

# MARY G. MONTGOMERY

## Vikings have QBs, but want to run



Senior quarterback Max Parden (10) heads up the quarterbacking corps for Mary G. Montgomery, and he is backed up by junior Slayden Pearce (7) and sophomore Ashton Hollins (18).

*Max Parden is top signal-caller for MGM, and Eddgerrin Houston is an elusive running back*

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Last season, Mary G. Montgomery scored 157 points en route to a 4-6 record. That's a big improvement from 2017, when the Vikings scored only 85 points and were winless at 0-10.

So when second-year head coach Stan McCain was asked what should be expected offensively from the Vikings, he laughed and said, "Whatever works. But honestly, we've got a new quarterback this year, Max Parden. He throws the ball real well, but when you throw the ball, you've got to be able to catch it."

In MGM's spring game against Greene County, Miss., Parden completed 8 of 15 passes for 100 yards and one interception. The senior is 6-foot-4 and has a lot of promise, according to McCain, but has not had a lot of experience.

Behind Parden is junior Slayden Pearce and sophomore Ashton Hollins. Pearce completed 8 of 16 passes for 61 yards in the spring game. They will have a host of targets, led by senior receiver Akelan Bush.

"I think that all three of those guys sometime during the season will see action (at quarterback)," McCain said. "Max has more experience than the other two, but I think the other two guys can step in there and do the job also."

While there is strong competition for the starting quarterback position, passing is a work in progress. Right now, the focus is ball control, especially with having to replace three starters on the offensive line.

"We're working on that (throwing the ball) on my end," said McCain. "But if I had my druthers, I would rather be a ball-control (team) first and make first downs. That's what I want us to be and

play to our defense. That's what I think we'll be.

"As far as formations and all of that, we'll be vanilla. One thing that I found out coming down here is that just about everybody runs the same stuff. They line up the same way, they run the same stuff and we're no different. What you'll see on Friday night is two teams running the same stuff, and who's able to stop that and who's able to do it (run the ball) better."

In other words, McCain said he wants to be a ball-control team, like Class 7A, Region 1 rival Theodore.

"I would like for us to be more run-oriented," he said. "We can be good throwing short stuff — screens, things like that — and get our shots when we can, but I think that's going to be a gradual thing for us. As the season goes along, we'll find our identity, which will likely be defense. But we can't put our defense in bad positions and we just can't give the ball away. That type of thing — holding on to the ball, score when we have the opportunities — I think that's the way we're going to have to play."

As far as the running game goes, Eddgerrin Houston, who went to Blount as a result of a transfer but is now back at MGM, is one of the leading candidates as a starter.

"He's a small, shifty back and we're looking for good things out of him," said McCain. "He's been consistent since he got back last January. In the weight room, he's gotten bigger. He has a good knack for finding the holes (in a defense). We've got about five guys back there and there's not a lot of difference in them. We've got a couple of straight-ahead runners, and a couple of shifty guys."

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