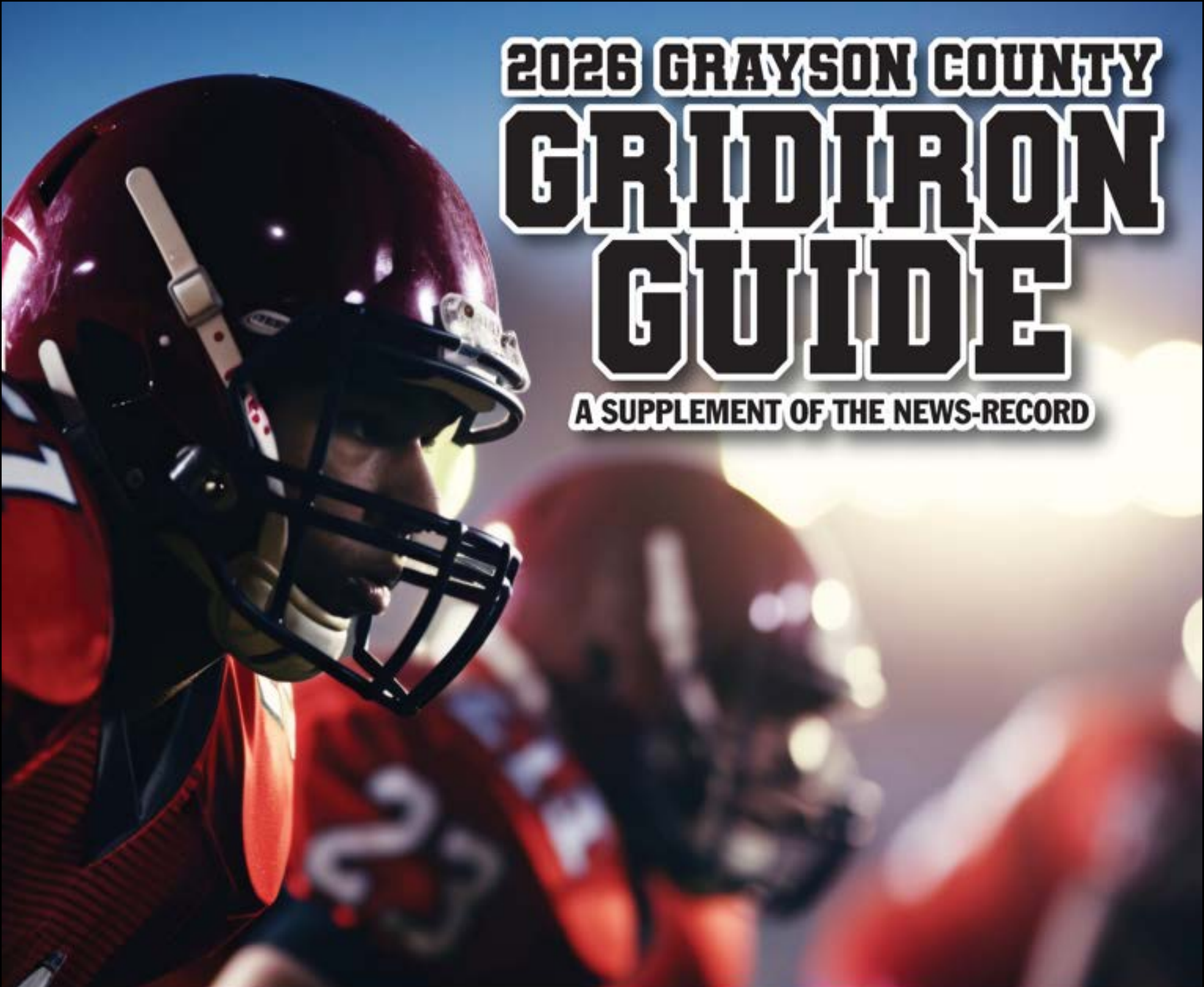




2026 GRAYSON COUNTY GRIDIRON GUIDE

A SUPPLEMENT OF THE NEWS-RECORD

FEATURING PREVIEWS FROM THE FOLLOWING HIGH SCHOOLS:

**BELLS • CALLISBURG • COLLINSVILLE • DENISON • GUNTER
HOWE • POTTSBORO • S&S • SHERMAN • TIOGA
TOM BEAN • VAN ALSTYNE • WHITESBORO • WHITEWRIGHT**

Bells Panthers

Bells looks to bounce back after uncharacteristic 2025 campaign

JASON CHLAPEK

Contributing writer

Postseason absence is not something with which Dale West and the Bells football program are familiar.

Entering his eighth season at the helm, the Panthers reached the playoffs every year under West until last season. Ultimately, a 15-12 loss to Callisburg kept Bells at home during the postseason for the first time since 2013.

Despite losses in the first two district games, the Panthers still had a chance to reach the postseason with a win at

Leonard. However, Bells fell short, 29-22, finishing in a fourth-place tie with Callisburg, who had the head-to-head tiebreaker over the Panthers.

"We're more than a little disappointed. It was a very disappointing season," West said.

Despite finishing 4-6 and missing the postseason in 2025, Bells has plenty of reasons to expect a postseason return this fall. For starters, longtime state powerhouse Gunter moved up to Class 3A-Division I, leaving the District 7-3A-Division II title up for grabs.

The Panthers are projected to finish

fourth in the league standings behind Blue Ridge, Leonard and Callisburg, respectively. But with a slew of running backs, Bells could grind its way to a lead title.

"Everyone is competing for every spot," West said. "We are deep at our running back positions with Asa Curtis, Jaxon Brown, Jace Weger, Westin Hicks, Je'Kobe Washington and Je'Darius Washington. They will all get carries."

Operating the run-heavy Slot-T offense is quarterback Jax Pitt. Also returning on offense is tackle Tanner Saxton.

Brown (970 yards, 14 TDs) is the top returning running back, while Curtis (436 yards, 2 TDs), Weger (221 yards, 4 TDs) and Je'Darius Washington (326 yards, 4 TDs) also contributed. Brown and Weger also make up two of five returning starters on defense as they play linebacker and free safety, respectively.

Also returning on defense are Matt Anderson at defensive end, Braeden Richardson at linebacker and Jay Washington at cornerback. Brown (83 tackles) and Richardson (57 tackles) led the

Panthers' 3-4 defensive attack.

West believes depth at the skill positions on both sides of the football is his team's biggest strength. His biggest concern is inexperience on the offensive and defensive lines.

With the exception of Gunter moving up and Valley View moving into the district, 7-3A-DII pretty much remains the same. Non-district play is similar with Bells opening the season at Pottsville and hosting Whitesboro to kick things off.

The Panthers wrap up their non-district slate at Collinsville and at home against Farmersville, respectively, before starting league play at S&S Sept. 25. Bells hosts Blue Ridge and visits Valley View, respectively, before observing a bye Oct. 16 and respectively closing out at home against Howe, on the road against Leonard and at home against Callisburg.

"If our young kids continue to improve and our senior leadership continues to improve, we are going to surprise some people," West said.



Photo by Amanda Smith



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Photo by Amanda Smith

2026 BELLS PANTHERS *Varsity Schedule*

8/28 • Pottsboro • Away • 7 p.m.
9/4 • Whitesboro • Home • 7 p.m.
9/11 • Collinsville • Away • 7 p.m.
9/18 • Farmersville • Home • 7 p.m.
9/25 • S&S • Away • 7 p.m.
10/2 • Blue Ridge • Home • 7 p.m.
10/9 • Valley View • Away • 7 p.m.
10/23 • Howe • Home • 7 p.m.
10/30 • Leonard • Away • 7 p.m.
11/6 • Callisburg • Home • 7 p.m.

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2026 BELLS PANTHERS *Varsity Roster*

00 - JAXON BROWN	25 - HAYES WHITING
01 - JAX PITT	27 - ETHAN KIRBY
02 - JACE WEGER	32 - TYLER BOOTH
03 - BRAEDEN RICHARDSON	33 - CLARK HAWTHORN
04 - ETHAN MCGEHEE	38 - EDDIE BUSH
05 - JE'KOBÉ WASHINGTON	42 - WAYLON MUTCHLER
06 - RYAN GLENN	44 - FORD HULCY
07 - JE'DARIUS WASHINGTON	51 - BRYCE ATWOOD
08 - WESTIN HICKS	52 - CARDER WASHBURN
09 - HUDSON HARGIS	53 - SANTIAGO GARCIA
10 - JETT MOORE	54 - TANNER SAXON
11 - MATT ANDERSON	55 - CANNON BULLINS
12 - SAM NORRIS	59 - JACOB TARABA
15 - WYATT TURNER	60 - BRIAN ALLEN
18 - BENTLEY CURTIS	61 - JESSE NEAL
20 - TYLER WHITMAN	62 - ADEN KNOX
21 - JE'MARRION WASHINGTON	65 - GARTH GLIDEWELL
22 - AIDEN ATWOOD	70 - ANGEL MAGANA
23 - BLAKE REEVES	74 - JUAN RODRIGUEZ
24 - ASA CURTIS	75 - CADEN MORROW
	77 - RUGER ALLEN
	79 - JAYDEN MENDEZ

LET'S GO, PANTHERS!

Callisburg Wildcats



Courtesy photo

Wildcats look to build on playoff run

RICHARD GREENE
Contributing writer

The Callisburg Wildcats returned to the playoffs for the first time since 2023, reaching the area round for the first time since 2022 last season. For Coach Corey Roberson, the postseason success of last season laid the groundwork for what are now expectations in the program.

“We had a pretty good year. We want that to kind of be the standard,” Roberson said. “Two rounds and grow off of it.”

But as Callisburg looks to build off last year’s 6-6 finish, it will be looking for several players to step into leadership roles, replacing a talented and large senior class that featured two of its main offensive weapons, back Gabe Zinski and quarterback Bowen McAdams.

“We graduated 17 guys that played key roles,” Roberson said. “So we do have some new faces in some new places.”

“We return a couple of guys that played key roles that are stepping into leadership roles this year that maybe were young sophomores last year, and

we’re expecting them to step up in a leadership role as juniors.”

Callisburg’s returning players learned how to battle through adversity, including losing two of their first three district games and holding off Bells and Howe to secure the fourth playoff seed out of District 7-3AII. The Wildcats then blew out District 8-3AII champion TLC Cedar Hill in bi-district before a season-ending loss to Henrietta.

“We’re hoping that, with the experience that they gained, they can share that knowledge with some of the younger guys,” Roberson said.

Offense

Callisburg installed the Wing-T offense last season, and there was a bit of a learning curve. Entering a second season in the system, Roberson has already seen more familiarity.

“They’re feeling more comfortable,” Roberson said. “They’re understanding the offense, and that’s going to set us a little bit ahead of the pace of what we were last year. We’re trying to pick up right where we left off, and the kids really understand the concepts and some of the nuances transitioning from a

spread team to a Wing-T and running the football.”

As far as players running the ball, fullback Braddock McKnight is the Wildcats’ leading returning rusher, totaling nearly 600 yards and four scores last year.

A combination of Weston Shoemaker, Ryder Davidson and Chris Walker will be used at running back. Walker has been a defensive starter for three seasons and will help more on offense this season.

Replacing Zinski at the Z, Callisburg is looking to Cade Bauwin and the Brasher brothers, Leyton and Landon.

At quarterback, McCoy Evans takes the reins of the offense after seeing limited action last season. Roberson expects to utilize Evans’ ability in the passing game to stretch the field a little more than the Wildcats did last season, when they attempted fewer than 10 passes per game.

“He made two starts last year when our starter was beat up and did a good job of coming in the game and playing the quarterback position,” Roberson said. “You can tell from those two games that he came in, he has a lot of

confidence and understanding of what we’re trying to do. We’re excited to see what he can do. He can throw the ball a little bit, too, and can make us more dynamic in the passing game than we were a year ago.”

Justin Laney returns as the leader of an offensive line that is breaking in several new starters. Koby Comer will be at center. Cooper Bradley, a 6-6 stand-out in basketball, has joined the football team and is manning left tackle. Rumor Lindsey, the brother of Texas State lineman Teagan Lindsey, joins the line as a sophomore.

“We have some guys that got some reps but didn’t start last year. That experience will help them,” Roberson said. “We’ve got two guys that will be making their debut on varsity. There are going to be some growing pains on the line, but I have faith and trust in those guys that they will work hard. They’re going to learn what to do and learn the speed and physicality.”

Defense

It’s not been surprising in preseason

See CALLISBURG page 6



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Photos by Steve Snyder

Callisburg

From page 5

workouts for the defense to be a little ahead of the offense, with Callisburg returning eight defensive starters to its multiple 4-3.

"We're excited about what our defense is going to be," Roberson said.

"There's lots of nuances and rules that we've established, and I've been here six years now. The kids get on autopilot and are able to check sets and get us in the best coverages and fronts."

Michael Christian (6-2, 215) returns at defensive end after recording 80 tackles and nine sacks a year ago. Adriel Kule is moving to defensive tackle to replace Gustavo Perez, who is now at Southeastern Oklahoma State University.

Shoemaker and McKnight man the middle of the defense at linebacker.

The defensive backfield returns the Brasher brothers and Walker.

"There's a lot of familiar faces on the defensive side of the ball. The only thing is we're asking a lot more offensively out of those guys," Roberson said. "We'll be looking for guys that can step up to plug in like Kaegan Morrow at linebacker and Zaiden Dearing."

Looking ahead

The Wildcats are no longer in the same league with perennial state power Gunter, joining a competitive 7-3AII with Bells, Blue Ridge, Howe, Leonard, S&S and Valley View.

"It feels wide open, and if you play well and have a good team, you have an opportunity to win a district championship," Roberson said. "The last 10 years, you look up and see Gunter, and go, 'All right, there's the team to beat.' With them exiting, you still have solid teams that played in the region finals."

Before district, Callisburg has tough matchups with Bowie, Millsap, Tioga and Pottsboro.

"Our non-district schedule has a purpose. A lot of those teams are similar to some of our district opponents that we see as far as schemes and speed," Roberson said. "It isn't an easy schedule. It's four games to get us better for the games that really count."

And to meet the new Callisburg standard.



Photo by Paul Queen Photography



Courtesy photo

2026 CALLISBURG WILDCATS *Varsity Schedule*

8/28 • Bowie • Away • 7 p.m.
 9/4 • Millsap • Home • 7 p.m.
 9/11 • Tioga • Away • 7 p.m.
 9/18 • Pottsboro • Home • 7 p.m.
 9/25 • Howe • Home • 7 p.m.
 10/2 • Leonard • Away • 7 p.m.
 10/16 • S&S • Home • 7 p.m.
 10/23 • Blue Ridge • Away • 7 p.m.
 10/30 • Valley View • Home • 7 p.m.
 11/6 • Bells • Away • 7 p.m.

2026 CALLISBURG WILDCATS *Varsity Roster*

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Collinsville Pirates



Photo by Jenna Howard

Pirates aiming for district supremacy

JASON CHLAPEK

Contributing writer

For two years, the Collinsville football team and its district mates not named Muenster played second fiddle to the back-to-back state champion Hornets.

Now that Muenster has moved up to 2A-Division I, there will be a new king in District 9-2A-Division II. The Pirates, ranked No. 5 in the Dave Campbell's Texas Football 2A-DII preseason poll, are predicted by the publication to rule the roost in league play.

Collinsville enters its eighth season with Garrett Patterson as head coach.

The Pirates were 10-3 a year ago.

"We look to make another deep run in the playoffs with a strong junior and senior class," Patterson said.

The cupboard is not bare for Collinsville, who welcomes back six starters on offense and five on defense. Among them are a trio of players who start on both sides of the football.

Paxton Davidson, Caysen Schafer and Chase Sheppard all start at line-backer on defense. On offense, Davidson is the quarterback and Schafer and Sheppard are wide receivers.

Other returning starters on offense are wide receiver Carter Larance, lineman Noe Cantu and tight end Jaxon

Spivey. Other returning defensive starters are linemen Kash Bacon and Tyler Grubbs.

With five of the front-six returning for the Pirates' 3-3-5 defense, finding five defensive backs will be a priority. Ryland Brown, Tate McLauchlin, Rider Patterson, Eli Settles and Briar Whisenant could fill those voids.

Offensively, Collinsville operates out of the spread. In addition to the six returning starters, McLauchlin and Whisenant also play receiver and Settles plays running back.

Patterson passed for more than 2,700 yards and 36 touchdowns and ran for 800 yards and eight scores in 2025. Sheppard ran for 1,000 yards and 11 touchdowns and caught 24 passes for 230 yards and three scores.

Spivey (57 catches, 556 yards, 10 TDs) is the top returning receiver. Larance (11 catches, 273 yards, 4 TDs) and Schafer (15 catches, 280 yards, 3 TDs) also contributed to the passing game.

Defensive leaders from last year were Grubbs (101 tackles), Schafer (161 tackles, 7 tackles for losses) and Sheppard (133 tackles, 3 TFLs). Bacon

(82 tackles, 6 TFLs) and Spivey (90 tackles) also contributed.

Coach Patterson believes his team strengths are the number of skill position players he has on his roster. His biggest concern is replacing four of the five offensive line spots.

When it comes to offensive line vacancies, there are several players who could fill those roles. They are Bacon, Grubbs, Drew Brown, Tony Castorena, Ashton Patterson, Michael Ponsness and Luke Sheppard.

In 2025, the Pirates finished second to Muenster in the district standings and advanced to the region semifinal round where they lost to Lindsay, 29-23. Collinsville beat Lindsay, 49-27, in district play.

The Pirates open the 2026 season at Tioga Thursday, Aug. 27. They host Cooper and Bells, respectively, before respectively traveling to Muenster and Alvord to conclude nondistrict play.

Collinsville opens 9-2A-DII play at Lindsay Oct. 9. The Pirates close out league play with Celeste (home), Era (away), Quinlan Boles (away) and Cumby (home).



Go Pirates!

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Photos by Jenna Howard



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2026 COLLINSVILLE PIRATES

Varsity Schedule

- 8/27 • Tioga • Away • 7 p.m.
- 9/4 • Cooper • Home • 7 p.m.
- 9/11 • Bells • Away • 7 p.m.
- 9/18 • Muenster • Away • 7 p.m.
- 9/25 • Alvord • Away • 7 p.m.
- 10/9 • Lindsay • Away • 7 p.m.
- 10/16 • Celeste • Home • 7 p.m.
- 10/23 • Era • Away • 7 p.m.
- 10/30 • Boles • Away • 7 p.m.
- 11/6 • Cumby • Home • 7 p.m.

2026 COLLINSVILLE PIRATES

Varsity Roster

- 00 - PAXTON DAVIDSON

01 - CARTER LARANCE

02 - RIDER PATTERSON

05 - BRIAR WHISENANT

06 - TATE MCLAUCHLIN

07 - JAXON SPIVEY

08 - CAYSEN SCHAFER

09 - ADAM MOTT

10 - ELI SETTLES

11 - CHASE SHEPPARD

12 - HAYDEN WATSON

13 - GAVIN MOLSBEE

15 - FERNANDO PEREZ

20 - KEASTON WORTHINGTON
- 21 - WYATT SMOTHERMON

23 - RYLAND BROWN

25 - TEIGUE BUCKHEISTER

44 - TUCKER HOWARD

50 - TYLER GRUBBS

51 - DREW BROWN

52 - TONY CASTORENA

53 - LUKE SHEPPARD

54 - LANDON TURNER

58 - MICHAEL PONSNESS

62 - NOE CANTU

71 - KASH BACON

75 - ASHTON PATTERSON



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Collinsville Pirates Quarterback Club



Photo by Jenna Howard



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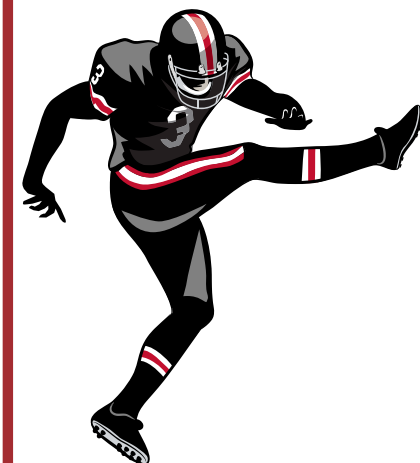


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Denison Yellow Jackets

Lilly returns home to restore Denison tradition

RICHARD GREENE

Contributing writer

Brian Lilly returned to Denison to not only meet a career goal of coaching his hometown Yellow Jackets, but also to restore the program's once-proud tradition.

Lilly recalls the words of legendary Denison coach Marty Criswell, who led the Yellow Jackets to the state title in 1984: "It's great to be a Yellow Jacket." That's his message to his current roster.

"It's exciting just to be back here, and I'm excited for our team," Lilly said. "These guys have worked really hard, and something we've stressed since I've been here is just how special it is. We talk about how great it is to be a Yellow Jacket ... just being able to define that for these guys and show them

how great it is to be a Yellow Jacket."

Denison and Lilly are looking to earn the school's first playoff win since 2009 and return to the postseason for the first time since 2023. Denison finished 4-5 last season, dropping its final three games to Anna, Lovejoy and Melissa while playing a young roster.

Now, Denison returns the bulk of its starters on both sides of the ball — six on offense and nine on defense. The Yellow Jackets bring back 10 players who earned superlative honors, Lilly said.

"We do have a lot of returning talent. That was probably something that was tough at times last year, but we'll reap the benefits of that this year," Lilly said. "I came in new and I brought two people with me, but a lot of the same staff and the players are here."

Offense

Lilly brought in former Navarro Junior College coach and Denison alum Ryan Taylor to serve as offensive coordinator.

"He's a phenomenal playcaller," Lilly said.

He has several weapons at his disposal, including running back Rashaun Dehorney, who ran for 777 yards and 17 touchdowns last year as the newcomer of the year for District 4-5AII.

Denison opened the year with a competition for the starting quarterback role between sophomore Paxton Neasbitt, who led an undefeated freshman team, and junior Tayden Luper.

"It's been great with Coach Taylor being able to give those guys the reps that they need and to see them competing with one another," Lilly said.

Gavin Mandrell played some quarterback last season but is expected to move to tight end. Lilly said the Yellow Jackets may have some packages with him at quarterback.

At receiver, Denison has several options, including Brandon Douglas, Jashaun Sims and Christian Ramons. Lilly pointed out that some players who have played defensively could help on offense in the passing game.

"We have a lot of guys from the 12th all the way down to the 10th grade that can possibly be pass catchers for us," Lilly said.

Up front, Noah Fletcher and Monte Nicholson lead a line that Lilly said is one of the team's biggest strengths.

Defense

The Yellow Jackets will be running a three-man front with some four-man looks for a unit that returns several key pieces.

"It's really 10 guys that played a ton of snaps last year," Lilly said.

The defensive backfield returns two standout corners in Alyc Moore, the 4-5AII Defensive Newcomer of the Year last year, and Shandan Love, along



with safeties Bryce McQueen, Luper and Austyn Syler.

All-district selections Ace Hernandez and Tre'kell Green are back on the defensive line.

In the middle of the defense, Cason Farley and Jason Carney are seeing time at linebacker. Lilly pointed out that depth at linebacker is the one question mark going into the season.

Looking ahead

To illustrate how the season builds, Lilly uses a mountain with winding roads leading to the playoffs in the middle.

"Hopefully we can climb to be able to be in the playoffs," Lilly said.

At the start of the climb is the traditional Battle of the Ax against Sherman, which Lilly calls the best rivalry in the state, before another tough matchup against Decatur. The Yellow Jackets then immediately jump into the nine-team District 4-5AII with Anna, Celina, Frisco, Frisco Emerson, Frisco Independence, Frisco Memorial, Frisco Panther Creek and Prosper Richland.

"It's tough every week with a schedule like this," Lilly said. "It makes you bring it every week. Regardless of what happened the week before, you've got to move on to the next one. Especially in a nine-team district, every one of them counts."

Playoff wins would only reinforce the message of Lilly and his staff: "It's great to be a Yellow Jacket."



Courtesy photo



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2026 DENISON YELLOWJACKETS

Varsity Schedule

- 8/28 • Sherman • Home • 7 p.m.
- 9/4 • Decatur • Away • 7 p.m.
- 9/11 • Richland • Away • 7 p.m.
- 9/18 • Panther Creek • Home • 7 p.m.
- 9/25 • Emerson • Away • 7 p.m.
- 10/2 • Independence • Home • 7 p.m.
- 10/9 • Frisco • Away • 7 p.m.
- 10/16 • Memorial • Home • 7 p.m.
- 10/23 • Anna • Away • 7:30 p.m.
- 11/6 • Celina • Home • 7 p.m.

2026 DENISON YELLOWJACKETS

Varsity Roster

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| 01 - PAXTON NEASBITT | 35 - DRAKE ELLIOTT |
| 02 - AUSTYN SYLER | 36 - JEREMIAH BROWN |
| 03 - JASON CARNEY | 39 - DREW RELFORD |
| 04 - SHANDON LOVE | 41 - MAXTON HARBOUR |
| 05 - BRANDON DOUGLAS | 42 - CHANDLER LOPEZ |
| 06 - ALYC MOORE | 44 - ACE HERNANDEZ |
| 07 - GAVIN MANDRELL | 47 - TYLER ESCANDON |
| 08 - TAYDEN LUPER | 48 - IZAAH MENDOZA |
| 09 - BRYCE MCQUEEN | 52 - ANTOINE HUDSON |
| 10 - ISAAH MCKINNEY | 53 - NATHAN DANIEL |
| 11 - JASHAUD SIMS | 56 - OMARI SMITH |
| 13 - CHRISTIAN RAMOS | 60 - JOVANI CASTRO |
| 14 - KING COLLINS | 61 - MONTE NICHOLSON |
| 15 - CYLAS HANSON | 62 - JIMARIUS BROWN |
| 16 - GAVIN BACH | 66 - AUSTIN STROUD |
| 18 - ZORYIAN DUFFIE | 70 - WYATT DAWSON |
| 21 - MEHKI STEWART | 71 - ETHYN HARVEY |
| 23 - RASHAUN DEHORNEY | 75 - AYDEN HUNT |
| 24 - CASON FARLEY | 76 - MADDOX DODSON |
| 26 - CHASE COURTRIGHT | 77 - NOAH FLETCHER |
| 28 - CHRISTIAN GARRY | 99 - TRE'KELL GREEN |
| 29 - JAMES GARRY | |



Courtesy photo

Gunter Tigers

Tigers hope to continue winning ways after moving up

JASON CHLAPEK
Contributing writer

Some big changes have taken place for the Gunter football program in recent years.

A year ago, longtime coach Jake Fieszel stepped down after leading the Tigers to their third consecutive Class 3A-Division II state championship and fifth overall. Jordan Gil stepped into the head coach role from his offensive coordinator position.

The next big change took place in February. The University Interscholastic League moved Gunter up to 3A-Division I, where the Tigers will be members of District 5-3A-DI alongside Grayson County rivals Pottsboro and Whitesboro, traditional powerhouse Pilot Point, and Dallas charter schools A+ Academy and Life Oak Cliff.

“We’re excited, but we have many challenges to face,” Gil said.

Despite moving up a division, Gunter still has plenty of respect. The Tigers are the No. 2 team in the 3A-DI state poll for Dave Campbell’s Texas Football and are projected to win the district. Rounding out the 5-3A-DI projections are Whitesboro, Pottsboro, Pilot Point, Life Oak Cliff and A+ Academy, respectively.

One of the reasons Gunter is getting such preseason praise is the Tigers return seven players on both sides of the football. Leading the way for Gunter’s flexbone offense is junior quarterback Gage Knox.

Gage passed for more than 1,600 yards and 24 touchdowns and ran for more than 800 yards and 10 scores. The hulking Caleb Siler (6-foot-8, 280 lbs) leads the offensive line and returns for a unit that averaged 45 points per game

in 2025.

The Tigers also welcome back four receivers who caught 20 or more passes a year ago. They are Rhys Dainauski (34 catches, 502 yards, 7 TDs), Alex Fenner (26 catches, 392 yards, 9 TDs), Cole Bolt (28 catches, 372 yards, 5 TDs) and Gage Prescott (20 catches, 301 yards, 2 TDs).

Linebacker David Puga (105 tackles, 9 sacks) will anchor the defense. Gunter operates out of a 4-2-5 alignment.

After winning state championships in 2022, 2023 and 2024, the Tigers fell against eventual 3A-DII state champion Wall, 28-25, in the state semifinal round. Fittingly, the Hawks moved up to 3A-DI as well.

With the exception of a nondistrict loss to Celina, Gunter ran the table in the regular season which included a 6-0 mark in 7-3A-DII play. The Tigers have won 61 district games in a row dating back to a 21-19 loss to Howe on Oct. 9, 2015.

Once Gunter reached the postseason, it dominated through the first four rounds until its state semifinal loss. The loss to Wall marked the first time since 2021 the Tigers didn’t win state.

Gunter opens the season against Sealy in Waco before taking an early bye Sept. 4 and visiting Jefferson Sept. 11. The Tigers have back-to-back home games against Sulphur, Oklahoma and Fort Worth All Saints before opening 5-3A-DI play at A+ Academy Oct. 2.

Gunter hosts Plainview Oct. 9 before returning to district play at Pottsboro Oct. 16. Rounding out the Tigers’ district slate will be against Whitesboro (home), Life Oak Cliff (away) and Pilot Point (home).

2026 GUNTER TIGERS *Varsity Schedule*

9/11 • Jefferson • Away • 7 p.m.

9/18 • Sulphur • Home • 7 p.m.

9/25 • All Saints • Home • 7 p.m.

10/2 • A Plus Academy • Away • 7 p.m.

10/9 • Plainview • Home • 7 p.m.

10/16 • Pottsboro • Away • 7 p.m.

10/23 • Whitesboro • Home • 7 p.m.

10/30 • Life Oak Cliff • Away • 7 p.m.

11/5 • Pilot Point • Home • 7 p.m.

2026 GUNTER TIGERS *Varsity Roster*

02 - WITTEN OVERMAN

07 - ALEXANDER FENNER

08 - KNOX GAGE

09 - DAVID PUGA

14 - JD JETER

18 - GAGE PRESCOTT

21 - RHYS DAINAUSKI

23 - BRAYDEN WALDEN

30 - CASEN

STANDRIDGE

31 - COOPER VEST

32 - JOSHUA TAYLOR

33 - KASON LINDSEY

34 - JAYDEN STOGSDILL

35 - ETHAN WALTZ

40 - BRAYDEN WAITE

42 - STONE RUMAGE

45 - ANDREW PULPANECK

48 - ANSON PULPANECK

51 - ZACHARY HALES

53 - JORDAN DECKER

55 - ALEX HERNANDEZ

56 - BRADEN HILTON

57 - KAIL RICHEY

58 - BRODY BRACEWELL

59 - JOSHUA ROANE

61 - CALEB BOWEN

64 - JEREMY GEE

75 - CALEB SILER

77 - COLE WEBSTER

78 - ALEX VALENZUELA

85 - JAXSON LEONARD

88 - BRYANT KIMBLE

90 - KRIS GRIMALDO



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Howe Bulldogs

Howe aiming for postseason

JASON CHLAPEK

Contributing writer

With the bulk of its starting lineup returning, optimism is alive and well within the Howe football team.

A year ago, the Bulldogs won its District 7-3A-Division II opener against S&S before the wheels fell off. Howe dropped its last five games of the season, including a 14-11 heartbreaker against Callisburg, to finish 2-8 overall and 1-5 in district.

“Can we win a big game?” asked Jake Smith, Howe football coach. “We found ways to not win them last year.”

In Smith’s second year at the helm, welcoming back six starters on offense and nine on defense is reason enough to have high hopes. The Bulldogs are aiming for their first playoff berth since 2022.

Returning offensively for Howe’s spread option attack are wide receivers Jayden Allcorn and Riken Cross, linemen Jakob Griffio and Gavin Snapp, running back Rylan Strong, and quarterback Deacon Bender. Battling it out for positions on the offensive line are Shawn Stanley, Kason Windon, Bryce Baker and Matthew Rodriguez.

Bender threw for 451 yards and four touchdowns and ran for 442 yards and three scores to lead the offense in 2025. Cross (15 catches, 244 yards, TD) and Strong (14 catches, 170 yards, 2 TDs) led the Bulldogs receiving.

“We have a fast group of skill play-

ers,” Smith said.

Returning defensively for Howe are Allcorn, Cross, Strong and Kaiden Thomas at defensive back; Griffio and Jamir Brown at defensive tackle; and Charles Fuhr, Kendall Murphy and Chris Torres at linebacker. The Bulldogs operate out of a 4-3 alignment.

Torres (39 tackles), Fuhr (38 tackles), Brown (34 tackles, 5 tackles for losses) and Grillo (17 tackles, 5 TFLs) led Howe defensively last season. Fernando Sanchez returns at kicker.

Another thing that gives the Howe faithful high hopes is Gunter moving up to 3A-DI. The perennial powerhouse Tigers ran the show in the district in previous years.

The rest of District 7-3A-DII stayed the same except Valley View replaced Gunter. Blue Ridge, Leonard, Callisburg and Bells are respectively projected to go 1-4 in the league standings with Howe picked to finish fifth, S&S sixth and Valley View seventh.

With a nondistrict schedule consisting of Alvord (away), Bonham (home), Pilot Point (away) and Rains (home), Howe opens 7-3A-DII play at Callisburg Sept. 25. The Bulldogs host S&S, visit Blue Ridge, host Valley View and visit Bells, respectively, before observing its bye Oct. 30 and closing out the regular season at home against Leonard.

“I think we can be more competitive than last year and fight for fourth in district,” Smith said.

2026 HOWE BULLDOGS *Varsity Schedule*

8/28 • Alvord • Away • 7 p.m.

9/4 • Bonham • Home • 7 p.m.

9/11 • Pilot Point • Away • 7 p.m.

9/18 • Rains • Home • 7 p.m.

9/25 • Callisburg • Away • 7 p.m.

10/2 • S&S • Home • 7 p.m.

10/9 • Blue Ridge • Away • 7 p.m.

10/16 • Valley View • Home • 7 p.m.

10/23 • Bells • Away • 7 p.m.

11/6 • Leonard • Home • 7 p.m.

2026 HOWE BULLDOGS *Varsity Roster*

01 - JAYDEN ALLCORN

02 - KAIDEN THOMAS

03 - RIKEN CROSS

04 - DEACON BENDER

05 - AUBREY MILLER

06 - AYDEN KANE

07 - NATHAN GARIBAY

08 - SAMSON BLAKE

09 - BRENTON SMITH

10 - KEELAN DAVIS

11 - YAHIR PEREZ

12 - RYLAN STRONG

13 - KENDAL MURPHY

14 - ETHAN POTTER

17 - CHRIS TORRES

18 - BRODIE SELLERS

19 - BRYCE PIEPER

22 - GUNNER OWEN

34 - CHARLES FUHR

50 - ISAAC PEREZ

51 - MATTHEW

RODRIGUEZ

52 - KASON WINDON

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Pottsboro Cardinals

Cardinals reaching for encore of 2025

JASON CHLAPEK

Contributing writer

Christmas came early for the Pottsboro football team.

The Cardinals, who were in search of a quarterback to replace 3,200-yard passer/1,600-yard rusher Cayden Humphrey, found their man in Sherman transfer Brayden Sheffield. The senior is primed to lead an offense that lost its leading rusher, passer and top three receivers.

Pottsboro doesn't return many starters – four on offense, five on defense – but hopes are high following last season's 12-2 campaign. The Cardinals had their best finish since a 15-1 state runner-up campaign in 2019.

While skill positions except for quarterback are a concern, the offensive line is not. Byron Coldicott, Zach Harrison, Van Holbrook and Bryson Wyatt return for a line that contributed to 41 points per game a year ago.

Returning defensively for Pottsboro are defensive linemen Brody Burdette and Chase Damm, linebacker Michael

Ermon, and defensive backs Cole Barker and Brady Wynn. Ermon (128 tackles) and Barker (77 tackles) are the top retuning defenders.

After dropping the second game of the season, 28-21, against Sanger, the Cardinals won their next 12 games, which included a 6-0 run in District 5-3A-Division I play. Pottsboro lost to eventual state finalist Grandview, 35-18, in the state quarterfinals.

Pottsboro opens the season with three consecutive home games against Bells, Farmersville and Leonard, respectively, before traveling for the next three – Callisburg, Bonham and the 5-3A-DI opener against Pilot Point. The Cardinals host Gunter Oct. 16 before traveling to A+ Academy and Whitesboro, respectively, and closing out at home against Life Oak Cliff.

Pottsboro is predicted to finish third in the 5-3A-DI behind Gunter and Whitesboro, respectively. Pilot Point, Life Oak Cliff and A+ Academy are respectively projected to finish fourth, fifth and sixth in the league standings.



Courtesy photo

2026 POTTSBORO CARDINALS *Varsity Schedule*

8/28 • Bells • Home • 7 p.m.
9/4 • Farmersville • Home • 7 p.m.
9/11 • Leonard • Home • 7 p.m.
9/18 • Callisburg • Away • 7 p.m.
9/25 • Bonham • Away • 7 p.m.
10/9 • Pilot Point • Away • 7 p.m.
10/16 • Gunter • Home • 7 p.m.
10/23 • A Plus Academy • Away • 7 p.m.
11/6 • Life Oak Cliff • Home • 7 p.m.

2026 POTTSBORO CARDINALS *Varsity Roster*

02 - COLE BARKER	23 - BRAXTON
03 - TRIPP WATSON	CHAPMAN
04 - BRAYDON DAVIS	24 - NOAH ALTLAND
05 - JAYDEN WRIGHT	25 - GAVIN GIBSON
06 - BRYADEN SHEFFIELD	43 - ANGEL ESPINOSA
07 - BRADY WYNN	44 - COLTON KIRKLAND
08 - BRODY BURDETTE	54 - MARKUS POPE
09 - LEVI HACKLER	55 - DAX CURRY
10 - CHASE DAMM	56 - BRYSON WYATT
11 - BRADY BADGETT	57 - JAGER DROSCHKE
12 - EVAN ROEBUCK	58 - RYEN WILLIAMS
15 - CORBIN ROBISON	66 - VAN HOLBROOK
16 - HUDSON CORDER	70 - ZACH HARRISON
17 - JAXON HAYES	77 - LAYNE MCDONALD
18 - MICHAEL ERMON	78 - MICHAEL RUND JR.
21 - TRAE POCZA	79 - BYRON COLDICOTT
22 - BRODY BILLY	

S&S Rams



Courtesy photo

Rams aiming for more wins in 2026

JASON CHLAPEK

Contributing writer

It was just the third game of the season on Sept. 12, 2025, but the S&S football team did something it hadn't done in three seasons – win.

The Rams snapped a 27-game losing streak with a 20-12 win against Nocona that night. Their previous win was a 35-29 win against Whitewright on Sept. 16, 2022.

Following last season's win against Nocona, S&S followed up with a 47-42 win against Bogata Rivercrest for its first road win since 2021. The Rams ended up losing all six district games and go into the 2026 season on a six-game skid.

Despite this, things seem good for S&S. The Rams return eight starters on both sides of the football.

Offensively, S&S will rely on its offensive line, which includes Ruffin Brubaker, Bryan Flores, Hayden Harkins, Parker Hansen and Peyton Turner. Also returning are receivers Jason Monreal, Joe Orr (45 catches, 556 yards, 7 TDs) and Connor Roberts and running back Eli Nortman.

Nortman (93 tackles) is expected to lead the defense at linebacker. Bru-

baker, Flores, Hansen and Turner also return at defensive line; while Harkins returns at linebacker; and Monreal and Roberts return at defensive back.

While finding a quarterback will be a chief concern for the Rams, they have another thing to be optimistic about. Perennial powerhouse Gunter is no longer in the district.

The Tigers moved up to 3A-Division I. S&S will be in District 7-3A-Division II with Bells, Blue Ridge, Callisburg, Howe, Leonard and newcomer Valley View.

S&S is predicted to finish sixth behind Blue Ridge, Leonard, Callisburg, Bells and Howe, respectively. But a few lucky breaks could have the Rams competing for a playoff spot.

S&S opens the season Aug. 28 at Rice and hosts Dallas Inspired Vision on Sept. 4. The Rams close out nondistrict play at Nocona and at home against Trenton before opening 7-3A-DII play at home against Bells.

S&S visits Howe, hosts Leonard and visits Callisburg before observing its bye Oct. 23. The Rams host Blue Ridge Oct. 30 and conclude the regular season at Valley View Nov. 6.



Courtesy photos

2026 S&S RAMS Varsity Schedule

8/28 • Rice • Away • 7 p.m.
9/4 • Inspired Vision • Home • 7 p.m.
9/11 • Nocona • Away • 7 p.m.
9/18 • Trenton • Home • 7 p.m.
9/25 • Bells • Home • 7 p.m.
10/2 • Howe • Away • 7 p.m.
10/9 • Leonard • Home • 7 p.m.
10/16 • Callisburg • Away • 7 p.m.
10/30 • Blue Ridge • Home • 7 p.m.
11/5 • Valley View • Away • 7 p.m.



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2026 S&S RAMS Varsity Roster

00 - URIAH MANNIS
01 - BRIGHTIN MCNABB
02 - JOE ORR
03 - GABRIEL JARAMILLO
04 - JOSHUA SIMPSON
05 - TATE BACA
06 - STEPHEN CARTER
07 - JASON MONREAL
08 - TANNER SCOGGINS
09 - ELI NORTMAN
10 - BRENDEN HAMMER
11 - CONNOR ROBERTS
12 - CARTER COPELAND
13 - PAULO DOS REIS

14 - BLU HATFIELD
15 - JORDAN WINBORNE
16 - CARTER ROSS
18 - WILL ROTELLO
20 - COOPER SIZEMORE
21 - ETHAN SIMS
22 - JAYDEN BEATTY
24 - LUIS CARRILLO
24 - BRODY CHANDLER
25 - KYLER KELLER
28 - JOHN PIERCE
28 - RAMSEY MAULDIN
30 - WADE FREEMAN
33 - MARIO ORTIZ

52 - HAYDEN HARKINS
54 - BRYAN FLORES
54 - JAXSON BABER
60 - PEYTON TURNER
61 - CAL HATFIELD
62 - KAIDEN SHIELDS
64 - ALEX STUCKEY
68 - RICARDO GONZALEZ
70 - AUSTIN HELLINGER
72 - BRAYDON
ANDERSON
74 - CONNOR LUCAS
75 - SAUL BECERRA
80 - DOMINICK PARSONS

Sherman Bearcats

New era begins for Sherman under Ramos

RICHARD GREENE
Contributing writer

It’s a new era for the Sherman Bearcats, who will open their new stadium on campus this fall while welcoming new football coach Efrain Ramos. Ramos was hired in April to take over the Bearcats program after leading Lamesa to a pair of playoff berths, including its first district title in 23 years in 2024. He now takes over a Sherman program searching for its first winning season since 2019 and one he believes is on the verge of something special. “Just look at the investment that the school district’s having in their facilities. I think we’re committed as a community to give our kids a first-class experience when they come to school here,” Ramos said. “My experience is making football teams really good, tak-

ing teams that have been down on their luck. ... We’ve always been successful at turning that around. Sherman is a place that I think has been down but is ready to explode to be a great football school.” The Bearcats finished 2-7 last year, ending the season with a 41-31 win over Frisco Lebanon Trail. Ramos, who arrived late in the spring, was able to start introducing the offense prior to August and the start of practice. Much of the defense stayed the same with the defensive coordinator returning. “We’re a little ahead of schedule of where I thought we’d be. I’m really proud of the kids, the time and the commitment they put into it, and the buy-in,” Ramos said.

See SHERMAN page 27

2026 SHERMAN BEARCATS *Varsity Roster*

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 00 - PIERRE BROWHOW | 25 - ZAIDEN COLEMAN |
| 01 - CHRISTIAN MACKEY | 26 - ANTHONY COLEMAN |
| 02 - DANIEL RAMOS | 28 - MOISES CRUZ |
| 03 - TRAE REASON | 30 - ELVIN RAMIREZ |
| 04 - JORDAN PUGA | 31 - ALVARO PAULIN |
| 05 - NOLAN WEST | 32 - WILL DUTTON |
| 07 - JADARIUS MOORE | 35 - ETHAN FULLER |
| 08 - PRESTON VELLOTTI | 50 - ANDRE HERNANDEZ |
| 09 - BRAYLON HAMMEL | 51 - JONNY HERNANDEZ |
| 10 - BRYCEN TAYLOR | 53 - MALACHI FLOWERS |
| 11 - CHARLIE CERNERO | 55 - AUSTIN MILLER |
| 12 - TJ JOHNSON | 58 - JEREN GREEN |
| 13 - SHALOM AYEDUN | 64 - CHASE SMITH |
| 14 - CHRISTIAN CLARK | 74 - JAGGER ANDERSON |
| 15 - MAX BOND | 75 - JERMAINE |
| 16 - MALEEK CHAPMAN | MATTHEWS |
| 17 - JACK MILLER | 76 - RIKEN ANDERSON |
| 18 - JORDAN | 77 - LEANDRE GOODEN |
| WILLIAMSON | 79 - MAX CLARK |
| 19 - ARMANI DOUGLAS | 80 - JACE JONES |
| 20 - ISAIAH SMITH | 90 - LANDON ROBINSON |
| 21 - ADAN ENRIQUEZ | 94 - ZE’RHYAN DANIELS |
| 22 - ALAN CHAVEZ | 97 - KENTRELL NEALEY |
| 23 - MICHAEL CHAPMAN | 99 - JERMAINE NEALEY |
| 24 - LIAUM HUMPHREY | |

2026 SHERMAN BEARCATS *Varsity Schedule*

- 8/28 • Denison • Away • 7 p.m.**
- 9/4 • Joshua • Away • 7 p.m.**
- 9/11 • Liberty Christian • Away • 7 p.m.**
- 9/18 • The Colony • Home • 7 p.m.**
- 9/25 • Fossil Ridge • Away • 7 p.m.**
- 10/2 • Ryan • Home • 7 p.m.**
- 10/9 • Azle • Away • 7 p.m.**
- 10/16 • Chisholm Trail • Home • 7 p.m.**
- 10/23 • Denton • Away • 7 p.m.**
- 11/6 • Saginaw • Home • 7 p.m.**

Tioga Bulldogs



Photo by Penny Washington

Tioga aiming to get back on track

JASON CHLAPEK

Contributing writer

Getting back to the standard is something Tioga football coach Zach Birdwell wants to do.

The Bulldogs were 5-5 in an injury-riddled 2025 campaign that concluded with a 42-20 loss to eventual state champion Hamilton in the bi-district round. Among the injuries were quarterback Cole Boyd, who missed the entire season.

“Regardless of the adversity we faced last year, we didn’t meet our standard,” Birdwell said. “We aren’t here to just win some games or be in games or just make the playoffs. This group enters this season with a chip on their shoulder and looking to right the wrongs from last season.”

If Boyd – the projected starting quarterback – stays healthy, the sky could be the limit for Tioga. He has a plethora of receivers to throw to.

Among those are Jaxson Hurst (70 catches, 1,106 yards, 14 TDs) and Justin Arrington (33 catches, 563 yards,

6 TDs). Jake David (19 catches, 259 yards, 3 TDs), Quesyn Arrington (12 catches, 211 yards, 3 TDs) and Kyson Kirkland (11 catches, 102 yards) also contributed to the passing game.

The Bulldogs also benefit from Bryson Bradley, Jesus Enriquez, Kooper Vandagriff and Karson Stewart on the offensive line. Tioga operates out of the Air Raid spread offense.

Defensively, the Bulldogs welcome back linebackers Jaxton Dejernet and Raul Chavez, both Arringtons at defensive back, and David and Kirkland at either linebacker or defensive back. Dejernet (81 tackles) and Chavez (54 tackles) led the way for Tioga a year ago.

The Bulldogs operate out of the 3-4 on defense. Also competing for vacancies on defense are Joseph Cuellar, August Strittmatter, Calan Sweeny, Maddox Hurst, Graham Arnold, Anibal Becerra and Raiden Washington.

Birdwell said experience is a team strength and injuries are a concern.

“We have a ton of guys who have

started on varsity since their freshman or sophomore season. This is also Year 4 for these guys in our system and program,” Birdwell said. “We’ve had back-to-back seasons hit with injuries. We are hoping to see this group get a fully healthy season.”

In 2025, the Bulldogs shook off an 0-2 start to win five of their next six, including a 4-2 district mark, before losing to Hamilton. Last season marked the fifth straight time Tioga reached the postseason.

Tioga opens the season Thursday, Aug. 27, at home against Collinsville before traveling to Fort Worth Southwest Christian. The Bulldogs host Callisburg and Tom Bean, respectively, before closing out nondistrict play at Carrollton Prince of Peace.

Tioga opens 6-2A-DI play Oct. 9 at home against Muenster. The Bulldogs close out district play with Chico (away), Alvord (home), Nocona (away) and Olney (home).



2026 TIOGA BULLDOGS

Varsity Schedule

8/28 • Wichita Falls City View • Away • TBD
9/4 • Bells • Away • 7 p.m.
9/11 • Bridgeport • Home • 7 p.m.
9/17 • Sanger • Home • 7 p.m.
9/25 • Holliday • Home • 7 p.m.
10/2 • Bye Week
10/9 • Life Oak • Away • 7 p.m.
10/16 • Pilot Point • Home • 7 p.m.
10/23 • Gunter • Away • 7 p.m.
10/30 • Pottsboro • Home • 7 p.m.
11/5 • Dallas A Plus • Away • 7 p.m.



Courtesy photo

2026 TIOGA BULLDOGS

Varsity Roster

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 00 - JAKE DAVID | 19 - RAUL CHAVEZ |
| 01 - JUSTIN | 20 - GRAHAM |
| ARRINGTON | ARNOLD |
| 02 - CAMDEN | 22 - CALAN SWEENEY |
| STEPHENS | 33 - ADRIAN |
| 03 - MADDOX HURST | PACHICANO |
| 04 - QUESYN | 50 - BRYSON |
| ARRINGTON | BRADLEY |
| 05 - JAXSON HURST | 51 - JESSE MILLER |
| 07 - JOSEPH | 52 - ANIBAL |
| CUELLAR | BECERRA |
| 08 - JAXTON | 53 - JESUS ENRIQUEZ |
| DEJERNETT | 55 - KOOPER |
| 09 - GRAYSON HURST | VANDAGRIFF |
| 10 - KYSON | 65 - LANDON SKAGGS |
| KIRKLAND | 66 - STEEL BOYD |
| 11 - AUGUST | 70 - KALEB KASSELL |
| STRITTMATTER | 71 - KARSON |
| 12 - COLE BOYD | STEWART |
| 13 - GRAYDON BOYD | 77 - RAIDEN |
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GO, BULLDOGS!

Tom Bean Tomcats

Tomcats look to build on peak season

JASON CHLAPEK

Contributing writer

Last season was one to remember for the Tom Bean football team.

The Tomcats not only reached the postseason, but they also won a playoff game for the first time in two decades. Tom Bean's 38-12 win against Bangs in the bi-district round of the Class 2A-Division I state playoffs was its first postseason win since 2004.

The Tomcats are aiming to build on their success from the 2025 season. In order to do that, they'll need to find a quarterback.

Donnie Hooten accounted for more than 4,000 yards and 49 touchdowns of total offense. He also served as Tom Bean's kicker and punter.

Offensively, the line of Ryon Cherry, Viktor Georgeff, Carter Mayo, Ronny

Reyna and Tony Secreto will protect up front. Receivers Camden Stephens (83 catches, 1,185 yards, 16 TDs), Tatum Hanson, Jacob Lind and Cain Pearson; and running back Slayton Farris will provide plenty of support for the new quarterback.

On defense, Hanson (150 tackles), Farris and Lind will lead the way. Cherry, Georgeff, Mayo and Secreto will anchor the defensive line; and Pearson and Stephens will guide the secondary.

A year ago, Tom Bean opened the season 6-0 before dropping a pair of seven-point district contests to Alvord and Wolfe City, respectively. The Tomcats bounced back to win their last two league contests and handled Bangs in the opening round before losing to Ax-tell, 41-7, in the area round.

Tom Bean is predicted to edge out county rival Whitewright for the



Courtesy photo

fourth-place spot in District 9-2A-DI. The respective top three as predicted in the league standings are Cooper, Honey Grove and Wolfe City; while Bogota Rivercrest and Trenton are the respective projected bottom feeders.

Tom Bean opens the season at De Kalb before hosting Cumby and Valley

View back-to-back and visiting Tioga before its district opener at Rivercrest. The Tomcats host Honey Grove and visit Cooper before observing a bye Oct. 16 and resuming play against Whitewright (home), Wolfe City (away) and Trenton (home).

2026 TOM BEAN TOMCATS *Varsity Schedule*

8/28 DeKalb • Away • 7:30 p.m.
9/4 • Cumby • Home • 7 p.m.
9/11 • Valley View • Home • 7 p.m.
9/18 • Tioga • Away • 7 p.m.
9/25 • Rivercrest • Away • 7 p.m.
10/2 • Honey Grove • Home • 7 p.m.
10/9 • Cooper • Away • 7 p.m.
10/23 • Whitewright • Home • 7 p.m.
10/30 • Wolfe City • Away • 7 p.m.
11/6 • Trenton • Home • 7 p.m.

2026 TOM BEAN TOMCATS *Varsity Roster*

00 - TATUM HANSON	17 - IZAK TUMEY
01 - CAIN PEARSON	19 - HOLDEN FARRIS
02 - BRAYLEN JOHNSON	22 - ETHAN HALPAIN
03 - PAXTON PARRISH	33 - JADEN SNOW
04 - JACOB LIND	51 - ANTHONY SECRETO
05 - HENRY CHEEK	52 - RYON CHERRY
06 - HAYDEN HILGER	55 - CARTER MAYO
08 - NOAH GRAY	65 - JOSEPH VALLE
09 - AJ CARNEY	66 - ETHAN HERNANDEZ
10 - OWEN CHEEK	70 - TRISTAN SCOTT
11 - SLAYTON FARRIS	72 - VIKTOR GEORGEFF
16 - MATTHEW FORSYTHE	75 - RONNY REYNA

Sherman

From page 23

Offense

Ramos is bringing in the Air Raid offense, with his son Daniel Ramos at quarterback to lead it. As a sophomore last season, the younger Ramos threw for nearly 3,500 yards and 41 touchdowns in leading Lamesa to the playoffs and earning 2-3AI Offensive MVP. That followed his freshman campaign, in which he threw for 2,500 yards and 38 touchdowns.

"He's got two years of starting experience," Coach Ramos said. "He knows what to do and has been in quarterback meetings since he was in seventh grade."

Ramos is encouraged by the options at receiver with Brycen Taylor, who is moving over from the defense, and Christian Clark. Christian MacKey and Trae Reason are at slot receiver.

"They are pretty dynamic and catch the ball really well," Ramos said.

"They've run the ball quite a bit here in Sherman over the last couple of years, so they're excited to see the ball in the air. They've got a chance to catch a pass and go score on every play."

Pierre Browhow, who ran for more than 500 yards last season, returns at running back and will be used in the passing game.

Up front, Chase Smith is at tackle. The Bearcats will look to twins Jagger and Riken Anderson to man the guard spots.

"They both stand around 6-2 or 6-3 and weigh about 280 or 290. They're really good and are catching on," Ramos said.

Leandre Gooden is also working in on the line, which is adapting to pass protection.

Defense

The Bearcats are staying in a multi-front 3-4 defense that will adapt to the style of offense they play.

Kentrell Nealey earned all-district honors at defensive tackle.

"He's a great defensive lineman who is a force to be reckoned with up front," Ramos said.

The Bearcats are young at linebacker, with Charlie Cernero, Ethan Fuller, Max Bond and Jack Miller filling the four spots.

In the secondary, TJ Johnson and Jordan Williamson are on the back end at safety. Nolan West is at one of the corner spots.

Looking ahead

Sherman moves from a district with mostly Frisco-area schools to the new 3-5AI, which includes Denton- and Fort Worth-area schools. The league will include Azle, Denton, Denton Ryan, Chisholm Trail, Keller Fossil Ridge and Saginaw.

Aside from perennial power Denton Ryan, the district is wide open.

"The competition to get into the playoffs is going to be very competitive," Ramos said. "We've got Ryan in there who is a state powerhouse, and that's the program I think everybody in the district is going to be chasing."

Sherman will open the season with three straight games on the road, including the Battle of the Ax against Denison in the opener. Sherman will debut its new stadium Sept. 18 against The Colony.

But the new era has already started.



Courtesy photo



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Van Alstyne Panthers

VA looks to keep postseason streak alive

JASON CHLAPEK

Contributing writer

Reaching the postseason is the standard at Van Alstyne.

The Panthers have been playoff bound each year since 2012. VA wants to make sure the 2026 season is no exception.

The Panthers welcome back the majority of their starting lineup from last season's 4-6 bi-district finalist but need to find a quarterback. Brayden Miller, who accounted for more than 2,300 yards and 23 touchdowns, graduated.

Luckily, the projected starter – Ca-

son Howard – will not have to throw the ball each down. Running back Xavier Vidaurri ran for 606 yards and seven touchdowns and caught 23 passes for 457 yards and four scores.

When Howard throws the football, he'll have plenty of options. Cayden Benedict (35 catches, 420 yards, 3 TDs), Tim Moore (7 catches, 235 yards, 3 TDs) and Amryion Taylor (14 catches, 258 yards) will be his top targets.

Caden Brown is projected to lead the offensive line. He contributed to an offense that averaged 33 points per game.

Brown and Major Morris are returning for the defensive line, while Ben-

edict, Vidaurri and Logan Mayes lead the linebacker corps. Moore, Taylor and Ashton Welch lead the secondary.

After winning the season opener against Waxahachie Life Academy, VA lost its next four, including district contests against Sanger and Krum. But the Panthers bounced back to win their next three against Gainesville, Farmersville and Bonham, respectively, to clinch a playoff spot before losing to Caddo Mills in the regular season finale and Sunnyvale in the bi-district round.

VA is predicted to finish second in the District 6-4A-DII standings behind Krum. Respectively picked to finish

behind the Panthers are Sanger, Ponder, Gainesville and Lake Worth.

VA opens the season at home against Dallas Carter before visiting Aubrey. A home game against Greenville and consecutive road contests against Sunnyvale and Quinlan Ford close out non-district play for the Panthers.

VA hosts Lake Worth in the 6-4A-DII opener before visiting Krum. The Panthers wrap up league play at home against Ponder, at Gainesville and at home against Sanger.



Courtesy photo

2026 VAN ALSTYNE PANTHERS

Varsity Schedule

8/28 • Wichita Falls City View • Away • TBD
9/4 • Bells • Away • 7 p.m.
9/11 • Bridgeport • Home • 7 p.m.
9/17 • Sanger • Home • 7 p.m.
9/25 • Holliday • Home • 7 p.m.
10/2 • Bye Week
10/9 • Life Oak • Away • 7 p.m.
10/16 • Pilot Point • Home • 7 p.m.
10/23 • Gunter • Away • 7 p.m.
10/30 • Pottsboro • Home • 7 p.m.
11/5 • Dallas A Plus • Away • 7 p.m.

2026 VAN ALSTYNE PANTHERS

Varsity Roster

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| 03 - CAYDEN BENEDICT | 23 - ASHTON WELCH |
| 04 - TIM MOORE | 24 - JOVANY BEAVERS |
| 05 - TUCKER PITCOX | 27 - NERI ORTIZ |
| 06 - SAMMY LATHROP | 28 - LOGAN MAYES |
| 08 - JACKSON DUNCAN | 54 - SHAN PATEL |
| 10 - TANNER POWERS | 58 - CADEN BROWN |
| 13 - GRAHAM HAYNES | 67 - SAHID RAMIREZ |
| 15 - XAVIER VIDAURRI | MENDOZA |
| 17 - AIDEN LANDEROS | 70 - ZAIN TOLLESON |
| 20 - AMYRION TAYLOR | 72 - CARTER CONROY |
| 21 - KAIGE WALKER | 74 - WALKER GAYLOR |
| 22 - MAJOR MORRIS | 77 - ADRIAN TEASDALE |
| | 81 - AYDEN MOWRY |

GO, PANTHERS!



Courtesy photo



Whitesboro Bearcats



News-Record photo by Jessica Edwards

Bearcats locked in and reloaded in 2026

JASON CHLAPEK

Contributing writer

Entering his eighth season at the helm at Whitesboro, Cody Fagan won't have a lot of changes to make for the Bearcats' football team.

That's because the majority of the starting lineup from 2025 returns. With 10 starters on offense and eight on defense coming back, the sky could be the limit for Whitesboro.

"We have a veteran team returning lots of experience with a bigger, stronger offensive line," Fagan said.

Four out of five starters from last season's 5-6 campaign return on the offensive line. They are left guard Marques Ruiz, center Layne Espinosa, right guard Noah Hall and right tackle Karson Shaw.

While finding a left tackle is the immediate need, all six skill position players return for the Bearcats' spread option attack. They are quarterback Colt Fagan; running back Justin Knight; and wide receivers Ian Bruce, Shayne Gabbert, Camron Howard and Wyatt Win-

chester.

Ayce Nelson, who plays tight end or fullback in certain offensive packages, also returns. In 2025, the younger Fagan passed for 1,889 yards and 26 touchdowns, while rushing for 453 yards and 10 scores.

Knight gave Fagan's arm relief by rushing for 915 yards and four touchdowns. Bruce (33 catches, 593 yards, 7 TDs), Howard (36 catches, 475 yards, 3 TDs) and Winchester (23 catches, 384 yards, 8 TDs) led Whitesboro in at least one receiving category, while Gabbert (8 catches, 189 yards, 4 TDs) also contributed.

Defensively, the Bearcats return eight starters – some of whom double up on offense. Howard and Winchester are outside linebackers, while Scout Reaglean and Korbin Ross are inside linebackers; Nelson plays defensive end; Brayden Johnson is a defensive tackle; Bruce is a cornerback; and Gabbert is the free safety.

Competing for vacant positions in Whitesboro's 4-2-5/4-4-3 defensive

alignment are defensive tackles Victor Chavez and Jace Bomar; defensive ends Rip Harper and Kason Vessels; defensive backs Rhett Fagan, Alan Flores and Ryan Oden; and linebackers Eli Degrafenreed and Parks Ramsey. Ross (121 tackles, 6 tackles for losses, 3 blocked field goals) and Gabbert (107 tackles, 4 interceptions) led the Bearcats on defense a year ago.

Chavez also returns as Whitesboro's kicker. He was a perfect 38-of-38 on point-after touchdown kicks in 2025.

Coach Fagan likes the experience his team has. However, he'd like to see more depth develop.

"We have depth, but we don't have experienced depth," Fagan said. "We need younger guys to continue to learn and grow up fast when asked to play in big moments."

A year ago, the Bearcats started 4-2 before losing four of their last five, including a season-ending 61-55 loss to Whitney in the Class 3A-Division I bi-district round. Whitesboro is now a member of District 5-3A-DI with five

other teams, which means the Bearcats lost a district game and gained a non-district one.

Whitesboro opens the season with consecutive road games at Wichita Falls City View and Bells, respectively, before wrapping up its nondistrict slate with respective home games against Bridgeport, Sanger and Holliday. Following a bye week Oct. 2, the Bearcats start league play on the road at Dallas Life Oak Cliff before respectively facing Pilot Point (home), Gunter (away), Pottsboro (home) and Dallas A+ Academy (away).

Some pollsters, such as Dave Campbell's Texas Football, predict Whitesboro to finish second to Gunter in the 5-3A-DI standings with Pottsboro and Pilot Point respectively taking the other two playoff spots. Regardless of the predictions, Fagan is ready for his team to suit up and play.

"We have high expectations with a veteran group to play really hard and be in every game this year," he said.



Photos by Haley Ross

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2026 WHITESBORO BEARCATS

Varsity Schedule

8/28 • Wichita Falls City View • Away • TBD
9/4 • Bells • Away • 7 p.m.
9/11 • Bridgeport • Home • 7 p.m.
9/17 • Sanger • Home • 7 p.m.
9/25 • Holliday • Home • 7 p.m.
10/9 • Life Oak • Away • 7 p.m.
10/16 • Pilot Point • Home • 7 p.m.
10/23 • Gunter • Away • 7 p.m.
10/30 • Pottsboro • Home • 7 p.m.
11/5 • Dallas A Plus • Away • 7 p.m.



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Varsity Roster

02 - IAN BRUCE	30 - ALAN FLORES
03 - CAMRON HOWARD	40 - DOMINIC RAMOS
04 - JUSTIN KNIGHT	44 - AYCE NELSON
05 - KORBIN ROSS	45 - SCOUT REGELEAN
06 - SHANE GABBERT	50 - AYDEN LASALLE
07 - COLT FAGAN	51 - CASON VESSELS
08 - VICTOR CHAVEZ	52 - MARQUES RUIZ
09 - RIP HARPER	53 - KARSON SHAW
10 - BRAYDEN JOHNSON	62 - NOAH HALL
11 - WYATT WINCHESTER	65 - JACE BOMAR
13 - RYAN ODEN	73 - MALAKI POE
14 - LUCAS TAYLOR	74 - LANE ESPINOSA
18 - CARLOS CONTRERAS	75 - LOGAN FARMER
21 - RHETT FAGAN	77 - AYDAN FALCON
24 - JAGGER MCCLURE	80 - PARKS RAMSEY
25 - ELI DEGRAFFENREED	

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**LET'S GO,
BEARCATS!**

Whitewright Tigers

Tigers eye return to postseason

MATTHEW SUMMERALL

Contributing writer

With season two of the Charlie Roten era at Whitewright, the Tigers are looking to bounce back and return to the playoffs after early district losses to rivals Tom Bean and Wolfe City kept them out of the postseason last year.

Despite losing their first four district games, the Tigers ended the 2025 season on a high note with wins over Noco-na and Trenton. They hope to carry that momentum into this season.

“Ending last season with two solid wins was great. It definitely gave us a boost into this season,” Roten said.

Despite finishing 5-5 and missing the postseason in 2025, Whitewright has plenty of reasons to believe it can get back to the playoffs this season.

Moving to a new district will bring new challenges, but the Tigers are up for it. Battle of Highway 11 rival Tom Bean and Highway 69 rival Trenton will join the Tigers in the new District 9-2A Division 1, along with perennial playoff contenders Honey Grove, Cooper, Rivercrest and Wolfe City.

“We are solidly stacked at our skill positions, and having nine seniors provides us with some great leadership,” Roten said.

Operating Roten’s Pistol Flexbone offense will be quarterback Peyton

Smith. Also returning are offensive and defensive linemen Logan Sallas and Greyson Vitko. The skill positions will be powered this season by Nolan Rigby, Jacoby Brown and Nate Lowry.

Top defensive players include Nick Ulmer, Austin Baio, Keelan Washington, Levi Elwell and Dayton Ritchie.

Roten believes the skill positions on both offense and defense are his team’s biggest strength. A concern is depth on the offensive and defensive lines.

District 9-2A-DI will be an interesting one to watch.

Nondistrict play begins with Whitewright opening the season at home against Clarksville, followed by a quick trip down the road to Celeste the next week.

The Tigers wrap up their nondistrict slate by hosting Lindsay before going on the road to Hopkins County to face Cumby on Sept. 18.

District play begins the next week with a short trip to Trenton. Whitewright opens October by hosting Rivercrest before traveling to Honey Grove and then hosting Cooper.

The Tigers will face Tom Bean in the Battle of Highway 11 on Oct. 23 before an Oct. 30 bye. Whitewright will close the regular season at home against the Wolfe City Wolves on Nov. 6.



Photo by Jenna Howard



Photos by Sarah Beth Owen

2026 WHITEWRIGHT TIGERS

Varsity Schedule

- 8/28 • Clarksville • Home • 7 p.m.
- 9/4 • Celeste • Away • 7 p.m.
- 9/11 • Lindsay • Home • 7 p.m.
- 9/18 • Cumby • Away • 7 p.m.
- 9/25 • Trenton • Away • 7 p.m.
- 10/2 • Rivercrest • Home • 7 p.m.
- 10/9 • Honey Grove • Away • 7 p.m.
- 10/16 • Cooper • Home • 7 p.m.
- 10/23 • Tom Bean • Away • 7 p.m.
- 11/6 • Wolfe City • Home • 7 p.m.



Photos by Jenna Howard

2026 WHITEWRIGHT TIGERS

Varsity Roster

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 01 - MADDOX SMART | 20 - JACOBY BROWN |
| 02 - NICK ULMER | 21 - NATE LOWRY |
| 03 - AUSTIN BAIO | 22 - RYLAND MEALER |
| 04 - COLT PARKER | 35 - XANDER HALL |
| 05 - DAYTON RITCHIE | 44 - KEELAN |
| 06 - ADRIAN GARZA | WASHINGTON |
| 07 - TYLER LATIMER | 52 - GREYSON VITKO |
| 08 - RAMON CRUZ | 53 - TRISTIAN VARVEL |
| 09 - NATHAN HERRIN | 54 - EDWIN ARROYO |
| 10 - GRANT SAENZ | 55 - LOGAN SALLAS |
| 11 - DRAKE FREEMAN | 63 - COLTON BAMBICO |
| 12 - NOLAN RIGBY | 77 - LEVI ELWELL |
| 15 - PEYTON SMITH | |



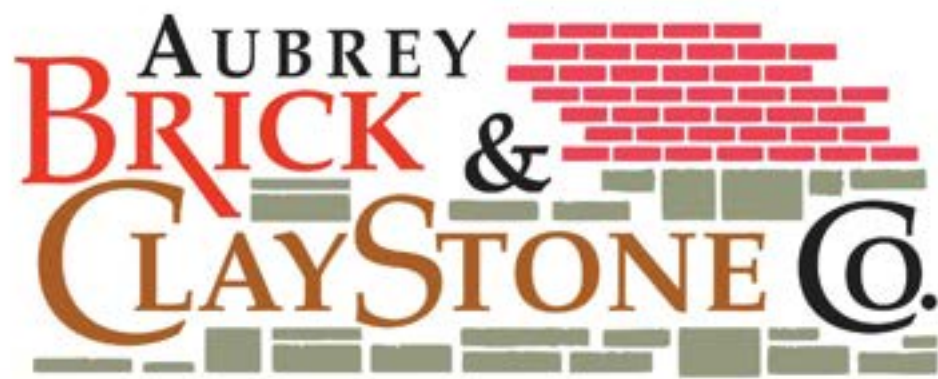
Photo by Sarah Beth Owen



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