

CITRONELLE

'Sky is the limit' for Coby Reed

Citronelle linebacker
Coby Reed

Defensive star can excel even more as linebacker

BY TOMMY HICKS
tommyhicks@thecallnews.com

There's a Southern quote — if it ain't broke, don't fix it. Some might believe that to be appropriate to use when considering Citronelle defensive standout Coby Reed. It was Reed who helped lead a solid Wildcats' defense last season from his spot at defensive end, a position where he was set free to go find the ball and the person in possession of it.

It was a good plan and Reed did a fine job and filling the requirements of the position.

As a returning defensive starter, many felt Reed would be found back at defensive end, charged with the same mission as Citronelle looked to once again make the Class 5A state playoffs. It's true, he'll be a returning starter, though the position he finds himself in heading into this season has changed.

Reed, who earned honorable mention all-state honors a year ago, will be found at the outside linebacker position this season. It is the hope, according to head coach Jason Barnett, that from that spot Reed not only will continue to make plays, but make more of them, and that Reed not only will be involved in creating havoc for opposing offenses, but that he'll be able to create added havoc. It is also believed the move will help shore up the Wildcats' linebacking corps that lost some key players from a year ago and found some others who played there moved to other positions.

"What we're doing is we're taking advantage of his skills and strengths," Barnett said of Reed. "Instead of trying to pigeon-hole him to one thing we're going to free him up. We're going to use him all over the place and hopefully

that will free him up and allow him to be more effective and translate into more production."

As for Reed, he said he's OK with the move, though it has taken a bit of work to become comfortable with his new position.

"It's a big adjustment and a big change," he said. "I had to learn the skills pretty quick. Going from defensive end to outside linebacker is a big change and I had to learn a lot of things pretty quickly. ... There are more reads at outside linebacker. At defensive end, you're more free as they say, while at outside linebacker you have to be more disciplined and more smart."

Told the move could be considered a compliment, his coaches giving him a task they felt comfortable he not only could perform but one in which he could excel, and one that would only add to his leadership role on the defense, Reed said he hoped that was the case.

"I saw it that way," he said. "When they asked me to move to outside linebacker I thought that I would be pretty good at that position because we've already got some pretty good linebackers there already. I thought it was a pretty good call by the coaches."

Reed's leadership ability played a big factor in the switch, Barnett said.

"He's the type that he doesn't say a whole lot; he's kind of a goofy kid and jokes around a lot, but he gets better every day and he comes to work and the other kids see him and say, 'Coby's working, let me go do some work too,'" Barnett said.

"Athletically, he's probably the best kid I've ever had. He learned how to play the game. He's a great football player and a great kid. I'm looking for-

ward to some of the things we're doing with him this year that could possibly open him up even more to get even more production than he had last year. Hopefully that will work. He's going to have to play wide receiver some, too. But he's always going to be as good as he can be. The sky is the limit for Cody."

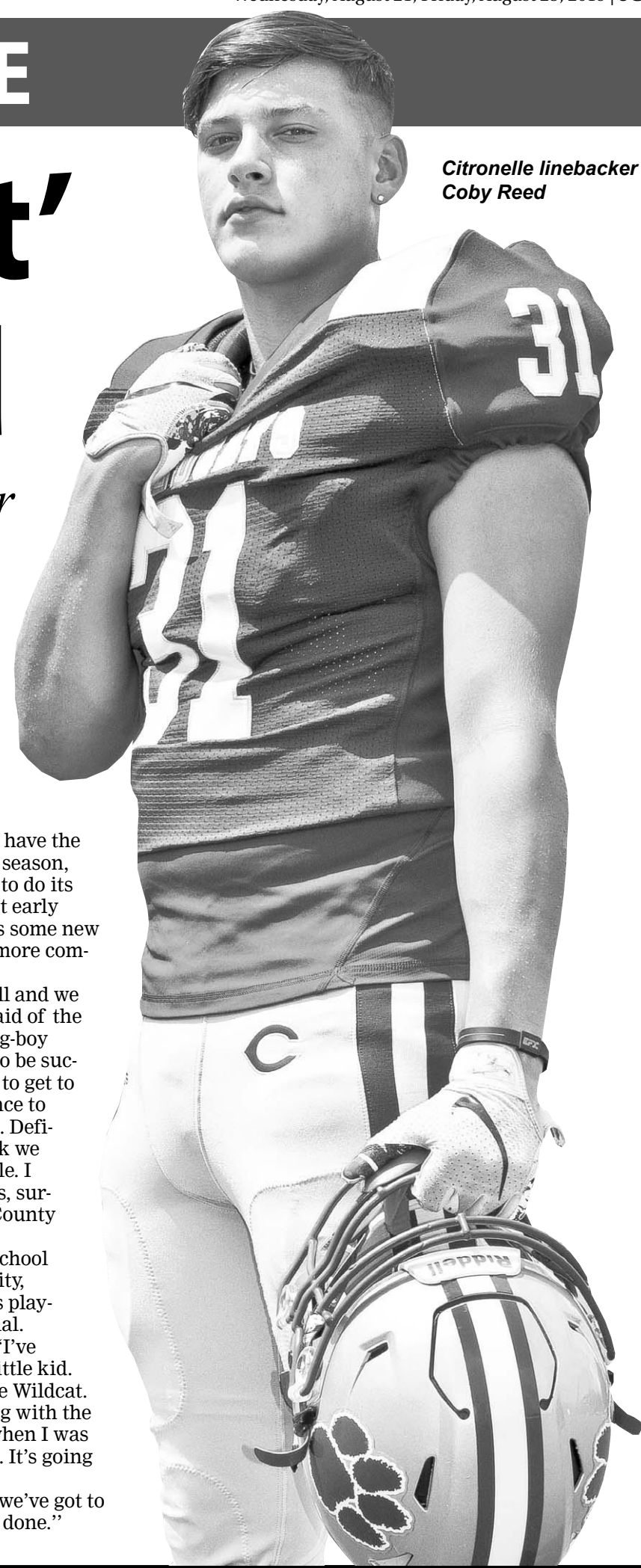
In order for Citronelle to have the type of season it wants this season, the defense is going to have to do its part, and it will have to start early while the offense, which has some new faces at key positions, gets more comfortable and confident.

"We have to get to the ball and we have to play smart," Reed said of the defense. "We have to play big-boy defense. Personally, I want to be successful and for us to be able to get to the playoffs and have a chance to compete in the (state) finals. Definitely, I think we can. I think we can surprise plenty of people. I think we'll surprise the fans, surprise the people in Mobile County and around the district."

As for representing his school and the Citronelle community, Reed said that's what makes playing for the Wildcats so special.

"It's an honor," he said. "I've been playing since I was a little kid. I've always been a Citronelle Wildcat. Growing up and now playing with the same people I played with when I was little, it's special to all of us. It's going to be a good season."

"It's my senior year and we've got to get on the ground and get it done."



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