

## Del City

# Eagles learning from past struggles

By Jeff Harrison

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The Del City football team was primed to make a move in Class 6A-II last year.

The Eagles were coming off a state semifinal appearance and were again loaded with experience and talent.

But things didn't go as planned. Del City started the season 0-5. They recovered to make the playoffs but were eliminated by Bixby in the first round.

Fast forward to this year, and expectations are high. But so is the level of maturity.

"I'm really excited about this year because the group and these seniors are very mature because of what we went through last year," said coach Robert Jones. "Some publications picked us to go to play in the state championship. So when you have those expectations,

and you add that we had eight Division I players, and then we start the year 0-5, that really humbles you."

Jones is in his first year as head coach after serving as defensive coordinator the past four years. He replaces his friend and longtime coaching colleague Mike Dunn who became Carl Albert's new coach. Jones believes the transition has been a smooth one as they regained a sense of normalcy with off-season workouts and the summer pride program.

"We have a very mature and humble team, and I think we're more unified ever," Jones said. "One of my focus points since I took over the job was character development, I really wanted to focus on not just helping the player, but helping the person. And it has paid huge dividends."

Jones also plans to have some players

play both sides of the ball this year.

"We just don't have the luxury to have 200 kids in our football program, so we think this will give us a competitive advantage that we hadn't had the last few years," Jones said.

The Eagles have a tough non-district slate that includes Tulsa Booker T. Washington, Carl Albert and Bishop McGuinness.

"One of the things that I learned from coach [Gary] Rose is to schedule tough early so you can prepare yourself for district and we did that," Jones said.

They host Booker T. Washington in the season opener on Sept. 3. The Hornets are led by the state's top players in Gentry Williams. The senior has numerous Power 5 offers including Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, LSU, Georgia and Michigan. Del City narrowly lost to

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Del City's Virgil Yates carries the ball during a scrimmage against Southmoore on Aug. 20. The senior has moved to quarterback this season. PHOTO BY JONATHAN TERRY

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