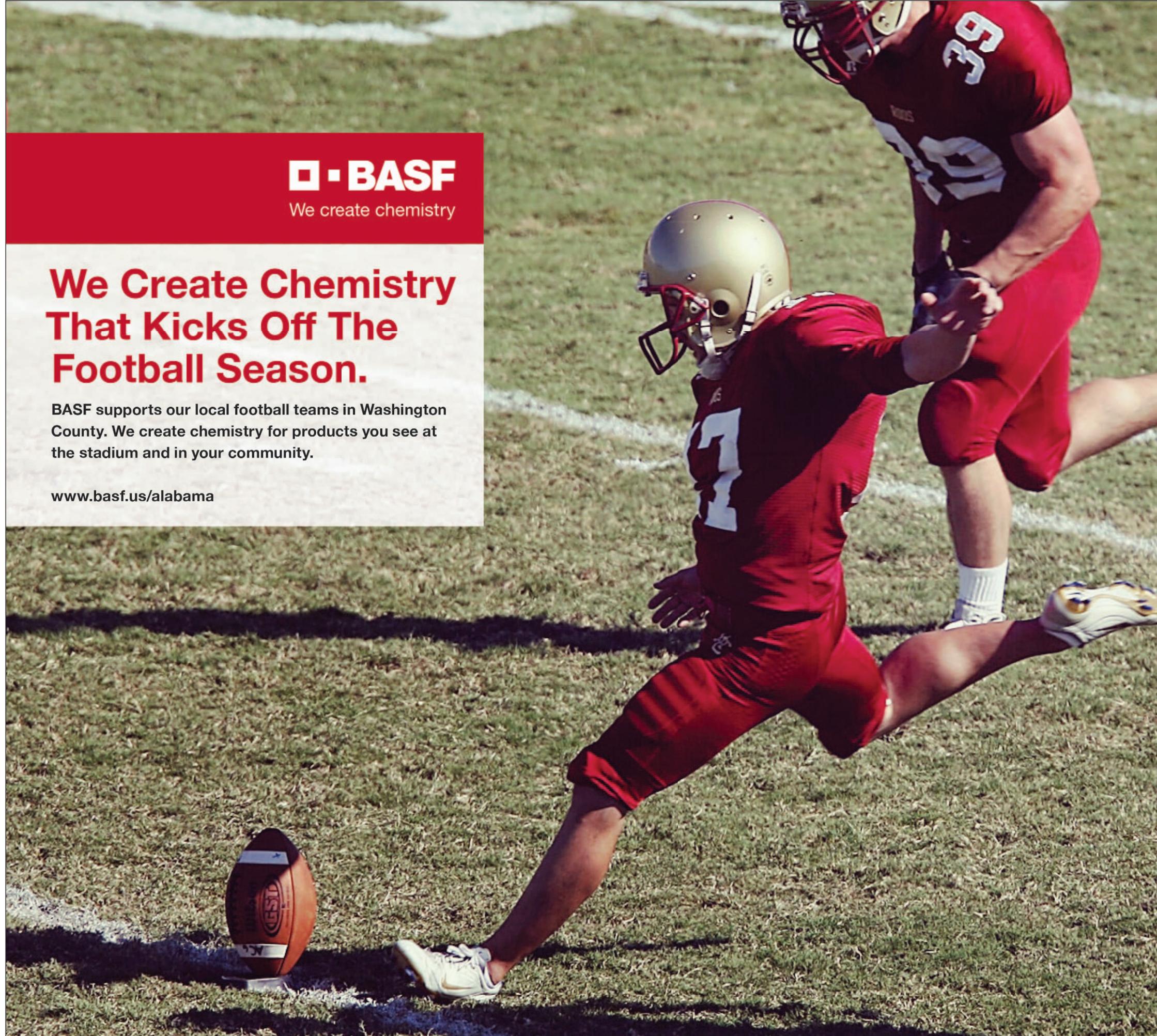
"We know we have tough teams ahead of us, both in our region and especially our

non-region games," he said. "We realize there is not one game on the schedule that we can take lightly, and what I like is that our players understand that for the most part. I think if we stay focused we will be OK this season."

The Bears will have a test right out of the gate with a preseason game against Jackson on Friday, Aug. 23, in the Battle of the Tombigbee. Although the game will not be recorded as a win or loss for either team, the two communities have always enjoyed the meeting. The two local rivals have competed 69 times since they first met on the field in 1928. During those years, Jackson has won 40 times, Leroy 25 times and the meeting has ended in a tie four times.

The regular season will kick off for

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