

McINTOSH

Demons 'ready to rock'

With returning QB and coach's magic touch, McIntosh hopes for more football success

BY DARRON PATTERSON
Sports Correspondent

McINTOSH — Just call Renard Davis the clean-up man. Last year he led McIntosh to a 6-4 record, its first winning season since, well ... Renard Davis was their head coach in 2012, when they finished 8-6, losing to Brantley in the Class 1A playoffs' semifinal round.

As a matter of fact, Davis was the Demons' coach in the only three winning seasons they've had in the past nine years, also going 7-5 on his watch in 2010, losing to bitter rival Sweet Water in the playoffs' second round.

So what does this guy do differently than three other coaches between his stints didn't do?

"If I had to talk about what I do, honestly, I put a lot of trust in these children," said Davis, with a slight laugh creeping into his thick Southern accent. "I don't let them run freely," he quickly adds. "But I tell them if you want to win, I demand some things from you. You must condition hard.

"To be completely honest with you, I'm not a big X and O (play diagram) guy, but the people I associate myself with as far as them wanting to be offensive or defensive coaches, I kind of let them do things the way they think they can do it.

"But I always tell them, 'If it doesn't work, then we're going to change and do something different.' I don't like to see coaches who demand children learn 50 plays and then they don't know any of them.

"I tell my coaches, 'Keep it simple,' and we're going to learn four or five plays that everybody knows ... everybody on the team knows. And we're going to perfect these four or five plays and we're going to do them well, because learning the whole playbook, but knowing nothing about the (overall) playbook, is counter-productive."

Davis' way was working for the Demons early on last season. They were 2-1 heading into a huge Region 1 game at Millry, but were soundly beaten, 35-14.

"In the Millry game, there were things that I just couldn't do anything about," he said. "We complained to the refs about some things, but it just didn't fly. We had 20 penalties in that game, and they had one. I'm just saying."

They rebounded to win 24-6 at Elberta the next week, setting up one of the biggest games at H.H. Wiggins Stadium the City of McIntosh had seen in a long time, a showdown with bitter rival Sweet Water.

Bulldogs 61, Demons 20.

"We started off pretty good. But everybody that



McIntosh coach
Renard Davis



McIntosh quarterback T.J. Jackson gets ready to unleash a pass last season. Jackson is back to lead the offense.

was in our area we just couldn't seem to get around," said Davis, a Thomasville native, of the midseason swoon.

"It wasn't a good feeling."

Senior quarterback T.J. Jackson (5-foot-7, 180 pounds) is back to try and make Davis feel better. His presence is a calming influence for the team after an uncertain offseason that saw Jackson's mother consider moving the family out of state.

But that uncertainty also forced Davis to develop another triggerman, and he found one in sophomore Defontae Sullivan (5-7, 155), that now allows the speedy Jackson to line up at running back when needed.

And that's good news for the Demons because last year's starter, senior 1,000-yard back Bernard Dixon (6-0, 200), won't play in the first part of the season for academic rea-

sons and promising junior George Thomas (6-2, 190) is lost for the entire year with an ACL tear suffered in spring practice.

Senior Anthony Phillips (5-7, 160) will also see time at running back, as well as at safety. Likewise fellow senior Keneau Davis (5-8, 165) will get carries and a lot of action at middle linebacker, too.

As is customary with teams like McIntosh that don't have an abundance of players turn out for football like larger schools,

most guys go both ways.

Senior D'Tontae Thomas (6-1, 170) will get time at receiver and defensive end, juniors Kelsey Smith (5-20, 250), Robert Bell (6-0, 195) and Michael Snider (5-9, 190) will all double up on the offensive and defensive lines, as will huge eighth-grader Gaberlle Back (6-3, 280).

"He's going to be special," said Davis of the youthful Back. "I'll tell you this, he might be young, but if he gets his hands on you on defense, just lay down because you're not going anywhere."

Davis is excited to get it going this year at J.U. Blacksher in the opener.

"We are really excited about the season," he said. "We're ready to rock."

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