

*High School*

# FOOTBALL PREVIEW

2021

*A special supplement to*

**THE CHATSWORTH TIMES**

# Aching knees and all, I'm back!

Truth be told, I could use a little more time off before football season kicks off. A week or two into September strikes me as a better time to launch the season, but nobody asked me, so here we are.

Are you ready for some football?

Before I took this job two years ago, I thought I had probably walked my last sideline. I was too old, too out-of-shape and too jaded with sports. But a funny thing happened. After taking over as editor of The Times, necessity forced me back to work on Friday evenings -- and I loved it. Covering our two teams has been a blast.

I've seen great plays (Elber Romero's game-winning field goal at Murray), terrific players (too many to name) and some thrilling games (that North Murray playoff run comes to mind).

I've eaten a few good hot dogs, enjoyed the bands at halftime and talked strategy with a lot of fired up fans.

Saturday morning my knees and back may ache, but I have no regrets



Jimmy Espy

about getting back into high school football.

## OUR GUYS

Logic says Murray County will struggle. The Indians lost more than 20 seniors and they need a lot of young players to get good quickly. But Coach Chad Brewer, a pretty darn good sales-

man, says he loves his team's status as "an underdog" and is confident the Indians will be very competitive.

North Murray is going to score a lot of points again. Quarterback Seth Griffin is very talented and in Michael McDade he has a gifted target. But can North Murray run the ball? I like that offensive line, but the backs have something to prove. Will the Neers improve on a sub-par 2020 effort by the defense? They'll have to be more physical up front.

## THE OTHER GUYS

Phone calls to my sources around the loop have produced more questions than answers.

Everybody seems to think Rockmart is once again the team to beat. The Yellow Jackets lost some quality players, but there are plenty of good holdovers coming back, including running backs. Terrion Webb is a fierce linebacker.

Ringgold, with a big returning class, is getting a lot of notice. The Tigers have improved steadily for two years and have brought back some talented players, including touchdown-scoring machine Kori Dumas and safety Kyle White.

He starts at quarterback but expect LaFayette to move talented athlete Jaylon Ramsey all over the place. The Ramblers are looking for their second straight playoff appearance in Region 6-AAA.

Sonoraville graduated a talented quarterback but much of the offense returns, including receiver Brant Bryant

and back Zach Lyles.

Coahulla Creek and Lakeview-Fort Oglethope are trying to build (or rebuild) programs. How much they can do this year is unclear.

Adairsville has a terrific linebacker in Tokyo Gordon and a tough back in Eli Agnew.

## THANKS A LOT

Staffer Erik Green has been a big help with this section. Erik contributed a trio of stories and helped copy edit everything. (If there are mistakes, blame him.)

Sherri Jenkins sold the ads and Jeremy Morgan and Kelly Cardozo made contributions as well.

Huge thanks to local photographers Scott Kuhn, Bradd Parker and Doug Smith who provided many of the photographs in this section. They are three talented gentlemen and their work is much admired and appreciated.

And as always, thanks to the advertisers who paid the bills.

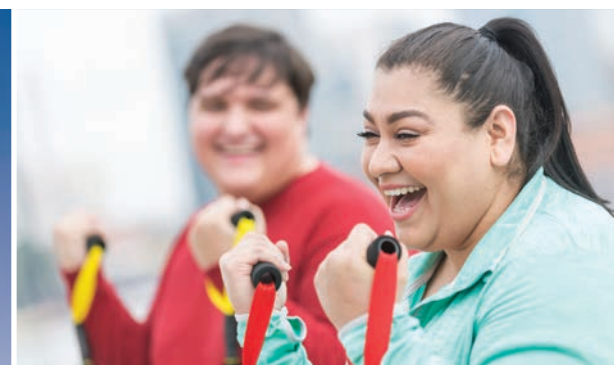
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# Youthful Indians hope to deliver a few surprises

By Jimmy Espy  
EDITOR

Murray County Indians Coach Chad Brewer believes his football team is underestimated.

"I like it," said Brewer. "I have told our players that people know we're a young team and that makes us underdogs. I like being the underdog."

A senior-laden Indian squad was hit hard by COVID-19 in 2020, with key starters multiple missing games in a frustrating 4-6 season. The Indians were 3-5 in Region 6-AAA.

Now, Brewer and his coaching staff are trying to bring together a much younger team around a core of veteran players.

"One good thing about all the games we missed last year was a lot of our younger players had to play," said Brewer. "That gave them some experience and helps our depth this season."

## QUARTERBACK

A pair of seniors, Justice Knotts and Tyson Leonard, are competing for snaps at quarterback. Knotts is the better inside runner; Leonard the better outside runner, according to Brewer. "Knotts is more of the inside runner, Tyson is a little faster and he throws deep well."

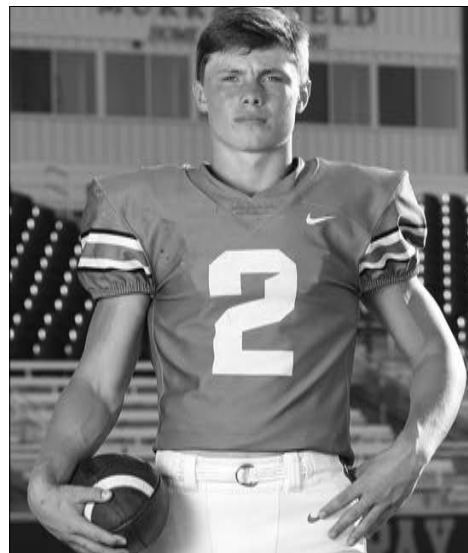
"We'll use both of them," Brewer said. "They bring a different set of abilities."

Sophomore Judah Woodall could see some action as well.

## OFFENSIVE LINE

Murray will try to build a strong running game but will have to do so with a less experienced, smaller offensive line.

The likely starting group includes Colby Gonzalez (195) at center, Eli Hope (255) and Cody Faulknor (200) at guard and Caleb Jones (210) and Justin Albright (195) at the tackle spots. Faulknor and Gonzalez are the only seniors in the group. Backing them up



Taylor Carrell

will be freshman Landon Souther and sophomores Memphis Dentmon, Gage Whitener and Travis McTaggart.

"That group has made a lot of progress," said Brewer. "We had over 200 yards offense in the first half against Polk County. I have been really pleased with the improvement."

## RUNNING BACKS

Operating behind that offensive front will be a "committee" of running backs.

Caleb Peden, a solid 200-pounder who scored two touchdowns against Polk, will start at fullback. He'll be supported by junior Aaron Flood and senior Cam Hunter.

The "A backs" (wingbacks) will include Taylor Carrell, Noah Densmore, Woodall, Drew Carter and Justice Knotts ("when he's not at quarterback").

Carrell was better known as a defensive contributor last season but will be asked to do a lot more on offense in 2021. Densmore is the fastest player on the team. Brewer said Carter is "our best blocking A back."

## RECEIVER

It will be a committee approach at tight end as well. Brewer was excited to add two athletes better known as

basketball players. Carson Weaver and Caleb Hooker both came out for football. Weaver will play tight end where he will team with a pair of juniors, Topher Hernandez and Trae Davenport.

Hooker, Cody Dunn and Tyson Leonard will be featured at outside receiver.

"We have spent an enormous amount of time working on throwing the football," said Brewer. "We need to have success throwing because we're not as big up front as we have been."

## PLACEKICKER

Murray has to replace one of the best kickers in school history, Elber Romero. The new toe belongs to junior Joseph Jones.

## DEFENSIVE LINE

Caleb Peden and Cody Faulknor are slated to start at end. Peden played a lot last year while Faulknor missed most of the season with an injured shoulder. Luke Sims and Memphis Dentmon are the top backups.

Inside, Eli Hope and Colby Gonzalez will be asked to jam the inside running game. Caleb Jones and Gage Whitener add depth.

## LINEBACKERS

Murray is switching from a 4-4-3 defense to a 4-3-4 alignment. The team's linebackers will be asked to make a lot of tackles.

Each starter has a different role.

The middle linebacker (MIKE) should be the team's top tackler, focusing on finishing off any running plays between the tackles. Justice Knotts will start at MIKE, with Jackson Bearden and freshman Aden Hollar backing him up.

The WILL linebacker covers the weakside (no tight end). Traditionally it is a position manned by one of the team's "football smarter" players. Cam Hunter will be asked to start in the role for Murray. Samuel Carr and senior Mason Higdon will see time

SEE INDIANS, PAGE 6

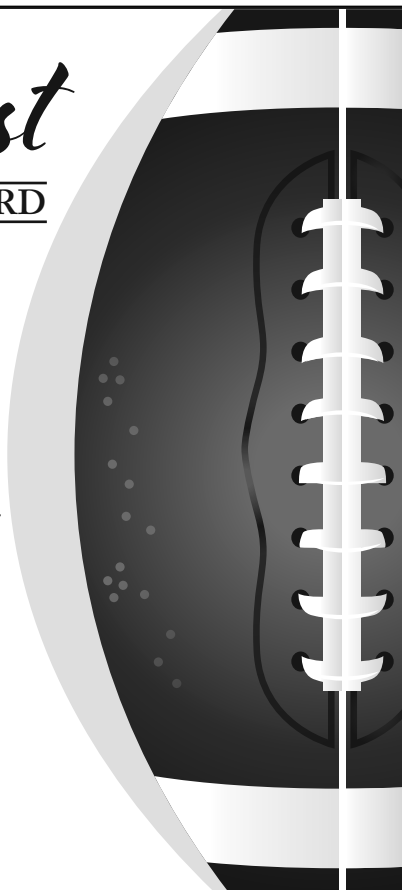
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# Flood's role gets bigger for Indians in 2021

By Jimmy Espy  
EDITOR

Aaron Flood's transition to linebacker didn't start smoothly, but when he figured things out, he got good very quickly.

Flood, 16, switched to linebacker at Murray County High School after playing receiver for several years.

Flood struggled with the change in his first three starts last season, according to Coach Chad Brewer.

"He was a sophomore and he played like a sophomore for two or three games," Brewer said. "He made a lot of mistakes like being out of position or overrunning plays. But then he seemed to get it. He started playing like he had been a linebacker his whole life."

Fields played in all 10 games, something many of his teammates weren't able to do because of COVID. He led the team in tackles with 106.

"I didn't have any confidence," Flood said of his early troubles. "There was a lot of pressure on me and I wasn't confident about what I was doing. In about the third game I started feeling comfortable and started getting better."

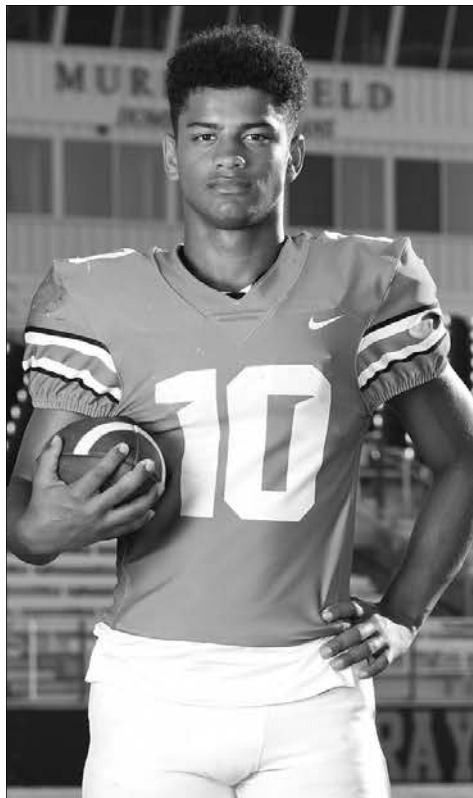
Brewer noticed the improvement. "He started figuring out his reads and where he was supposed to be," Brewer said. He eliminated the hesitation. That made a big difference.

Flood, this season, will line up at strong side linebacker, playing on the side where the other team's tight end lines up. It's called the SAM position.

"Your SAM linebacker needs to be very athletic," Brewer said. "He has to be able to run and to tackle. He needs to be physical. Aaron can do all those things. He has the skills and to be a very good linebacker for us."

Flood is 5-11 and plays at approximately 180 pounds. He runs well and has good athletic skills overall.

"Aaron is always around the ball," Brewer said. "He's a good open field tackler and not afraid of contact. He



Aaron Flood

can play inside or in space and he's aggressive."

Flood believes his role at linebacker encompasses more than just the physical aspect of the game.

"I love playing linebacker," Flood said. "Linebacker is a leadership position and I've always wanted to be a leader."

Brewer said he took note of Flood when he was a freshman.

"I knew he was a football player," the veteran coach said. "He was making plays as a ninth grader. The game was never too big for him."

Flood said Brewer and former linebackers coach Jake White were very helpful during his transition to his new position.

SEE FLOOD, PAGE 6

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# TUXES

# FLOOD: Junior standout wants to contribute on both offense and defense

FROM PAGE 5

This year he is working with new defensive coordinator Josh Zeigler, who also serves as linebackers coach.

Flood will also see action on offense. He'll get a few carries and serve as lead blocker as a fullback in the Indian attack.

"I hope to play a lot of offense," he said. "Linebacker fits me perfectly but fullback is another physical position and I like that."

Flood is optimistic about Murray County's chances in 2021. Despite graduating more than 20 seniors off the 2020 team, he thinks this unit might have even better leadership. He likes the way the team has come together during the offseason and at practice.

"We have some really good leaders," he said. "Eli Hope, Cam Hunter, Justin Leonard, Justice Knotts and others are leaders. We

will play with a lot of heart and unselfishly. The team is very close this year."

Flood believes that "team first" attitude could pay off in on-field success for the Indians. He's looking forward to the season opener against Southeast Whitfield on Friday. Region 6-AAA competition will be a strong challenge and cross-county rival North Murray is the game he most looks forward to playing.

"I think we are going to have a really good year," he said.

Although only a junior, Flood is looking ahead. He'd like to attend college but his real love is agriculture. He grew up on a farm and wants to work in agriculture one day.

"I want to be a farmer," he said. "I want to put food on people's tables."

The Indians-Raiders game at Dalton starts at 7:30 p.m.



FILE PHOTO

Flood (10) will also help out on offense as a blocking fullback and occasional ball carrier.

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## INDIANS: Young players crucial to team

FROM PAGE 4

at WILL as well.

A SAM or strongside linebacker often goes up against a blocking tight end which requires the player to be an instinctive and physical tackler. Aaron Flood fits that role nicely.

"Aaron did not play well the first two or three games last year," said Brewer. "But you could see that he was starting to get it. He quit hesitating and started making plays. He was our leading tackler."

Garrett Patterson will be the key backup at SAM.

### SECONDARY

The new defensive alignment brings an extra safety on the field, freeing up the cornerbacks to focus more on pass coverage. The safeties are asked to be more involved in stopping the run.

Murray has several veteran corners. Seniors Cody Dunn and Drew Carter are both experienced and reliable players.

"Noah Densmore can play corner and he will help us there, but he's going to be carrying a lot more of the load on offense this year," said Brewer.

Hooker is also expected to see time on the corner.

Judah Woodall and Chase Jarvis are expected to man the starting safety positions. Veteran Taylor Carrell, who started at safety last year, could step back in if needed, but Brewer wants him to focus more on offense and the return game.

Davenport, Leonard and Weaver also will line up at safety.

### PUNTING

"Caleb Hooker has a live leg and he's done a nice job," said Brewer.

### RETURNERS

"Our return game is going to be very important for us," Brewer said. "We could be dangerous."

Carrell, Densmore, Hernandez, Patterson and Jarvis could all see action as returners.

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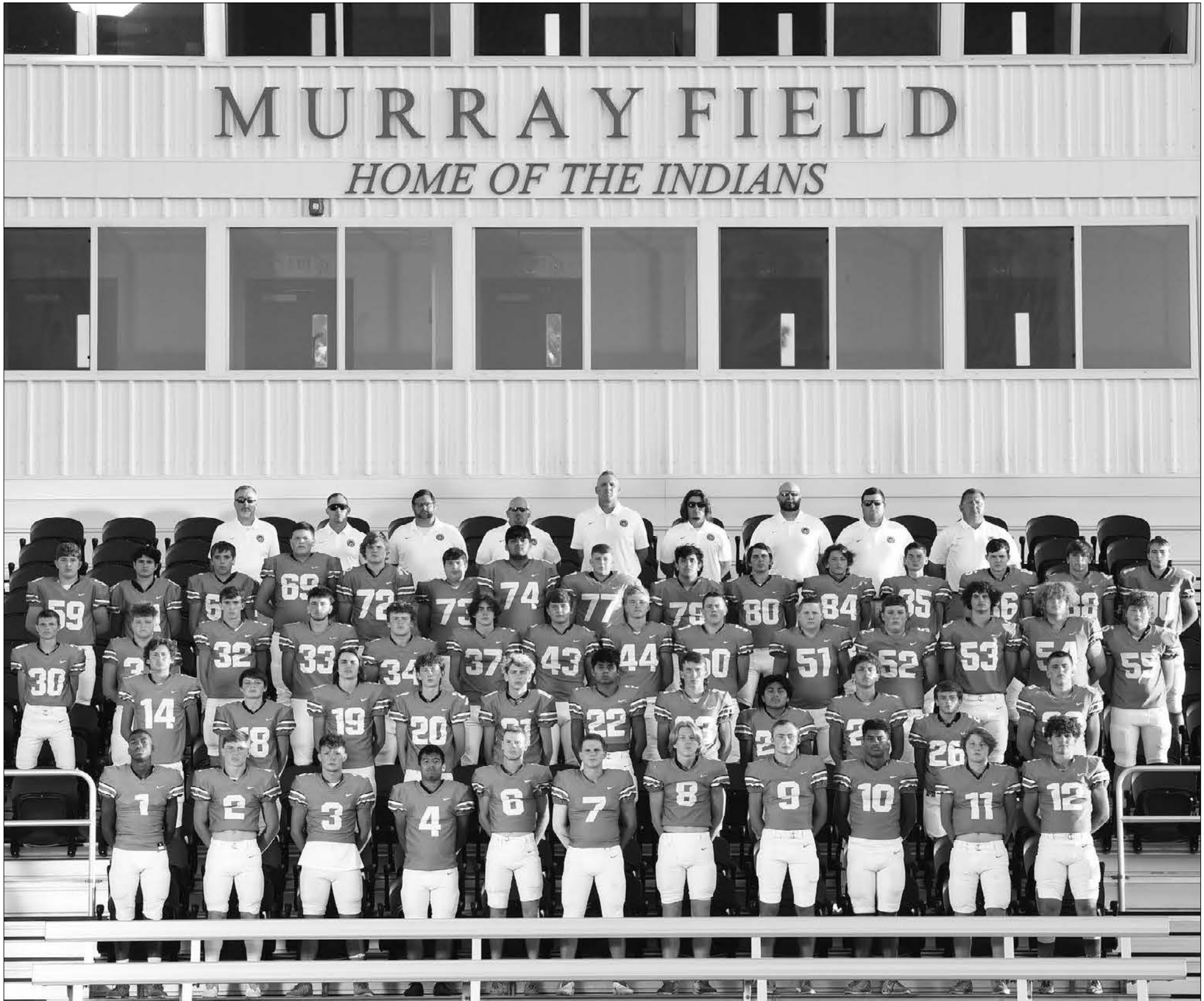
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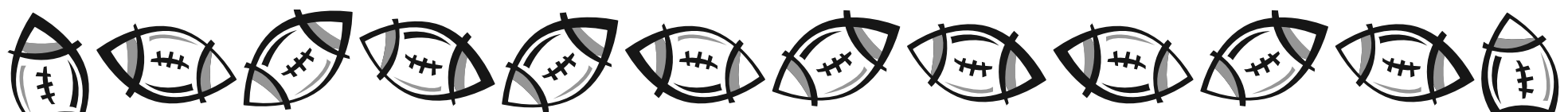
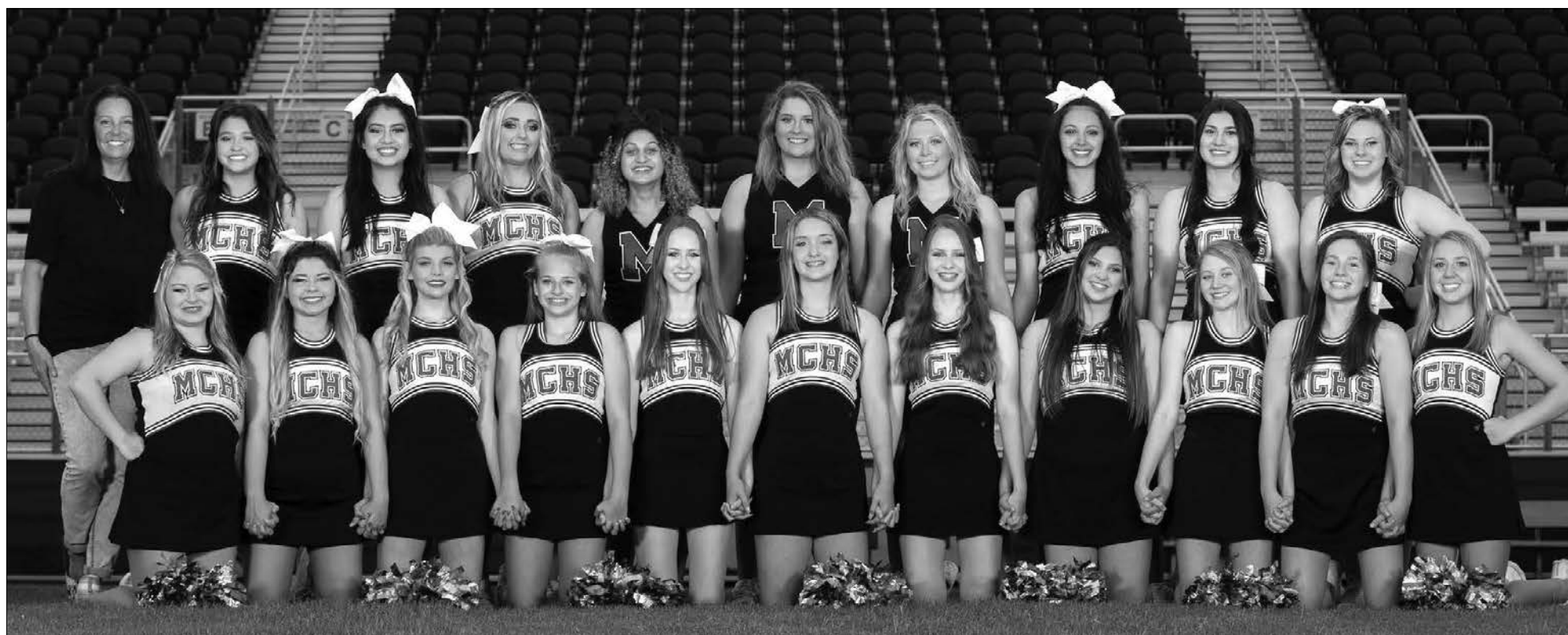
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# North Murray returns with playoff expectations

By Erik Green  
SPORTS EDITOR

It wasn't too many years ago that North Murray was a team on the cusp of making a breakthrough on the football field.

These days, expectations are generally high every year, particularly since the Mountaineers' Region 6-AAA championship a few years ago. Every year offers the promise of something new, but for North Murray there are a lot of key pieces returning from a team that went 6-4 overall and 6-2 in the region last year. The Mountaineers were again a playoff team last year, finishing second in 6-AAA. They will be gunning for a region title in 2021, but could have stiff competition near the top.

"What stands out the most about this team so far is the great attendance we have had in the summer," said North Murray coach Preston Poag, who took over at North Murray

in 2016. "We have gotten stronger and faster, which is good. We couldn't do that so much last year with COVID. We got in here so late. These guys have such good attitudes. Culture is a big part of it. One of our mottos this year is 'culture doesn't graduate.' We have a good many returners on both sides of the ball, so it's like any year: you have to stay healthy and get better and get ready to play."

Here is a closer look at the North Murray team breakdown:

## QUARTERBACK

Few teams have the luxury of a quarterback with the experience and abilities of Seth Griffin. The 6-foot-4, 185-pound junior returns for his second season as starter at quarterback and third as a contributing member of the team. Griffin is a long, broad shouldered quarterback who looks slightly larger than his 185 pounds might suggest. He is relatively mobile and possesses a strong arm



Michael McDade

with something of an unconventional release. He should be in the player of the year conversation.

Backing Griffin up are newcomer Skyler Williams, a freshman who transferred in from Gordon County, and Zavon McDade, younger brother of receiver Michael McDade.

## RUNNING BACK

The Mountaineers will be without one of the top players in school history, D'Ante Tidwell, who was the team's leading rusher, among other attributes. Tidwell is now playing college football. Senior Ethan Dempsey takes over as the lead running back. In Poag's pass-oriented, single-back offense, Dempsey won't be asked to carry the ball 30 times a game, but he will be counted on to grind out first downs and help bring balance to the offense. A veteran linebacker and the team's top tackler in 2020, Dempsey brings toughness and a little more size to the running back position.

Help will come from several teammates. Judson Petty is a hard-nosed runner. Jadyne Rice brings speed and explosiveness to the backfield. Devin Hunte is a powerful runner and lead blocker. Taylor Frazier will also get some carries.



Devin Hunte

## WIDE RECEIVER

North Murray could again have one of the top receiving corps in north Georgia of Michael McDade, Zavon McDade, Rice, and Judson Petty serving as Griffin's top targets. Michael McDade, who is 6-foot-4 and about 200 pounds, has the skill of an all-region performer. He proved last year that few defenders could contain him. Teams will, unquestionably, key on him, which could open the middle of the field for other players to work.

## OFFENSIVE LINE/TIGHT END

Skill players get all the attention, but without the offensive line there wouldn't be much happening. Poag is pleased with his line's progression. Carson Manis, Ryan Maton, Austin Johnson, Austin Newton, Carter Sanford, Logan Gray, and Carson Gibson will all see time on the field. A trimmed down Hunte could see time at tight end along with John Craig, Liam Rogers, and Aiden Ellis.

## DEFENSIVE LINE

An area of weakness last year, the Mountaineer D-Line has been revamped to feature edge rushers

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# NEERS: Another dangerous offense

FROM PAGE 10

Hunte and Gibson, a duo Poag believes will thrive in the trenches.

Defensive coordinator Bill Mitchell needs his line to tie up blockers, jam running lanes and apply pass rush pressure. Along with Hunte and Gibson, players expected to get that job done up front include Craig, Sanford, Manis, Heath Adams and Bradley King.

## LINEBACKERS

Dempsey and Logan Gray are two talented and experienced linebackers who should provide the bulk of the stops for the Mountaineers. Rogers will also contribute at linebacker. Petty could play some outside linebacker, but will likely get most of his playing time in the defensive backfield.

## SECONDARY

Tidwell's lockdown ability at defensive back will certainly be missed,

but Petty and McDade bring talent and aggressiveness to the defensive back corps. Both got playing time last year. Depth is crucial if the starters are to get any rest. Coaches will look to Walker James, Shawn Myers, Rice, Williams, Kaden Myers, and others to step up.

## SPECIAL TEAMS

Senior all-region selection P/PK Owen Hannah is about as steady as they come, having missed very few opportunities throughout his exemplary career. Poag pushed Hannah to work on getting kickoffs into the endzone and he's coming along, the coach said. He is certainly a weapon Poag will not be afraid to use. Hannah's backup is Jafet Cuenca, who Poag believes has a bright future as well.

The Mountaineers open the season on Sept. 3 on the road against Northwest Whitfield at Tunnel Hill in non-region action.



FILE PHOTO

Owen Hannah has been one of the most consistent kickers in the state over the last two years. Now a senior, he should be a strong weapon for the Mountaineers.



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# 2021 Mountaineer Marching Band



# Griffin: Keep it simple and keep winning

By Erik Green  
SPORTS EDITOR

Seth Griffin knows it's going to take more than throwing 50-yard bombs to Michael McDade to win a championship.

North Murray's junior quarterback has spent the last year refining his craft, working on read progression, and considering ways to get other receivers involved. He might even run a little bit more this season. It's all part of the development process for the Mountaineers' touted quarterback, who will likely be in the mix for a number of postseason awards, including region player of the year.

"The main thing is not making it harder than it has to be," Griffin said. "Just knowing who to read, finding that guy, and whatever he does tells you where to put the ball. I would say the biggest thing going into junior year is just really being more calm back there, more relaxed, and really simplifying the game down to a couple of people and a couple of reads."

The 6-foot-4, 185-pound Griffin first stepped onto the field as a freshman, getting the start as a free safety. He then switched to full time starter at quarterback last year. Entering his junior year, Griffin feels a lot more confidence, not only in himself, but his supporting cast. He will, obviously, be without the services of D'Ante Tidwell and Cade Petty, among others, who were true weapons for the Mountaineers in the past. This year, McDade is back and is, potentially, the top receiver in the region if not north Georgia.

"He has a big frame, a great kid who will give you 100 percent effort," Griffin said of his main target. "Even when it's not a pass play, or just not to his side, he is going to block or throw off the defense."

Knowing that teams will, no doubt, key on McDade, Griffin is prepared to spread the ball around and not force things unnecessarily. He will also look to get the ball to Jady Rice and Judson Petty, Cade's younger brother. There will be others in the mix as well, and Griffin isn't taking



Seth Griffin

for granted the potential of running back Ethan Dempsey to help carry the load.

"Our whole receiver corps and whole offense is loaded," Griffin said. "I can't wait (to start the season)."

Speak to Griffin for even a short time and you're able to sense his intelligence and self confidence, which doesn't reek at all of arrogance. He's the quarterback. He is supposed to be somewhat charismatic and outspoken, unafraid to answer difficult questions and shoulder the leadership role on the team. It's always been that way, according to Griffin.

"I really started taking it seriously in eighth grade going into ninth grade," Griffin said. "I really knew that was what I wanted to do. I really wanted to focus on quarterback and hopefully go to college and play. To me, the biggest difference from back then is technique, of course, but I think I have definitely gotten smarter. I have learned how to break things down, and know what to look for."

Griffin grew up watching his older brother Luke star on the offensive line at North Murray. Luke is now a sophomore offensive lineman at the University of Missouri and could be in the mix for a starting job. Seeing how Luke dealt with the pressure and hype of being a highly touted recruit helped him stay grounded and focus

on the things he could control. Griffin's outlook is a team-first concept and he isn't distracted by prognostications and recruiting hullabaloo. That stuff will work itself out.

"Luke got hit real hard his freshman year with a bunch of offers and then it died down and picked back up," Seth Griffin said. "For me, it hasn't picked up a whole lot yet. We're hoping it picks up pretty heavily. Right now, it's been mainly camp invites and stuff like that, getting followers on Twitter. I'm focused on this year and my team and having a good year. If we do that, it should all play out and work out for the best."

North Murray, in its short history, has produced a line of quality quarterbacks. Coach Preston Poag who has coached several of them, believes Griffin belongs in the upper echelon of those talented quarterbacks.

"He's a great kid," Poag said. "He's the kind that never meets a strang-

er, always talking, always upbeat. You want that in your quarterback but also, he works his butt off. He's getting to be a better leader. Quarterbacks here, I ask a lot of them. I want them to be the guy in front leading us. Since I have been here, I've been blessed with good quarterbacks. If you want to have a good team, you had better have a good quarterback."

Griffin and company have a shot at winning Region 6-AAA, but the young quarterback isn't focused on the end of the season.

"I feel like week to week we're focused on the team we're playing," Griffin said. "We can't start thinking too far ahead and think this team or that team is a 'give me' week. Every week we have to come prepared like we would against the Rockmarts or the Ringgolds, the teams competing with us for the region. Really, going week to week and knowing what we have to do to keep going (is key)."

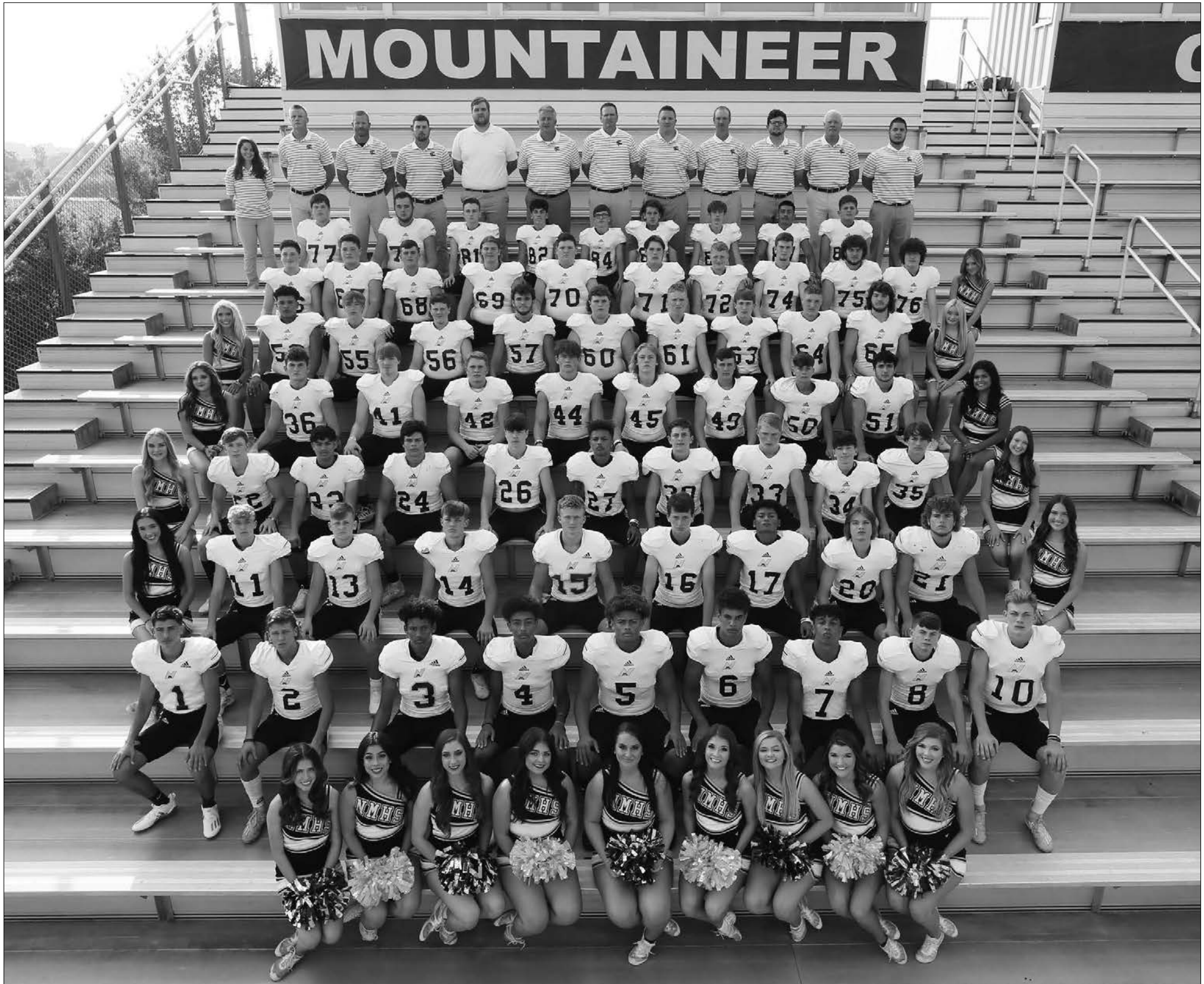


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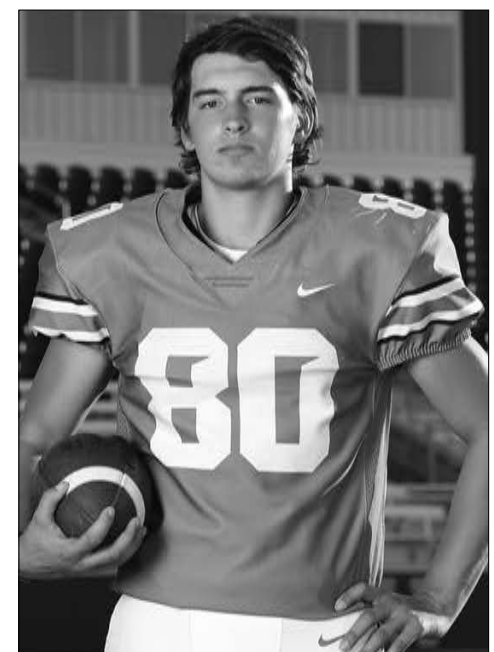
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# Murray High School Marching Band





# Indians build defense around veteran talent

By Jimmy Espy  
EDITOR

The Murray County Indians have lost a ton of experience and talent from last year's squad, but one area where the team returns good depth is defensive back. Yet changes to the lineup and scheme are going to require some younger players to grow up quickly.

Indians Coach Chad Brewer OK'd the change from a 4-4-3 defense to a 4-3-4 alignment preferred by new defensive coordinator Josh Zeigler.

That puts an extra safety on the field and alters the responsibilities of the defensive backs.

Brewer said his cornerbacks will be allowed to focus more on pass coverage with the two safeties tasked with helping smother the other team's running attack.

"The big thing for our cornerbacks will be to stay disciplined and not to get beat deep," said Brewer. "Keeping the ball in front of them is their first priority. They won't have to come up in the running game as much to make tackles or take out blockers. They can focus on coverage."

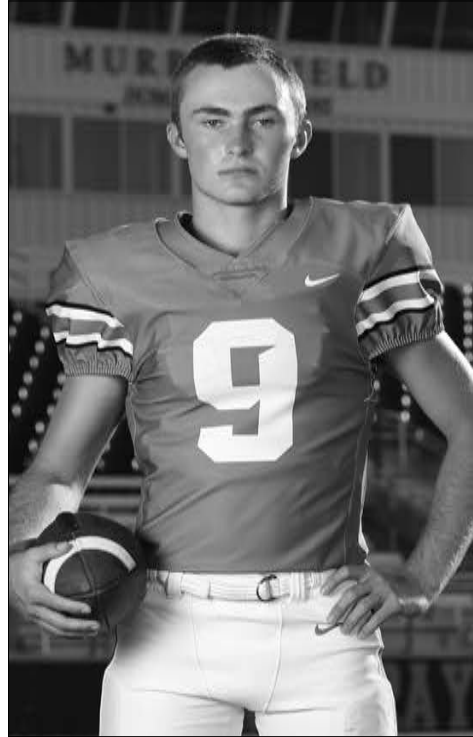
Zeigler will have a couple of capable veterans to work with. Seniors Cody Dunn and Drew Carter should start.

"Drew is a smart guy," Brewer said. "He's always in the right spot. He is the son of a coach and has a lot of football knowledge."

"The same is true for Cody," Brewer added. "He is experienced. He tackles well. He had a good spring game."

Noah Densmore, who played a lot of defense last year, will be asked to do more on offense this season. The fastest player on the team, Densmore, a junior, could step right in at cornerback if needed, Brewer said. Caleb Hooker, a senior who didn't play football last season, is expected to contribute.

At safety, the Indians had a quality starter in Taylor Carrell returning



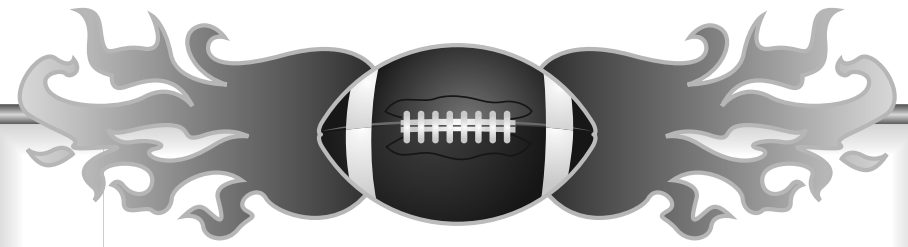
Cody Dunn

this season. But as with Densmore, Brewer plans on using Carrell a lot more on offense and in the return game. That means there will be two new starters at safety.

"Carrell will play some back there but we are asking him to do a lot on offense and we want to keep him fresh," said Brewer.

Sophomore Judah Woodall and junior Chase Jarvis will get the first opportunity to nail down starting roles. Other players who may factor at safety are Tyson Leonard, Trae Davenport and Carson Weaver.

"In our defense now, our safeties have to be physical and able to set the edge," Brewer said. "They have to be smart and get our defense lined up properly. We are asking them to do a lot of things and they will certainly have the opportunity to make a lot of plays."



*Our staff wishes the  
Indians and Mountaineers  
a great season!*

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**"The measure of who we are  
is what we do with what we have."**

Vince Lombardi

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# Mountaineers working hard to fortify defense

By Erik Green  
SPORTS EDITOR

North Murray coach Preston Poag will be the first one to tell you that the Mountaineer defense last year was, well, pretty bad.

“It was a problem all year,” Poag said.

Nonetheless, the Mountaineers still finished 6-4 overall and 6-2 in Region 6-AAA despite giving up 29 points a game. They still made it to the playoffs and averaged 38 points a contest on offense, which hid some of the defensive shortcomings. That was then and Poag is happy with the direction the defense is going so far this offseason. He believes Mountaineer defenders are ready to come out and prove that last year was a fluke.

“It’s a little bit different this year,” Poag said. “I have liked our intensity on defense. We’re a lot more physical and have a lot more size, which is going to be beneficial.”

Things started out funky for the Mountaineers on defense last season and never got better. Before the first game, all of the defensive line starters were out until the Wednesday of game week with COVID-19 or other issues. Losing the early practice time hurt, according to Poag, and depth issues became a factor.

“We had to play some guys who just weren’t ready to play,” Poag said. “They were small. Missing that time in the weightroom (due to COVID) hurt us. Two things really hurt us, depth and our size. If you think about the year before that, about all those starters were seniors. We lost all those guys, so the guys who stepped in last year were mainly just JV players until they got in there.”

As a whole, defensive balance is teetering behind offense in the modern game at all levels. In the NFL last year, 29 of the 32 teams allowed more than three touchdowns a game. In NCAA FBS football last season, the defensive disparity was even greater. Of the 570 games played, roughly 74 percent had a winner that scored more than 30 points. By



PHOTO BY JIMMY ESPY

**The Mountaineer defense put on terrific pass rush pressure in a recent scrimmage against Pepperell. North Murray is seeking to reinvigorate its defense after an uncharacteristically poor season. Here, Devin Hunte (5) gets in the face of the Dragon quarterback.**

comparison, in 1995, about 62 percent of the games were won by teams scoring 30 points or more (70 fewer games were played last year).

“I think it is hard on defenses now,” Poag said. “Think about our offense. If you’re preparing for us, we do so much stuff. Once the season starts rolling — you can spend time on that stuff in the summer — but when you’ve got one week before you play somebody, and they do all this stuff, you don’t have enough time to cover it all. So you go on tendencies and stuff like that, but it’s an offensive game now. It’s hard to prepare for all this stuff.”

So what is it going to take to turn the corner for the Mountaineers? Having some players with experience will certainly help.

“When you have your leading tackler back, that’s a big deal (Ethan Dempsey),” Poag said. “You’ve got Logan Gray, who’s a terrific line-backer, too. I think the two defensive ends (Devin Hunte/Carson Gibson) are really good players. I think people will have a hard time blocking those two guys. If you can put pressure on people, it’s a big deal.”

Some of the players like Dempsey and Judson Petty, for example, will play both ways. Having some versatile players that can help on each side of the ball is something that Mountaineers will lean on as well.

“It brings a lot to the table,” Poag said. “You can do a lot of different things with them. It’s a week to week game plan as to where you play guys like that. Some games where you

play a running team, you might want to play Petty inside instead of corner. Or we play a Ringgold, you might need to play him at corner because they’re going to throw it. Guys like that, you can move around. Michael McDade is a big safety who can play. I’ve got a lot of dual guys that can play and will make a difference.”

The Mountaineers once again open the season with non-region opponent Northwest Whitfield, to whom they lost 20-7 in what might have been the only “defensive battle” all season. The bright spot defensively last year was a stretch in which the Mountaineers held Coahulla Creek, Lakeview-Fort Oglethorpe, and Murray to 35 total points. The 2021 season opens Sept. 3 on the road against the Bruins.

# North Murray County Players to Watch



**Jady Rice**



**Judson Petty**



**Carson Manis**



**Ethan Dempsey**

## Murray County Indians 2021 schedule

August 20	@Southeast Whitfield
September 3	Gilmer
September 10	Adairsville
September 17	@ LaFayette
September 24	@Ringgold
October 1	Coahulla Creek
October 8	@ Sonoraville
October 15	Rockmart
October 22	North Murray
October 29	@ LFO

## North Murray Mountaineers 2021 schedule

September 3	@ Northwest Whitfield
September 10	Ringgold
September 17	Coahulla Creek
September 24	Sonoraville
October 1	@ Rockmart
October 8	Southeast Whitfield
October 15	@ LFO
October 22	@ Murray County
October 29	Adairsville
November 5	@ LaFayette

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