

# MAC Rams dealing with small roster, but excited about season

*Special to the Herald*

The McLain Rams will be small in number this year, but big when it comes to showing heart.

The Rams are fielding a team with just 12 total players and a few returning players from a year ago. That's a pretty slim roster for Coach Robert Roper, but the veteran coach has dealt with similar situations before.

"Early practices have looked very promising, and the team is working hard to get ready for their season opener against Sand Hill," Roper said. "With more than half the team being first-timers, the Rams will be relying heavily on the leadership of the returning players."

That opener was Tuesday

night on the road at cross-county rival Sand Hill, who is coming off a 2021 season that saw them make the conference championship game.

Results from the opener were not available at press time.

Among the leaders on the squad is Zaine Moody, who will be making the transition from runningback to quarterback this season. Dawson Thurston will remain at his runningback position, while Julaine Graves will be back in his spot as wide receiver.

E.J. Dawkins will be back on the Rams' offensive line, while Skyler Tatum has transitioned from offensive line to fullback. Kennan Thomas will take the field for the first time for the Rams as their center and defensive tackle.

Roper says he has a good crop of incoming seventh graders who will be forced into action this year. That will likely result in some growing pains for the Rams, but will bode well for the program's future. The seventh grade Rams include defensive ends Jonathan Steele and Jay'Cobi Kirsh. Mia Sherman will see action on the Rams' offensive and defensive lines, while Brees Arevalo, Jordyn Kapolczynsky and Ryan Hobby will field the receivers and defensive back positions and round out the roster.



Photos by CHERI CULPEPPER  
Herald Staff

The McLain Rams for the 2022 season are Brees Arevalo (#20), Ryan Hobby (#9), Jordyn Kapolczynsky (#21), EJ Dawkins (#75), Zaine Moody (#13), Julaine Graves (#18), Jay'Cobi Kirsh (#30), Dawson Thurston (#10), Jonathan Steele (#74), Skyler Tatum (#34), Mia Sherman (#51). Not Pictured is Kennan Thomas (#62). Team managers are Colton Cumbie, Carson Lott, Darryll McSwain, Dagan Calhoun and Logan Moody.

SCHEDULE

Aug. 30  
@ Sand Hill

Sept. 6  
@ Perry Central  
Middle School

Sept. 13  
vs Richton

Sept. 20  
vs Sand Hill

Sept. 27  
vs Perry Central  
Middle School

Oct. 4  
@ Richton



Cheerleaders at McLain Attendance Center this year are Nyla Bivens, Kaylee Thurston, Lilly Edwards, Krista Fairley, Chloe Miller, Hope Bolton, Maliyah Moody, Carlie Moody, Jaerica Lockley, Rylee Bush and LeeAllyn Cook, Manager.

## Coaches

King. "Me being a spread guy, and him being a power-toss guy, we just couldn't find a way to make the systems mesh."

"Plus, I felt like I had forfeited an awesome opportunity here with the impact we were making with the kids in the community."

For Dungan, this year's Wildcat offense, with a more deliberate pace in a modified spread attack, is right down his alley.

"We've started using more power-running, downhill stuff and meshing it with (King's) West Coast back-ground," said Dungan "We're tight end, H-back type, with only two wide-outs, and I'm more familiar with that scheme."

"We base it around being fundamentally sound up front, playing quick off the ball, being aggressive. I think we're always going to be that kind of run-downhill type team, regardless of how many times a game we throw the ball."

On the other side of the ball, after going through four

defensive coordinators in four seasons, King has promoted former Wildcat Caleb Prentiss to the position, and King believes Prentiss will stick around.

"Caleb worked as defensive line coach from 2017-19, and Coach Ainsworth and I both coached him when he was here as a player," King said. "He's a hometown guy, and he's done a phenomenal job with these young men."

Prentiss graduated from GCHS in 2009, returned as an assistant after college and has steadily worked his way into a more responsible position.

"After I finished up college, a job for a teacher came open here, and I was able to come back and coach under Coach Ainsworth," said Prentiss. "And Coach King was here before I graduated, so I knew him as well."

"It's a true blessing to work for him; he's a great guy. We have a lot of experienced guys on our staff, but we also have some younger guys like myself. We have a good group of guys that want to help grow

kids to become young men, as well as football players."

Prentiss is in the unique position of supervising his father, Gary, who has head coaching experience and was longtime high school assistant and middle school coach.

And he's not the only former Wildcat on staff at Greene County. Cam Dunnam and Garrett West are also young coaches who have returned to the program.

"It's a good blend," said Dungan. "We've been able to get some former players in and help them get started in this profession. They're workers, and that's what I tell them they need to do."

"Good coaches build their reputation on hard work. These guys are willing to do whatever needs to be done. At the end of the day, when we walk out of here and we're all on the same page, that's all that matters."

Other young assistants on the Wildcat staff include Kaelin Moore, Hayden West and Lee Hill, along with veteran David Tadlock.

And the Wildcat players have

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taken notice.

"These coaches, they mix in well," said senior Kayden Miller. "When one coach has something they believe in and another one may have a different idea, they can talk it out, work it out and come to the best decision that they feel is best for the team."

"So, I think they really come together well."

And, as for the future of the coaching staff, there is always the potential for turnover, but King says he is happy right here at GCHS.

"We've got great kids here, kids who have overcome a lot, just geographically where they live, the size of the county, and sometimes the resources aren't what we'd like them to be. But it's a great place to live, and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else."

JR.  
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Good Luck Wildcats

CADEN MILLER

Smash Some  
HEADS  
& Have a  
Great  
Year!!



Love,  
Mom, Brayden & Nana

Have an  
AWESOME  
Junior  
Year!



LET'S GO  
GOON!!!

Love,  
Mama, Daddy, Breeze & Krim

Have a  
GREAT  
Season  
Peanut

Stay Positive  
Work Hard  
& Believe in Yourself  
Because We  
BELIEVE In You!



WE LOVE YOU!  
YOUR FAMILY

LILLY CLAIRE EDWARDS