

Bulldogs still young, but same coach will help

By Mike Lee
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Mullin will field a young football team for the second straight season, but for the first time since 2015-2016, the Bulldogs will have the same head coach for two consecutive years.

"I believe that will make a big difference," said Brent Williamson, who is returning after coaching the Class 1A (six-man) Bulldogs through a 1-9 season in 2019 with a roster filled with freshmen and sophomores. "Consistency in coaching will help any program. With that continuity, the kids start to believe in the coaches and themselves. We're looking for better times this year."

The Bulldogs have no seniors on this year's preseason roster, but they do have four juniors in running back Trent Coston and linemen Travis

Lytle, Brian Moore and Cody Holland. Sophomores Cyrus Jackson, Esteban Hernandez, Abel Martinez and Hayden Thomas also return after seeing considerable playing time last year as freshmen.

"It would be nice to have some seniors," Williamson said. "We had to play a varsity schedule last year with mostly freshmen and sophomores. We're still young and fairly small, and those things will hurt us."

"But with a year's experience, we're better, athletically, and better overall than last year. We just need time to build -- and keep the kids' confidence up and keep them working hard. Our kids need to realize that they have an opportunity to take one step at a time and get better."

Coston is a returning starter at running back, but the Bulldogs need another back to emerge. It could be Jackson, who played more at quarterback last year. Martinez and Thomas are the projected starters at receiver. The Bulldogs have all their linemen back from last year in the 180-pound Lytle and the 200-pound Hernandez. Moore returns as center when Mullin's offense utilizes the spread formation.

Troy Shelton, a 6-foot-1, 165-pound freshman, is expected to take over at quarterback and spreadback.

Mullin is seeking consid-

erable improvement on offense from last year, when the Bulldogs averaged just 9.8 points per game and scored 18 points in their final seven games combined.

Lytle, Moore, Hernandez and Thomas all played in the defensive line last season. They'll be joined this year by Holland, a 185-pound junior who last played football in 2018. Coston is a returning starter at linebacker. Jackson and Martinez return in the secondary. Shelton will play on defense, but he could move around to different positions as needed.

The Bulldogs' defense allowed 52 points per game last season.

Mullin finished 0-4 in district last year. They moved to the reshuffled District 16-1A Division II that includes defending state champion Richland Springs. The Coyotes are a heavy favorite to win district this year, with Rochelle picked second, Cherokee third, Mullin fourth and Lohn fifth. Richland Springs opens the season ranked No. 4 statewide by texasfootball.com. Rochelle returns 20 of 23 players from last year's 8-3 team, and Cherokee returns all its starters from a team that finished 2-2 in district.

"We're in a tough district with the defending state champs. Rochelle returns almost everybody, and Chero-

kee has a senior-heavy team," Williamson said. "But we hope to find a way to get one of the (two) playoff spots."

Although Mullin will enter this season trying to end an eight-game losing skid, the Bulldogs won five games as recently as 2017 and they won six games in 2016. The Bulldogs are seeking their first playoff berth since 2014 and first district title since 2004.

Mullin has an intriguing season opener at 6 p.m. Aug. 28 at Olfen, located 12 miles south of Ballinger. Olfen is starting its first season of UIL football, and the Mustangs' first varsity game will be against Mullin. It will match two of the smallest schools in Texas playing football. Olfen has a high school enrollment of 31 students while Mullin has 29.

