

Choctaw

Jackets loaded with weapons

By Ryan Horton

choctawtimes@sbcglobal.net

Choctaw High School's offensive arsenal is fully loaded.

The Yellowjackets have been working to reshape the program for years, and the coaching staff says extra work put into year-round mental and physical conditioning has CHS poised to take gold this season.

"This season is looking good. We've got a lot of good kids coming back," said junior La'Trell Ray. "We're taking it all home this year. As a team, we have no doubts."

A year ago, a CHS team consisting primarily of sophomores took second in the state, and that experience has the 2021 team in prime position.

"The offense looks good. We expect to put up bigger numbers than we did a year ago. We have nine returning guys and you can just see the experience is there. Coaches aren't having to motivate these guys; they're motivating each other to get going. There's more intensity among the kids, they understand what's at stake and they want to be good," said coach Jake Corbin.

As a sophomore Steele Wasel took over the starting quarterback spot.

That year he threw for 3,300 yards and 33 touchdowns as he led the Jackets back to their first state final appearance since 1960.

Now a junior, Wasel stands at 6-4 and weighs about 220 pounds. He has several Division-I offers, but his focus remains on building his current team and helping Choctaw claim a long-awaited second state title.

Backing up Wasel will be a freshman baseball standout that has already picked up an offer from the University of Oklahoma, Cash Williams.

Choctaw has a versatile rushing attack. Freshman Juju Smith will have an opportunity to play, but there's no lack of skilled runningbacks on the varsity roster.

Senior C.J. Smith (6-5, 195) doesn't look like a typical running back. However, he repeatedly produces yards for the Jackets with power and breakaway speed.

Junior La'Trell Ray (5-9, 165) can run a 4.36 in the 40-yard dash. Last year his 47-yard run against Stillwater was what set Choctaw up to make the school's second ever state final

appearance.

"Probably the biggest offseason we've had was La'trell Ray. He has sculpted himself into being able to play any receiver position including tight end," said Corbin.

Junior RJ Jackson is another big play maker for the Jackets.

The standout started 12 games for Choctaw as a freshman and then moved over to tight end as sophomore. He repeatedly produced results in the tight end position averaging 20 yards per reception last season. Now a junior, Jackson stands 6-4 and weighs in near 245 pounds.

As usual, Choctaw has a deep roster of talent ready to play receiver.

Senior Jaxon Burchett (6-0, 175) had over 800 yards receiving last year and is the top returning player on the outside.

Junior Jax Smith (6-1, 195) is expected to have a breakout season.

Senior Lamere'on Curry, a Carl Albert transfer, is another threat at receiver expected to make an immediate impact.

The entire offensive line is going to have varsity experience.

Senior Cade McConnell (6-7, 305) is the anchor of the offensive line. Jacket fans can also expect to see big work from senior Alton Robinson (6-4, 295) who has high agility on a strong frame.

"From center, Alton Robinson, to guards Aaron McAffrey and Cage Butler, TCU commit Cade McConnell will play tackle, Gabe Gaines and Brody Hofen will anchor the offensive line," said Corbin. "All six of those guys have varsity experience and are real veterans for our team."

Kicker Tommy Yousey returns after calmly hitting the game-winner against Stillwater in last year's state semifinal that put Choctaw in title game.

"The current theme is bigger, faster and stronger and Tommy is no exception. A year ago, he could sporadically reach the endzone, and now he can do it consistently. He's just booming them through the endzone," said Corbin. "He's stronger and it shows in his kicks."

Return wise, Jacket fans can expect to see some speedsters and big play makers like La'trell Ray take the field for Choctaw's special teams.

Choctaw

Swarming defense returns

By Ryan Horton

choctawtimes@sbcglobal.net

Last year Choctaw earned a reputation as one of the most devastating defenses in the state.

With plenty of talent returning, the Jackets again plan to make big stops designed to terrorize the state's elite programs.

Last year CHS gave up an average of 19 points a game, while playing some of the best programs across Oklahoma and Arkansas. Choctaw High School's coaching staff says they once again have the power and speed needed to make big stops this season.

The defense will work as a swarm focused on eliminating any offensive threat, but Jacket fans are sure to notice some key play makers.

"This is a real veteran group that works extremely hard," said CHS head coach Jake Corbin.

Senior leader Desean Brown (6-4, 260) is a one-man wrecking-crew at defensive end that will set the tone for teammates on the defense.

Coach Jake Corbin says Brown is one of the top players in Oklahoma regardless of position. He had 19 sacks as a junior and multiple pressures and hurries.

"He had a monster season a year ago and has multiple Power 5 offers. Almost all the Big 12, Big 10 and some of the SEC teams are looking at him," said Corbin. "I expect him to have a huge year.."

Julius Pruitt plays the end opposite of Brown and adds his own unique fast and powerful presence.

Seniors Aaron McAffrey (6-0, 240) and Alex Davidson (6-2, 245) add size at the down positions in Choctaw's multiple-front defensive look.

Powerhouse RJ Jackson should make an impact on defense as will

Brody Hofen.

The linebacking corps is led by seniors Ethan Rone and Spencer Boles. These three-year starters are smart, physical and reliable.

Rone (6-0, 205) is the top returning tackler for the Jackets. Last year he was credited with 103 stops and four sacks. Boles (6-0, 200) always finds the action.

Senior Bolton Hawkins (6-0, 185) snagged three passes and made 65 tackles as a junior.

C.J. Smith is another standout Jacket that fans can expect to make big plays for the defense.

"He will likely play defense at the next level and can cover a ton of space in the secondary," said Corbin.

New in the mix this year will be Easton Costa and Matt Smith.

"Smith will be a senior, but has really changed his body and put in the work," said Corbin.

"Our nickle spot will have a great deal of depth with sophomore Will Smith and senior CJ Smith. Our corner spot will be DeAundrey Green competing with guys like, Imari Jones, Troy Barker and Lamere'on Curry. Choctaw's safety spot will be led by three-year starter Bolton Hawkins. Guys like Cash Williams, Cory Childs and Ajay Lynch will also get back there. We've got a lot of pieces, and they're pushing each other through fall camp to get better every day."

Corbin says the Choctaw defense will keep pushing for improvements daily, and hope to build from where they left off a year ago, holding Bixby to just 17 points in the state final.

Choctaw strives to be the G.O.L.D. standard in Oklahoma football. The program's principles are based on gratitude, ownership, leadership and discipline. Choctaw will be looking to prove that standard this season by turning their motto into a gold ball.