ARCHER CITY WILDCATS & LADY CATS

WINDTHORST TROJANS & TROJANETTES





FALL SPORTS PREVIEW 2023

Issue 34 - August 31, 2023

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New faces have Wildcats back on track

By Will Edwards

Not many teams in the state could handle losing its top passer, rusher and pass-rusher in one off-season. After a tumultuous off-season that saw the Wildcats lose several key playmakers, Archer City and head coach Bradan Ritchey are ready to get back to football.

"I'm so proud of the kids we have," Ritchey said. "The way I put it after our scrimmage on Friday is we are ahead of where I thought we would be and are 10 times ahead of where we could have been. When I was able to see us go against some other teams, I was able to tell that we are going to be competitive. It gave me a chance to go home and take a deep breath. It has been a lot of work since April and the kids did it and the coaches that are still here did it and nobody backed away from it. We attacked what happened and came out on top as far as where we could have been. I'm so proud of the kids and the coaches because the kids that are here learned a really valuable lesson – things are going to happen that are outside of your control. You can back down; you can run or you can fight. These kids fought and I think they are going to see it pay off. It is bigger than football. I'm most proud that we have got to this point and the drama is over and school is starting and we are back in a routine. I have never been more excited to get back to that. I am so proud of our kids and I could not be happier with the way they responded with what we challenged them with."

Last season, three teams won a share of the district championship. With graduation and several key players leaving the district, Ritchey sees the 2023 race as wide-open as ever.

"I think our district is going to be really competitive. The top four teams from last year are all going to be good. Seymour is going to be good; Windthorst is going to be good; Haskell is going to be the same type of team. Electra is going to be way improved. Everybody has talked about Petrolia being a little down but I got on NFHS and watched their scrimmage and they looked pretty good. They are not going to be a bad team by any means. Munday is such an unknown with a new coach. Top to bottom it should be more competitive this year. I think Electra might be one of the more improved teams in the state just from where they were last year to where they are this year. It will be interesting. Anybody that tries to predict the finish of the district is just grasping at straws without seeing two or three weeks of football."

With a new offensive coordinator in coach Collin White, a wealth of talent in the receiving corps and more experience up front, Ritchey believes the Wildcats to be capable of running at-will at the opposition.

"We will be a little bit different on offense. We've got Coach White coming in. He is a really good quarterback and receivers coach. He is really good at making little tweaks in the passing game based on how people are playing us. We are going to be much improved in that area especially with the receiving corps we have. We're going to be a lot better up front. I think this year we are going to have the ability to just line up and run the ball which is something we didn't have last year. Last year we had to scheme ways to make it happen by formation. We were very poor up front last year but it is the same group of guys just a year smarter and a year stronger. You'll see some tweaks in the passing game with a quarterback that is more of a dual-threat. He's going to be able to do more for us. We are going to be much improved up front so we will have the ability to run the ball at people."

The biggest question on the offensive side is the quarterback position. Ritchey has announced junior Landon Smith as the Wildcats' signal-caller at the start of fall camp and Smith has exceeded his coaches expectations early on.

"Landon has embraced the quarterback role. It's a huge challenge. He is a kid that does not back down from a challenge; he is not scared of it. He does not lack confidence. That is the biggest thing he brings to us is the confidence and the kids believe in him because he is so confident in himself. There are some little particulars we have to work with him on and one of those is being the guy every one looks up to. There have been some maturity issues in the past with him. He has really, really grown up and now he wants to be the guy that everyone looks to. It has been a process to get him to that point. The guys listen to him. They listen to what he says. It's been a huge plus to have him step into that role the way that he has. Right now there are a couple guys that I can give direct credit to as much as any coach in the room that has got us to where we are now and he is one of them. There was a time that belief was wavering and he stepped in and gave us something to believe in when we really needed it."

Smith will have the benefit of throwing to an extremely talented receiving corps of Chance Warren, Kole Stovall, Layken Cagle and Isaac Dieguez.

"Having the receiving corps that we do helps out Landon a lot. The learning curve is not quite what it would be when you have a group of guys that can make plays the way that they make plays. Isaac is a big mismatch problem. He reminds me a lot of Wes Welker in that he is small and he is quick. He is just a matchup problem. We have a little bit of everything. We have the size with Chance. We have a guy that is going to out-athlete you in Kole. Isaac gives us that other little mismatch in the slot that creates a serious problem for defenses. Layken is another kid that goes 6'4 to 6'5 that creates mismatches. They have made Landon's learning curve much less steep for sure."

At the tight end/H-back position, Archer City turns to move in Jonathan Clay who came to the Wildcats when his father Monty was named the new defensive coordinator.

"We do have a tight-end/sniffer spot where we have Jonathan who is a good player there. He is an animal. When we get him on the field with those three receivers I think we will be dangerous. He is as good of a run blocker as any lineman we have. It gives us a serious run threat with defenses having to respect the guys at receiver. Kole or Chance is going to be solo when we are in those formations and it will create some serious matchup problems for the defense. He is a kid that has been a big part of our improvement thus far through fall camp."

Splitting time in the backfield will be Laine Hall and Kline Mayo at the running back position.

"We have two very specific types of running back. Our guy right now is Laine. He played corner for us last year and carried the ball two or three times in games that we were trying to run the clock out in. He is a very dynamic player. He is more like a modern day NFL back that is more of a threat out

See Football, Page 4B



Archer City will be looking to replace its top passer, rusher and pass-rusher after a trio of Wildcats departed following the 2022 season. Landon Smith will be the starting quarterback for the Wildcats this year.

File photo

Wildcat football schedule

Date	Opponent	Place	Time
Aug. 25	Quanah	Home	7 p.m.
Sept. 1	Anson	Away	7 p.m.
Sept. 8	Millsap	Home	7 p.m.
Sept. 14	Henrietta	Away	7 p.m.
Sept. 29	Seymour	Away*	7 p.m.
Oct. 6	Electra	Home**	7 p.m.
Oct. 13	Haskell	Away*	7 p.m.
Oct. 20	Windthorst	Home*	7 p.m.
Oct. 27	Petrolia	Away*	7 p.m.
Nov. 3	Munday	Home*	7 p.m.

* - District
**- Homecoming

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Lady Cats continuing to grow

By Will Edwards

After going through a rebuilding process last year, the Archer City Lady Cats are aiming to build off that late-season success and are continuing to grow in 2023.

"We want to build upon last year," Archer City head coach Krissa England said. "Last year I guess you could say was the first year of our rebuilding process. This year would be number two. We have older kids that are new to the varsity level and younger kids that are new to the varsity level. We really just need to learn to play at the pace of a varsity level game. We've got to get in our defensive spots and work hard at the net. We just have a bunch of skill work and that's what we'll continue to do."

With two tournaments under their belt, England has seen signs of positivity and growth from her team despite running the gauntlet through the early tournament action.

"We were in two tournaments that were both pretty aggressive," England said. "They were pretty tough competition for us. We ended up in the bracket that I felt we could do well in. I saw good things in both bracket play and pool play. Just because we didn't win a lot of games doesn't mean we didn't find success in a lot of areas."

Even after returning only two players from last year's squad in seniors Caitlyn Hilbers and Brynlee Skelton, England acknowledges the pair will be leaned on heavily to help bring the youngsters along.

"My leaders on the team right now are Brynlee and Caitlyn. They are pretty much the only two that have any type of varsity experience. We'll pretty much go as they go and go as our defense goes."

In the middle is Malia Jones and Brilee Canada while Serenity Jones has stepped up as a six-rotation player for the Lady Cats.

"Malia is new in the middle with Brilee. I expect big things with both of them. They are long and they are lanky. They just need to get a little bit more confident and get used to the pace of the game. Serenity is probably going to be my all-around best player. She's the only one right now that is playing all six rotations. She's a little undersized for an outside hitter but she has decent jumping ability so she does well on the front row. She's very quick and can read hitters really well on the back row."

Filling out the back row is Adelyn Harvey and Katelyn Casillas with Talynn Lowe also expected to see time as a defensive specialist. Kassidy Marin and Nicole Crouse will also see time in the rotation.

"My two biggest defenders that have come out have been Adelyn and Katelyn. They have been the one that seem to have picked up the game faster than others. Talynn is right there behind them. She's new to varsity as a sophomore. I expect a lot of growth from her. She's already grown so much through two-a-days. Fighting for playing time will be Kassidy and Nicole. They are my other defensive people. I feel I could put any of them in at any given time. It's just going to depend who is on that night."

A bright spot for England has been the play of Alyssa Schroeder.

"Alyssa started out as a setter but she's been so good defensively that I decided to just run with one setter. She can hit as well from the right-side but Kaydyn Ritchie will play her front row on the right-side. She's a little bit longer and a little bit taller. She gives us some better blocking ability but Alyssa has a harder swing than Kaydyn does."

With so much young talent in the Lady Cats' system, England is excited to see where Archer City goes from here.

"I'm excited about what's coming up and I'm excited about the future. I'm ready to see how we are going to be better from last year."



Archer City will hopes to build on last season's late momentum in 2023 as the Lady Cats return just two players from the previous year.

File photo

Lady Cat VB schedule

Date	Opponent	Place	Time
Aug. 7	Bowie	Away	L 3-0
Aug. 11-12	Burk Tourney	Away	2W- 4L
Aug. 15	Wichita Christian	Home	W 3-2
Aug. 29-20	Lu Allen Tourney	Away	1W - 6L
Aug. 22	Jacksboro	Away	5 p.m.
Aug. 26	WCS Tourney	Away	TBA
Aug. 29	Harrold	Home	5: p.m.
Sept.2	Bellevue	Home	11 a.m.
Sept. 5	City View	Away	5 p.m.
Sept. 9	Northside	Away	5 p.m.
Sept. 12	Newcastle	Home	5 p.m.
Sept. 16	Burkburnett	Home	10 a.m.
Sept. 19	Alvord	Home	5 p.m.
Sept. 23	Quanah	Away	10 a.m.
Sept. 26	Petrolia	Home	5 p.m.
Sept. 30	Christ Academy	Home	1 p.m.
Oct. 3	Windthorst	Away	5 p.m..
Oct. 7	Olney	Home	10 a.m.
Oct. 9	Quanah	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 14	Petrolia	Away	10 a.m.
Oct. 20	Windthorst	Hoome	4 p.m.
Oct. 24	Olney	Away	5 p.m.

Caitlyn Hilbers:Setting up future of Lady Cats

By Will Edwards

Archer City senior Caitlyn Hilbers is the next one up in a long line of Archer City setters.

From Elliot Hilbers to Maddie Lopez to Jill Liles, Hilbers has had the opportunity to learn from some of the all-time Lady Cat greats.

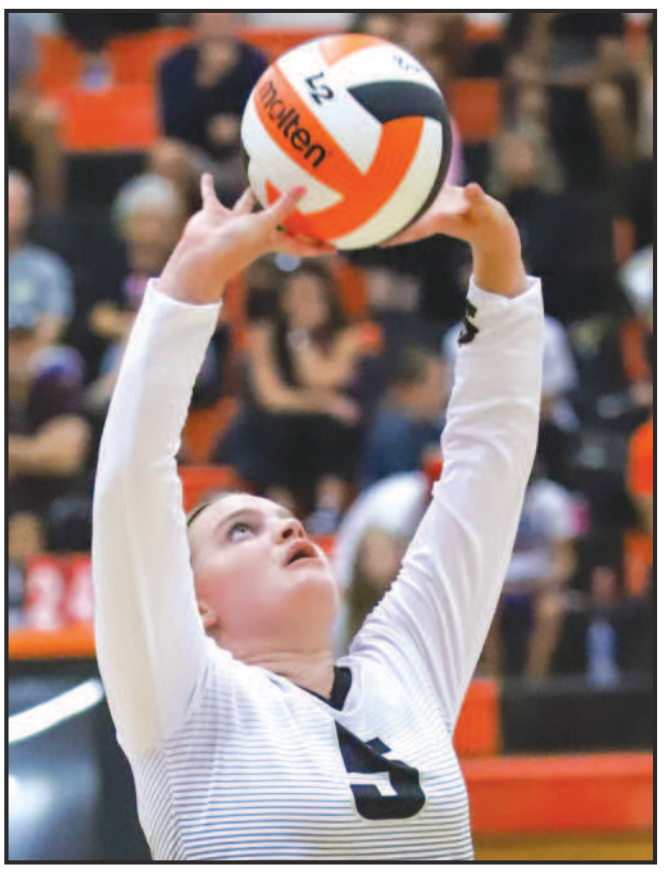
"Caitlyn has learned under Maddie who learned under Elliot," Archer City head coach Krissa England said. "She's just the next person in line of setters. She's got to learn from those kids and see how they came to work every day. She's assumed that responsibility without even asking. She steps up and naturally leads. She hates to lose. She is very competitive. She has a lot of fire. She may not show it on the court but she definitely has a lot of fire. She wants what is best for the team and is not afraid of stepping up and telling the team what we need to do to succeed. The girls listen to her. There is no give-back or push when she says something. They take it and run with it."

Hilbers began playing volleyball in seventh grade at Archer City and immediately fell in love with the game.

"I started playing volleyball in seventh grade at Archer. I loved it. I always watched the older girls doing it. I fell in love with it so I started playing it. It's just really fun. I like picking the team up, especially when we're down. We've always got a shot. I can help pick people up and try to build confidence especially when they are getting nailed with balls. I try to help them shake it off."

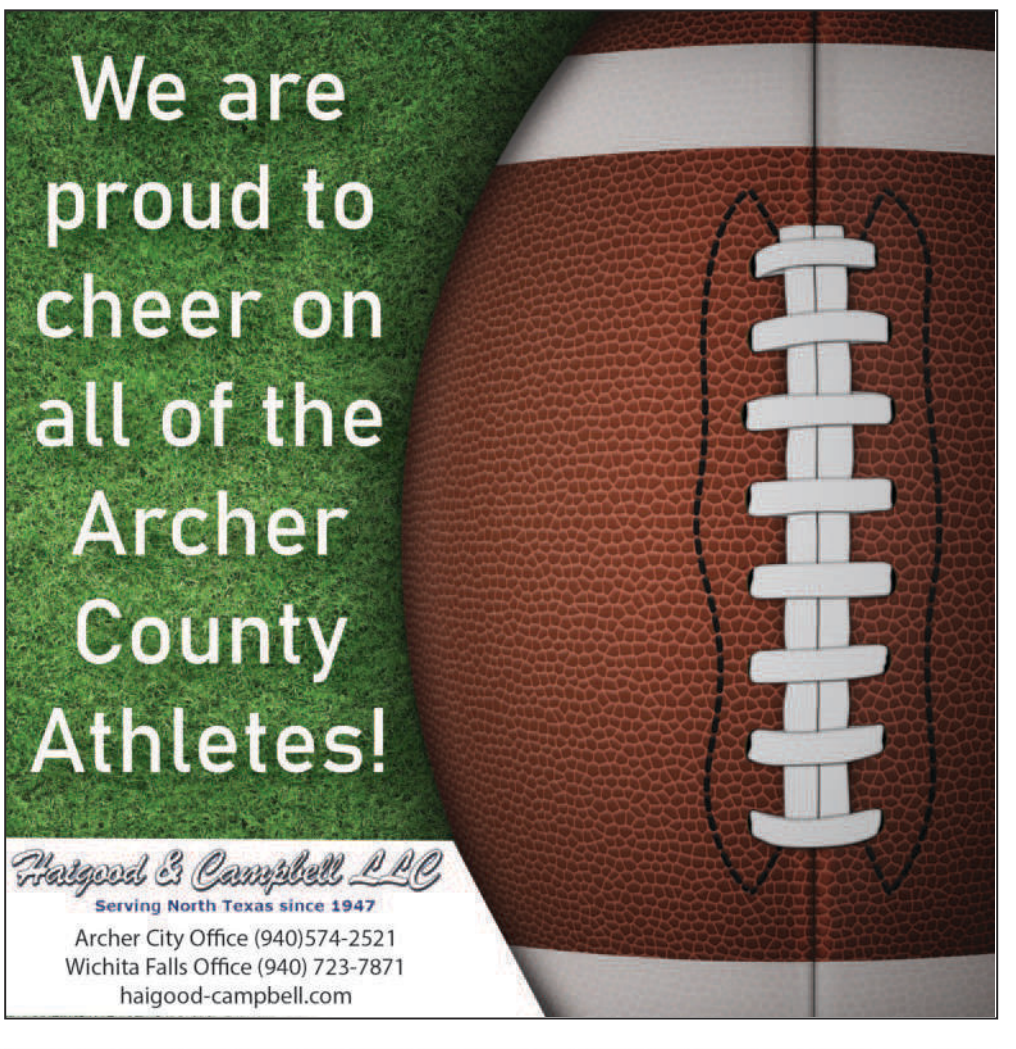
Looking up to icons like

See Hilbers, Page 7B



Archer City senior Caitlyn Hilbers hopes to continue the legacy of great Lady Cat setters in her senior campaign.

File photo





Kole Stovall: professional sprinter



Archer City senior Kole Stovall looks to be the leader on the defensive side of the ball for the Wildcats this year after hauling in nine interceptions last year.

File photo

By Will Edwards

Archer City senior Kole Stovall is a playmaker.

A year after ranking near the top of the state with nine interceptions, the Wildcats' senior is poised for bigger and brighter opportunities in his final campaign with the Black and Gold.

Archer City head coach Bradan Ritchey raved on the senior leader.

"Kole means so much to our program. He plays football the way he lives his life. You have vocal leaders on a team and you have guys that lead by example that you can always point to and say man if we all just do what he does, we'll be in good shape. He is one of those. He definitely leads by example. He is always here. He is one of those that always puts in the work without being asked. It does not matter who his coach is or who is teammates are, he is going to be there and working. That is the thing that he brings to us and why he means the most to us is his leadership. It would mean a ton to us even if he was not very athletic. He has got to be one of the top athletes at the Class 2A level just as far as running and jumping ability. I have coached at the 6A level and he would stand out there as well. He is just an unbelievable athlete.

From a young age, Stovall knew he was a special athlete and once he found the sport of football, he knew he was locked in for life.

"When I was two, the only thing I enjoyed doing was running and I always had a dream of being a track star. That was always the number one dream. I have all these papers from when I was younger that say when I grow up I want to be a professional sprinter. From a real young age, I've always wanted to do something with running. Growing up, football has always been big in this town. I watched that and grew to love this sport as a fan. I always wanted to go out and do what the big kids did. Derek Pollock was the big one I great up watching as a little kid. By third grade it was pretty obvious that I could do something with football."

The senior safety/wide receiver has certainly made a name for himself after a breakout 2022 campaign that saw him score seven touchdowns on 15 touches for 352 yards as well as nine interceptions on defense.

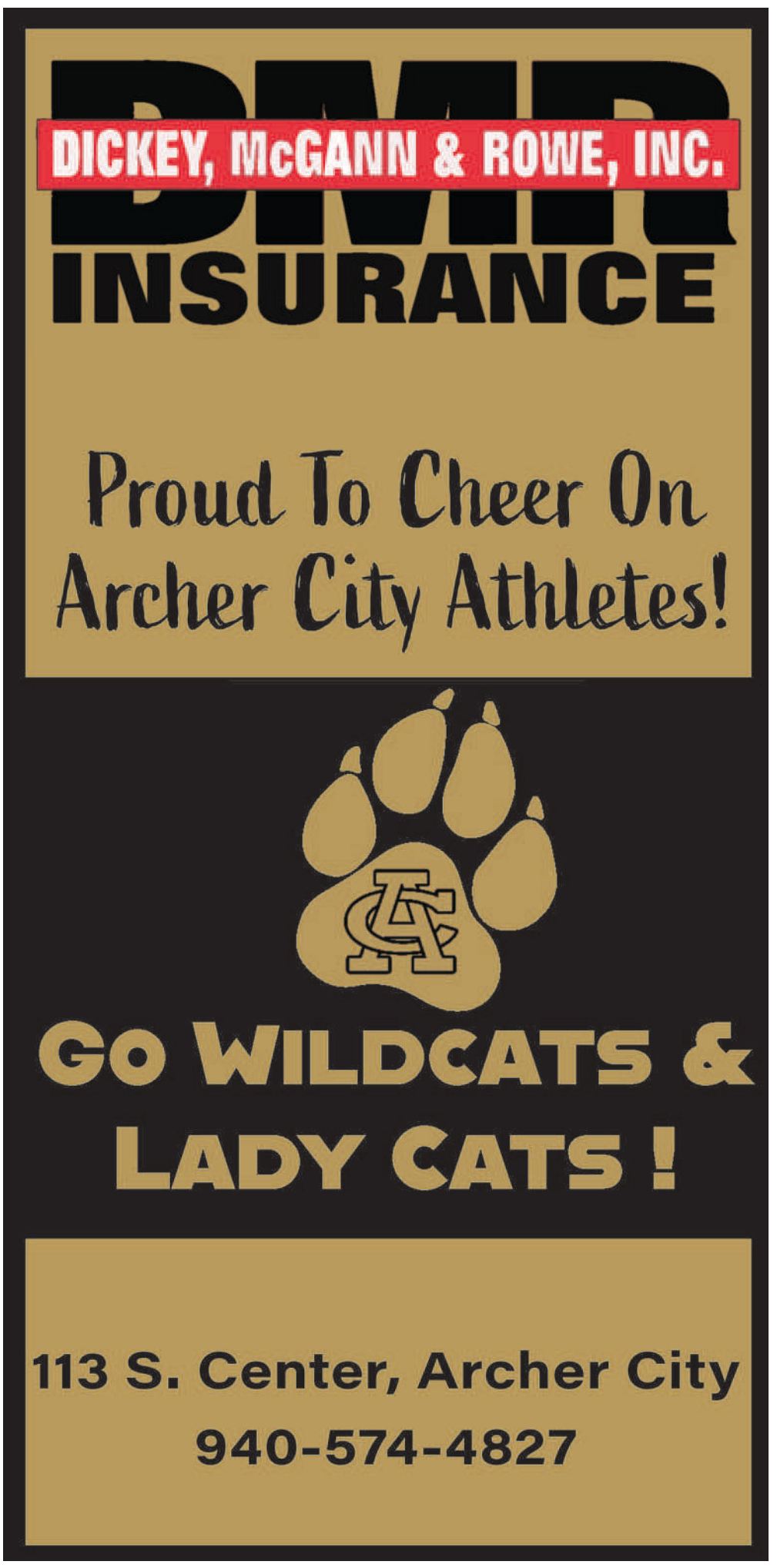
He attributes his ball hawking skills in the Wildcats back end on defense to his instinct. A huge fan of former Baltimore Ravens safety Ed Reed, Stovall tried to mimic the NFL Hall of Famer with his play.

"I have always loved going for interceptions even since recess football. That's always been one of my favorite things to do. My favorite player growing up was Ed Reed so growing up I would always watch him play and study his game. That was something I was easily able to implement. I feel like this has always been something that I've wanted to do. I finally got the chance to play safety last year. I didn't want to go out there and be bad. I wanted to be the best I could at my favorite position."

Stovall credits his mother, grandmother and step-father for molding him into the person and the player that he is today.

"My momma has been my biggest influence growing up, my mom and my grandma. They've always been the biggest people in my life as far as providing for me and caring for me. When I was four, my step-dad came in and he and my grandma have always been my biggest supporters sports-wise. He's been an amazing father figure to me. I would say those guys were my biggest influence for me. I've always looked up to my coaches as well. Coach Mark Green is one of those guys. He's one of the people that helped me fall in love with the game.

See Kole, Page 8B



Football

Continued from page 2B

of the backfield. We will use him in the passing game a lot. Most weeks, he will be the fastest kid out there for both teams. He is very very fast. He catches the ball really well. He is learning every single day where things hit. The biggest thing he has to learn is where the run schemes fit. He is so fast that sometimes he gets there before the play has a chance to develop. He is going to be a huge part of what we do. The other guy back there is Kline Mayo who is just a bulldozer. He is a throwback. He is a linebacker and short yardage running back. He is pretty good. Sometimes when he gets the ball into the second level and you can see that he is pretty quick. He is a guy that nine times out of 10 when there is a third and one, he is going to get it."

The Wildcats offensive line of Shooter Canada, Zach Allen, Zayne Foster, Brody Reneau, Cooper Jones, Brendon Mason and Alejandro Rodriguez is expected to be much improved after being thrown to the fire last year.

"We will still be young up front. Our left tackle, Shooter, I'd put him up against a lot of dudes right now. He is really good. At left guard we are rotating a few guys in there with Zach in the starting spot but another one that is really good is Zayne. He will play a lot in that spot but he will also rotate in on defense so we are trying to keep that spot as fresh as possible. Brody is the center and he has made big strides from last year. He was undersized a season ago and wasn't as strong as he needed to be. He is still a little undersized but man has he gotten stronger. Right guard we have a couple seniors rotating with Cooper as the starter and Brendon has been rotating back and forth. Our right tackle Alejandro looks like a 6A offensive lineman. He goes about 6'5 and 275 pounds. He is a big sucker. He has come a million miles. He is originally from Cuba and did not really understand English when he first got here. He is getting where he can understand what to do and understand what I am talking about because he does not completely understand the sport yet. If I am able to make it as simple as you down-block on him, he is really good. He is bigger and stronger than most dudes out there. He is a work in progress but he has the potential to be the best lineman in the district if he can figure it out."

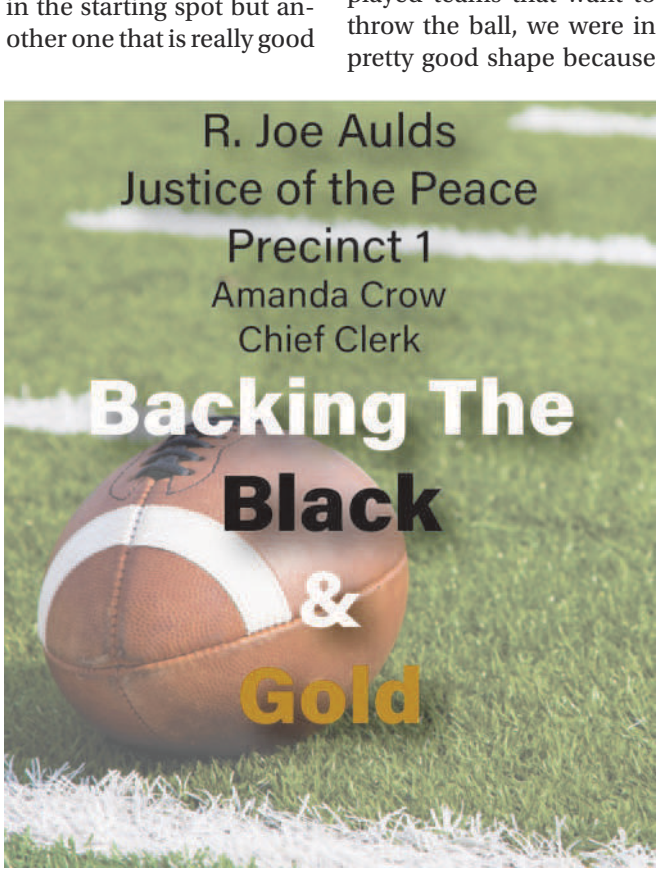
On defense, Ritchey believes the Wildcats will hold up better against the run after being geared to stop the spread a season ago.

"Last year when we played teams that want to throw the ball, we were in pretty good shape because we had one of the best safeties in the state and one of the best pass rushers in the state. When people wanted to line up 11-on-11 and smash us we had some problems. That has been more of our focus in the off-season is how to hold up against that type of offense because it is more of what we see. As a committee, we have five or six guys on the defensive line in Alejandro, Jonathan, Brendon are all guys that will rotate in. We are a lot more suited this year to face those type offenses than we were last year. We were able to move Zayne off the d-line to linebacker and we have got Kline back in the middle. Esteban Monroy is our third linebacker. They all have bigger, stronger bodies than what we had last year. We are much more suited to play the type of offenses we see week in and week out for sure."

In the back end of the Wildcats' defense, Stovall steals the show after ranking among the state's best with nine interceptions a season ago. Joining him in the defensive backfield will be Hagen Deerinwater, Noah Cornell, Dieguez and Cagle.

"Right now our two corners are Isaac and Hagen Deerinwater and Haegen has been playing football for about two weeks. He is mainly a basketball kid. He has really taken to the corner spot. His second play of varsity action ever, he had a pick six in our scrimmage against Alvord. He is picking it up quick. He has been a big bright spot. Layken Cagle and Noah Cornell are playing our strong safety spot. Kole is back at free safety doing what Kole does. A big bright spot thus far has been the physicality of Layken. He is a pretty looking sucker as far as receiver goes but we had questions on whether he could come down and be physical on the defensive side. He has answered those questions and has been a pleasant surprise."

While the off-season was a gauntlet for Archer City, the Wildcats appear poised to shake it off and pick up right where they left off under Ritchey.





Trojans built for another deep run



The Windthorst Trojans return much of its skill talent from a season ago and appears poised for another deep postseason run.
Courtesy photo/Jamie Anderle

By Will Edwards

The Windthorst Trojans simply just reload.

After last year's 8-5 run to the regional semifinals, the Trojans have geared up with a highly touted freshman class to pair with a bevy of experienced returners.

Despite a challenging non-district slate that includes Class 3A Henrietta, Muenster and fifth-ranked Bremond, Trojans head coach Chris Tackett has one thing on his mind through the early portion of the season – get better.

"Early on, we need to try to get better every week and then contend for a district title and get in the playoffs," Tackett explained.

After a three-way tie atop the district standings a season ago, Tackett believes 2023 to once again be a wide open district race.

"I want to say there's some teams at the top that are going to be fighting for it. You never know right now without having seen anybody play but there's teams that have gotten better. It's all a crap shoot until you get a chance to see a little bit of them."

Replacing departed quarterback Logan Cope is expected to be freshman Brock "Big Juicy" Belcher and the Trojans will likely go as he goes. The son of Windthorst offensive coordinator Scott Belcher and younger brother of state champion quarterback Cy Belcher, Brock has high expectations going into his first high school football campaign.

"Brock is going to be the starter. We'll go with him and see what happens. He's got to get some experience."

Filling in at the running back position are juniors Tyler Camacho, Cash Armstrong and Carson Anderle. Camacho headlines the group after running for 588 yards and five touchdowns a season ago.

"Tyler Camacho at running back and Cash Armstrong is getting to run some fullback. Carson Anderle is also running the ball as well. We've got two or three we can roll out there."

The Trojans strongest position on offense is the receiving corps, headlined by seniors Brayden Berend and Kolby Teakell. Last year the duo combined for 81 catches for 1,271 yards and 15 touchdowns. They'll be leaned on as a security blanket for Belcher at quarterback.

"They're two big targets. Both catch the ball really well and run good routes. We'll lean on them. They're really good solid players and we're glad we've got them and nobody else does."

Up front, Windthorst brings back four starters on the offensive line that averaged 5.4 yards per carry a season ago.

"Offensive line is going to take some time for them to gel together but I think we'll be alright. We've got four guys coming back up front and the rest of them have some experience there as well."

On the defensive front, senior Drew Anderle leads the group as a high-motor player that is expected to do big things for the defense this fall.

"The defensive front looks good. We've got a little bit of depth to run through there. That's going to be the key early on is rotating guys in that are going to be fresh. Drew is a beast. His motor never quits. He enjoys playing the game and he likes getting after people. Being a converted running back, he's got some footwork skills that he can use. He's a tough out."

At the middle linebacker position Conner Schreiber and Karson Vieth are expected to hold down the middle of the unit.

In the back end, Berend and Teakell are a pair of lockdown corners that pulled down three and five interceptions a season ago, respectively.

"Kolby and Brayden are back there with Kasen and Cash at safety. Daxton Anderson is helping out there and Brock is a secondary guy. It's probably our thinnest spot but those six are pretty good. We just don't have a whole lot of depth."

With expectations high, Tackett knows the challenges of the schedule he put together.

"The schedule is tough. It's supposed to help get us ready for playoffs. That's our goal is to get into the playoffs. I'd like to say we're going to go to state every year but year-in and year-out it's not realistic. If you get in the playoffs, you've got a chance. We're taking it one game at a time and trying to set ourselves up for a good district run then get in the playoffs and see what happens."

Whatever happens, these Trojans should be fun to watch once again.

Trojan football schedule

Date	Opponent	Place	Time
Aug. 25	Henrietta	Home	8 p.m.
Sept. 8	Muenster	Away	7 p.m.
Sept. 15	Wheeler	Away	7 p.m.
Sept. 22	Haskell	Home*	7 p.m.
Sept. 29	Bremond	Aledo	7 p.m.
Oct. 6	Petrolia	Away*	7 p.m.
Oct. 13	Munday	Home**	7 p.m.
Oct. 20	Archer City	Away*	7 p.m.
Oct. 27	Seymour	Home*	7 p.m.
Nov. 3	Electra	Away*	7 p.m.

* - District
**- Homecoming

Trojan Twin Towers

By Will Edwards

Windthorst's pair of 6'4 bookend receivers are a matchup nightmare for defenses on the perimeter. Senior cousins Brayden Berend and Kolby Teakell are two of the area's top targets and both are primed for a strong senior campaign.

The duo enjoys playing with one another as both admit it reminds them of playing in the back yard when they were youngsters.

"It's just like we used to do when we were little and playing in the back yard," Teakell said. "We're used to it. It's awesome to do."

"It's more fun. Playing with Kolby brings back a lot of happy memories," Berend added. "I think it's more fun playing with a family member."

While both are superstars in their own way, the pair understands there is still only one football to go around.

"There's never an argument over who gets the ball," Teakell explained. "We're both pretty good and I'm fine with him getting a lot of touches. It doesn't really bother me much. As long as we win, that's what matters."

"Whatever helps us win the game is all that matters," Berend said. "I can get one touch and he can get 10, it doesn't matter. As long as we're winning and it's helping the team, that's all that matters."

The two human highlight reels are known for making spectacular one-handed catches along the sidelines but this year, they'll be leaned on heavily to help develop freshman quarterback Brock Belcher.

"I'm trying to build team chemistry," Teakell said. "Usually if you have good team chemistry it means you are a pretty good football team. That's what I'm mainly doing. I'm just trying to catch everything that comes my way to try to help him out. We're both doing the little things to make him look good."

"I think having a lot of experience and knowledge of the sport, especially with what we do, you can translate that to all of the new kids coming up. It's a big thing as far as being a leader. That's the No. 1 thing that we need to do. Having the knowledge we have over the last three years is the best tool for teaching youngsters about how you play the game. 'll try to talk to him and bond with him. You don't want him to feel out of place and be scared. Creating a bond with him to make him as comfortable as possible. He's actually pretty comfortable with us now after we bonded with him all summer."

When asked, the pair each had a distinct catch they remember as their favorite going into their final year.

"My favorite catch was probably the tipped catch against Petrolia, that one-hander," Berend admitted. "I don't even know what happened. We actually ran the same play twice in a row. The first time was a disaster but the second time the ball got tipped and I was able to grab it."

"Two years ago when I was a sophomore, we played Archer City at Iowa Park," Teakell explained. "I made a one-handed catch with my less dominant hand."

Both players hope to continue their playing career at the next level should the opportunity ar,ise.

"If I get an offer to continue my playing career, I'll probably explore that," Teakell said. "If not, I'll probably just go on with my educational career and go to a small college and do whatever there. I've been thinking about becoming a high school coach. If I don't do that, I'll go to become an electrical engineer or something like that."

"I'm almost the same way," Berend followed. "Getting a sports scholarship is the main goal obviously. It's been a dream ever since I was little. It would be great if I get one. If I don't get that, I'll be looking into my backup option of engineering but I'm really looking into the medical field. The top thing on my mind right now is becoming a physical therapist. That's probably my No. 1 career I want to do as of right now."

The goal for the duo is simple – make the playoffs. If both can perform as expected, there's no reason to believe that goal to be unobtainable.



Kolby Teakell will be a big target for QB Brock Belcher.
File photo





Windthorst senior Brayden Berend and cousin Kolby Teakell will lead the Trojans' offense after combining for 81 catches, 1,271 yard and 15 touchdowns last year.
File photo

Trojanettes built for the long haul



The Trojanettes are looking to go back-to-back with another state championship in the 2023.

File photo

By Will Edwards

What will the Windthorst Trojanettes do for an encore?

After last year's surprising run to the state championship, expectations are high in Trojanland for the 2023 campaign.

"One thing that we've talked about is to never be satisfied even though it's very early right now and we have some wins under our belt, we want to make sure that we are progressing throughout the season," Windthorst head coach Allison Bussey said. "We don't want to be satisfied with just a few wins early on. I stress on our serve-receive all the time. We have to have passes in order for our hitters to be successful. We've got a lot of great hitters back from last year and in order for them to be successful, we have to pass the ball well."

"We have a lot of hitters that have a lot of potential. Obviously Rylee and Annikah, our outsides, are back from last year. They were big for our team last year. At any given time, any of our other hitters can put the ball away. We've got Saige and Abby in the middle and then Charlee, Megg and Isabel all playing a little bit on the right-side also. At any point in time, I've seen all of them be very successful in practice and I've seen a lot of success in games as well. That's what is going to make us a little more versatile this year is we do have a lot of hitters that can all put the ball away."

Leading the charge for the high-flying Trojanette attack is senior Rylee Wolf. Wolf is coming off a breakout junior campaign where she earned Player of the Year honors as well as a state tournament MVP. Wolf put down a county-high 506 kills to earn MVP of the ACN Super 10 team.

"I wish I could have her every year," Bussey said. "She's somebody that is easy to coach. She can handle a coach yelling at her; she can handle the encouragement. She's just one of those special players that is going to go hard no matter what the circumstances are."

The Robin to her Batman is senior Annikah Frank. Frank was a breakout sensation in the postseason last year finishing with 312 kills, 68 aces, 81 blocks and 390 digs. She and Wolf are expected to carry the bulk of the offensive load this year.

"Annikah is a little different this year in that she's come in with more confidence," Bussey explained. "She wants the ball to come to her; she wants them to serve it to her and to get as many sets as possible. She wants to be a leader for this team. She's done well at that role so far this year."

In the middle, seniors Saige Anderson and Abby Schroeder will be leaned on to throw up a great block as well as put the ball away.

"We stress a lot on blocking as well. In order for us to be successful defensively, we've got to be able to throw up a big block. Both Saige and Abby are very big and athletic in the middle which allows them to get a lot of touches for us and help our defense out in that aspect."

"Abby is our little quiet secret weapon. She's not necessarily a hitter that is going to go up and hit the 10-foot line but she is good at finding the open areas. She's very reliable. I know I can count on her to get as many touches on the middle block as possible. I can count on her to do her job for this team."

"Saige is just a natural athlete. She can make things happen for us that most people that play volleyball aren't able to do. She can jump out of the gym. She's quick. She can get to a lot of stuff. She can put a ball away at any time as well. She's just very quick and very athletic on the front row."

Sophomore Charlee Wolf and junior Isabel Bussey are expected to rotate at the right-side position, opposite Wolf and Frank.

"Charley is someone that is going to do anything she can for her team. She is one that will stay after everyday in order to perfect any skill with her game. She is someone that will be a big hitter for us this year."

"Isabel for us is a very vital part of this team in that she's playing all the way around. On the defensive end and with serve-receive, she has big shoes to fill. She has worked her tail off all off-season to get where she needs to be. I have no doubt she'll be a big part of this team."

One thing the Trojanettes will not have to worry about is breaking in a new setter as junior Megg Lindley and sophomore Violet West both return after orchestrating the offense to near perfection a season ago.

"Having our setters back is going to be big for us this year. Both of them last year were very young and Violet especially was inexperienced at the varsity level. Having last year under their belt and having that confidence back from the success of last season is definitely going to help. I've seen both of them become more vocal and more of a leader on the court this year. As a setter in that position, we've got to have that to be successful."

Along the back row, sophomore Karissa Fillingim is expected to take over the libero role for 2023.

"Karissa has some big shoes to fill for us on the back row. She's a little spitfire and she is very coachable. I know that if I ask her to do something, she's going to go as hard as she can in order to get it done."

Rounding out the Trojanettes rotation is senior Bri Hoff.

"Bri is a very big part of this team. She's one of those that might not get a lot of playing time during the game but she is very important to this team. If we don't have a good 12 to come and scrimmage during practice, we're not going to get better. Other players on this team are just as important as the six on the court. They have to push those starting six to get better. It's vital for our JV team to get those reps as well and come practice with us to learn the speed of the game because we will have a lot of shoes to fill next year."

While expectations are certainly high around Windthorst this fall, Bussey does not want to get caught looking too far ahead. She wants to ensure the team takes everything one game at a time and to celebrate every win.

"Obviously I don't want to look too far down the road. We know what our goals are throughout the year. We're just going to take it one game at a time, one tournament at a time and then hopefully into district. We'll talk about playoffs when we get to that point."

With a roster loaded with talent, veteran leadership and unmatched coaching acumen, the Windthorst Trojanettes are sure to SOAR in 2023.

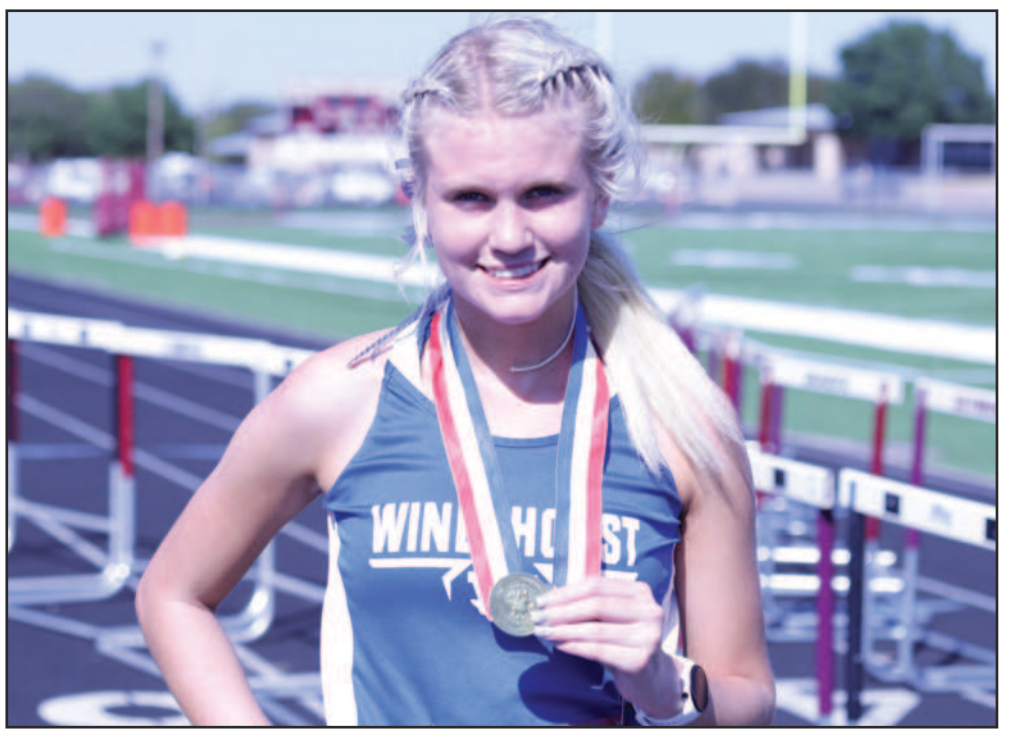
Trojanette VB schedule

Date	Opponent	Place	Time
Aug. 8	Paradise	Home	W 3-0
Aug. 11-12	Burk Tourney	Away	6W- 0L
Aug.15	Burkburnett/ Vernon	Home	2W - 0L
Aug. 19-20	Lu Allen Tourney	Away	7W - 1L
Aug. 22	Nocona	Away	4:30 p.m.
Aug. 24, 26	Nocona Tourney	Away	TBA
Aug. 29	Henrietta	Away	5 p.m.
Sept. 6	Iowa Park	Away	5 p.m.
Sept. 12	Christ Academy	Away	5 p.m.
Sept. 15	Graham	Home	5 p.m.
Sept. 19	Old High/ Harrold	Home	5 p.m.
Sept. 23	Olney	Away	10 a.m.
Sept. 25	Quanah	Home	5 p.m.
Sept. 30	Petrolia	Away	10 a.m.
Oct. 3	Archer City	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 10	Olney	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 14	Quanah	Away	10 a.m.
Oct. 18	Petrolia	Home	5 p.m.
Oct. 20	Archer City	Away	4: p.m.









Windthorst Senior Cameron Belcher aims to return to the State Cross Country Championships after making an appearance as a freshman, sophomore and junior.

File photo

Belcher hopes fourth state appearance

By Nathan Lawson

Trojanette Senior Cameron Belcher will be looking for her fourth straight appearance at the State Cross Country Meet in Round Rock this year and this time she's aiming to bring a medal back to Windthorst.

As a freshman, Belcher took 41st at Old Setters Park with a time of 13:35.30 before posting a 57th-place finish her sophomore year with a time of 13:10.5 and a fourth-place finish last year with a time of 12:47.6. The reigning back-to-back Region II-2A individual champion won last year's regional event with a time of 12:06.86.

"I expect Cameron to make her fourth trip to state and if she can stay healthy, she has a real good shot of winning it," Cross Country Coach Scotty Lofland said. "Finishing fourth is motivation enough for her. It's a constant reminder that she was one place away from a medal. But ultimately, she wants the gold."

Belcher will be joined on the Trojanette side by two new runners, Sophomore Maddison Farris and Freshman Charlie Bone.

For the Trojans, Junior Nolan Schrieber returns as he looks to improve on a 39th place finish in regionals last year with a time of 19:14.33. Schrieber finished second in the district 9-2A race with a time of 18:57.09. Schreiber will be joined by cross country newcomers Sophomore Kolton Rodgers and Freshman Jackson Zicarelli.

"Nolan has a chance to advance to state if he continues to improve," Lofland said. "I have never seen Kolton run competitively, but he looks really good in practice, and he has a good chance to advance to state."

The runners will get their first taste of competitive action at Burkburnett on Thursday, Aug. 31, they will then travel to Lubbock on Sept. 6, followed by Seymour on Sept. 20, Rider on Sept. 28, Muenster on Oct. 4 and the District meet will be on Oct. 11.

"My goal is always for the kids to show up, work hard, do their best and do the right thing," Lofland said. "If they do that, regardless of where they finish, they will have been successful."

Hilbers

Continued from page 3B

Lauren Castles, Hilbers knew she one day wanted to be on the varsity like her favorites growing up.

"I looked up to Maddie Lopez, Mallory Maxwell, Chandler Clark, Jill Liles and Lauren Castles. They were all so good. I watched Lauren a lot when I was younger. She's amazing. I always wanted to be like them and now I'm on varsity setting like Maddie."

While she never had the opportunity to play with the likes of Castles, she did get some time with Lopez, Maxwell, Clark and Liles as a JV player during practice. Last year, she rotated with Liles in England's 6-2 system and had the opportunity to learn under her mentor.

"Jill taught me to pick the team up and be a leader to lead the team. I try to boost everyone's confidence when we're losing. I try to pick us up and get momentum back on our side."

Seemingly the glue that holds the team together, Hilbers says there is so much familiarity with one another after playing together for so long.

"I feel most of us are already together because we played in seventh and eighth grade together. So we already had that bond. As we play together more and more, we get closer and know how each other plays. We feed off of that to try to do it better."

This season, Hilbers goals are simple. She knows the Lady Cats are capable of achieving great things before her time in the Black and Gold comes to an end.

"My goals are to go to playoffs and get better as a whole and talk more. We have a shot. We just need to put it all together and get some balls down. We can do it if we believe ourselves."

Upon graduation, Hilbers is still undecided with what she wants to do with her life.

"I'll probably go to MSU. I also looked at Tarleton so it's a possibility. I have no idea what I want to do so wherever I go, I'll just get my basics and go from there until I decide."

With Hilbers fire and ne'er say die attitude, she can lead the Lady Cats as far as they will let her.

Rylee Wolf: everyday MVP

By Will Edwards

Rylee Wolf comes from a long line of Trojanette greats. The reigning Class 2A Player of the Year has her eyes set on one thing in her final campaign for Windthorst – another state title.

The senior and the Trojanettes have looked the part for the first few weeks of the season, racing out to a 16-1 record while winning the Cool in Boomtown tournament in Burkburnett and finishing as runners-up in the Lu Allen Memorial tournament. Wolf won MVP honors at the Graham tournament after a 91 kill performance.

While the senior did not realize how special she was until her sophomore year, her head coach knew she had something special from Wolf's first practice as a seventh grader.

"I remember Rylee in seventh grade," Trojanettes leader Allison Bussey said. "Obviously I knew who she was; I've known her my whole life. In seventh grade volleyball, I can remember her in practice and in games that when she would get set, she would put the ball away. I knew at that point from our very first practice that she was a very special player for us and I am glad I had the opportunity to coach her."

"Sophomore year the game started to click for me," Wolf explained. "I was understanding a lot more than I had when I was younger. (…) During games, it got to a point where every time we got the ball, I wanted it. I felt like I was more into it. I would be sitting at home and wanting to come up to the gym because that is what I wanted to be doing. This started my sophomore year."

Despite rounding into form as a sophomore, Windthorst and Wolf were still plagued by a tough district and even tougher region in the postseason. A second round exit to then top-ranked Crawford ended the Trojanettes' run early.

Turning the calendar over to 2022 proved to be a boon for the Trojanettes. After losing just one senior from the year prior and moving back to Region I, Windthorst was poised for a great run. Just how great that run would be, no one expected.

"I'm going to be completely honest, I didn't really expect the year we had last year," Wolf said. "I knew we were capable of it. I just knew it would be really really tough. We did it."

The rest was history.

Now Wolf and the Trojanettes are in a new position in 2023. They have moved from hunters to the hunted and have a target on their back every match as the defending state champions.

"Like Coach Bussey says almost every single day, last year we could sneak up on people because no one really knew who we were but this year everyone knows and everyone is trying to beat us," Wolf added.

Following in the lines of great Trojanette leaders like Tara Tackett and Camryn Latham, Wolf chooses to lead by example and let her play on the court do all the talking she needs.

"They brought a lot of energy and it helped me," Wolf said of her now graduated teammates. "They told us a lot of stuff in pep talks and I took it to heart. I just try to pick everyone up like my leaders before me did. I try to give them good pep talks in the huddle and tell them what I know to help them."

"Rylee is more of a lead-by-example type of leader for our team," Bussey added. "She's vocal but she's not one of those that is going to get in somebody's face to get them going during a game. She leads more by example. This summer, she was at every single summer workout. She's always staying after practice to try and work. If we are not doing something correct during a drill in practice, she's going to tell our team what to do and to get refocused. People look up to her for that on this team because she does not have to get in someone's face. She leads by example and gets the job done."

After her prep career ends, Wolf has hopes to continue her playing ca-

See Wolf, Page 8B



Windthorst senior Rylee Wolf hopes to lead the Trojanettes to another state as the reigning Class 2A Player of the Year.

File photo

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Archer City cross country runners get an early morning start sporting headlamps provided by the booster club.

Courtesy photo

Archer City Cross Country building for future success

By Jerry Phillips

Morning cross country workouts before the sun comes up are not for everyone. First year Archer City cross country coach, Kent Kyle, plans to rely on senior Kassidy Marin, a regional qualifier last year, as the headliner in the program for the girls.

On the boys side, Senior Chase Curry finished in the top 20 at last year's district meet. Junior Kellar Crow, junior Adrian Rubio, and sophomore Jesse Cantu round out the varsity boys.

"We have a group of young men in varsity that are very athletic and give us a good chance to go far," Kyle said.

Kyle, juggling a schedule of first year teaching and coaching volleyball, while going to college, is still in the process of recruiting runners. It's early in the season and Kyle is starting on the ground floor to lay a foundation for future success.

Marin should be in the hunt come regional and Kyle plans to develop some new runners to complement the existing runners by the district meet.

He said, "I believe we have a chance to be very good this year."

The booster club provided headlamps for safety in the early morning and before opening the Archer City Country Club is offering the course for training to help runners improve. Kyle explained, "Our junior high students have really high numbers and I see a lot of promise for both the girls and boys. I can't wait to watch them grow as runners and run to the best of their abilities."

Kole

Continued from page 4B

Coaches can really impact if a kid wants to play or not, no matter how good they are and he always did a good job of making us want to play the game.

Goals for the 2023 campaign are simple for the senior – win a district championship for the third straight year.

"I would like to get the district championship. I feel that is the No. 1 goal right now. We definitely have the team to do it. It would be nice to have all three years of varsity football winning a district championship. I would like to see a good playoff run after that. Those are the main goals we have got right now."

Individually, Stovall talked about how he would like to see himself improve on both sides of the ball.

"I would like to bring my tackles number up. That was the biggest hit on me when I was going through recruiting. I had the picks but I had less than 20 tackles. That is not exactly what you are looking for on defense. I would definitely love to see my tackle numbers go up this year. I'm going to focus on getting my turnovers up, have more forced fumbles and fumble recoveries. I would love to get some return work in. I love returning the ball so hopefully get some kickoff return touchdowns and some put return touchdowns to put on film. As far as offense goes, I just want more. I've got the production per catch so I want to get some more catches to just show off what I've got."

After a rigorous summer camp recruiting circuit, Stovall believes he has what it takes to continue his playing career at the next level.

"I went all over Texas in the off-season from Abilene to Houston to Waco to Dallas to Amarillo. I felt like it went well. I got a lot of looks and a lot of exposure and got my name out there at a couple colleges. I would love to play college football. That's my number one goal is to play in college and any program that would have me, I would be happy to go."

Once it comes time to hang up the cleats for the final time, Stovall hopes to work in the computer science field.

"Once football is done, I would like to become a computer scientist. That's what my mom does. She taught here for 10 years and is now the computer science professor at MSU. A lot of my friends are in computer science. It is good money and it is something that I enjoy doing. I feel like that is what I would do after football."

For now, however, the Wildcats will lean on Stovall to lead them as far as the team can go.

Wolf

Continued from page 7B

reer at the next level.

"I've been talking to a few coaches and hopefully I'm about to start going on some visits so that is what I plan to do. Going D1 is definitely a dream."

"She did not know if she even wanted to play at the next level until recently really," Bussey stated. "She got a few looks last year after winning state so that opened some doors for her and got her thinking that this is something she could do and continue to play. Now everything is up in the air for her career of choice."

While motivation is never an issue with Wolf, she has one simple goal every time she takes the court – make her coach happy.

"I honestly just want to see Coach Bussey happy," Wolf said. "Last year after we won, seeing her excitement after the regional tournament made us want to go even harder and win it all for her."

When the time comes to take off the Blue and White for the final time, Wolf hopes to be remembered as someone who gave it their all every time she stepped on the court and would not leave anything behind.

That time has not yet come, however, and there is still work to do to leave a lasting legacy.

For the time being, the Trojanettes will be content to Feed the Beast and let Wolf lead them as far as she can.

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FALL SPORTS PREVIEW 2023

Issue 34 - August 31, 2023

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- Holliday Cross Country Preview
- Holliday Athlete Profiles

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Lady Eagles looking for more in 2023

By Will Edwards

The 2023 Holliday Lady Eagles might look a little different this season.

After losing 12 seniors to graduation from last year's team that made the program's third-straight trip to the regional finals and the introduction of new coach Kimberly Hargrove last spring, Holliday might look a little different than what fans are accustomed to seeing.

Early season success at the Bev Ball Classic in Abilene and the Lu Allen Memorial Tournament in Graham has proved the Lady Eagles are more than capable of another deep postseason run.

"I have seen a strong work ethic," Hargrove said on her early impressions of her team. "I have seen dedication. I have seen flexibility in their playing positions and the sheer will to win. Generally, I've been impressed with everyone and I think it goes back to the work ethic. Having to step into roles that 11 seniors, give or take, had last year is a hard thing to fill. They have accepted that challenge and accepted that pressure. They have been willing to work to fill those shoes."

Returners back from last year's squad include seniors Kelby Jones and Kenna Wood along with juniors Bella Timms and Braylie Womack. Those four are expected to be leaned on for leadership as well as performance on the court.

"The four returners have been great teammates on coaching up their teammates and leading by example," Hargrove said. "They have set the standard for the seven others that have never played a varsity match until this year. They know what that standard is. They went through it

See More, Page 3C



The Holliday Lady Eagles are mainintaing their high expectations for the 2023 season despite just four returning players and a new head coach leading the program.
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Eagles flying high under Atwood



The Holliday Eagles aim for its seventh-straight 10 win season but will be doing so with a new look offense and defense under new head coach Kyle Atwood.

File photo

By Will Edwards

The Holliday Eagles are soaring in a new direction under head coach Kyle Atwood.

Gone are the days of the Wing-T and the power run game. The defense, the backbone of the Eagles, transitions from an attacking approach to more of a read and react.

Holliday will certainly look different in 2023 but with talent across the board, don't expect much of a dip in productivity.

"We've progressed throughout the spring and summer," Atwood explained. "We felt really good about it. We didn't look too great in our intersquad. We ran strictly base offense and defense because we didn't want to throw a whole lot out there on film. We wanted to see our kids be fundamentally sound. Then we turn around and go on the road to Cisco and looked really good. Executed really well with our base offense and defense. We turn around against Burkburnett and they fired off the ball. They hit us in the mouth and we had some adversity. We found when that happened, our heads started spinning. We had a lot of things that were off and it was the exact same thing that we had worked the week prior. Our kids battled. We're excited to get on the field for a full test for 48 minutes."

After winning three-straight district championships, the Eagles roll into district play having won 19-straight league contests dating back to the 2019 season. Atwood believes Holliday is up to the task once again.

"It's really hard to tell about our district. Obviously I've watched film from the previous two years of our district opponents on our Hudl account. We don't have any scout film. We just have the games from previous years. It's going to be a different identity so watching what we looked like the last few years is going to be completely different than what I am trying to do. There is a lot of talent in our district and a lot of talent in the Texoma area. (…)

Looking at it district-wise from watching the film, I feel like our kids play for 48 minutes. Any time it's a tight game, our kids find a way to win because of their mentality, work ethic and drive for 48 minutes. I think that is what is going to push us over the top against our district. The kids know how to grind a game out. They have an expectation to win. It's not going to be a walk in the park district. We're going to have to show up on every Friday night to earn a win and I think everybody in our district is going to do the same."

Offensively, Atwood is pleased with where the Eagles are at heading into the first game of the year.

"We feel really good offensively with where we're at. We've got a lot on and that has slowed us down a little bit practice-wise. We wanted to have that so they had somewhat of a grasp of it. It's going to be a huge test for us."

Taking over at quarterback, replacing three-year starter Peyton Marchand, is senior Grant Cox.

"Grant will take the reins at the quarterback position. He's done some great things through spring summer and fall camp. Hunter Jones looks really good as well. We've been really proud of them. Grant just gives us that little extra spark right now and that senior leadership. We'll go with Grant but there will be a lot of times that you'll see Hunter on the field. Grant looks really good. We haven't put the ball in his hands on the ground but that is a big part of what we do when it counts. Hopefully we don't have to use it as much but he's a big bodied kid that is explosive and agile. He's a dang good runner with a very good arm."

At running back, the Eagles have a loaded room with talent and past production that should be able to carry them through most games in Tyrese Polite, Kaison Yow and Collin Hays. As Atwood explained, all three bring a unique style to the rushing attack.

"At the running back position, we've got three kids that will rotate that all have been on varsity. Tyrese Polite who was the offensive MVP of the district last year. Kaison Yow looks phenomenal as well. Collin Hays is a bruiser. If you try to tackle him with an arm tackle, it's not going to work. They all have things that they do well and they are all a little bit different. There will be different times where they will be utilized. They'll be in a rotation to keep themselves fresh but they can all do special and unique things on the field."

When it comes time to throw the ball, Holliday has a bevy of receivers for Cox to turn to.

"We're two deep at every receiver position. We've got Ty Harrison, Landry Huchton and Dallas Pecot at our A position. Landry and Dallas were both varsity players last year and Ty was a big-time performer on the JV for us. Those three guys will rotate at that position. At our C position we've got Jaiden Kim and Parker Jones. They'll see a lot of jet sweeps and plays on the edge. We'll do some things vertically with them as well. If we want to go to our sniffer set, we'll have Parker and Asa Greathouse in those positions. At the other slot position we've got a three way rotation with Isaac Villa who has looked really good for us. He's explosive and quick with a lot of top-end speed. We were questionable if he was going to be able to block on the edge having not played since his freshman year but he's doing a phenomenal job blocking on the edge. He's going to be a force to be reckoned with. We'll rotate him with Steele Skinner as well as Cade Foster. Our wideout to the left is Ashtyn Berry who was a starter last year and Parker Fandler who was a starter last year and we'll spell them with Brady Jones."

The Eagles return several monsters on the offensive line with Caleb Foster and Cooper Turner headlining the group.

"Up front, we're returning Hudson Frye at center. Caleb Foster was the center last year but we're moving him out to the left tackle to protect the blind side. Jimmy Hammill will be our left guard. At the right guard position we've got Cooper Turner who has been a three-year starter on defense and a two-year starter on offense. He'll be that right guard position. At right tackle, we've got a battle with Kreede Neal and Christian Terrell. They're both looking good."

Flipping over to the defensive side of the ball, Atwood has been pleased with the way the group has progressed.

"We've looked really good defensively. I've been impressed. It's not a whole lot different than the things we've done in the past. It's a little less aggressiveness and a little more sound fundamental football. We have looked extremely good."

Holliday has another talented group on the defensive front with Hammill and Turner leading the way.

"At the defensive tackle, Jimmy and Cooper were both starters last year. They're our go-to type guys but we've also got Caleb and Jett Callahan. We've got a number of guys that will rotate in at that tackle position. The strong end position will be Asa but Kreede has come in and looked phenomenal. At our left-side is Vaughn Hammill who was a JV player but got a lot of reps on special teams through the playoffs. He's got a lot of speed and strength. Parker Fandler has looked phenomenal. He's been a corner that's transitioned to the defensive end. He's grown a little bit and has a long wingspan. He's a strong kid that's extremely smart. We'll rotate Denver Cross in as well."

Hays leads the linebacker room after racking up over 100 tackles in each of the last two seasons.

"At the linebacker position, we've got some studs who have returned. Collin has been a two-year starter and has an eye for the football. He comes downhill and will lay the wood when he gets there. We've been really impressed with him. We've moved Parker Jones inside to the Will position. He'll be removed from the box when we play teams that like to throw it a lot so he'll be outside the box where he's been for the last two years. Heston Davis will come up from the JV. He's got a lot of speed and a high football IQ. He'll rotate with them along with Cannon Faulkner. The strong safety/outside linebacker position is Steele. He was a starter last year. He'll get the majority of the reps but we'll rotate him with Tyrese. He got quite a few reps in last year as well. They did a good job the last few years of rotating all these kids so a lot of them already have varsity experience. That's been really good for us."

In the defensive backfield, Holliday turns to Villa, Berry, Pecot, Jones, Yow, Landry Huchton and Cade Foster.

"At the corner position, Isaac has looked great. Brady, Ashtyn and Dallas are all really good cover guys as well as can come up and play the run as well. At our rocket position, we've got Kaison. He can do it all. He's got a lot of speed. He's physical. He's aggressive. He's heading up that safety position. At our free safety, Landry will start for us. He was a starter for them by the end of the year last year. We'll rotate Cade Foster in who moved in from Rider last year. He's looked really good through the summer as well."

Atwood says the team's dedication and commitment is what sets this group apart.

"I've been really impressed with the kids. It's all important to them. At the 6:30 scouting report this morning, not one kid was missing. They were there and attentive. They want to be successful. It's our job as coaches to leave no stone unturned. We've tried to do that so far and put them in position to make plays on Friday nights. When it all comes down to it, it's the kids that play the game on Friday night. These kids have put in the time and effort to be in position to make plays and to make those plays when the time comes. I'm excited to step out there on Friday night because I know those kids have prepared the right way."

Holliday may look slightly different in 2023, but there's no reason to believe the Eagles won't find success on the gridiron once again.

Football

Continued from page 3C

last year. They know the expectations. They have really impressed the younger kids that haven't truly known what that standard is. They understand the standard and the expectations now. They have been very receptive to being coached a little bit and being led by those older players and myself. I applaud my whole team in adjusting to me. That's something that's easier said than done. There could be new plays, new sets, new defenses, new offenses, new serve-receive patterns. Everything is different as opposed as having to the same coach year to year. They have all adjusted well to each other and to me and how I do things."

Newcomers on the varsity include juniors Claire Steinruck, Maggie Maxwell, McKenzie Barnes, Aubrea Strealy and sophomores Addisyn Scott, Bennett Luig and Jordan Peters.

The back row for the Lady Eagles largely consisting of Timms, Jones and Barnes has been impressive through the early portions of the season.

"My back row have impressed me with their raw knowledge, talent and ability of defense and serve-receive," Hargrove added. "Back row is not what you would consider a glorious position. It is willing to hustle, willing to lay out, willing to sacrifice everything to get that ball up and that is something they do really well."

Providing the bulk of the attack for Holliday is Wood who returns after a strong junior campaign. Steinruck has played solid in the middle through a pair of tournaments while Peters, Scott and Luig are all expected to compliment the offense.

"My front row players all work hard everyday to work with the setters and get the ball in a good spot. They work hard throughout the whole practice to make themselves better and make the team better whether that is hitting at us to work on our defense or just working on the actual rotations."

At setter, Womack returns after seeing significant time as the Lady Eagles' No. 2 setter a season ago while Maxwell has impressed early on.

"My setters have both improved on their defense. Obviously they were chosen as setters for a reason because of their ability to set. Normally the defense gets put a little on the back burner but they have both been able to adjust and be coachable as far as where to be on defense and how to lead the team."

Once the district schedule rolls around, Hargrove believes the Lady Eagles are in a prime position to secure the team's fourth-straight district title.

"I think everyone from Holliday would say our goal is to win district. I'm going to do every single thing I can to get them there. I want it for them probably more than they want it for them."

Despite the losses from graduation, the Lady Eagles are going to be just fine in 2023.



Holliday Cross Country looking to race its way back to the state meet

By Nathan Lawson

Holliday Sophomore sensation Noah Strohman will be seeking back-to-back state titles in Old Settler's Park this November after blowing away the field as a freshman.

Strohman finished first in every race he participated in last season before turning in a time of 15:49.5 in the state meet in Round Rock. He will be joined on the course by his twin brother, Ryder, who hopes to finish on the medal stand this year after a 13th place finish at the state meet with a time of 16:37.9.

"The Strohmans are very dedicated, and they do not require anything from me," Cross Country Coach Glenn Griffin said about getting the brother's back to the state meet. "They have unbelievable work ethic."

Also returning alongside the Strohman's on the fourth-place Eagles team is sophomore Tanner Simmons and Senior Cole Esparza. Freshman Connor Killian will round out the Eagles pack this year as Cole Morrison has departed for a spot on the football team. Also running for the Eagles are Dylan Thompson, Scout Henry, Grayson Kafer and Gavin Macleod.

"We would like to get on the podium this year, but the three teams who finished ahead of us are still as strong as last year," Griffin said. "We will also have to replace Morrison who left to play football."

The Lady Eagles will be replacing big shoes once again with sixth-place finisher Jaycee Lyons now graduated. But once again the Lady Eagles will have someone up to the task. The Athletic Director's daughter, Kenli Atwood, will take on the lead role for the Lady Eagles after she placed eighth in the 4A State Cross Country meet for Alice last year as a freshman with a time of 11:55.0.



The Holliday Lady Eagles will be seeking their third state title in five years as Kenli Atwood looks to lead the team after moving in from Alice.

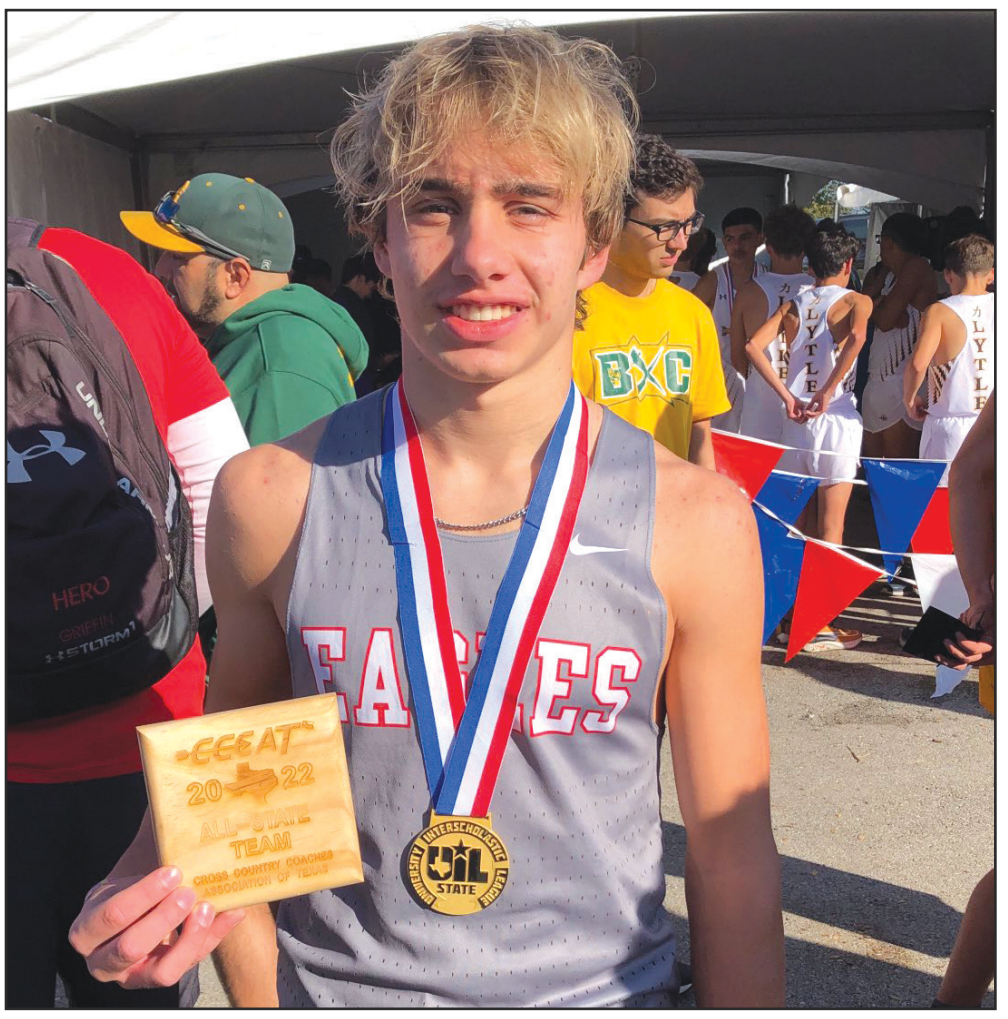
File photo

After finishing fourth as a team last year, Griffin thinks the Lady Eagles are poised to contend for their third state title in five years. Joining Atwood at the front of the pack of 13 runners for the Lady Eagles are Simone Mouras, who finished 40th last year, and Freshman Sammi Kirkland who is coming off a broken ankle.

"The girls are definitely looking to win the whole thing again," Griffin said. "We should have three girls running a sub 12 minute and Anahi (Machuca) will be running a sub 12:20 plus we will have an additional six running in the 12s."

Rounding out the Lady Eagles will be Bailee Bowers, Briar Griffin, Sarah Spears, Kaylee Bullington, Kendalynn Muhlbauer and Kynzee Jackson.

The Cross Country team will have meets in Boyd on Aug. 26, Decatur on Sept. 9, Lubbock on Sept. 23, Decatur on Sept. 30 and the district meet will be on Oct. 9 as they hope to race their way back to Round Rock on Nov. 3.



Holliday's Noah Strohman will be seeking back-to-back state titles this year after he won the meet as a freshman with a time of 15:49.5.

File photo

Football

Continued from page 3C

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ARCHER COUNTY News



Holliday senior Kelby Jones will help stablize a Lady Eagles volleyball team that saw 12 seniors depart from the previous year.

File photo

Kelby Jones: dig machine

By Will Edwards

Holliday senior Kelby Jones has been a key cog in the Lady Eagles' defense for each of the last two seasons. After losing 12 seniors to graduation last year, Jones is one of two seniors to retake the court in the Red and White this fall.

Last year, Jones anchored the back row of the Lady Eagles' defense that dropped just 14 sets on the season. Jones garnered the district's Most Valuable Libero honor behind a 474 dig campaign that included 41 assists, 11 kills and 64 aces to earn a spot on the ACN Super 10 team.

This year, Jones is back in the libero role for her final season after breaking on the scene as a junior.

To Jones, volleyball has been something that has just always clicked.

"Volleyball has always clicked for me," she said. "Even through middle school and all through when I was younger, I've always been just naturally good at it. In middle school I was always all-around MVP each year and stuff like that. At McNeil, it was a lot different than Holliday because they only had six girls here and those six girls had to do everything, but at McNeil there was an A, B and C team and then there were still cuts. We had a lot more people so we were a lot more competitive."

Jones' volleyball career began at a young age in the third grade.

"I started playing volleyball when I was in the third grade. I started out playing Southside and just playing little stuff like that. Then I started playing with ZIVA around 10. I played 10s and 11s and I always played up because all of my friends played up and I was too young to play on all the teams. I played 12s and 13s for two years and then I played my regular 14s and 15s. Last year I played 18s as a junior and I really liked it. That's where it all started and I have just really liked it from there."

Although she didn't begin attending Holliday until the second semester of her freshman year, she explained how she was immediately met with open arms upon her arrival at her new school.

"I moved to Holliday after the first semester of my freshman year. I went to a semester at Rider and then moved out here because we built a house. My brother has been out here since sixth grade because he moved out here earlier. That was probably the best decision I've ever made. The second I moved here, I got begged to play softball. With volleyball, Coach Parker talked to me as soon as I got here and then with tennis, I made the varsity as a freshman. Rider wouldn't let me play tennis so when I moved here I got to play everything. I love sports. It made me really happy to do whatever I wanted and get to participate and make everything work. I'm really really glad I moved. I like the small town feel. I love that everybody knows everybody."

After graduation, Jones is unsure if she wants to continue her volleyball career at the next level.

"I'm undecided if I want to play volleyball at the next level or not. I want to try to play in college. I either want to go to pharmacy school or play volleyball but I don't really know. I really want to go to Tarleton but if I play volleyball I probably won't get to go there."

When her playing career is done and her time at Holliday comes to an end, Jones knows exactly how she would like to be remembered.

"I just want to be remembered as a leader and someone that always tried their best and gave their all for everything. I always get told how much all these little kids look up to me at the games and stuff. It makes me feel really happy that a bunch of kids look up to me and want to be like me."

Cooper Turner: one man wrecking crew

By Will Edwards

Holliday senior Cooper Turner is a winner in every sense of the word.

From wreaking havoc on opposing offenses to mauling in the run game to hitting home runs and striking out foes on the baseball diamond, Turner knows how to win.

"He's the ultimate of what you want out of a Holliday athlete," new Holliday head coach Kyle Atwood said. "He's respectful. He takes care of his grades. He does all the stuff outside of the school to represent Holliday well. He plays with a fire on the field. He's not going to be beat whether it's the tackle position, the guard position, the nose guard position, on the pitching mound or on first base. Whatever it is, he's a winner."

Over the last two seasons, Turner has helped the Eagles to a 26-2 record with both losses coming in the regional finals to arch-nemesis Gunter.

Despite his baseball career likely carrying him to the next level, Turner wants to leave it all on the gridiron in his final football campaign.

His football career began in the second grade on the Holliday pee-wee team but it wasn't until his junior season that the game truly started to click for him.

"My junior year, I started to feel like the game came naturally to me," Turner said. "My sophomore year I wasn't very good. I was mainly just a defensive specialist. I actually started working out the summer before my junior year and I gained some muscle and speed. I came back junior year better than I was sophomore year."

His favorite moment came in his junior season when the Eagles edged out Bells 21-14 in overtime at Denton's Collins Stadium on black Friday. Holliday erased a seven-point deficit in the final minute to draw even before scoring on the first possession of overtime. A fourth down stop with Turner in on the tackle sealed the game for the Eagles.

Turner admits he is hoping to continue his baseball career in college after earning a spot on the last two ACN Diamond Dozen squads.

"I'm hoping to go play baseball at the next level," Turner said. "I'm currently looking at some junior colleges. If it doesn't work out, I'll probably just go to MSU for business."

When all is said and done, Turner just wants to be remembered as someone who always gave it 100% in everything he did.

"I want to be remembered as the athlete that gave it all on the field in every sport."

His new head coach could not stop raving about the senior.

"We've been really proud of Cooper and what he's brought to the table," Atwood said. "He hasn't missed through the course of the summer. He's just someone that goes above and beyond in all that he does, not that our other kids don't. There's a lot of them that do. Cooper is just a special kid and we're glad to have him. We're excited about what he brings to the table in other things."



Holliday will be leaning on Senior Cooper Turner to provide some leadership as he hopes to avenge his only two losses in his career to Gunter this year.

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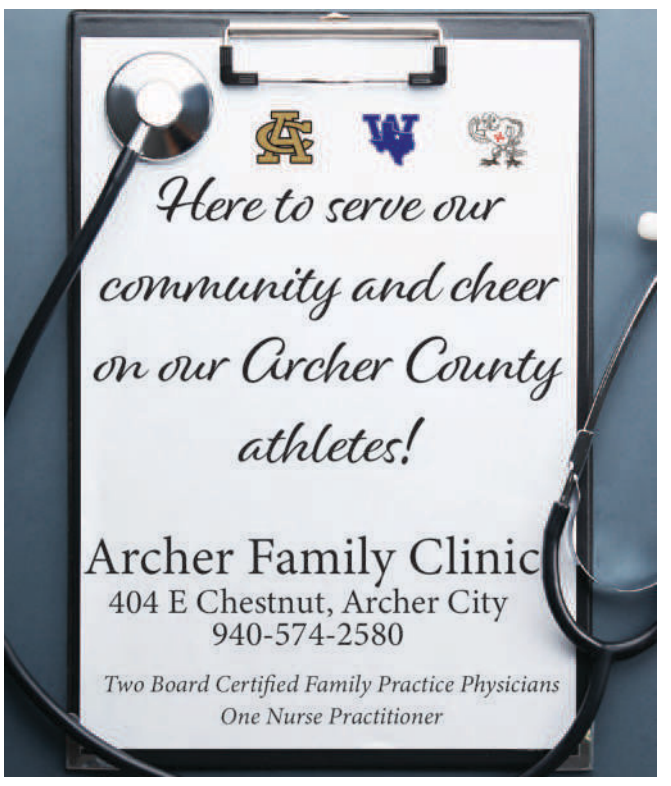

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9/4 Harrold @ 5pm
9/8 City View @ 4:40pm
9/12 Bridgeport @ 6pm
9/15 Vernon @ 5pm
9/19 Iowa Park @ 5pm
9/22 Bowie @ 5pm
9/26 Henrietta @ 5pm
9/30 Jacksboro @ 10 am
10/3 City View @ 5pm
10/6 NCTA @ 5pm
10/10 Vernon @ 5pm
10/13 Iowa Park @ 5pm
10/17 Bowie @ 5pm
10/21 Henrietta 10am
10/24 Jacksboro @ 5pm

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9/15 Childress @ 7:30pm
9/29 Snyder @ 7:30 pm
10/6 Valley View @ 7:30pm
10/13 Henrietta @ 7:30pm
10/20 S&S @ 7:30 pm
10/27 City View @ 7:30pm
11/3 Callisburg @ 7:30pm

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