

# DRESDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL



## Changing and Growing Are Part of the Game

BY JASMINE WILLIAMS  
jasmine@dresdenenterprise.com

The Dresden Middle School Lions football team has new faces not only on the team, but with almost a brand-new coaching staff. New Head Coach Richard Ritz leads the team this year with assistant coaches Scott Hewitt and brothers Bobby and Jeffery Hampton. Ritz has been coaching for 11 years, with experience from pee-wee league to high school football. He began coaching in high school at Dresden and started coaching at Lake County. Last year he was at Shelbyville Central High School as a head coach.

Returning to Dresden, he is now taking all those years of coaching, along with the many different styles and putting that into being a head coach and building the Dresden team. Ritz said this is not his first time building a new team, so it is a challenge he is willing to work on to make Dresden the best that it can be.

He came back to Dresden since it was where he began his coaching journey after graduating in 2004 and coaching as an assistant

at the high school in the past. Ritz said this was where he wanted to come back to and raise his family. He and his wife have two children. Rounding out the coaching staff are Bobby Hampton and brother, Jeffery Hampton. Both love Dresden football and were on the State Runner-Up football team in 2011. They stepped up to be assistants and have always been there for the team when they are needed. They love the team, the community, and Dresden. Looking at the team, the defense this year is strong.

Ritz said the team is starting to get the idea of being physical and playing hard. But he also said it is a struggle to get some of the younger kids learning that it is not the football they used to play when they were younger, and they need to learn that. However, the defensive line is shaping up with Jaqwan Ellison, who is a key player, returning on the field. Brody Taylor and Gabe Alvarez are two more strong players that Ritz said need to be looked out for this season. The linebacker positions were what a lot of younger players were hoping to earn during the time of the interview.

Some players on the outside for the defense are Cooper Allman,

Luke DiPietro, and Bruce Willis. Ritz noted they are good players as long as they keep coming and stay focused. Both sides of the ball are bringing different challenges to the team this year. With a new coaching staff, the system of playing has changed to what they were used to last year.

The team used to work to hold back the defensive line, but this year Richard Ritz wants the offense to be more focused on spreading out and throwing the ball more. Helping with this is quarterback Luke DiPietro, who is returning as a good player and leader for the team.

Cooper Allman will be a running back. He is fast, smart and strong and likes to hit. Receiver positions were being looked at by Ayden Flora and Bruce Willis, who were competing for that position. Jaqwan Ellison and Brody Taylor will also be on the offensive line, and they are really smart on the field.

Ritz said this about DiPietro, "If he can play the way that he really up to him on how far we go this year. Two others who will be carrying the team a lot this season are offense linemen Brody Taylor and Jaqwan Ellison. Cooper Allman will have a lot of work running the ball and so far, all four of them have been doing very well."

The Lions' special teams were being considered at the time of the interview, but there were no players named for those positions. Ritz said they did not have a kicker and were looking to see who would play the best for that position.

The team is looking well overall for the start of the season. Ritz went on to say that everyone is on the same slate with a new system and coaching staff and its like they have 30 new guys. The team is on the right path this year and working to make sure that their fun and excitement transfers to the field to win.

COVID has affected Dresden Middle like it has many teams, having to miss a lot of valuable snaps and plays. Younger players have also not come back out to play for the middle school like they were expected to and there are lower numbers than what they expected. Ritz stressed it will be up to the parents on helping their kids out.

### 2021 DMS FOOTBALL ROSTER

No.	Name
3	Cooper Allman
4	Conner Evans
8	Bruce Willis
15	Luke DiPietro
16	Jaegar McMackin
18	Wyatt Davis
20	Ayden Flora
21	Parker Scott
23	Cavin Stoffeth
24	Aiden Carrington
27	Ignacio Becerra
34	Ryan Cousins
40	Jackson Cook
44	Calvin Artis
52	Jaqwan Ellison
53	Gabe Alvarez
55	Carter Adams
56	Tucker Dunning
57	Aiden Essary
60	Grayson Reynolds
65	Reed Killebrew
67	Bryson Hames
70	Elliott Stafford
71	Jacoby Sutton
72	Mika Lawrence
74	Will Childs
78	Brody Taylor

Head Coach: Richard Ritz  
Assistant Coach: Scott Hewitt, Jeffery Hampton, and Bobby Hampton

Looking at the team, Ritz said his philosophy is, "To have pride in yourself and have pride in your program and that is a big thing with having a jersey that it's not just about you, but for all those who have come before and wanna see Dresden succeed."

He added, "I tell this to the players that if you are not here to win a championship, then why are you here. That is something I have learned in my career. No one is here in 100-degree heat to come in second place, so we are definitely competing for a championship, and I hope all these guys are on the same page."

He also said it will take some learning and time, but he hoped once the Lions get to the middle of the season, they will be able to see improvement. The Lions are looking forward to the first game of the season against McKenzie and they want to make sure they are ready for game one and see what the rest of the season will be for them.

Coach Ritz also wanted to thank all of the coaches' wives who sacrifice a lot for having the coaches out there and it is a lot about family, not only for the coaches, but for the team and having a family that supports this.



Dresden Middle School Cheer Team Back Row (Left to Right) Jordin Cornett, Lilli Nelson, Abigail Kibbler, and Peyton McMackin. Middle Row (Left to Right) Jaylynn Kirby, Jayden Guy, and Madelynn Thomas. Front Row (Left to Right) Bella Hendrix, Carrie McClure, Caitlyn Dillinger, and Liddia Foster. Coaches Kelly McGuire and Olivia Patrick



Dresden Middle Coaching Staff Head Coach: Richard Ritz. Assistant Coach: Scott Hewett, Jeffery Hampton, and Bobby Hampton.

Dresden Middle School had its first game against McKenzie on August 12 at home. The Lions' next game is Thursday, August 26 at home against Hillcrest. Kick-off is at 6:30.

### 2021 DRESDEN MIDDLE SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Date	Venue	Team
Aug. 12	Home	Mckenzie
Aug. 19	Away (5:30)	Lake Road
Aug. 26	Home	Hillcrest
Sept. 2	Away	Gibson County
Sept. 9	Away	Westview
Sept. 16	Away	*Greenfield
Sept. 23	Home	*Gleason
Sept. 30	Home	*South Fulton

\*Reelfoot Conference Games  
All Games are 6:30 Kickoff except at Lake Road

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