

Harrah

Harrah looks to defense for success

By John Martin
Staff Writer

Seven teams from District 4A-2 made the state play-in round for the state playoffs at the conclusion of the 2020 season which will forever be called the "Year of the COVID."

The Panthers were among them.

Usually, the top four qualify and that would have been state runnerup Blanchard, semifinalist Tuttle, Ada and Tecumseh. But thanks to the COVID plague, John Marshall, and Cushing stepped in when teams they had lost to had to forfeit.

Even the Panthers got a second chance when a forfeit gained them a chance against power-packed Clinton.

But this is a new season and Chis Blik and his Harrah Panthers are primed to WIN a slot in the playoffs, not advance via a bye.

And Blik and his staff will welcome back eight starters on offense from a year ago to rank high on the list of statewide powers.

The pre-district schedule will give Blik and his staff and the Panther squad a chance to hone their skills in preparation of another rugged district against the same teams listed above.

And the Panthers have every right to expect success with their veteran group leading the way.

"Just like the offense, the Harrah defense returns seven starters making this one of the more experienced units in 4A," said Blik.

The Panthers have experience returning in all three levels of their defense. Along the line, Dawson Hairell (6-3, 205, Jr.) and Ethen McNeill (6-0, 190, Sr.) will bring pressure from the two defensive end positions.

At linebacker, Mort Barber (5-10, 185, Sr.) and Dusty Daigle (5'11, 180, Sr.) return to man the middle of the defense and are joined by outside linebackers Chadlee Humphries (5-8, 160, Sr.) and James Cummings (6-3 190, Sr.).

Ricky Blik (5-8, 160, Sr.) Austin Coley and Braydon Morrison (5-10, 165, Sr.) return to the outside in the secondary for the third season and Logan Bundy (6'1



Senior linebacker Austin Coley is one of the top returning starters for the Panthers. PHOTO BY JASON TURNER

160, Sr.) is returning for this third season as the starting free safety.

Coach Blik and the Panthers are also expecting big things from newcomers Ashten Zimmerman (5'10 205, Sr.) and Devon Macaraig (5'10 160, So.) who both expect to make an impact defensively.

So don't expect Tuttle to score 35, Ada for 49, Cushing 42 and Clinton 38 against the Panthers during the upcoming campaign.

These young men have worked hard all summer long, in the heat, in the rain, in the humidity to remedy those situations and have the physical skills and the mental attitude to accomplish those improvements.

The home schedule begins with a visit from Seminole on Sept. 3 and following a visit to Bridge Creek, where the D is hoping to pitch another shutout to go with the 12-0 blanking of a year ago, to set the stage for the classic Oklahoma High School football rivalry—McCloud at Harrah, our own version of Bedlam on Sept. 17.

The district schedule opens on Sept. 24 with a visit to historic Taft Stadium to play Classen with hopes of another 59-14 victory, followed by Homecoming at Evans Field hosting John Marshall on Oct. 1. Then comes a visit to Tuttle followed by a Fall Break clash with Ada on Oct. 13.

Tecumseh will come to Evans Field on Oct. 22 with a journey to Blanchard the next week and the regular season finale at home against Cushing, possibly for a berth in the state tourney at stake.

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