

MILLRY

No doubt now: Warr is (an outstanding) QB



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— Greg Crager

WILDCATS: Crager says his veterans are role models

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going to be more a defense-only player but will get some time on offense. Tyler Lewis also comes off the bench to add to the depth.

On defense, Trey Lewis is the leader, along with junior defensive end Justin Beasley. “Trey is our middle linebacker and Justin is a defensive lineman, but those two really kind of set the tone on defense,” Crager said.

In the secondary Lockhart will be at safety and is one of the players going both ways for the Wildcats. Brandon Holston, another two-way player, will be at linebacker. Crager said a lot of what Millry will do on defense will revolve around that group.

Warr, a solid defensive player, is going to be used sparingly on defense this season, looking to keep him fresher to run the offense. He is slated to play maybe 10-20 percent of the time. Jonah Smith will help out on the defensive line where he’ll be a first-time starter. Crager called him a “real aggressive guy who has been a pleasant surprise; I’ve been trying to get him out for football for several years and he finally is out there and he’s doing a good job.” At middle linebacker look for transfer Jordan Woulard to play a key role.

Warr is going to handle kickoff and punting duties with Trey Lewis kicking extra points and field goals.

“Anything the school offers, they do it,” Crager said of the senior duo. “They work hard and they’re where they’re at because they have put in a lot of time and effort and worked to be productive. They are good role models for the rest of the team and the campus.”

BY TOMMY HICKS
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The fact Millry’s Tate Warr is a quarterback heading into his senior season — and a good one at that — still creates a bit of head-shaking for Warr himself. This wasn’t Plan A and quite frankly, probably wasn’t Plan B either.

But it’s a good plan, as he has clearly proven the past two seasons with the Wildcats. Heading into his senior season, Warr is the unquestioned leader of the Millry offense and he has demonstrated great growth and improvement in his new normal.

As head coach Greg Crager can explain, Warr’s transition into the Wildcats’ starting quarterback role started out as an experiment of sorts.

“He had never played quarterback until his sophomore year,” Crager said. “And it happened by accident. We had a couple of injuries in the spring (heading into Warr’s sophomore season) and I said, ‘Hey, let’s stick Tate back at running back.’

“We did and he ran the ball hard. Then I thought, shoot, if he can run it that good, I know he’s a baseball player, I bet he can throw the ball too. Let’s see what he can do, and he ends up turning into a good quarterback. He was our best option.”

He began his Millry career as a wide receiver, a player with good hands and speed who had the potential to grow into the position and be a standout. But the injuries came, so he was shifted to running back and from there to quarterback. He never did make it back to receiver, though occasionally there is a play the Wildcats will employ that has him catching a pass.

“Early on we ran more option stuff to try and fit his style, but now he’s really developed himself into a complete quarterback,” Crager said. “That’s how it goes sometimes. When everybody is looking to you and you have to make calls, especially when the stakes are high and you have all this complicated stuff, and even knowing what to do you still have to go do it. You have to be able to do all those things. He’d be the first to tell you it’s challenging. But when you’ve done it for a couple of years like he has, he’s become comfortable in that role.”

The 6-foot-3, 200-pounder is a versatile athlete to begin with. He plays a key role in just about every sport the school offers and can always be found in the starting lineup and in a leadership role. The past two seasons, as he has learned the quarterback position, Warr has thrown for 1,450 yards, a 51 percent accuracy, 19 touchdowns and eight interceptions. As a ball carrier, he has rushed for 1,835 yards the past two seasons, averaging 7.5 yards per carry and scoring another 23 touchdowns.

He also plays defense on occasion, though Crager hopes to limit his time on that side of the ball this season. The past two years he has collected 122 tackles, including 74 as a sophomore when he played a lot on defense.

But there’s no doubt now, Warr is a quarterback.

“In the ninth grade we had a pretty good quarterback, Michael Manuel, and I was just playing receiver, pretty much just blocking and stuff and catching a couple of passes,” Warr said. “In tenth grade, somebody had to move up and me and another guy were splitting the position and after about Week 3 he broke his collarbone and I had to step in, so I pretty much had to start getting comfort-



Millry quarterback Tate Warr

able with it.”

It took some time, but he has become comfortable with being the starting quarterback.

“I guess I started getting comfortable with it about Week 5 or 6 my sophomore season and from then I was just listening to coach (Crager) and I just started getting better.”

He said he believes his passing game has experienced the most improvement from his sophomore season to this year. “I’ve gotten better at running and stuff, but I’ve been passing a lot the past two summers and I think that now I’m 100 times better at it than I was as a sophomore,” Warr said. “Just the experience and coaching over the past couple of years, during the summers with 7-on-7, that has helped out a lot. After that it’s just getting used to playing with a line in front of you.”

Crager said he could see the improvements in Warr’s game almost on a daily basis.

“I think it as that first spring when we moved him,” Crager said. “You could see him move around and he was doing well, but when he showed the physicality that he did, that’s when I said, ‘OK, this guy could be pretty good.’ Moving into his junior year, his spring game then, I saw enough to see the explosiveness and speed to see he was going to be pretty good.”

So what is Warr’s best asset? Crager didn’t hesitate.

“No question it’s his work ethic, his competitive nature and work ethic,” he said. “Those are the things that, working in high school sports over the years, I haven’t seen too many athletes with his work ethic. He really wants to get better and he works as hard as anybody.”

As his improvement has continued, the expectations of the team have risen too. Joining forces with good friend Trey Lewis and others who took starting roles early in their careers and are now seniors, the Wildcats’ are picked as one of the teams to chase the Class 1A, Region 1 title this season, and that’s a tough neighborhood.

“We’ve just been pretty much investing in ourselves this summer and not worrying about who we’re going to play and what they’re going to do,” Warr said. “We’re just worrying about us and getting good at what we need to be good at, executing on offense, things like that.”

He said he’s OK with playing less defense the season, though he likes playing on that side of the ball. As a concession, he said, “During games I like it a little better because I’m more fresh on offense, but overall, in big games and when it comes down to big possessions and stuff, I pretty much want to be playing every one of them on defense and offense. I miss it, but it’s better for the team probably.”

That’s the sign of a leader, and Crager said Warr certainly is that. Asked his best leadership skill, Warr said, “Probably just helping out the younger guys, the younger wide receivers that are going to provide depth in our offense, just trying to help them learn the routes. We’ve got a pretty good senior class. We’ve got some other guys who can help look out for them too.”

Up front, Warr will be protected by an experienced offensive line that includes the return of all five starters from a year ago.

“Those guys, they’ve been working hard every day all summer trying to get better, trying to get a little bit stronger. They should be well improved,” he said.

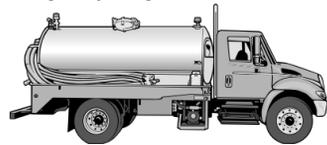
Warr was an all-state selection last year in baseball and an honorable mention all-state pick in basketball. Lewis was an all-state selection in football, baseball and basketball. Of his friendship with Lewis, Warr said, “Since ninth grade, me and Trey, every sport we just lean on each other. We both kind of lead in baseball and basketball too, so we just kind of work with each other at what we’re good at and what we’re not good at and try to lead other people too.”

Warr said he expects big things from the Wildcats this season.

“We’re going to be pretty explosive on offense,” he said. “We’ve got a wide receiver who came out this year, a senior, Zeke Turner, he’s going to be real explosive for us on the edge, and Ben Lockhart is good. Trey can go up and get a ball and I’ll rely on him in the fourth quarter and stuff, just rely on our good players. ... We’ve just got to stay focused and invest in ourselves.”

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