

2024 Clay County High School

# FOOTBALL PREVIEW

*Electrifying!*

Keystone Heights Quarterback

Baylor Ford and

Wide Receiver

Jackson Parmeter

poised to supercharge the

Indians' offense in 2024



Story  
Page 26



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# Super 11

## 2024 Impact Players



**CLASS OF 2025**  
**Cibastian Broughton**  
FLEMING ISLAND \* QB

120 of 228, 1815 Yds, 25 TDs, 7 INTs. 1253 rushing 8 Tds. 8.6 per rush, also track speed 11.17 100, 22.96 200, 53.59 400. Offers from Syracuse, Arkansas State, Akron. Broughton has been the highlight reel for Fleming Island for the past three years; no problem thinking his senior year will not be as good or better. Has plenty of weapons around him to make things happen quickly. Elite passing arm and track speed legs.



**CLASS OF 2026**  
**RJ Carter, Jr.**  
MIDDLEBURG \* DE

40 tackles, 5TFL, 2 Sacks, 10 QB Hurries. Massive muscle mass guy that was dominant as defensive end last year. Is slated to be defensive tackle/noseguard this year and will be the dominant defensive player for Broncos if not Clay County. Crushing sack to fumble against Clay that almost went the distance.



**CLASS OF 2026**  
**Baylor Ford**  
KEYSTONE HEIGHTS \* QB

(1,106 Yds Passing, 11TDs, 8INTs) Smart, fastest guy on team, has three or four targets that will go through a wall to catch his passes. Could be the surprise elite player of the area when this season is done, then massive senior season. Coupled with quarterback guru Ken Mudge, Ford has the team that truly believes in him and position coach that gave up better job to stay with him.





**CLASS OF 2025**

**Chris Foy II**

OAKLEAF \* QB, RB

773 Yds Rush 5TDs, (226 Yds in best game against tough Fleming Island defense). Foy is workhorse son of coach Chris Foy. Remarkable hands for out of pocket passes and separation speed to get downfield quick. Oakleaf will ride his coat tails if dad gives him 20-25 touches. Against state runner-up Madison County, took goal line handoff, danced around four guys, finished 55 yards later (In the rain).



**CLASS OF 2025**

**Omar Goosby**

CLAY HIGH \* DE

(49 tackles; 22 solos, 5.5 TFLs) This guy is always in a good mood; maybe not when chasing quarterbacks or playing Fleming Island, but engine is big part of his beast mode. Let's guess 275 pounds, 5.17 40 speed is a Mack Truck coming around the corner. Sacked Cibastian Broughton nasty last year with one hand for 10 yard loss.



**CLASS OF 2025**

**Jayden Boyd**

MIDDLEBURG \* RB/DB

Slated early as running back prospect for Broncos, but has seen time in secondary over summer. High intelligence with football IQ keeps him ahead of the pattern thus interception worthy. More than likely the lockdown defensive back guy though safety has been in the chat as well depending on rest of secondary. Can go anywhere.



**CLASS OF 2025**

**Antonio Thomas**

CLAY \* WR

35 receptions, 473 Yds, 4 TDs. Thomas has been wrecking secondaries all summer in passing scrimmages and his size as well as pass catching thrills makes him a threat anywhere and in a crowd. 40 speed at 4.54, six foot tall, took a 10 yard slant 60 yards in spring game with ankle-breaking stop and outrun a very fast Palatka secondary to the 10. Took a five yard wide out screen 50 yards to paydirt last year against Orange Park.



**CLASS OF 2027**

**Michael Conner III**

OAKLEAF \* WR

37 catches, 578 yards, 3TDs., Six catches twice; vs. Creekside for 111 yards and vs. Madison County for 110 yards with five against Bolles for 73 yards. Human highlight reel with magical catches and Randy Moss elusiveness. Conner is fearless anywhere on the field, thus his magic downfield. And, he has three years to go.



**CLASS OF 2026**

**James Kitchen**

OAKLEAF \* SS

(66 tackles, 45 solos, 10 Pass blocks). One of busiest guys in a secondary with killer instincts to attack from inside out and not afraid to lay the lumber on ball carriers. Kitchen more than likely will be in centerfield in district full of high-tier wide receivers, but post patterns and crossing routes will feel his pain in paths cross.





**CLASS OF 2025**  
**Nathan Van Hof**  
FLEMING ISLAND \* DE

Sometimes there is a guy on the field that is just a stealth bomber. Van Hof is the F-18 fighter jet from Top Gun Maverick that guys say "Do some of that defensive end (poop)". A total wrecking ball on the field.



**CLASS OF 2025**  
**Demhir Jackson**  
FLEMING ISLAND \* RB

Can you say Bo Jackson? This is what Demhir Jackson brings to a football field. Big, powerful with sub-11 100 speed. That's a Ferrari with Knobby Wheels churning mud. Had plenty of 60-plus yard breakaways and those fast, little DBs could not track him down. Swing passes to Jackson go 60. This guy is a corner away from 200-plus yards per game. Short kickoff against Clay went 60 yards. Likes the number 60.

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# Clay

## Schedule

### Clay High (4-6 2023)

#### District 3-4: Ridgeview, Columbia, St. Augustine

Fri., Aug. 23 vs. Fleming Island (5A, 3-7)  
Fri., Aug. 30 vs. Yulee (3A, 9-3)  
Fri., Sept. 6 at Middleburg (5A, 5-6)  
Fri., Sept. 13 vs. Toccoi Creek (6A, 5-5)  
Fri., Sept. 20 vs. First Coast (6A, 6-5)  
Fri., Sept. 27 at Ridgeview (4A, 1-9)  
Fri., Oct. 4 BYE  
Fri., Oct. 11 at St. Augustine (4A, 13-1)  
Fri., Oct. 25 vs. Columbia (4A, 4-6)  
Fri., Nov. 1 at Orange Park (5A, 4-6)

### History

1967

• B Harvey Lofton, Won title 33-0 over Graceville.

1983

• 2A, David Mitchell, Lost to Newberry 42-13. Newberry lost in state sectional.

1997

• 4A, James Teeter, Lost to Madison County in region quarterfinal 55-20. Madison County lost in region final.

1998

• 4A, James Teeter, Lost to Raines in region quarterfinal 24-6. Raines lost in region final.

2000

• 3A, James Teeter, Lost to Suwannee 24-14 in region quarterfinal Suwannee lost in region final.

## Blue Devils look will have fans seeing double

By Randy Lefko

GREEN COVE SPRINGS - Clay High football coach Kyle Kennard will have to be a bit more careful when he asks for certain players to go into his games as the Blue Devils will have two sets of twins on their roster; the Swilley brothers; Dominic and Darius, and the Roberts brothers; Javaris and Lavaris.

"I think we are the first school to have two sets of twins on the team," said Kennard, who enters the 2024 season after a four-win, six-season loss that started with four wins and a season-opening loss to rival Fleming Island, then ended with five losses. "All four boys are going to be impact players for us with all four very similar type

athletes on the field. Should be interesting."

As for transforming his 4-6 team into the annual contention teams of Clay High football lore, Kennard has steadily rebuilt the Blue Devils brand up from the Hoekstra-era powerhouses to, what he deems, pretty close to what the Blue Devil fans have come to expect.

*Blue Devils double trouble: Twin brothers Lavaris and Javaris Roberts and Dominic and Darius Swilley.*







“We want to put the type of team and program that Clay High has been noted for over the last decade or so,” said Kennard, who took over in 2020 off a 1-9 season under then-coach John Stilianou who followed the decade reign of now-Bolles coaches Joshua Hoekstra and Matt Toblin.

Kennard opened with a 10-2 season in 2020 with a playoff run to Ocala Vanguard then a 7-3 slate that featured a dramatic 21-14 win over Fleming Island and an equally dramatic 23-21 win over Middleburg as highlights of the season, but the Blue Devils have slowed down in recent years as Kennard has had to rebuild his roster the last two seasons.

“I think we have the right players in the right places this year after missing a piece or two the past two years,” said Kennard. “I’m excited, the team is excited and the Blue Devil fans, I think, are going to get a good product on the field. This is a great town to play football in.”

Kennard’s fervor on the field is amplified by his optimism coming from his players emulating his enthusiasm for the game with the Swilley brothers to be dominant on defense; one of the defensive line, one in the secondary and the Javaris Roberts slated to be one of the top tacklers on the squad



Clay coach Kyle Kennard looks for Blue Devil tradition to return.

**“I think we have the right players in the right places this year after missing a piece or two the past two years. I’m excited, the team is excited and the Blue Devil fans, I think, are going to get a good product on the field. This is a great town to play football in.”**

– Kyle Kennard

*DE Omar Goosby is big, fast, mobile chaser in enemy backfield.*

after 73 stops last year put his reputation in the top tier box in the county.

“He came on big last year and will be one of the best linebackers in the county,” said Kennard. “He’s bigger, stronger, faster and will have a good front on the line in front of him. He’s our Jack Lambert.”

That “front in front of him” will feature the 1-2 punch of seniors Omar Goosby and Aaron Stacy, both very athletic, but not so big, linemen who both feature high-octane engines.

“Those two are going to be a big factor in our defense right from the snap with Stacy a beast because, though a bit smaller on the line, a wrestler-strong body with great footspeed and agility,” said Kennard, noting 41 tackles, three tackles for losses. “Those big guys up front will have a hard time finding him at the snap because he’s so quick.”

For Goosby, slightly bigger, but equally agile, the defensive end position has produced a history of great Blue Devils.

“I like our combination with me and Aaron side by side,” said Goosby. “We are both fast and can chase down people. We know our linebackers; Javaris and Kade have our back. We

**2003**

•3A, Jim Reape, Lost to Dunnellon in region final 26-19. Dunnellon lost in state semifinal.

**2004**

•3A, Jim Reape, Lost to Nease in region quarterfinal 39-23. Nease lost in region final.

**2007**

•3A, Jim Reape, Lost to Baker County in region quarterfinal 44-14. Baker County lost in region final.

**2009**

•3A Matt Toblin, Lost to St. Augustine in region semifinal 34-21. St. Augustine lost in region final.

**2010**

•3A Matt Toblin, Lost to St. Augustine in region semifinal 43-28. St. Augustine lost in state semifinal.

**2011**

•5A Joshua Hoekstra, Lost to Ponte Vedra in region quarterfinal 24-21. Ponte Vedra lost in state semifinal.

**2013**

•5A Joshua Hoekstra, Lost to American Heritage in 5A final 66-8.

**2014**

•5A Joshua Hoekstra, Lost to Bishop Kenny in region semifinal 34-26. Bishop Kenny lost in region final.

**2015**

•5A Joshua Hoekstra, Lost to Wakulla in state semifinal 34-24. Wakulla lost in state final.

**2016**

•5A Joshua Hoekstra, Lost to Ponte Vedra 52-42 in state semifinal. Ponte Vedra lost in state final.



just have to make plays.”

On the outside, Kennard has a twin combination with the Swilley brothers.

“The Swilley brothers will be our defensive ends with Goosby and Stacy inside,” said Kennard. “Omar is our guy. Javaris Roberts at linebacker is probably the best defender out there. Aaron is an undersized guy but he has an engine.”

At the linebackers, Roberts is built for the position; large, strong and fast, evidenced by an 80-yard breakaway score in a recent Clay intrasquad scrimmage. A new face next to Roberts will be Kade Williamson, a sophomore, but another multiple athlete.

On the edges, Kennard will have wrestler Vonte Burke as the nickel back.

“The way the game is played nowadays, you got to have athletes that can move,” said Kennard.

In the secondary, Lavaris



*Clay's 1-2 defensive punch will come from Omar Goosby, left, and his wingman Aaron Stacy, a state wrestler with a big engine.*

Roberts is in one corner with Mikeise Battle a new face on the other side with Gavin Bailey also getting reps.

“J'vion Cobbert is another great athlete that can go both sides and he'll be at safety,”

said Kennard. “Depending on the quarterback situation, both Landons can help out in the secondary or Landon Martin likes linebacker.”

Chadwick has been at multiple positions on both sides and

still will be a guy that can be installed on the field.

“He just wants to play,” said Kennard. “He's very athletic.”

At kicker, Ethan Bellemare had two game-winners last year; against Orange Park and Tocco Creek, with solid kickoffs all season.

On offense, with three quarterbacks vying for that spot; senior Merrick Rapoza, last year's starter, with Landon Martin and Landon Chadwick both taking reps over the summer with Rapoza playing summer baseball.

“We had Merrick for two days before the Spring game, but he's also an all-star baseball guy,” said Kennard. “Right now, it's just a good competitive spot that we will make some kind of decision down the line. Baseball went to the region finals last year with him.”

Running the ball, the Roberts brothers are slated to be ball carriers, with Antonio Thomas

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Left to right: Clay's backfield will have a three-man selection at quarterback with senior Merrick Rapoza, sophomore Landon Martin and junior Landon Chadwick all battling for the start spot.

being an any-position player with a great skill set.

"That position will be by committee; we got Oliver Pierre, Antonio, Vonte can run, Chadwick or Martin can go there," said Kennard. "Javaris definitely will tote between the tackles and we'll get the other guys on the perimeter."

Thomas looks to be the next great playmaker for Clay in the make of guys like Bilal Ally, Wes Weeks and Jaylan Jenkins.

"I watched those guys play when I was in junior high," said Thomas. "I worked to get myself ready to be that kind of player. They were great because they came to work every single day."



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<b>2017</b> •5A Joshua Hoekstra, Lost in region final to Baker County 29-14. Baker County lost in state final.	<b>2020</b> •5A Kyle Kennard, 10-2, Lost in region final to Ocala Vanguard 38-7. Vanguard lost to Dunnellon in state semifinal.
<b>2018</b> •5A Joshua Hoekstra, 4-6	<b>2021</b> •5A Kyle Kennard, 7-4
<b>2019</b> • 5A Jay Stilianou, 1-9	<b>2022</b> •5A Kyle Kennard, 3-7
	<b>2023</b> •4S Kyle Kennard, 4-6



## College Football

2018: Aundre Carter-University of Idaho; Ajay Belanger-Tusculum College Raequan Williams-Bethel University; Connor Davies-Brevard College; Jordan Copeland-Bethel University.

2017: Jarrod Leeds OL Georgia Southern University; Colin Wilson RB University of Louisville; Jaylan Jenkins QB Fort Scott Community College; Max Moore OL Jacksonville University; Rico Schnitzler LB Webber International University; Devon Vatick LB Webber International University; Derek Smith WR Bethel University; Marcus Jones RB Webber International University; Matt Adams LB Bethel University; Tre Griner QB East New Mexico State. Jordan Collins OL (NC Wesleyan), Zack Baker (Duke), Jacob Conrad (Furman), Bilal Ally (U of Massachusetts), Michael Howard OL (Ole Miss), Sean Grayer (U of S. Alabama), Chris Sakamoto LB (U West Florida), Turner Erstad QB (Concordia), Colin Wilson RB (Louisville), Mike Carns OL (Wingate), Max Moore OL (Jacksonville), Mike Adams LB (Bethel), Jeremy Beaulieu LB (Bethel), Raequan Williams RB (Bethel), Ajay Belanger WR (Tusculum), Aundre Carter RB (Idaho), Liz Fogarty K (Soccer, Georgia State), Wes Weeks QB (Baseball, U of North Florida), Jaylan Jenkins QB (Troy), Derek Smith WR (Bethel), J.T. Turner RB (USAF Academy), Marcus Jones FB (Cheer, UCF, USF), Jarrod Leeds OL (Georgia Southern), Max Moore OL (Jacksonville), Cliff Avril DL (Purdue, NFL Seattle Seahawks), Nolan Carroll DB (Maryland, NFL Dallas Cowboys, Philadelphia Eagles), Will Holden OL (Vanderbilt, NFL Baltimore Ravens); Bilal Ally RB Massachusetts; Valdez Seymour



*Clay' linebacker duo; Javaris Roberts, senior, and Kade Williamson, sophomore, will bolster a tough front line for the Blue Devils with Roberts the top tackler last season.*

On the outskirts, catching passes are, probably, the two best all-around athletes on the team; Antonio Thomas, a senior, and Daylen Brown, just a sophomore, but both showing creative running and catching skills all summer. Battle will see some pass-catching duties as will tight end Parker Dykas.

"Daylen was a junior varsity guy, but he learned a lot, lifted every day and was just here every day," said Kennard.

On the offensive line, the big names are Eli Oscoa, Josh Hetz and Blake Warren who come in as the main trio with Dashon Douglas with Touni Sauod as the new names. "I like our offensive line; we've been together for three, four years and have developed that trust of my brother," said Oscoa. "We like to think we can move any defensive line with hard-hitting, fast-blocking schemes." Kicking for Clay will be Ethan Bellemare, who came in with two game-winners last year; Orange Park and Toco Creek, and was



*Henry Rahm and Clay senior center Eli Oscoa, right, is big, strong leader of equally big and strong offensive line prepared to move people and release the Blue Devil offense.*

a strong kickoff guy leaving Clay's opponents starting at the 20 most times.

"He's one of the best kickers in the county," said Kennard. "We've always had pretty reliable kickers at Clay."





Clay's defensive end bookends will feature twin brothers Dominic Swilley, No. 3, and brother Darius Swilley to complete four man front of super athletic defenders. Kicker Ethan Bellamare had two game kicks in the Toci Creek game.



Former Clay High offensive line stalwart Jordan Collins, No. 63, returns from college play to offer his expertise to the next generation of great Blue Devil linemen. Right, Clay had beset run in recent history with Class 5A runnerup finish behind speed demon quarterback Wes Weeks, here squeezing between monster linemen Nick George, left, and Tyler Grimsley, No. 69.

***"I like our offensive line; we've been together for three, four years and have developed that trust of my brother. We like to think we can move any defensive line with hard-hitting, fast-blocking schemes."***

– Eli Oscoa

DL Lake Erie College; Caleb Slate LB Princeton University; Dez Sullivan DE Jacksonville University.

2015: Zach Baker, offensive tackle (Duke University, played in International Bowl, Team USA Under-19 team vs Team Canada); Michael Howard, offensive tackle (University of Mississippi); JT Turner, quarterback/wr/defensive back (United States Air Force Academy); Jeremy Peters, defensive back/running back (Liberty University); Sean Grayer, defensive end (University of South Alabama); Chris Sakamoto, middle linebacker (University of West Florida); Isaac Brinson, safety/wideout (Jacksonville University); Chris Barron, wideout/defensive back (University of West Florida); Cornelius Richardson, safety (Independence Community College); Andre Colson, defensive back (Iowa Central Community College); Billy Scriven, defensive end (Independence Community College); Ryan Dickerson, defensive lineman (Independence Community College)

### *Alums of Note*

Cliff Avril, NFL, Super Bowl champion with Seattle Seahawks, holds Super Bowl record fastest score; tackle of Denver Bronco quarterback Peyton Manning on first play of Super Bowl (12 seconds); Nolan Carroll; NFL, Dallas Cowboys, Philadelphia Eagles; originator for Jacksonville Athletic Academy college; Will Holden, OL, (Vanderbilt, NFL Arizona Cardinals, Baltimore Ravens, NY Giants, Indianapolis Colts, Cleveland Browns); Mikey Carns OL US Marine; Liz Fogarty K (Jacksonville Armada Womens Soccer pro team).



# CLAY HIGH Blue Devils



WR/DB Antonio Thomas



WR/DB Kendall Doctor



DL Dominic Swilley



WR/DB J'vian Cobbert



QB/ATH Landon Chadwick



LB/DB Vonte Burke



QB/ATH Landon Martin



WR/TE Parker Dykas



DL Aaron Stacy



LB/FB Donovan Davis



LB/RB Javaris Roberts



K/P Ethan Bellemare



WR/DB Nikiese Battle



WR Daylen Brown



LB/FB Kade Williamson



WR/DB Bryce Fisher



WR/DB Cameron Lee



RB/DB Lavaris Roberts



WR/DB Blake Deel



DB Oliver Pierre



LB/FB Skyler Phoenix-Dean



DB Gavin Baillie



Kevin Reyes



*Offensive Lineman*

TC PHOTOGRAPHY & MEDIA DESIGNS  
est. 2017





RB Isaiah Henson



DB Ryan Chapin



LB Lucas Youniet



DL Brayden Ringer



DL Anthony Isidro



DL Brady Rock



OL Eli Iscoa



OL Blake Warren



OL Dayshon Douglas



DL Barius Swilley



OL Jacob Troughton



OL Henry Rahm



OL AJ Bivins



OL Job Bryant



OL Gavin Thompson



OL Joshua Hetz



OL Benjamin Loper



OL Youni Saoud



WR Andrew Riddling



DL Jhaylen Golphin



DL Omar Goosby



*Varsity*





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# Fleming Island

## Schedule Fleming Island (3-5A, 3-7)

District 3-5A: Orange Park, Middleburg,  
Beachside & Ponte Vedra

Fri., Aug. 23 at Clay (4A, 4-6)	Fri., Oct. 4 vs. Creekside (7A, 9-3)
Fri., Aug. 30 at Riverside (4A, 9-3)	Thurs., Oct. 10 vs. Beachside (5A, 9-1)
Fri., Sept. 6 vs. Oakleaf (6A, 3-6)	Fri., Oct. 18 at Terry Parker (3A, 2-8)
Fri., Sept. 13 at Orange Park (5A, 4-6)	Fri., Oct. 25 at Middleburg (5A, 5-6)
Fri., Sept. 20 <b>BYE</b>	Fri., Nov. 1 vs. Fort White (Rural, 9-2)
Fri., Sept. 27 vs. Ponte Vedra (5A, 8-4)	

## Eagles set to begin redemption tour

By Mike Zima

FLEMING ISLAND - With eight returning players who hold offers from Division I schools, Fleming Island embarks on its 2024 football season intent on erasing the memories of 2023, when the Golden Eagles seemed to lose every close game and stumbled to a 3-7 record in Chad Parker's first season as the head coach.

In a dramatic change of personnel, Parker was relieved as head coach in August and defensive coordinator Derek Chipoletti was

### History

**2013**  
Frank Hall, 7A, Lost in region quarterfinal to Oak Ridge 48-41 (OT)

**2017**  
Damenyum Springs, 7A, Lost in region final to Bartram Trail 38-13.

**2019**  
Damenyum Springs, 7A, Lost in region semifinal to Niceville 47-28

**2020**  
Damenyum Springs, 7A, Lost in region final to Niceville 35-18

**2021**  
Damenyum Springs, 7A, Lost in region quarterfinal to Buchholz 35-7

**2022**  
Damenyum Springs, 4S 5-4

**2023**  
Chad Parker, 4S, 3-7







*Fleming Island has second four year quarterback at the helm with Cibastian Broughton returning to drive the Golden Eagles machine. Former quarterback Dean Hyams was a four year starter that took Fleming Island to seasons of 11-3 in 2017 and 10-1 season in 2019.*

named the head of day-to-day operations for the upcoming season.

Chipoletti declined to comment on the ongoing situation and its investigation saying he wants to be a positive force for the football athletes of Fleming Island as the season sits just two weeks away. Parker was contacted for comment, but none was received as of press time.

For Fleming Island, when teams are trying to end a playoff drought that extends back to 2019, a quarterback with sprinter's speed and two



*Derek Chipoletti has been named head coach amidst sudden resignation of Chad Parker.*

years of starting experience is a good place to start. And that is exactly where Fleming Island is resting its hopes in 2024. The Golden Eagles will go as far as highly touted senior quarterback Cibastian Broughton takes them.

"Our entire offense is filled with quality players in every position," said Broughton. "Our mentality is to get the ball to as many different hands as possible to keep defenses guessing."

Broughton accounted for 29 touchdowns running and passing and 3,300 yards of total offense in 2023.



*Left: Fleming Island has rugged Demhir Jackson as their top running back while, above, speedster Trace Burney will be the top pass target.*

## College

**2012:** Johnathan Jean-Catawba College; Craig Brodsky-Delaware; Frantz Caudio-Jacksonville U; Cameron McCurry-Villanova; Armando Bonheur-Samford U (NFL NY Giants, Canada Football League)

**2014:** Bryce Motes WR Wofford College; Darelle Smith WR Air Force Academy; David May OL Valdosta State; Zack Devore LB Northwestern Oklahoma State; Khalil Bryant De Princeton; Heath Whiddon DE Ithaca College; Joel Ntui DB Bethel University; Will Williams OL University of Pennsylvania; Mike Scarnecchia QB U of South Carolina; Brandon Kuhn LB Wofford College; John Biscardi OL Presbyterian College

**2015:** Neal Mars OL Florida International; Austin Smenda LB South Dakota State; Vincent Buzzy LB Savannah State; Joel Mock SS LaGrange College; Nick Walker LB LaGrange College; Trevor Forman FB Southeastern U

**2017:** Brandon Becar OL Davidson College; Josiah Robinson Bridgewater College; Brandyne Mackey OL Shaw University

**2021:** Alex Maier LB Furman; TK Kocak RB Naval Academy; Darius Harris DB Elon College; Jourdan Haynes DE Lake Arie College; Grant Travis QB Myrtle College

**2022:** Dedric Walker LB Bryant University; Joseph Stephens DB Armyh West Point; Caleb Jones WR Presbyterian College Jhoel Robinson- Stetson University, Soph Samuel Singleton Jr. FSU., Redshirt Freshman, (2023: Played 2 games, 56 Yds rushing, 4 YDs vs. Georgia in Orange Bowl)

Timothy Lawrence- USEF, Freshman OL  
Ethan Williams- Georgia Southern-Red-shirt Freshman OL







Fleming Island's defense will have explosive players on two levels with defensive end Nate Van Hof, No. 40, and Cohen Cioffi, No. 19 at linebacker.



Linebacker coach Chris Otero is tough taskmaster for Fleming Island's historically solid position.

During the track season, Broughton had several sub-11-second 100-meter dashes and

covered 200 meters in under 22 seconds.

Joining Broughton in the backfield will be senior Dem-

hir Jackson. While Broughton will often run the ball himself, Fleming Island will rely on the 210-pound Jackson, who

ran for 500 yards and seven touchdowns last year, to share the load and to convert short yardage situations.

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"We feel like we have the right people in position to make offense exciting," said Jackson.

Speedster wideout Trace Burney emerged last season as Broughton's favorite receiving target, and the 5'7" jitterbug returns this season to lead the receiving corps.

Burney, who holds offers from three Division I schools, will be a multi-position weapon on offense.

Burney has been on the receiving end of many of Broughton's long passes downfield and even riddled secondaries in a recent 7 v 7 passing scrimmage but took a more emotional response to play off Broughton's abilities.

"I look at like we've been together for a long time and this is our final season together," said Burney. "I just want to cherish the moments we make from here on out."

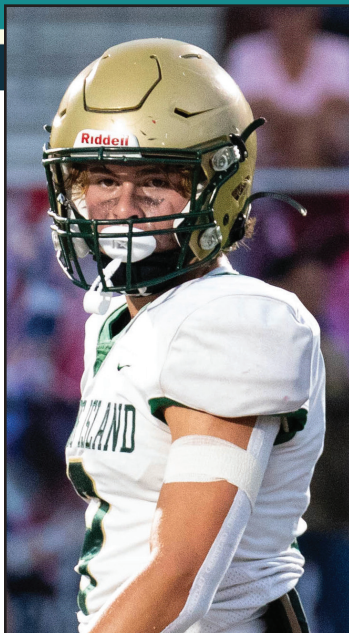
Burney will also be returning kickoffs with Tacori Allen and Sebastian Cruz returning punts.

Oliver Picchot, a sophomore that coaches expect to have a breakout season, and Tristan Stephenson, who played defensive back last year, will man the other receiver spots.

Cohen Cioffi, a junior, entertaining five Division I offers, will make an impact from his tight end position. Cioffi, still growing at 6'2", 225 pounds, will also start at defensive end.

On the young offensive line that loses All-State tackle Braden Cunningham to Florida Atlantic University, the guards will be junior Easton Isbel, who can bench press 300 pounds, and Kevin Reyes, a two-time state weightlifting champion and a defending regional wrestling champion.

The Golden Eagles plan to run the ball up the middle often,



*Safety Sebastian Cruz is super fast attack master from 12 yards away.*

they need strength in the interior. Thus, Steven Franklin, a 6'4", 290-pound senior who played left tackle last year, will move to center. Incoming freshman Gavin Holt (6'2", 220") will man one tackle position while sophomore Griffin Vallerston has the inside track on the other side of the line. Freshman Sawyer Peterson and Logan Kirkland will be the top backups if they do not win a starting job.

While the offense may experience a few growing pains with Franklin's position change and the young tackles, the Fleming Island defense on paper is above average at all three levels. The Golden Eagles intend to use four down linemen, two linebackers and five defensive backs in their base package.

One factor that gives Fleming Island a decided defensive advantage is the addition to the coaching staff of coach Mark Michaels.

"Definitely, coach Michaels has brought a whole new look to our game and that just makes us better," said Van Hof. "We've been lifting and working out together and it's a good bond."

The line will consist of Cioffi moving to end from the linebacker position he played last year, and Reyes on one side, and returning starters Nate Van Hof and Jarius Rodgers on the other. Van Hof was very productive last year, while Rodgers is a 6'5", 210-pound junior who runs a 4.6 40-yard dash. Rodgers was a state qualifier in the high jump and 110-meter hurdles last spring and has offers from Notre Dame and Florida State.

"We are coming off a good defensive year last year and look to be even better this year," said Van Hof. "We have coach Michaels and we're playing as a pretty tight unit."

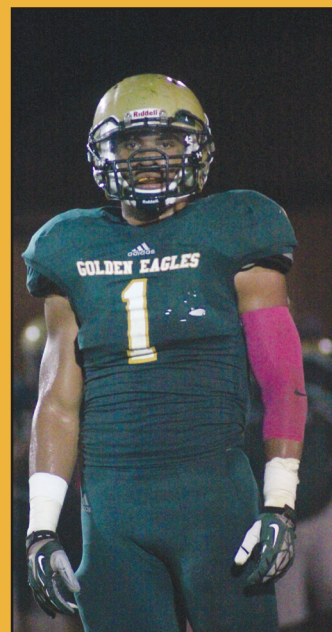
Another young player looking good is sophomore Braden Street, whose quick development led to the decision to move Cioffi from linebacker to defensive end. Street will be paired at linebacker with A.J. Witt, an Army commitment, who is a smart tactician known for his intelligence and physicality. David Smith is the fourth piece of the linebacker puzzle.

"Having those guys in front us; Nate, Cohen and Jarius, makes our job a little easier because they will clog the lanes and force guys around them," said Smith. "That's where Sebastian and I will meet them. It's an awesome situation."

Witt jokingly called Cioffi his twin brother as both have developed similar striking patterns and thought processes.

"We might look different, but you can say we are twins," said Witt. "We are similar in build and movements and we are going to make some noise out there."

The secondary will be extremely green but very athletic. Sophomore Tacori Allen, who started at safety last year, will move to cornerback while junior



*Ryan Smenda, LB, NFL Los Angeles Rams*

### College

**Jhace Edward's - Albany State, Played 4 games, 3 tackles**

**Abram Wright- Rutgers University, LB Freshman, played 5 games, interception in Bad Boys Mowers Pinstripe Bowl vs. Miami, Brenden Cook- University of West Florida, Soph, played 5 games, 2 passes for 45 yards; 13 yarder vs. Kentucky, 31-yarder vs. Shorter**

**Darion Domineck and Michael Zeray- Blinn College, Domenick redshirt freshman; Zeray OL, played three games**

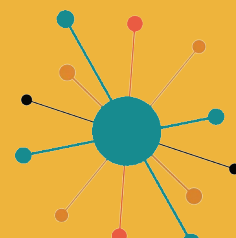
**Tabari Tucker - Methodist University, soph. DT**

**Musthafa Marshall- Kentucky Christian.**

**Brody Glickman and Tyler Williams- Jacksonville Athletic Academy.**

**Walker Whiddon- Webber International University.**

**Austin Allred- River City Prep. Nate Chase OL Southeastern University**





Sebastian Cruz returns to man one safety spot. Allen and Cruz both have offers from Iowa State and SMU.

Chase Donaldson will start at the other safety position while either fellow sophomore Eric Gentry— who is also the backup quarterback— or junior Fabrice Joseph is likely to start at the other cornerback spot.


Where Fleming Island expects to see the biggest improvement from 2023 to 2024 is on special teams. Mark Michaels, a former NFL special teams coach who has been at Oakleaf High School is the Fleming Island special teams coordinator. Michaels has coached at three Division I colleges and spent eight years coaching in the NFL. Kicking coach Bailey Cate, an Orange Park High and Old Dominion University standout, is hoping to jump-start the kicking game with veteran Parker Sirdevan.

Golden Eagles should compete for a district title in their



*Kicker Parker Surdivan is a long range scorer that can handle the pressure of tight games.*

new Class 5A district, which includes Beachside, Ponte Vedra, Clay County rivals Orange Park and Middleburg. Fleming Island's non-district schedule includes high-profile matchups with Oakleaf and Creekside and the traditional season opener at Clay.

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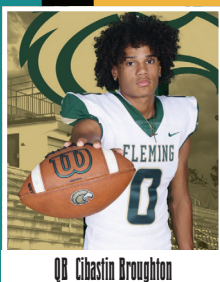
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# Golden Eagles

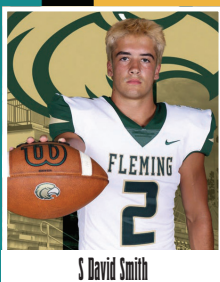
FLEMING ISLAND



QB Cibaſtin Broughton



S Sebastian Cruz



S David Smith



WR Trace Burrey



LB Cohen Gioffi



LB Tacori Allen



LB Arion Whitt



RB Demhir Jackson



DL Nate Van Hof



DL Jarius Rodgers



WR Damiano De Steno



WR Oliver Piechota



WR Tristan Stevenson



LB Dylan Tison



QB Eric Gentry



LB Grayson Cuitley



S David Fuentes



DB Fabrice Joseph



K/P Parker Sirdevan



RB Brady Dignan



DB Logan Battig



LB Jacob Parks



DB Chase Donaldson



LB Peyton Spooner



LB Kameron Singleton



DL William Casteza



DL Sawyer Pearson



DB Levi Cox



TE Jayden Smith



LB Christopher Bajandas



DL Isaia Kisenia



DL Kevin Reyes

Photos courtesy of

Leonard's





OL Easton Isbell



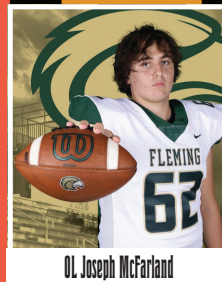
DL Lavell Howard



DL Landon Howard



DL Noah Moreno



OL Joseph McFarland



OL Caleb Wein



OL Griffin Vollertsen



OL Gavin Holt



OL Steven Franklin



OL Adam Myers



OL Logan Kirkland



OL Colton Otero



WR Gavin Boysen



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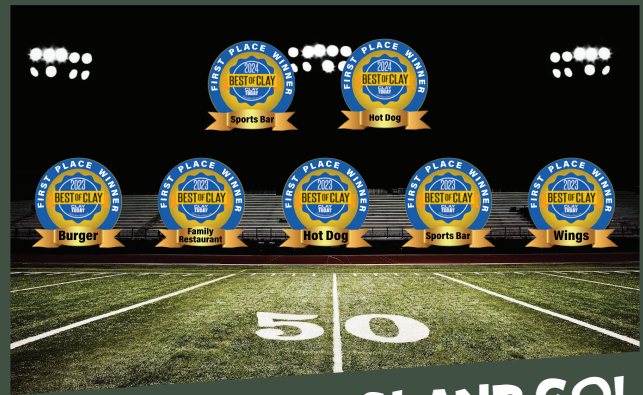


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# Playoffs, bragging rights in new districts

By Randy Lefko

FLEMING ISLAND - Well, Well, Well, football just got a little more interesting for the upcoming 2024 season as the FHSAA, in their presiding wisdom, has returned to the Class 1A, Class 2A, etc. system of classifications with new alignments set up that will make Clay County football very interesting.

## No Cupcakes

"The whole state of Florida is good football," said Middleburg coach Ryan Wolfe. "That's just how Florida is, every district is going to have a few juggernauts. Last year, we had Columbia. There are no cupcakes."

With the new alignments, Clay County teams will stay closer to home with trips last year to Titusville (FIHS), Melbourne (OPHS), and Daytona Beach's Taylor-Pierson (KHHS) not on the schedules in 2024. Middleburg takes a ride to North Marion at the end of their season and Oakleaf will visit Hawthorne and Ridgeview takes a long drive to West Nassau as the furthest trips on the schedules.

## Rivalry Games

"It's good for our football because our rivalry games will all be good games," said Orange Park coach Marcus Wimberly, who lived through the District of Doom (FIHS, OHS, Bartram Trail, Buchholz and Creekside). "It's still not a cakewalk because not only playoff points at stake, but county bragging rights."

In one of the more strategic "rivalry" moves for the fall, district 3-5A will have Fleming Island, Orange Park and Mid-



*Middleburg coach Ryan Wolfe is lone playoff survivor in Clay County past two seasons.*

dleburg all in one package with Beachside and Ponte Vedra district foes.

Ponte Vedra, being the more recent consistent playoff team of the five with deep runs in Classes 5A, 6A and 7A back during the Matt Toblin days of head coaching in 2015 up to 2020; seasons of 8-3, 13-1, 7-5 and 8-3, when Toblin left for Bolles.

Last year, Ponte Vedra lost their season opener, but ran the table to the playoffs with a seven game streak that ended with two losses to Nease and Creekside and a region playoff loss to Buchholz; the Bobcats the Class 4S state runnerup last year to Lakeland by a 21-20 score. Buchholz now Class 6A; District 3-6A with Bartram Trail, Nease and Toco Creek thus eliminating the once-District of Doom (3-4S) that featured Buchholz, Bartram Trail, Creekside, Fleming Island and Oakleaf.

## District of Doom

Locally, Middleburg enters as the lone playoff team of the District 3-5A group with both

Oakleaf and Fleming Island unable to thwart the District of Doom damages last year. Orange Park missed a few key plays in their season to not make the playoffs and Fleming Island could not catch the frontrunners, but dealt with new coaches, new scheme and being in the dreaded District of Doom.

## Pot Stirring

For 2024, a little pot stirring in district 3-5A is likely to happen. One, Middleburg's notoriously treacherous schedule under Coach Ryan Wolfe's last two years offered just a 5-5 won lost record with three losses out of the box to three state contenders; Hawthorne, unbeaten Class 1A champion; Bradford, Class 4A runnerup, and Ponte Vedra.

Wolfe survived the opening salvo of games, but Orange Park coach Marcus Wimberly gave a glimpse of Uh!Oh! with an upset win in game nine that was just shy of a playoff upset.



*Sean Grayer, CHS, U of South Alabama DE*



*RHS QB Derek Hatcher, Memorable, but tragic.*



*FIHS DE Jeremiah "Bus" Jackson, Furman U.*



*CHS OL Michael Howard, scariest OL ever*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 80



# Keystone Heights

## History

1992

4A Robert Wright, Lost in districts to Newberry 12-6. Newberry lost in state final.

1993

2A Robert Wright, Lost in semi-state first round to P.K. Yonge 15-0. P.K. Yonge lost in state semifinal.

1994

3A Robert Mooring, Lost in semi-state first round to Newberry 27-24. Newberry lost in state semi-final.

1997

3A Walt Darty, Lost in region first round to Trinity Christian 49-7. Trinity Christian lost in region final.

1998

3A Walt Darty, Lost in region first round to Bolles 62-6. Bolles won state title.

2005

2A Chuck Dickinson, Lost in region semifinal to South Sumter 35-0. South Sumter lost in state final.

2006

2A Chuck Dickinson, Lost in region semifinal to South Sumter 52-12. South Sumter lost in region final.

2013

4A Chuck Dickinson, Lost in region semifinal to Bolles 32-10. Bolles lost in state final.

2014

4A Chuck Dickinson, Lost 32-10 in region semifinal to Bolles. Bolles state runnerup.

2017

4A Chuck Dickinson, Lost in region quarterfinal to Bradford County 27-2. Bradford lost in state semifinal.



Jackson Herman, Bryce Daniels, Teddy Westbrooks, Pete Bostic, Luke Bacorn, Jackson Faul (Driver)

## Resurrecting the pounding run game

By Randy Lefko

KEYSTONE HEIGHTS - Back in the not-so-distant past, the Keystone Heights High football team was noted for one thing.

"We could just run the ball all night," said former coach and still Athletic Director Chuck

Dickinson, who orchestrated a near curtain call 10-2 season with two playoff games; one a 50-0 bruising, and had, arguably, one of the more unstoppable ground games in all of Florida with three stallions; Dalton Hollingsworth, Tyler Jen-

kins and Logan Williams, who accumulated like 5,000 yards of rushing with an astounding 58 touchdowns. "We only threw the ball on the goal line to score touchdowns; 18 of 41 for the season with five touchdowns to our two tight ends; Bryar Schenk



# Schedule

## Keystone Heights (4A, 4-6)

District 5-2A: Bradford, Newberry, Palatka & Sante Fe

Fri., Aug. 23 at Interlachen (SSAC, 2-8)  
 Fri., Aug. 30 vs. Union County (Rural, 8-4)  
 Fri., Sept. 6 BYE  
 Fri., Sept. 13 at Newberry (2A, 9-3)  
 Fri., Sept. vs. Dixie County (Rural 7-4)  
 Fri., Sept. 27 at Bradford (2A, 14-1)  
 Fri., Oct. 4 vs. West Nassau (Freelance, 3-7)  
 Fri., Oct. 11 at Sante Fe (2A, 0-10)  
 Fri., Oct. 18 vs. Chiefland (Rural, 4-7)  
 Fri., Oct. 25 vs. Palatka 92A, 7-4)  
 Fri., Nov. 1 at Crescent City (1A-4-6)

and Caleb Moncrief with one to Logan."After a few tough seasons a product of a huge graduation class from the 9-1 team, fast forward to 2024, with his assistant coach on the sideline at the time; Steve Reynolds, taking over two seasons later, the Indians, with what looks like a carbon copy of that iconic Keystone Heights team have the blueprint for 2024; big offensive linemen, a smart quarterback, a great batch of wide receivers, two bulldog running backs and bunch of flying missiles on defense.

"We're very excited about this season after a very productive spring and summer season," said Reynolds. "We have a very competitive schedule opening with Interlachen, we got Bradford as always with Newberry, Palatka and Union County always tough."

One additional piece of the puzzle is an expanded passing game under the leadership of a Patrick Swayze (Point Break) looking surfer bad-ass quarterback named Baylor Ford and a quarterback coach who stepped away from his mentee for about



**Mighty Mite Colton Hollingsworth, 150 pounds of crash as linebacker and running back with fearless abandonment.**

a week before returning to Keystone Heights to guide his young protege to raising the Indians lore back up to country-rugged status.

"I felt bad about leaving Keystone Heights (to go to Middleburg High) and decided that I wanted to come back and at least get a chance to help Baylor be the best quarterback in Clay County," said Ken Mudge, himself an iconic slinger for Orange Park High in the Danny

Green era for the Raiders. "He has all the tools physically and the best of athletes around willing to follow him. Coach Reynolds has given me some good direction to use the tradition of Keystone Heights tough football and add the passing game to it."

Reynolds was glad Mudge returned to Keystone Heights.

"I was glad he came back," said Reynolds. "He has a great rapport with kids, and he and I were getting in sync with the offensive game plan. He wants to be a head coach someday and he is almost an assistant head coach with me. He called most of the offensive game plan last year."

In 2023, Ford and his compadres opened up a little shocked with two losses right out of the gate; 35-0 and 49-26, before Reynolds and Mudge tweaked the strategy a little going from 49 yards passing and 118 yards passing in those fateful games to blowout wins in a row; 49-0 and 46-8, with Ford more able at getting the ball downfield quicker with games of 161, 193 and 136 following



Steve Reynolds

### 2019

4A Chuck Dickinson, Lost in region quarterfinal to Astronaut34-14.

### 2020

4A Chuck Dickinson, Lost in region quarterfinal to Bradford County, 40-14.

### 2021

4A Chuck Dickinson, Won region quarterfinal 50-0 over Umatilla, Lost in region semifinal to The Villages Charter 34-6 (Villages lost to Cocoa 54-21 in region final)

### 2022

2S Chuck Dickinson, 2-8

### 2023

New coach Steve Reynolds, former coach at Bradford County, Oakleaf and St. Johns Country Day School. Reynolds has been defensive coach at Keystone Heights past three years, part of region final finish and 10-2 season in 2021. Had home playoff win that year, 50-0, over Umatilla, lost 34-6 to The Villages in round two. Replaced Chuck Dickinson, the coach since 1990. Retained long time linebackers coach and state weightlifting two time champion coach Lantz Lowery and former Orange Park High quarterback Ken Mudge.



Keystone Heights power will derive from fullback Zane Leger, here getting handoff from quarterback Baylor Ford.





Senior wide receiver Tallon Campbell is one of handful of double-side standouts on offense and defense as defensive back.

to finish with three wins and a playoff opener loss to Yulee.

“He’s learning more and more and developing a good quarterback intellect to read and react to defenses and get the ball to the right guy,” said Mudge, as summer passing drills against the likes of Fleming Island and Clay, as a direct challenge of Reynolds to his team to raise their game. “His receivers will do whatever it takes to get their hands on the ball and they all were making each other look good against some of the best athletes from Fleming Island and Clay.”

With Ford accumulating 1,092 yards last year with 13 touchdowns, Keystone Heights in 2024 will have a new look as Ford’s favorite targets; Andru

Siemer and Wyatt Van Zant have graduated.

For Reynolds, who had his history under the lights of Bradford County and Oakleaf with head coach Derek Chipoletti, the mix of passing and running is something he’s not hesitant to look forward to.

“I can see us going to move to the balance of an offensive attack,” said Reynolds. “Baylor has learned more and more the past two years from coach Mudge and we have pass catchers; Tyler Sapp, Jackson Parmeter, and Tallon Campbell, all willing to go horizontal to get to passes. They will all run through a wall for Baylor.”

Stepping up thus far over the summer has been junior Jackson Parmeter, an ex-back-

**“They could be the best five-man crew ever at Keystone Heights, if not in the state,” said coach Gregory Daniels, who has escorted son Bryce to a variety of college campuses with some of the Tractor Boys coming along to get the very best look at big-time college blocking.**

up quarterback and safety, and Tanner Campbell who was impressive in the Indians’ spring games against Ridgeview and Interlachen in May.

“Baylor is the kind of quarterback that can get through his reads quickly and get to the guy that is open and can keep the ball moving,” said Campbell. “It makes our job a little easier because if we get open, he will

find us.”

Up front, where the self-nicknamed “Tractor Boys” will be, is a very big, powerful and very motivated batch of boys that look to follow the footsteps of guys like Mason Dicks and Luke Snider, two behemoths for Dickinson.

For 2024, the biggest guy will be sophomore center Bryce Daniels, 6’-4”, 305 pounds, with



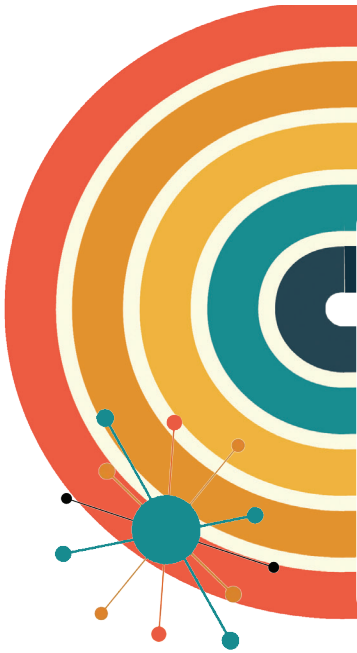
Keystone Height linebacker Layton Wright is ball hawk here with fumble recovery, and adds to legend of tough Indians linebackers.



Senior strongman Jackson Herman, defensive lineman, is one of many state champion weightlifters on the Keystone Heights roster.







One of Keystone Heights' top playmakers will be junior Jackson Parmeter, here with interception against Interlachen after 60 yard pass play earlier in spring game.

range.

"Zane is the prototype Keystone Heights running back; big strong, tough, but Colton, Dalton's brother, is a tough kid to get on the ground," said Reynolds. "Colton is smaller and can hide behind the big offensive guys and find openings."

On defense, Reynolds sees Herman, 23 tackles, returning to his spot at defensive tackle where he was a leader for last year's rugged defense.

"He's a little bigger than Trey Jeffries who was with him

Luke Bacorn (T), Pete Bostic, (G) Jackson Herman (G), Teddy Westbrook (T), Jackson Faul and Damien Dunlap all big, strong rugged stompers.

"They could be the best five-man crew ever at Keystone Heights, if not in the state," said coach Gregory Daniels, who has escorted son Bryce to a variety of college campuses with some of the Tractor Boys coming along to get the very best look at big-time college blocking.

Reynolds says Daniels' trips around the southeastern college football campuses have been a learning experience for him to better his footwork and his movement.

"Remember, he's only a sophomore and got his bruises last year as a freshman," said Reynolds. "What he learned from all those college visits, he

can pass on to his guys next to him and they all get better."

The OL crew has had their trial by fire the past few years with the Indians having tough schedules year in and year out with teams like Bradford County (14-1), Newberry (9-3), Union County (8-4) and Dixie County (7-4) on the docket as Reynolds slowly nurtured the intensity of Keystone Heights' run game into the big boys up front.

"The strength of this team is our offensive line for sure," said Reynolds. "Our backfield has good size to hit; Zane Leger, Damian Dunlap and Colton Hollingsworth carrying the ball. We are very similar to that 2021 team."

Put all that together into a tight offensive package and add two running backs not hesitant to lower their helmets and bash

tacklers; Zane Leger and Colton Hollingsworth (sound familiar?) and Reynolds and Mudge, with first down plays looking like a plus five every time behind that offensive line and Leger, 6'-0", 210 pounds, more than likely the first handoff, second downs could very well be in the second and three, second and four

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last year, but he's very football smart," said Reynolds. "All those guys on the offensive line will rotate in on the defensive line depending on the situation with Bryce probably getting in on third and shorts, fourth and shorts." Reynolds knows that durability is part of the process of Keystone Heights football and, with most of his guys a part of the Indians state-ranked boys weightlifting team, Reynolds will be hoping for more depth as a big help. "They have been working hard and lifting all summer knowing that an injury to any of our guys could be critical," said Reynolds. "We don't have 35-40 guys on our roster."

Linebackers are familiar with Kyle Perkins and Layton Wright both returners with Leger on one of the edges.

"Again, if we are holding on to the ball on offense with Zane (22 tackles) and Colton running and eating the clock, we should be okay," said Reynolds. "A quick turnover could hurt our

guys who are going both ways."

In the secondary, Reynolds will have Parmeter, two interceptions, and Hollingsworth will return as probable safety with Hollingsworth the enforcer in the backfield.

"Since his brother graduated, Colton has been our best tackler out there (33 tackles) and he's only half his size," said Reynolds. "Damien Dunlap is also one of our top guys on defense." Reynolds had one of the best punters last year in graduate Connor Guy with Tyler Sapp taking over in 2024.

In the district schematic, Reynolds acknowledged the new team; Newberry, is a tough opponent with Santa Fe and Union County top opponents beyond the annual Bradford County rivalry game.

"Chiefland is another one of those small schools that puts out tough football teams," said Reynolds. "We'll prepare each week as hard as anyone, I know that."





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# Keystone Heights Indians



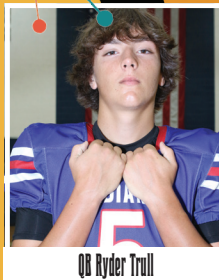
WR Jackson Parmeter



SS/RB Colton Hollingsworth



WR Andrew Wilson



QB Ryder Trull



FS Micah Screen



RB/LB Zane Leger



WR Tallon Campbell



QB Baylor Ford



WR/OB Tyler Sapp



Trace Wooden LB/TE



LB/TE Tyler Brinson



RB Hunter Crompton



WR Deshawn Williams



WR Michael Dukes



Layton Wright



RB/LB Kyle Perkins



WR Evan Lallemond



OL Jagger Lancaster



TE Talon Lybarger



RB/LB Damien Dunlap



OL Juan Plama



OL Teddy Westbrook



OL Kaden Tillman



OL Tyler Kermer



OL Pete Bostic



OL Luke Bacorn



LB Rayne Pace



DL/OL Jackson Herman



OL Jackson Faul



OL Bryce Daniels

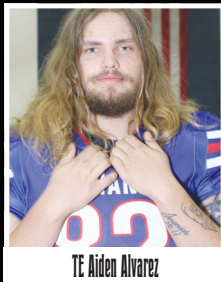




# Varsity



OL Logan Madden-Moore



TE Aiden Alvarez



K Ryder Omas

*Keystone Heights offensive coordinator Ken Mudge, a former Orange Park High quarterback, has been mentoring Baylor Ford for the past three years and sees this year as a building block for Ford's ascension as a team leader.*





*History*  
**1984**

3A Lost in 7-3 to Robert E. Lee in region quarterfinal; Lee lost in region final.

**1987**

4A Lost to Satellite High 24-14 in region quarterfinal. Satellite lost in region final.

**1989**

5A Lost to Pensacola Washington 31-26 in region quarterfinal. Washington lost in state semifinal.

**1990**

5A Lost to Choctawhatchee 38-0 in region quarterfinal. Choctawhatchee won state title.

**2003**

3A Beat Palatka 54-28 in region quarterfinal, lost 45-22 to Dunnellon in region semifinal. Dunnellon, who beat Clay in region final, lost in state semifinal to Bolles.

**2016**

6A Lost to Crestview 35-0 in region quarterfinal. Crestview lost to St. Augustine in region semifinal.

**2017**

6A Karl Smeltzer 2-8

**2018**

6A Karl Smeltzer 3-7

**2019**

6A Karl Smeltzer 3-7

**2020**

6A Karl Smeltzer 0-10

**2021**

6A Ryan Wolfe 5-5

**2022**

3S Ryan Wolfe 5-6, Only Playoff team in county, lost to Pensacola Escambia 42-18

**2023**

3S Ryan Wolfe, 5-6, Only Playoff team in county, lost to St. Augustine in regions 52-14

# Middleburg

## Broncos: New schedule, tough finish

**By Randy Lefko**

MIDDLEBURG - With his first two years of rugged scheduling; the likes of two-time state champion Hawthorne, powerhouses Ponte Vedra and Bradford County, Middleburg High football coach Ryan Wolfe

gets a bit of a breather in 2024 with a reversal of sorts of his scheduling demands.

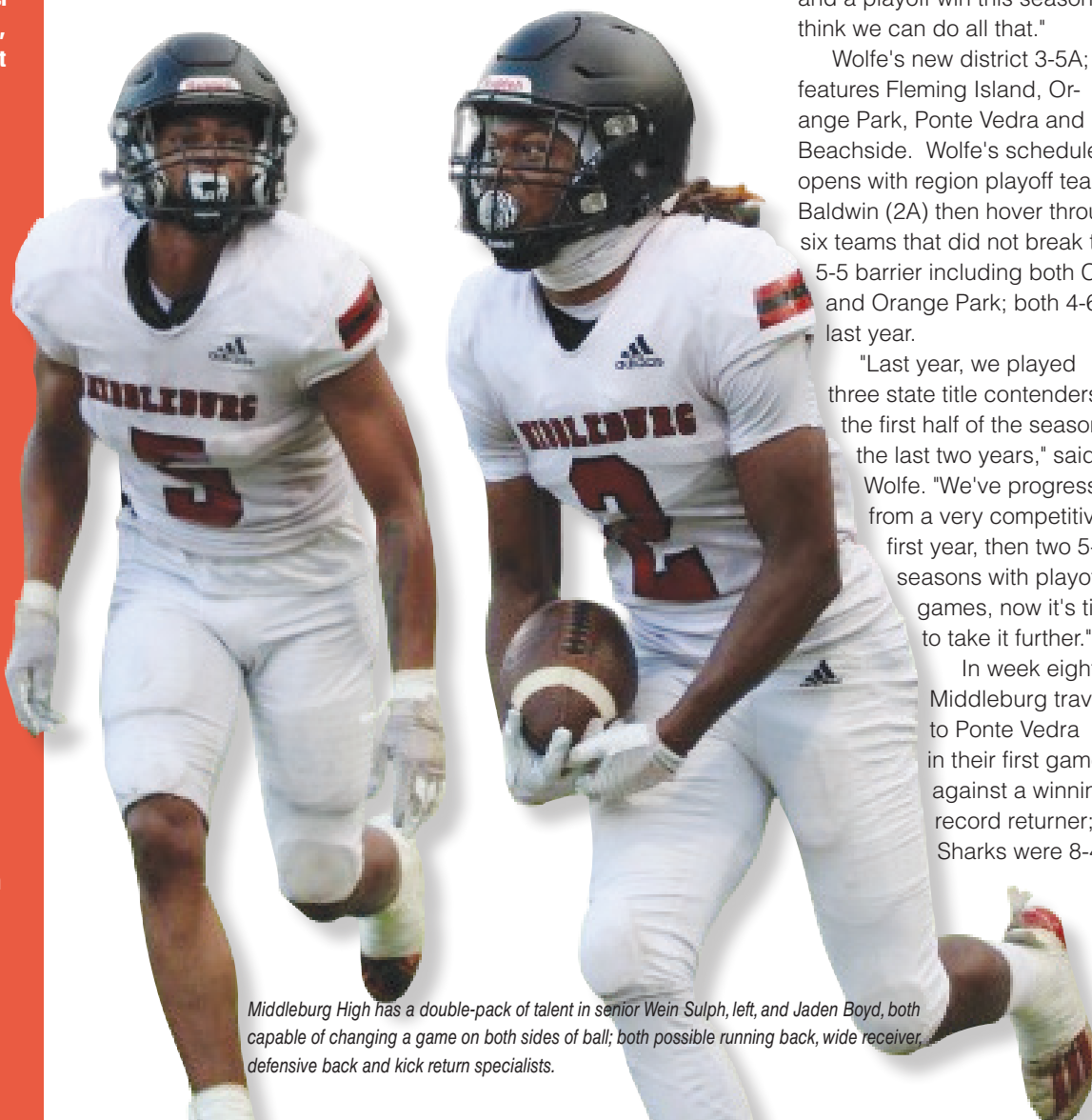
"We have had to face state contenders in the first part of our seasons the past two years and we have survived to be the only playoff team in Clay County

the same two years," said Wolfe, who has back-to-back 5-5 seasons with a first-round playoff departure to eventual deep region teams; Pensacola Escambia (42-18) and St. Augustine (52-14). "I would like a winning season, a playoff run and a playoff win this season. I think we can do all that."

Wolfe's new district 3-5A; features Fleming Island, Orange Park, Ponte Vedra and Beachside. Wolfe's schedule opens with region playoff team Baldwin (2A) then hover through six teams that did not break the 5-5 barrier including both Clay and Orange Park; both 4-6 last year.

"Last year, we played three state title contenders in the first half of the season, the last two years," said Wolfe. "We've progressed from a very competitive first year, then two 5-5 seasons with playoff games, now it's time to take it further."

In week eight, Middleburg travels to Ponte Vedra in their first game against a winning record returner; Sharks were 8-4,



Middleburg High has a double-pack of talent in senior Wein Sulph, left, and Jaden Boyd, both capable of changing a game on both sides of ball; both possible running back, wide receiver, defensive back and kick return specialists.



# Schedule

## Middleburg (3-5A, 5-6)

District 3-5A: Fleming Island, Orange Park, Beachside & Ponte Vedra

Fri., Aug. 23 vs. Westside (3A, 0-10)  
 Fri., Aug. 30 NFEI (1A, 2-8)  
 Fri., Sept. 6 vs. Clay (4A, 4-6)  
 Fri., Sept. 13 vs. Hollis Christian Academy (Freelance, 1-6)  
 Fri., Sept. 20 vs. Ridgeview (4A, 1-9)

Fri., Sept. 27 vs. Orange Park (5A, 4-6)  
 Fri., Oct. 4 BYE  
 Fri., Oct. 11 at Ponte Vedra (5A, 8-4)  
 Fri., Oct. 25 vs. Fleming Island (5A, 3-7)  
 Fri., Nov. 1 at North Marion (3A, 1-9)



Middleburg quarterback Carson Stewart has one solid year at the helm under coach Ryan Wolfe's offense strong attack and will have a bevy of weapons to move the ball in rivalry-thick district with Fleming Island and Orange Park.

then finish with Fleming Island; 3-7, but potentially much improved, and North Marion, a highly touted program in the past season, but still 1-9 last year.

"Every team is good in Florida and this district versus that district is not what makes teams competitive or not," said Wolfe. "Teams regroup, get good young kids in after good seasons and return to their usual level of competitiveness. With the new district, we want the winning season, the district title and to get to the next playoff game. We have 16 seniors that can add some legacy to their final games as a Bronco."

Where Wolfe has had the most success to get to those playoff games has been with a running game that featured two stalwart, now college standouts;



Middleburg wide receiver Jordan Williams had outstanding summer in numerous Broncos' passing scrimmages as one of quarterback Carson Stewart's top targets.

Mike Mitchell, slated to be a big part of the University of Utah nationally-ranked run game, and T.J. Lane, part of the University of West Florida program that is a legit national NCAA Div. II a playoff contender.

Factor out a playmaking offensive highlight reel in quarterback Jaylan Jenkins, from 2023, and Wolfe is revamping his offensive schematic to include a bit more run game and a bit more pass.

"Carson Stewart is a solid pocket quarterback with a strong arm and has been in the program enough that we can throw things at him and he is a quick learn," said Wolfe, noting Stewart came to Middleburg after leaving Fleming Island where four-year starter Cibastian Broughton was on board for his junior season, now his senior



BJ Carter

### College

Caleb Freytag WR Erie Community College NY, Tanner Peery OL Concord U. (W Va.), Malachi Flowers Thomas More University (KY), Aiden Mayo WR Thiel College (PA), Stone Newsome LB Carroll University, Cole LeClair OL, Valdosta State/McNeese State (LA); Brody Senn LB, Shorter University/Cheerleading; Trevor Todd WR (Webber); Joe Justino K (U of West Florida), Steven Henrikson DE (SEA Atlanta JUCO); Laron Bryant WR (Kentucky Christian); (Bailey Barnard DL, Mayville State; Kodi Karrington LB Methodist; Brent Caviness DL, Mayville State; Andre Jean-Pierre DL, Mayville State, Daniel Justino K, U of Florida/Northwestern State (now Kicker for Arena Football Orlando), Rob Justino QB, Liberty; Richard Owens TE, Louisville, Anthony Havens WR, Culver Stockton, Joseph Lieds OI, Concordia University.

### 2022 Signees

Stone Newsome LB Carroll College; Cole LeClair OL McNeese State; Mike Mitchell RB Utah; T.J Lane RB West Florida; Aiden Mayo DB Thiel College, De'Marion Suggs DT MTI Prep, Tony Steele LB Monmouth College, Jayden Levy-Zlotowski Highland Community College, Toshombe Jenkins MTI Prep.

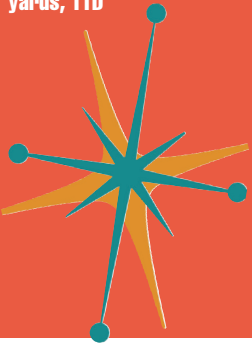


## 2023 Signees

Kaleb Robison K North Carolina Central, Austin Cruce LB William Penn, Jaydan Jenkins QB Iowa Western, Micah George, St. Thomas, Gage Isbell OL Point, Braydan Street Kentucky Christian, Trent Robinson LB Mount Union, Jarren Rosier WR William Penn, Errick Fryer DB St. Thomas

## Key Alumni

Cole LeClair, OL, McNeese State, Senior, 4th ranked in FCS 2025 Draft selections; Mike Mitchell, RB, Utah, Sophomore, slated as one of top RBs for Utes; TJ Lane, RB, West Florida, Redshirt Freshman, played three games; 10 carries, 61 yards, 1TD



*Middleburg's tough guys up front will be tasked in new district to protect quarterback Carson Stewart and release a bevy of running backs for Broncos.*

season. "We have a good package of plays and players that can execute and, I think, Bronco fans will be excited about our product."

Stewart opened his varsity campaign in the Broncos preseason game against Oak Hall with a 75-yard scoring strike to wide-out Deshun Green that opened a lot of eyes on the sidelines and also on IHUHL.

"We are still trying to find a running back next to me, but we have plenty of weapons to open the passing game," said Stewart. "Middleburg has had two great running backs the past few years."

Stewart's footwork continued to be a part of his summer preparations.

"Coach Wolfe is trying to stretch the pocket using me

rolling left or right," said Stewart. "I also have an option to run, but I'm better now at throwing on the run from both sides. We have a good couple of receivers that I'm very confident with."

For the receiving end of Stewart's strikes, Wolfe has a cadre of strong hands led by Fleming Island transfer Jordan Avellino, Jordan Williams and Ridgeview transfer Deshun Green, who led Panther's paltry offense with nine catches and one score last year, who has lit up defenses all summer in 7 v 7 passing scrimmages.

Over the summer, Williams seemed to be Stewart's top target with reliable hands and open field finds getting him open on the Bronco's complex routes with Green the long threat most times. Green had success with Stewart hitting him on 10-15 yard slants then adding yards with his footspeed and that could play well if the running game limits pocket time for Stewart.

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Left: Wide receiver Deshun Green has height, reach and speed and will be vertical target off offense. Above: In the secondary, defensive back Joel Lowe showed good instincts to steal passes in Broncos' summer passing scrimmages. Grad No. 61 Cole LeClair is top Bronco in the college ranks with the burly offensive lineman one of top blockers in nation at McNeese State University. Far right: Last year's top kicker in the area, Kaleb Robison, is knocking out 60 yard kickoffs for Central Carolina University.

In the backfield, Wolfe has some choices to take guys like senior Jaden Boyd, a secondary athlete with a good skill set and great football instincts, but tabbed to be free safety over the summer. Boyd and graduate Errick Fryer were great team leaders last year and should continue with Sulph to possi-

bly be Boyd's wingman in the secondary and possibly Dusty Silcox as a safety; and possibly Travis Pinkard, both solid athletes who don't mind sticking their helmet in front of bigger ball carriers.

As of August, Wolfe had Sulph getting the backfield as his main running back with a

handful of guys possibly joining him.

"We have to see who steps up as the fall part of the season progresses," said Wolfe.

One guy who seems to be the Swiss Army Knife candidate is Wing Back, tight end may-be Mason Zwilling, last year's plug-in guy at quarterback and

multiple offensive slots catching passes. Zwilling has embraced his versatility on the field and could be a surprise player for Wolfe.

"Mason can be an H-Back, fullback kind of guy for us," said Wolfe. "He can block, made some nice catches and runs over the summer for us, and is

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*Broncos colorful defensive coordinator Benjamin Traywick has host of athletic players to bolster strong Bronco defense led by nose tackle B.J. Carter and protected in the secondary by Jaden Boyd and Wein Sulph.*

just ready to play anywhere on the field."

Up front, big Charles Little is the menace in the trenches as the biggest guy and sporting a state weightlifting ticket from last year.

With Little, will be junior Trent Pavlus at left tackle, senior Noah Montoro at left guard, senior Travis Antienowics at center, Little at right guard, and

junior Jaykeyvicious Carter at right tackle; all 300-plus pound movers and shakers.

"We've been just working out hard in the weight room, eating right, and making ourselves ready for the trenches," said Little, one of a handful of 300-pound plus mammoths on the offensive line under the direction of former Fleming Island High standout Nate Chase,

who played at Southeastern University. "We want to be able to move the entire line as a unit. We are pretty athletic and if we get our guy outside the tackle, we want to lead the way. Iron sharpens Iron; we come to work every day."

Little liked that his quarterback, Stewart, is a side-to-side pocket guy with his options opening up as he moves out of the traditional pocket.

"Over the summer, we have learned about his tendencies and we are on the same page knowing that if we keep on our feet and head on a swivel, we can get downfield to protect him for extra yards," said Little.

One spot the Wolfe will be filling a big void is linebacker Austin "Cowboy" Cruce is gone with his nearly 100 tackles all four years. Cruce's menacing nonstop seek-and-destroy attitude is one part of the Bronco defense that will be inherited by a new face and it may come from a guy a little bigger, but a

lot closer to the point of attack in nose tackle BJ Carter. Carter, a monster defensive end with wingman Tucker Cody on the opposite side last year, has gotten bigger, faster, and stronger and carries a lot of Power 5 college interest for his talents.

"He's going to dominate, pretty simple," said Wolfe. "He and Tucker were a great duo last year and we have him in the middle this year so he can go either way. Because we have a three-man front, we will be mixing and matching them for situations."

Carter said the move gives him more space to operate which makes a strong side or weak side kind of a moot point for opposing offenses.

"Being in the middle is a different feel, but I'm working through the small adjustments so I can be effective across the whole field," said Carter, 49 tackles, 5 TFLs, and 10 quarterback hurries as a defensive end. "From the middle, I can



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attack both sides of the offenses which should get me more tackles. I think my strength will get me through the double teams that offenses will try on me."

Junior Gabe Baker is a second third of the equation with junior Brad Darnold the third third. Defensive coordinator Benjamin Traywick sees the best of both worlds in his defense.

"We have B.J. in the middle, we have a great secondary with Boyd and Sulph and we have a few guys that will be effective as our linebackers; Hanifen and Mooningham with Danny Raines out there," said Traywick. "They will make some noise. I think Austin Cruce put the standard of linebacker on our team and these guys know what is expected; energy, pursuit, and 11 hats to the ball."

Behind the defensive line, Wolfe will have wrestler Daniel Raines, a junior, as one middleman, and junior Kadin Hanifen next to Raines.

On the perimeter, Angel

Valdez and Keensdee Roseme, both juniors. "One thing we do is make sure our junior varsity guys are practicing as hard as the varsity," said Wolfe. "We don't anticipate a drop off in our play because our JV teams have been pretty good the past three years. We just plug a guy in and the execution and expectation are the same."

In the secondary, Floyd Reed and Joel Lowe will man the corners with both showing good reaction and skill in summer passing sessions with Sulph in a safety slot with Boyd, Sulph, and Silcox floating around in centerfield as well.

"Me and Jaden have been working in the weight room to get bigger to be able to deliver the tackles from our spots," said Sulph. "From being a wide receiver, I think both of us have good tendency reads when we are back-pedaling, knowing how receivers kind of thing when crossing the middle. Our group is going to get a lot of

picks this season."

Sulph also acknowledged that facing off against Fleming Island's senior quarterback Cibastian Broughton is one of the top things circled on his calendar. "He's the best and the rivalry will only be a great game," said Sulph. "He's my boy and we know what each other can do." Kicking-wise, Wolfe loses everything weapon Kaleb Robison to Central Carolina

University and will be seeking another guy who can put kick-offs into the end zone and not miss from the field.

"I don't think we are going to surprise anyone this season being the past two seasons, we have been the only team in the playoffs from Clay County," said Wolfe. "I think we'll be getting everybody's best games when they face us and that puts some pressure on us."

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**AUG 23**

Keystone @ Interlachen  
Riverside @ Oakleaf  
Orange Park @ Ridgeview  
Fleming Island @ Clay  
Westside @ Middleburg

**AUG 30**

Union County @ Keystone  
Oakleaf @ Orange Park  
Yulee @ Clay  
Middleburg @ NFEI  
Ridgeview @ West Nassau  
Fleming Island @ Riverside

**SEPT 6**

Keystone - BYE  
Oakleaf @ Fleming Island  
Orange Park @ Riverside  
Clay @ Middleburg  
Ridgeview vs. Englewood

**SEPT 13**

Keystone @ Newberry  
Oakleaf @ Hawthorne  
Fleming Island @ Orange Park  
Tocoi Creek @ Clay  
Hollis Christian @ Middleburg  
Ridgeview - BYE

**SEPT 20**

Dixie County @ Keystone  
Oakleaf @ Bolles  
Bartram Trail @ Orange Park  
First Coast @ Clay  
Ridgeview @ Middleburg  
Fleming Island - BYE

# Clay County Football Schedule

# 2024

**SEPT 27**

Keystone @ Bradford  
Fletcher @ Oakleaf  
Orange Park @ Middleburg  
Clay @ Ridgeview  
Ponte Vedra @ Fleming  
Island

**OCT 4**

W. Nassau @ Keystone  
Oakleaf - BYE  
Westside @ Orange Park  
Clay - BYE  
Middleburg - BYE  
Ridgeview @ KIPP  
Creekside @ Fleming Island

**OCT 11**

Keystone @ Santa Fe  
Oakleaf @ First Coast  
Orange Park - BYE  
Clay @ St. Augustine  
Middleburg @ Ponte Vedra  
Ridgeview @ Columbia  
Beachside @ Fleming Island

**OCT 18**

Chiefland @ Keystone  
Ed White @ Oakleaf  
Ponte Vedra @ Orange Park  
Clay @ Fernandina Beach  
Middleburg @ Beachside  
Impact Christian @ Ridgeview  
Fleming Island @ Terry Parker

**OCT 25**

Palatka @ Keystone  
Mandarin @ Oakleaf  
Orange Park @ Beachside  
Columbia @ Clay  
Fleming Island @ Middleburg  
Ridgeview @ St. Augustine

**NOV 1**

Keystone @ Crescent City  
Tocoi Creek @ Oakleaf  
Clay @ Orange Park  
Middleburg @ North Marion  
Ridgeview @ Episcopal  
Fort White @ Fleming Island







# SCORE BIG!

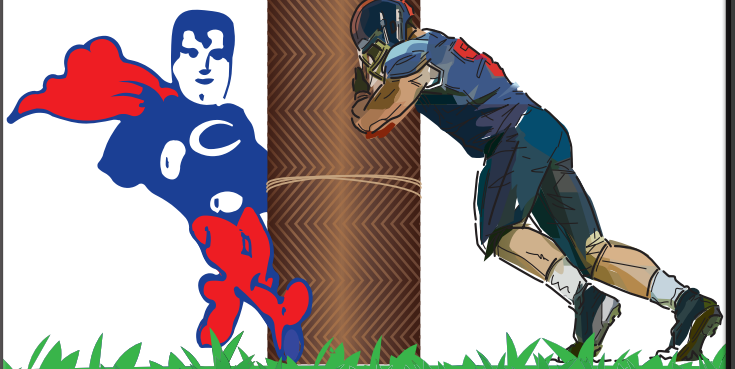
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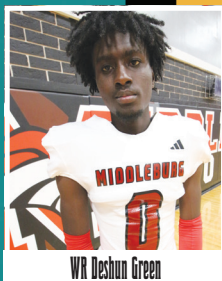


# Good Luck Clay County Teams!

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# Middleburg Broncos



WR Deshun Green



SS Jayden Boyd



DB Floyd Reed



DE Joel Lowe



WR Jordan Williams



SS Wein Sulph



WR Jordan Avelling



QB Carson Stewart



LB Kadin Hanifen



DT RJ Carter



RB Travis Pinkard



LB Angel Delgado



DT Mason Zwilling



QB Kymani Pettway



QB Treyvon Malone



OLB Keensdee Roseme



RB Jordyn Grace



RB Joseph Morales



RB Mason Peavy



SS Frank Hanna



SS Dusty Silcox



RB Caiden Thigpen



DB Jaylen Jolosuk



OLB Caleb Eastwood



LB Kellen Blackburn



DB Ethan Vela



RB Sam Craven



LB Daniel Raines



WR Michael Bowden



WR Tim Ories



OLB Ronell Seward



DE Brad Darnold



OLB Blake Nolanax





DL Gabe Baker



LB Peyton Mooningham



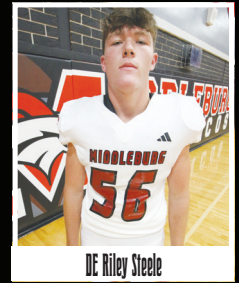
K Brock Araujo



K Ace Bullock



DL Jakevious Carter



DE Riley Steele



DL Massi Zori



DL Charles Little



OL Makachi Haynes



OL Noah Montoro



OL Trent Pavlus



OL Logan Tedrick



OL Destin Watson



OL Travis Antienowicz



WR Tristan Angelo



WR Drake Massaro



WR Robert Schilling



Defensive end Gabe Baker gets his 44 jersey from Corey Hawkins on media day at Middleburg High School.



# Oakleaf

## Schedule

Oakleaf (2-6A, 4-6)

District 2-6A: Fletcher,  
Mandarin, First Coast

Fri., Aug. 23 vs. Riverside (4A, 9-3)  
Fri., Sept. 6 at Fleming Island (5A, 3-7)  
Fri., Sept. 13 at Hawthorne (Rural, 12-0)  
Fri., Sept. 20 at Bolles (2A, 8-6)  
Fri., Oct. 4 BYE  
Fri., Oct. 11 at First Coast (6A, 6-5)  
Fri., Oct. 18 vs. Ed White (4A, 7-5)  
Fri., Oct. 25 vs. Mandarin (6A, 11-4)  
Fri., Nov. 1 vs. Toco Creek (6A, 5-5)

## Knights to be big, fast, strong

By Randy Lefko

OAKLEAF - On paper, the Oakleaf High football lineup looks like a small college-level team on both sides of the ball; massive offensive linemen, two smart, agile quarterbacks, a bruising downhill running back, whippet fast wide receivers, an equally big defensive line, rugged linebackers and a secondary with sticky fingers.

What more could second-year coach Chris Foy want?

"After last year at 3-6, we need to learn to finish games," said Foy. "We scored a lot of points and played a lot of tough teams, but could not find a way to win those big games. We

want to win those close games now that we know what it feels like to lose them. Plus, these guys love each other and want to be tough and successful as a family."

In 2023, after opening with a 42-0 thrashing of Orange Park and a 24-14 upset win at Fleming Island, Foy looked like he was going to be a miracle man on the sideline giving Knights fans a repeat of Derek Chipoletti's undefeated playoff season in 2014.

"The new district puts us in with big boy football; Fletcher, First Coast and Mandarin, and that will be a challenge, but our schedule last year and this year

### History

2010  
Freelance Joel Brighton 3-7

2011  
6A Joel Brighton 0-10

2012  
6A Derek Chipoletti 6-4

2013  
7A Derek Chipoletti 5-6

2014  
7A Derek Chipoletti 12-1, unbeaten regular season, two home playoff wins, lost to Niceville in region final at home

2015  
7A Derek Chipoletti 8-2

2016  
7A Steve Reynolds 7-3

2018  
7A Steve Reynolds 2-8







*In his second year, Oakleaf High coach Chris Foy has a ton of weapons to not go 3-6 in 2024 and with Foy's history of turning programs to contenders quickly, Oakleaf fans should see an exciting brand of hard-nose football on the field.*

is tough even our district," said Foy. "Here in Clay County, I remember when I was at Jackson, we hated to come to Clay County to play because the football is so good here. We hated having to travel to Clay High, that's a tough place to play, so we will be battle-tested."

Not to happen, especially in arguably the toughest district in Florida (Bartram Trail (8-5, lost region final to Buchholz), Buchholz (13-1, lost in state semifinal to 4S champion Lakeland 21-20), Creekside (6-5, lost in region quarter to Ponte Vedra), Fleming Island), Foy's team skid to six straight losses, albeit against top-ranked teams from north Florida; Bolles (lost in 2M state semifinal to 2M runner-up Norland 28-7), Creekside, Bradford (2S runnerup to Cocoa 20-6), Madison County (1R runnerup to Hawthorne 22-13) before salvaging the season with a 43-7 win over Clay.

"We know we have one of the toughest schedules in Florida this year and only lost seven seniors. We know what we have to do to prepare and be

competitive," said Foy. "It's a matter of being a team, trusting the guy next to you and just doing your job."

In 2024, Foy does not let off the gas pedal again an uphill battle on paper no game offering cruise control; Riverside (9-3, lost in region semifinal to Bishop Moore 37-35); Hawthorne (2X defending state champion, 13-0 12-0 last two seasons, 10-1 2021, lost to Madison County in the state final 13-12, 10-3 2020), Bolles (8-6, lost in the state semifinal to runnerup Miami Norland; 2022, 9-5, lost state semifinal to 2M runnerup American Heritage 21-14), Fletcher (7-4) and Mandarin (11-4, 4M



Jordin Price

**2019**  
7A Frank Garis 5-6, lost region opener in overtime to Lincoln 38-31

**2020**  
8A Frank Garis 7-4, lost to Bartram Trail in region opener 51-7

**2021**  
8A Frank Garis 4-6

**2022**  
4S Marcus Miller 5-5

**2023**  
New coach Chris Foy, from Andrew Jackson High (two district titles in three years). Coached at Fletcher during Oakleaf region playoff run; beat twice by Chipoletti; regular season and playoff. Son Chris Foy II in as running back for Oakleaf.

state runnerup to Miami Columbus 38-19, 2018 8A state champions over Miami Columbus 37-35).

"Yeah, it's tough," said Coy. "But, this is a different team with a different mentality."

Ironically, where



Foy will be with a quarterback is a question mark. He has two guys; junior Jayven Moreno, last year's backup to Brandon Wallace, Jr., and transfer Jack McKissock, a prolific player from The First Academy where he accounted for 1503 yards passing and 19 scores for a 6-4 season in 1M with 11 interceptions. Wallace leaves after putting up 1373 yards passing with nine touchdowns last year as well as 442 yards rushing with six touchdowns.

"I wanted to play with the big boys, that's why I'm here," said McKissock, early in the summer.

McKissock, a junior, had won with scores of 43-6, 56-0, 63-6 and 59-12 for the Hornets.

"Both guys have good skill sets and have shown the ability to keep the chains moving," said Foy. "Jack is a pocket-type guy while Jayven is such an athlete and can get downfield quickly. Jack is a little more cerebral, but can get downfield,



*Two keys to the Oakleaf offensive engine will be quarterback Jack McKissock; strong arm passer, and running back Chris Foy II, downhill, punishing ball carrier.*

too."

In the backfield, Foy has a Foy as his lead back, "Wendy's son" as he calls him, meaning senior son Chris Foy II, who brings a strong pair of legs, soft hands for swing passes and an intensity that keeps his offensive

linemen in check.

"He's like a quarterback out there because he knows what everyone in front of him is supposed to do," said Foy. "We go as he goes."

Next to Foy II will be senior Malachi Worthen who was mainly a wide receiver last year but looks to be a speed back out of the backfield.

Foy jokingly said his H-Back position or wingback will be "a linebacker or someone like that."

"That's mainly going to be another big body up close to the offensive line to clear the

way," said Foy. "We might even use Amare "Biggie" Thomas (6'4", 325 lbs.) out there or one of my big guys up front, Mykel Mayo (6'3", 310 lbs.) may get that call."

Foy will have a handful of firepower on the outskirts of the field with the speed, hands and savvy of guys like sophomore sensation Michael Conner III, his wingman Jordin Price and superman Carlos Witherup.

"With the schedule, we have against the well-coached teams we play, we have to keep them guessing and with this firepower, I think we can do that," said Foy. "There's a lot of ways we can get you."

Witherup, with 24 catches last season for Mandarin state runner-up finish, returns to the Oakleaf lineup after playing his junior season at Mandarin. Witherup played behind Jaime French, Jr., last year, now a senior, who had 62 catches for the Mustangs with 14 scores.

"Having him back is a big plus for the young guys because he is one of the smartest guys on the field," said Foy. "Michael and Jordin are playmakers with a lot of speed and great hands. Carlos and another great player, Zach Michel, a senior, will make the four of them very hard to defend. Those boys can

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*On the second phase of Oakleaf offense is a second equally effective quarterback in Jayven Moreno who adds an element of breakaway speed from the pocket to the Knights' arsenal.*



burn.”

Up front, the big guys include Reggie Houston, Chris Jules, Jaden Adams at center, Lewis Nixon and Mykel Mayo, all averaging nearly 325 pounds in total body mass.

“They are big, strong and fast,” said Foy. “The big difference between our big guys and other big guys in the county, is our guys can dunk a basketball.”

Reggie Houston, a massive offensive lineman, concurred with his coach.

“Doing the things he asks of us; like running in sand, is what is going to make us mentally tough and physically fit,” said Houston. “We work and sweat as a unit in the sand pit and when we get on the field, it’s the same mental toughness that gets us through the fourth quarter.”

The workhorse on the offensive line, according to Foy, is Chris Jules.

“He’s our lunch pail guy,” said offensive line coach Bubba Horne. “No matter what we ask of him, he goes full tilt. He’s not flashy out there.”

On the defensive front, the leader and one of the more dominant big men will be Amari “Biggie” Thomas who garnered plenty of college interest over



Kicker Andrew McDaid is one of top kickers in area.

the summer.

“Biggie will be the target for most offenses to avoid, I know I would,” said Foy. “A new guy, who comes back from an injury last year is Jamal Ray Durant who, as a senior, has gotten much better. It’s got to happen this year.”

At linebacker, where all everything Dajon Brown will be the biggest empty spot having transferred to Columbia, Lake City, Foy has Jermaine Robinson and Ryan Copeland slated to be the second wave.

“It hurt to lose Dajon because he could have been the

**“The new district puts us in with big boy football; Fletcher, First Coast and Mandarin, and that will be a challenge, but our schedule last year and this year is tough even our district. Here in Clay County, I remember when I was at Jackson, we hated to come to Clay County to play because the football is so good here. We hated having to travel to Clay High, that’s a tough place to play, so we will be battle-tested.”**

Oakleaf Coach, Chris Foy



One welcomed returner is wide receiver and kick return playmaker Carlos Witherup who returns after a junior season with Mandarin to add senior expertise on the edges.



Defensive stalwart Amari “Biggie” Thomas is huge asset in center of also very big Oakleaf defensive front with Mason Thomas on his wing for Knights to plug up between the tackles.

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*Massive defensive end Mason Thomas will team up with equally big Amari Thomas to give Knights defensive front huge presence at line of scrimmage. Fleming Island transfer Kaylib Singleton adds speed to the Knights defensive secondary and a good knack for blocking field goals.*

best defensive player in the county,” said Foy. “But, we got guys there that will make the plays; Trevin Davis at outside linebacker is going to be a big factor.”

In the secondary, Foy has track-fast athletes that will be severely tested this season with what Foy calls, one of the best groups of wide receivers in the

state. “James Kitchens is the experienced one back there with Kaylib Singleton (transferred from Fleming Island, brother to FSU running back Sam Singleton and arguably as fast) able to cover a third of the field and TJ Erling the brains of the operation,” said Foy. “We will be facing great wide receivers on our schedule with Jaime

French from Mandarin, (62 catches, 1247 Yds, 14TDs) and Naeem “The Dream” Burroughs of Bolles (47 catches, 1019 Yds, 15 TDs); offers from Notre Dame, West Virginia, Ole Miss, all legit big college recruits lining up against us. Riverside has two senior receivers coming back; Myles Kendrick (40 catches, 710 YDs, 9TDs); committed

to Indiana, and Tae’ Shaun Gelsey (48 catches, 859 YDs, 9TDs), a Florida verbal commit. They will be challenged.”

Burroughs was limited to just five passes last year in Bolles’ win over Oakleaf with no scores.

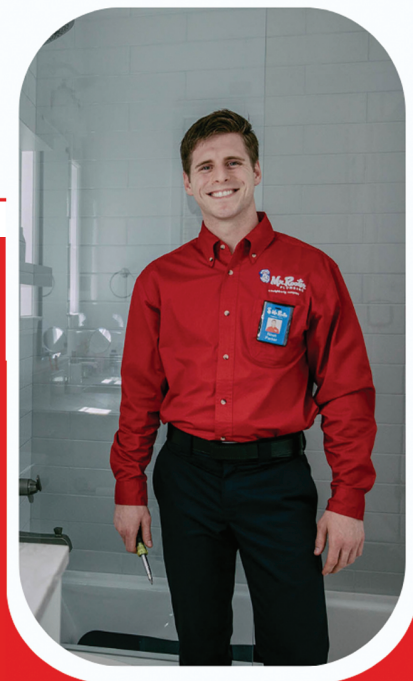
One guy returning from a torn labrum last year is senior Maurice Samuels, who Foy said ran a legit 4.3 seconds 40 at South Carolina State and then picked off 10 passes in 12 scrimmages at the FCA pads camp at Southeastern University in July. “We call him ‘Webbie’,” said Foy. “He came here from Westside last year but got hurt. He will be exciting to watch in the secondary.”

On the kicking game, Foy has one of the best everywhere in Andrew McDaid who was 24 of 26 in Points after touchdowns with five field goals on five tries.

“He’s automatic,” said Foy. “Hopefully, we started every series on defense at the 20 because he can kick that thing out of the stadium.”



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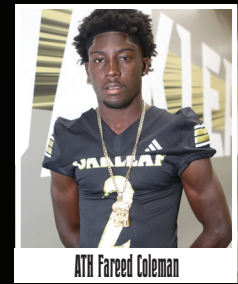
# Oakleaf Knights



RB Christopher Foy II



ATH Carlos Wintherup



ATH Fareed Coleman



DB Tyrone Early



LB Jermaine Robinson



WR Denero Jacos



ATH James Kitchen



ATH Michael Conner II



QB Jack McKissock



LB Bryan Copeland



QB Jayven Moreno



ATH Jordan Price



DB Kaytib Singleton



ATH Malaci Warren



ATH Rodney Townsend Jr.



QB Savion Williams



DL/LB Anthony Smith



LB Trevan Davis



WR Zach Michel



LB/DB Kamauri Townsend



DB Maurice Samuels



LB Michael Ingram



WR Emmett Egger



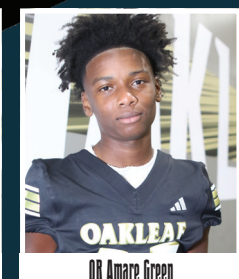
DB Quassim Swain



P/K Andrew McBaid



ATH Isaac Ford



QB Amare Green



DL/LB Chase Jones



RB Jeremiah Edwards



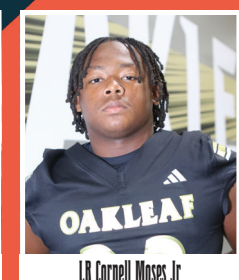
DB Ronel (RJ) Bishop



DB Marlen Castillo



DB Rasoci Kamma



LB Cornell Moses Jr.





LB/DB Sean Smith



ATH Aiden (AJ) Justilien



LS Joel Bazinet



LB Josiah Edwards



DL Jacob McClintic



OL/DL Jayden Adams



OL/DL Evan Brown



OL/DL Christopher Jules



OL/DL Jaylin Wilson



OL Louis Innocent



DL Mason Thomas



OL Parker Havies



OL Gabriel Lines



OL/DL Harley Germaine



DL Jamaraye Durant



DL Kahlil Matthews



OL James Jean-Baptist



OL/DL Mykel Mayo



OL Anthony Salas



OL Demetrius Jones



OL/DL Reginald Houston



WR Terrance James



WR Jarius Ervin



WR Jaylon Willis



WR Jakoven Livingston



DB David Masline



RB London Carswell



LB Devonte Scott



DL TayKell Wilson



LS Cameron Keen



DL Dequan Beechman



ATH Israel Rivers



DL Amare Thomas



# Orange Park

1980

4A Wendell Davis. Won in quarters 29-20 over Terry Parker, Lost in region semifinal 50-14 to Tate. Tate won 4A title.

1992

5A Bob Williams, Beat Niceville 14-13 in quarterfinal, beat Daytona Beach Mainland 10-7 in Semifinal, lost in region final to Manatee 37-17. Manatee won title over Miami Dillard 44-14.

1994

6A Bob Williams, Lost in region quarterfinal 41-0 to Niceville. Niceville lost in state semifinals.

1999

6A Bill Shields, Lost in region quarterfinal to Lake Mary 33-14. Lake Mary lost in region semifinals.

2008

5A Danny Green, Beat Pine Ridge 27-7 in quarters, beat Daytona Beach Mainland 21-20 in semifinals, Lost in region final to Pine Forest 33-7. Pine Forest lost in state semifinals.

2009

6A Danny Green, Lost in region quarterfinal to Deland 46-0. Deland lost in state final.

2010

6A Danny Green, Beat Mainland 29-28 in quarters, beat Deland 14-6 in semifinals, lost in region final to Seminole 21-16. Seminole lost in state semifinal.

2020

5A Tom Macpherson, Lost in region quarterfinal 41-24 to Menendez.

2021

6A Tom Macpherson 3-7

2022

3S Marcus Wimberly 2-8

2023

3S Marcus Wimberly 4-6

***"We think we got the team culture in the right spot; them believing in themselves and kind of not listening to what people say or write. Now, we just have to cultivate the talent."***

– Marcus Wimberly





# Raiders are hoping three's the charm

By Randy Lefko

ORANGE PARK - Orange Park High football got Marcus Wimberly here as coach just three years ago with a Tennessee high school state title on his resume, a national championship ring on his finger from the University of Miami, and an NFL career, albeit, shortened by injury.

Three years later, with seasons 2-8 and 4-6, Wimberly is looking to bank on his third year as the changeover season.

"These guys here as seniors have been my guys since I got here and I think we've changed the culture to what a Raider football player is supposed to be," said Wimberly, who brings an experienced quarterback back, Gabe Taylor, as the focal point of his attack. "We were a couple of points away last year from getting a playoff spot and these guys know what it took to get that close. This year, we will surprise some people."

With a last-second field goal by Clay one of his "close" losses; 42-41, and an overtime loss in the season finale to Fleming Island; 28-27, Wimberly's optimism could rise from just one game.

"Middleburg came to our house last year ready to go to the playoffs and we hit them with a kickoff return for a touchdown and a 41-22 game



*In 2023, the Raider defense, led by linebacker Justin Davis, No. 54, put the shackles on Fleming Island quarterback Cibastian Broughton in tough 28-27 overtime loss for Raiders. In 2024, the rivalry becomes key district game.*

that probably showed the kids where the program should be," said Wimberly. "That game and the Fleming Island game the next Friday set the tone for the preparation for this season."

Wimberly will get his chance to open eyes in Clay County due to the new district lineup for the Raiders; District 3-5A: Orange Park, Fleming Island (3-7), Clay (4-6), Beachside, (6-5) and Ponte Vedra.

With the district lineup chock full of quality athletes; Ponte Vedra being the top returner with their 8-4 record and region semifinal finish against Buchholz, and Beachside, a newcomer to the area with a 9-1 record last year in just their second year.

"We think we got the team culture in the right spot; them believing in themselves and kind of not listening to what people say or write," said Wimberly. "Now, we just have to cultivate the talent. We have some prom-

## Schedule Orange Park (5A, 4-6)

District 3-5A: Fleming Island,  
Middleburg, Beachside & Ponte Vedra

Fri., Aug. 16 (Preseason) vs. Mandarin (6A, 11-4)  
Fri., Aug. 23 at Ridgeview (4A, 1-9)  
Fri., Aug. 30 vs. Oakleaf (6A, 3-6)  
Fri., Sept. 6 at Riverside (4A, 9-3)  
Fri., Sept. 13 vs. Fleming Island (5A, 3-7)  
Fri., Sept. 20 vs. Bartram Trail (6A, 8-5)  
Fri., Sept. 27 at Middleburg (5A, 5-6)  
Fri., Oct. 4 vs. Westside (3A, 0-10)  
Fri., Oct. 11 BYE  
Thurs., Oct. 24 at Beachside (5A, 9-1)  
Fri., Nov. 1 vs. Clay (4A, 4-6)

**"These guys here as seniors have been my guys since I got here and I think we've changed the culture to what a Raider football player is supposed to be. ..."**

Marcus Wimberly

Senior tackle Jeremiah Hamilton and quarterback Gabe Taylor, a junior, look to get the Raiders into playoff contention in 2024.



ising incoming players."

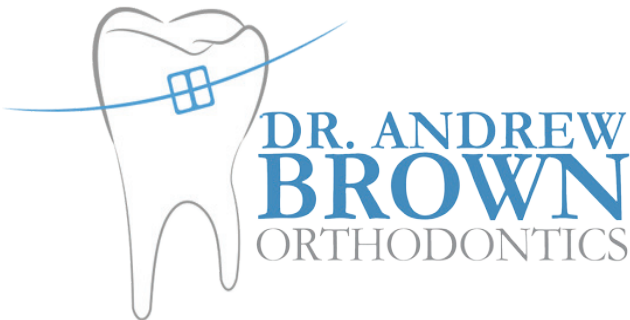
The Clay County trio; Raiders, Fleming Island, and Middleburg will give area fans better than just "a good rivalry" game as the playoff points will count now that everyone is in the same district.

"It's still going to be good football week after week because that is just Florida football," said Wimberly. "Sure, Middleburg is the lone county playoff team, but we got them last year. We should have beat Fleming Island last year as we played our best games right there at the end of the season."

Taylor is Wimberly's point man with the versatile leader quickly grasping the reigns of Wimberly's pretty simple and forward-moving run power game with a sprinkling of fast, mobile pass catchers; mainly track speedster Daniel Richardson, who moved over from defense and glue-fingered Ryder Fulmer playing at the hashmark.



Orange Park's offensive line has the heft of senior Jeremiah Hamilton, left, and junior Andrew Austin to toss some beef at enemy defenders.



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Tennessee coaching buddies Marcus Wimberly and Coby Haslett have slowly moved the Raider culture to a strong work ethic with high efficiency.

"Both can run, both make solid catches," said Taylor, with 1651 yards passing, 15TDs last year. "We'll mix it up pretty good on offense."

Taylor's best games were against Episcopal; 34-19 win with 229 pass yards with one score and a 101 QB rating and 217 yards against Ridgeview; a 36-12 win, with two scores.

Taylor noted that extra practice time with his two targets has given them a good rapport on the field and makes his reads more effective.

"We've been doing the extra work to make routes more precise with Daniel primarily our deep vertical threat and me taking the over the middle routes," said Fulmer. "We're hoping to

get solid catches then separate and get the extra yards. Daniel is a threat anywhere on the field."

Offensive line coach Coby Haslett likes his opportunistic offense with solid pass-catching and some rugged ball carries with an experienced quarterback.

"When we are on, and that comes from solid offensive line play, we can move the ball," said line and assistant coach Coby Haslett. "We are young there, but the players are getting good coaching from Tyler DeHart, a former player here and wrestler, who has been teaching them some solid technique. We are not that big, but we want them to attack."



Orange Park's defensive line will have slight advantage in muscle weight compared to district foes.



Linebacker Justin Davis will be strong attack spear for Raider defense.

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Orange Park long history of tough, community-strong football has had a big following down the the elementary school cheerleaders in the area.

DeHart, recently named head wrestling coach, has narrowed down his young offensive around Austin and Hamilton "As of now, Terrick "Bam"

Moore is our left tackle; about 5-11, 225 pounds maybe, a transfer from Ridgeview," said DeHart. "Left guard will be Jeremiah Jennings with center to

be Andrew Austin. The big guy is Jeremiah Hamilton at right guard; 260 pounds and Terrion Butler at right tackle; about 230 pounds. With only two starters

returning, we're working hard to get the top five in there." With Orange Park nearly taking out Fleming Island last year; an overtime loss, DeHart is

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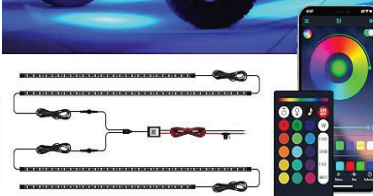
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From left: Track speedster Daniel Richardson is fastest pass catcher on field with senior Ryder Fulmer the sticky fingers patrolling the center of the secondary. On defense, James Riley will be lockdown defensive back for enemy speed trackers.

looking to match up his muscle with the Fleming Island muscle; notably state weightlift champion Kevin Reyes.

"I think we'll be fine," said DeHart. "We played even last year in that close game and, if

we take care of our side of the ball, it should be a good trench battle."

On the offensive line, center Andrew Austin, a 250-pounder pusher is the most experienced with Jeremiah Hamilton, a

270-pound tackle, one of the biggest.

"We only have those two coming back; Andrew and Jeremiah, then it's all new guys and a work in progress," said Wimberly. "Possible on the line

will be Terrick Moore, a senior, and Kevin Hendricks."

Wimberly has DeHart slated to call plays on the sideline.

Wimberly noted that Richardson and sophomore Zachariah Murphy are his two fastest



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*In 2023, Orange Park's offensive line, led by Jeremiah Hamilton, No. 70, and Andrew Austin, right, finished with a standoff against Clay with Clay winning on last-play field goal.*

*Mammoth All America tackle Roderick Kearney is product of strong Raider iconic offensive lines with the massive attacker at the University of Florida.*

athletes on the field, both with 4.5-4.6 range 40-yard dash times.

Wimberly, through the summer, may or may not have power running back Joshua Johnson and speedster Quinton Moore; mainly a pass catcher, in the lineup for their senior years, but will rely on some new faces; with Damar Jackson, a senior, looking to be the speed back,

with Austee'n Mills, a freshman, who got some kick returns last season and early reps over the summer with his small, but compact frame.

"Both are fast guys and can get behind the big guys and find space," said Wimberly. "We thought we had some key guys returning, but we haven't seen those guys over the summer. They may show up. Damar was

a middle-distance pass catcher last year with an 80-yarder for a score."

Wimberly was hoping to find an H-Back, Wing-back candidate once practice started but was going to rely on a strong backfield and shooting for the tackles in his run game.

On the defensive line, Wimberly has a handful of names for linebackers and linemen on

defense with positions being positioned according to need.

"Justin Davis, a senior, is a solid defensive player that can play standing or come in off the line," said Wimberly. "He was our best linebacker last year and we will find his spot."

Rory Childs is a senior for the defensive line.

"I think we only have three returners for the defense," said

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Wimberly. "Richardson will be in the secondary with sophomore Derek Page showing good cover skills in recent passing scrimmage. Murphy will be out there too and he can run with anyone." A freshman on Wimberly's shortlist is wideout Robert Lewis, who showed good pass-catch skills in a passing scrimmage with Bishop Snyder.

"A good athlete from Orange Park Junior and can get some

**"These guys here as seniors have been my guys since I got here and I think we've changed the culture to what a Raider football player is supposed to be," said Wimberly, who brings an experienced quarterback back, Gabe Taylor, as the focal point of his attack. We were a couple of points away last year from getting a playoff spot and these guys know what it took to get that close. This year, we will surprise some people."**

Orange Park Coach, Marcus Wimberly

varsity reps once he learns the plays and gets comfortable out there," said Wimberly. "Gabe liked him over the summer."

The kicking game should go to senior Luke Obemeyer, younger brother to last year's kicker Ty Obermeyer, and junior

Brock Afleje, who handled kickoffs last year with Luke Obemeyer. Ty Obemeyer was six of seven on PATs last year.



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Ridgeview's Rayhn Hutcherson  
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Keystone Quarterback  
Taylor Ford and  
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Jackson Pomeroy  
 poised to supercharge the  
Indians' offense in 2024

Story Page 25

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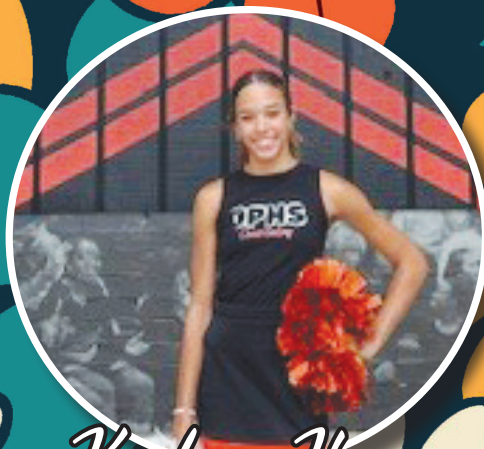
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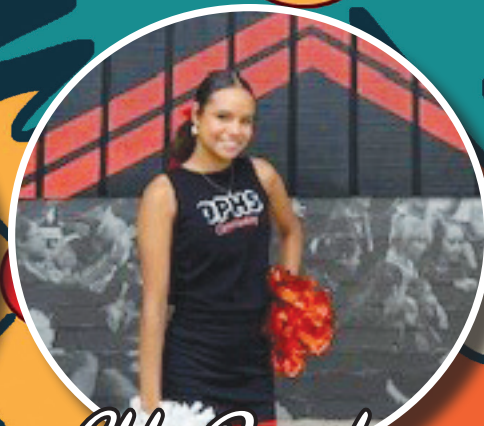
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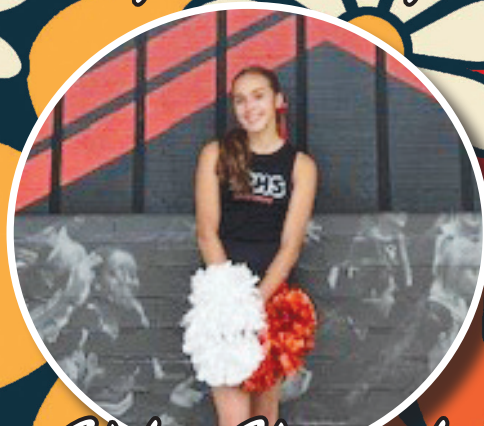
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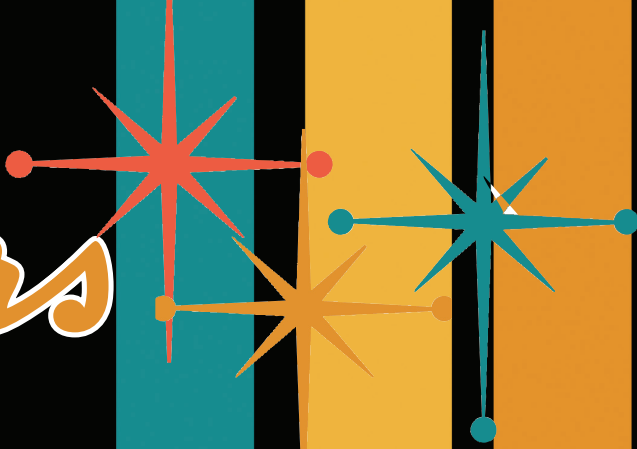
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CB Julian Still



K/WR Brock Allige



LB Justin Davis



WR/DB Alexavier Fennell



CB Derek Page



QB Gabe Taylor



RB Austee'n Mills



DE/LB Willie Ross



FB/TE James Waters



WR Jaden Dreams



OLB James Riley



DL Rory Childs



DL Dawson Smith



WR Jack Rivera



WR Ryder Fulmer



WR Kennedy Simon



K Luke Obemeyer



OLB Emani Justavino



SS Michael McGriff



WR Devon Rail



DE Blake Livingston



RB Damar Jackson



LB Bryson Pinkston



DE Jakeen Powell



LB Joseph Fortin



LB OJeden Innocent



DL Kendrick Baldwin



DL Damian Perreira





DT Jayden Blanton



DE Jeremiah Jennings



OL Jeremiah Hamilton



RT Terrion Butler



OL Terrick Moore



Andrew Austin



# Varsity



# Junior Varsity



# Coaches

Landon Talley, Coby Haslett, Raequan Fuller, Marcus Wimberly, Chad Parker, Del Wright, Tyler Deheart & Winston Sweeting



# Ridgeview

2000

4A Tom Macpherson, Lost in region quarterfinal to Pine Forest 52-7. Pine Forest wins title game.

2001

4A Tom Macpherson, Lost in region quarterfinal to Pine Forest 21-2. Pine Forest loses in region semifinals.

2004

3A Tom Macpherson, Lost in region quarterfinal to St. Augustine 32-21. St. Augustine lost in state semifinal.

2005

4A Tom Macpherson, Lost in region quarterfinal to Eastside 14-7. Eastside lost in region final.

2008

4A Tom Macpherson, Lost in region final to Seabreeze 44-7. Seabreeze lost in state semifinal.

2010

Tom Macpherson, Lost in region quarterfinal to Lincoln 34-0. Lincoln won state title.

2011

6A Tom Macpherson, Lost in region quarterfinal to Bartram Trail 62-10. Bartram Trail lost in state semifinal.

2012

6A Tom Macpherson, Lost in region quarterfinal to St. Augustine 35-26. St. Augustine lost in region semifinal.

2020

5A Matt Knauss, Lost in region quarterfinal to Ocala Vanguard 35-0. Vanguard lost in region final.

2021

6A Bryan Arnette 1-9

2022

3S Bryan Arnette 1-9

2023

3S Bryan Arnette 1-9

2024

New coach Merlin Smith takes over after decade of winning seasons at Oakleaf Junior High School

## New eyes on Panther staff

By Randy Lefko

ORANGE PARK – After three seasons finishing at 1-9, new football coach Merlin Smith comes to Ridgeview High with a resume packed with junior high prowess and a bevy of high school and college athletes that have been tooled

through his system at Oakleaf Junior



Ridgeview 2024 will put the reigns of the team into the hands of senior quarterback Jack Buchholz as new coach Merlin Smith tries to mold his Panthers into a formidable district foe after years of one win seasons.

High School. "I came here intending to

make a winning program at Ridgeview," said Smith, who was an annual finisher in the Northeast Florida Athletic Conference championship game with one conference title in his decade of tenure. "What works at the junior high level and the high school level are two different animals, but the process can be the same."

For Smith, "the Process" is the summer conditioning,





## Schedule Ridgeview (1-9 2023)

### District 3-4A: Clay, Columbia & St. Augustine

Fri., Aug. 23 vs. Orange Park (5A, 4-6)  
 Fri., Aug. 30 at West Nassau (Freelance, 3-7)  
 Fri., Sept. 6 vs. Englewood (4A, 6-4)  
 Fri., Sept. 13 BYE  
 Fri., Sept. 20 vs. Middleburg (5A, 5-6)  
 Fri., Sept. 27 vs. Clay (4A, 4-6)  
 Fri., Oct. 4 at KIPP Bold City (1A, first season)  
 Fri., Oct. 11 at Columbia (4A, 4-6)  
 Fri., Oct. 18 vs. Impact Christian Academy (Freelance, 7-4)  
 Fri., Oct. 25 at St. Augustine 94A-13-1)  
 Fri., Nov. 1 at Episcopal (1A, 5-6)

weightlifting, and game plan preparation of his players.

"Right now, our leader on and off the field is senior Jack Buchholz, who got some varsity playing time last year at quarterback," said Smith. "He was used in spots most of the time like the game against Columbia last year. He's been prepping on his own to be ready."

Buchholz, who has a strong arm and a John Elway-type mentality may share duties with Jordan Mesa, a sophomore left-hander who has been right next to Buchholz in Smith's plan.

"Right now, Jack is the guy we are going with, but Jordan has his own skill set and him being a lefty, gives me more options on play selection," said Smith. "We are going to put up a strong run game to build into the passing game," said Smith. "Junior Christian Felder, right now, is our top running back and he had a great spring game against Interlachen and Keystone Heights."

Also carrying the ball will be Isaiah Fowlkes, a junior and a linebacker, and Jayden Cross, a sophomore, who both offer 175-200 pounds of running power to



*Ridgeview running back Christian Felder is a guy built in the mold of first year coach Merlin Smith's success as Oakleaf Junior High stalwart; big, fast and rugged in between tackles.*

the mix.

"Both of those guys are big, athletic guys with Jayden a bit bigger and taller maybe getting some reps as a tight end or H-back," said Smith. "Our offensive line is going to be small, but quick hitting and we have these three hitting the holes fast and with downhill momentum."

At a tight end position, sophomore Austin Kittrell is a tough pass catcher and will move to

be a strong blocker on the line of scrimmage.

Against Interlachen in their spring game, Ridgeview powered to their first score behind Felder who followed his linemen, mainly sophomore Mark Albney at center. Albney is a stout 265-pounder up front on a 5'-10" frame.

"When we go shotgun, we have to have good snaps to keep the offense moving," said

## College

**2023:** Jairus Moore, DE, Presbyterian College

**2019:** Tyler Huff, QB, Presbyterian College (2020 led Pioneer Football League total offensive yards per game, second in League passing yards/Furman University (took Furman to SoCon title, FCS playoffs 2023, Team Co-Captain, 2022: 10-3 season, FCS Playoffs).

**2024:** Redshirt senior at Jacksonville State University

**2014:** Stanley Dye, DB/WR University of Texas-San Antonio to 2018/Valdosta State University 2019. 2023 played in Liga de Football Americano de Mexico for Tulsa Oilers.

**2012:** Ramsey Meyers, OL, Kentucky (ALL SEC Freshman selection 2014)

**2020:** Glendon Miller, SS, Maryland, Redshirt Senior, 2023 Seven starts, 13 games, Four interceptions including interception touchdown in TransPerfect Music City Bowl game against Auburn.

**2019:** Jaiden Turner, WR, Wheeling University/Presbyterian College/2021-Newberry College.

**2019:** Odijuan Whitfield DE, Troy University, Grayson Edwards, WR, Methodist University; Anthony Troupe, OL Methodist University Jaiden Turner, RB, Wheeling Jesuit University Stanley Jean-Baptiste, LB, Geneva College

**2015:** Josh Moore QB (Mercer); Divine Maloney WR(Sewanee); Kaleb Krantz OT (Faulkner); Mitchell Galloway WR (Everett Community College)





Senior wide receiver Micah Burdetsky-Smith is will for force downfield as a pass catcher a bit bigger than most secondary would-be tacklers. On an offensive line new to Ridgeview's new ball moving protocol sophomore center Mark Albney is thrust into leadership role as guy who must get things moving from first whistle. Ridgeview has a second move to make if things get dicey in lefty quarterback Jordan Mesa, here following running back Christian Felder out of backfield. One of more successful Ridgeview High grads has been quarterback Tyler Huff, now a graduate student quarterback at Jacksonville State University after playoff stints with Presbyterian and Furman.

Smith. "We're still looking at center and I don't care how big or small, if he can snap, I'm going to use him."

On Albney's wings at guards will be Aiden Janke, a junior at just 200 pounds, and Joshua Longley, a sophomore 227

pounder.

"Not the biggest guys, but in the weight room and quick," said Smith. "We are going to be pulling and moving bodies down the line of scrimmage to counter our size disadvantage. These guys understand that our

games will be determined at the point of attack."

Smith liked the "new-look" Ethan Gordon, a junior offensive lineman, as the guy to anchor the line.

"He's a returner and he's a new player," said Smith. "He's

our quick tackle."

Two of the biggest guys Smith has on his rosters; both hopeful to Smith to be a big part of the strength of upfront are Bailey Reese, a senior at 340 pounds and 6'-5", and Michael Mogila, a sophomore, at 6'-9",

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**"I've seen them from the start begin to believe that we can do this; turn the program around. I come from a winning atmosphere and I want them to have the next two or three years building the program to a point where they are proud to play here. I see that. They are all working hard."**

**Ridgeview Coach, Merlin Smith**

385 pounds.

"They both are big, obviously, and my staff is working to get them into the quickness of the front line that we want," said Smith. "Another sophomore is 308-pound Josiah Moore."

On the outside, catching passes, senior Micah Burdetsky-Smith is a long-armed receiver with some length who can snare passes on the run and add mileage after the catch.

"He's a big target and can get more yards when it's secured," said Smith. "Jack has good touch on his passes and we will stretch him more and more as the season progresses to go vertical. Right now, we are looking to get the 7-12 yard pass catch, then add yardage."

Smith likes what he sees thus far in his summer preparations in the mental toughness of the team. "I've seen them from the start begin to believe that we can do this; turn the program around," said Smith. "I come from a winning atmosphere and I want them to have the next two or three years building the program to a point where they are proud to play here. I see that. They are all working hard."

On the opposite side of Burdetsky-Smith, who Smith



Ridgeview first year coach Merlin Smith has an energetic and soulful wingman in assistant coach Samuel Kitt, who has been high-level leader of Oakleaf youth football success for years.

looks to be in an H-back kind of position, the Ridgeview offense will have a two-receiver strong side spread; Lorelle Pitt, a six-foot junior, and Burdetsky.

"Lorelle is long at six feet with big hands," said Smith. "Jack is getting the feel of both guys and we had some good pass plays in our spring games."

On defense, Smith likes his linebacker corps led by Gavin Huey, a senior at 202 pounds, who is a key returner.

"I can tell you our linebacker crew is going to be nice with Gavin the leader," said Smith. "Lucius Ayers, another senior returner, will be part of a good crew back there with freshman Christian Gage (190 pounds) adding some reps there. Christian was one of my Oakleaf guys last year."

Up front, where Smith sees Reese as a defensive noseguard.

"He's a senior that never played before, but he is a big guy and I just need him to kind of get in the way and let our linebackers find the ball," said Smith. "Jayden Cross will have a big impact on defense as well. We will put our athletes on the field wherever we need them so we may have a bunch of guys going both ways at first."

Smith sees his coaching staff and his job is to fit his team against the strengths of the team lined up against them.

"As the season moves, our schedule, I hope, will give us a chance to grow into the season and tweak our attack to what is coming," said Smith. "We

know Orange Park will come in strong up front, then we go to West Nassau, they will be decent, strong guys and tough players so we have to adjust our approach to take advantage of what they do. That's the learning process."

Smith detailed his approach

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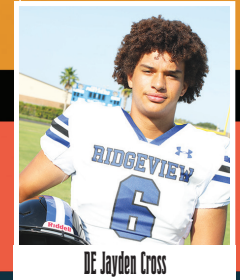
WR/DB Jace Thrift



LB Gavin Huey



WR Christian Felder



DE Jayden Cross



WR Micah Burdetsky-Smith



DB Camryn Hall



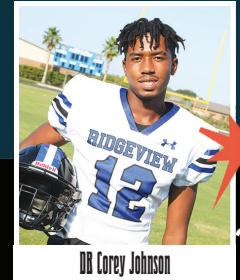
WR Lorelle Pitt



WR/DB Landon Kleiber



LB Christopher Gage



DB Corey Johnson



QB/RB Treyvon Tyrone



QB/DB Jordan Mesa



LB/WR Sean Moore



QB Jack Buchholz



LB/RB Lucious Harris



RB Isaiah Fowlkes



WR Laila Finley



DB Jaylin Dawson



DE Adrian Rivera



DL Garvens Lafaille



OL Mark Albney



OL Ian Moser



OL Aiden Janke



OL Rama Gordon



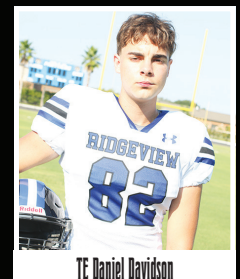
OL Bailey Reese



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## Junior Varsity Cheerleaders

over the summer as learning technique first, and then, letting athleticism take over to get to the ball. "They have to learn what it takes to get to the ball first; preparation, then be fast enough or strong enough to get there," said Smith. "It's just football."

In his secondary, Smith noted the final line of defense will be very young.

"Jordan Mesa may be out there at safety; he's a ball hawk and, as a quarterback himself, can see the reads in front of him," said Smith.

In his new district; 3-4A with Clay, Columbia, and St. Augustine, Smith knows who is who.

"Like I said, everyone knows what St. Augustine does, what Clay does and what Columbia does," said Smith. "It's on us to get the team knowing that also and being able to respond."

Smith is promising some good news for Panther fans and that could come with some wins

against less sizable opponents; West Nassau (Freelance), KIPP Bold City (1A), Impact Christian Academy (Freelance), and Episcopal (1A) through the A number on a team not indicative of the talent level as 1A powerhouses Hawthorne and Madison County can attest.

"Clay is our first district game in game six and we hope to be more prepared at that point than at game one," said Smith. "I would like to think we will have a strong game one to build some momentum. From there, we can build to be ready for Clay, Columbia, and St. Augustine."

St. Augustine, 13-1 last season and state runnerup to Daytona Beach Mainland, also a late season road game for Clay, will always be the ultimate district target and Columbia a, region playoff finisher last year, will force Clay and Ridgeview will need to muscle up to be successful.



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Former Fleming Island High standout Nate Chase is offensive line coach at Middleburg after stint at Southeastern University.

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 25**

For the district, though, Fleming Island, Orange Park and Middleburg should be improved enough with a second year for Golden Eagle coach Chad Parker, a much-softened schedule for Wolfe, and a third year of “his” guys for Wimberly.

Wolfe’s schedule is lightened with the Broncos not seeing a team with a 2023 winning record until Ponte Vedra (8-4) on October 11.

Orange Park has a few more winning records on their schedule; Mandarin preseason (11-4), Riverside (9-3), Bartram Trail (8-5) and Beachside (9-1) so Wimberly has upped the ante for his Raiders to earn a few more playoff points.

Fleming Island is, on paper, fully loaded with a four year quarterback, a big running back, a defensive front that features fast and furious chasers, but with a much-inexperienced offensive line, must reverse last year’s disappointing finish amidst five teams on their schedule with eight or nine wins; one being Beachside (9-1).

For Oakleaf second year coach Chris Foy, the prospect of getting out of the District of Doom is not lessened by inclusion in District 2-6A that features Mandarin (11-4), Fletcher (7-4) and First Coast (6-5), all past powerhouses for the north Florida area and all playoff finishers last year.

Fletcher is always a high-scoring offense; last year with wins of 31-0, 35-6, 58-16 and 65-20 so that’s job one for Foy’s defense.

Mandarin, knocked a win over Bartram Trail in regular season play, ran four wins in playoffs then finished with a state runnerup finish to Miami Columbus in a shootout, 38-19. The Mustangs lose a stable of two thoroughbreds in the backfield, but a hot quarterback and a hot wide receiver.

*New Quarterback*

Foy comes back with a new quarterback, a solid running back and one of the best receiver corps around plus a whole bunch of very big and agile linemen on both sides of the ball.

Oakleaf and Fleming Island will be another barn burner of a game, but for no district points with Foy’s schedule almost as torrid as Parker’s with Hawthorne (12-0, 2X 1A champs), Riverside (9-3), Bolles (8-6, 2M Final Four) and Mandarin on the slate.

Ridgeview and Clay don’t have much traveling to do in their new district 3-4A lineup with Columbia Lake City and St. Augustine the third and fourth teams in the district.

*Merlin’s Magic*

Ridgeview’s new coach Merlin Smith is promising some good news for Panther fans and that could come with

some wins against less sizable opponents; West Nassau (Freelance), KIPP Bold City (1A), Impact Christian Academy (Freelance) and Episcopal (1A) though the A number on a team not indicative of the talent level as 1A powerhouses Hawthorne and Madison County can attest.

St. Augustine, a late season road game for Clay, will always be the ultimate district target and Columbia has been a big dog in the 5A/6A realms over time so Clay and Ridgeview will still need to muscle up to be successful.

“We know what everyone knows about St. Augustine, we know what it takes to beat them and hope that the kids grow up, mature to the point of knowing exactly what time of team we have at game six,” said Smith. “Then, we want the kids to know what it will take and take the steps to get close to that. That is all we can ask.”

Keystone Heights, in district 5-2A; Bradford, Palatka, Newberry, Santa Fe, still has Bradford (14-1) for a massive rivalry game, adds Palatka (7-4) for a little bigger team with a new fireball coach (ex-KHHS defensive guru Lantz Lowery) and a tough road game against Newberry (9-3). At the 2A level, smaller roster numbers are usually the difference at the end of the season with 23-25 guys just getting beat up each week for 10 weeks making for a tough finish.



Rayhn Hutchinson



Ajay Carter



Donovan Thomas



James Rhodes



# Strength of Schedule

2 Points for wins  
1 Point for classification over  
1 Point less for classification under

Example: Fleming Island (10-4) vs. Clay (11-2): Clay 11 wins-22 points to Clay, 7A vs. 5A, -2, Total 20 points Fleming Island. 200 is 100 % score. (10 wins/10 same class opponents)

## Clay High (4-6 2023)

District 3-4A: Ridgeview, Columbia, St. Augustine

	Points
Aug. 23 vs. Fleming Island (5A, 3-7) (3 wins x 2= 6, 1/4A v. 5A)	7
Aug. 30 vs. Yulee (3A, 9-3) 18-1	17
Fri., Sept. 6 at Middleburg (5A, 5-6) 10 + 1	11
Sept. 13 vs. Toco Creek (6A, 5-5) 10 + 2	12
Sept. 20 vs. First Coast (6A, 6-5) 12 + 2	14
Sept. 27 at Ridgeview (4A, 1-9) 2 + 0	2
Oct. 4 BYE	
Oct. 11 at St. Augustine (4A, 13-1)...	26
Oct. 25 vs. Columbia (4A, 4-6) 8 + 0	8
Nov. 1 at Orange Park (5A, 4-6) 8 + 1	9

106 / 200

53% Strength of Schedule

## Ridgeview (1-9 2023)

District 3-4A: Clay, Columbia, St. Augustine

	Points
Aug. 16 (Preseason) vs. Keystone Heights (2A, 6-5)	2
Aug. 23 vs. Orange Park (5A, 4-6)	2
Aug. 30 at West Nassau (Freelance, 3-7) 6 - 4	12
Sept. 6 vs. Englewood (4A, 6-4) 12 + 0	12
Sept. 13 BYE	
Sept. 20 vs. Middleburg (5A, 5-6) 10 + 1	11
Sept. 27 vs. Clay (4A, 4-6) 8 + 0	8
Oct. 4 at KIPP Bold City (1A, 1st season) 0 - 3	-3
Oct. 11 at Columbia (4A, 4-6) 8 + 0	8
Oct. 18 vs. Impact Christian Academy (Freelance, 7-4) 14 - 4	10
Oct. 25 at St. Augustine (4A, 13-1) 26 + 0	26
Nov. 1 at Episcopal (1A, 5-6) 10 - 3	7

83/200

41.5% Strength of Schedule

## Fleming Island (3-5A, 3-7)

District 3-5A: Orange Park, Middleburg, Beachside, Ponte Vedra

	Points
Aug (Preseason) vs. Westside (3A, 0-10)	7
Aug. 23 at Clay (4A, 4-6) 8 - 1	17
Aug. 30 at Riverside (4A, 8-3) 18 - 1	7
Sept. 6 vs. Oakleaf (6A, 3-6) 6 + 1	8
Sept. 13 at Orange Park (5A, 4-6) 8 + 0	8
Sept. 20 BYE	
Sept. 27 vs. Ponte Vedra (5A, 8-4) 16 + 0	16

# Top games not to miss

## Week One August 23



**Game of the Week**  
**Fleming Island at Clay**

Fleming Island comes in loaded with talent (QB Cibastian Broughton, RB Demhir Jackson, WR Trace Burney)

Clay has new faces, big guys again (Eli Oscoa, Josh Hetz, Blake Warren) and three quarterbacks (Merrick Rapoza, Landon Martin, Landon Chadwick) capable of moving the ball. Will be up to Goosby, Stacy and Swilley to control line of scrimmage where Fleming Island O-Line is all new but one guy (state weightlift champion Kevin Reyes).

Both have solid field goal kickers and it could go that route.

### Orange Park at Ridgeview:

OPHS, but RHS gives a game under new coach Merlin Smith

### Westside at Middleburg:

Broncos open big without state champion Hawthorne as first game.

### Keystone Heights at Interlachen:

Keystone Heights already saw Interlachen; Ford to Parmeter-4TDs.

# Game Previews

## Upset of the Week

### Riverside at Oakleaf

Riverside (9-3 2023) invades the Dungeon and stokes the Knightmares with historically fast and aggressive athletes and returning quarterback (Glenn Foreman III with 1622 Yds, 21TDs from last year) plus top running back (Shermon Davis with 915 Yds 11 TDs). Oakleaf has girth (Mykel Mayo, Amari Thomas) and outside magic (Jordyn Price, Michael Connor III) with bruiser running the tackles (Chris Foy II).

Last year, Oakleaf scored a lot but also gave up a lot. Different mentality this season, Oakleaf lays down gauntlet against one of top programs in area.

## Week Two August 30



**Game of the Week**  
**Fleming Island at Riverside**

Riverside at home is a party and the Generals take their home games seriously. Thus, Fleming Island's speed will be matched nicely on both sides. A bounce here and there could be the score maker. Look for Sebastian Cruz, Fleming Island safety, to make big plays downfield, possible pick six.

Oct. 4 vs. Creekside (7A, 9-3) 18 + 1	19
Oct. 11 vs. Beachside (5A, 9-1) 18 + 0	18
Oct. 18 at Terry Parker (3A, 2-8) 4 - 2	2
Oct. 25 at Middleburg (5A, 5-6) 10 + 0	10
Nov. 1 vs. Fort White (Rural, 9-2) 18 - 4	14

114/200

58% Strength of Schedule

## Middleburg (3-5A, 5-6)

District 3-5A: Fleming Island, Orange Park, Beachside, Ponte Vedra

	Points
Aug. 16 (Preseason) vs. Baldwin (2A, 5-6)	
Aug. 23 vs. Westside (3A, 0-10) 0 - 2	-2
Aug. 30 at NFEI, (1A, 2-8) 4 - 4	0
Sept. 6 vs. Clay (4A, 4-6) 8 - 1	7
Sept. 13 vs. Hollis Christian Academy (Freelance, 1-6) 2 - 5	-3
Sept. 20 vs. Ridgeview (4A, 1-9) 2 + 0	2
Sept. 27 vs. Orange Park (5A, 4-6) 8 + 0	8
Oct. 4 BYE	
Oct. 11 at Ponte Vedra (5A, 8-4) 16 + 0	16
Oct. 25 vs. Fleming Island (5A, 3-7) 6 + 0	6
Nov. 1 at North Marion (3A, 1-9) 2 - 2	0

Total: 34/200

16% Strength of Schedule

## Orange Park (5A, 4-6)

District 3-5A: Fleming Island, Middleburg, Beachside, Ponte Vedra

	Points
Aug. 16 (Preseason) vs. Mandarin (6A, 11-4)	
Aug. 23 at Ridgeview (4A, 1-9) 2 + 0	2
Aug. 30 vs. Oakleaf (6A, 3-6) 6 + 1	7
Sept. 6 at Riverside (4A, 9-3) 18 - 1	17
Sept. 13 vs. Fleming Island (5A, 3-7) 6 + 0	6
Sept. 20 vs. Bartram Trail (6A, 8-5) 16 + 1	17
Sept. 27 at Middleburg (5A, 5-6) 10 + 0	10
Oct. 4 vs. Westside (3A, 0-10) 0 - 2	-2
Oct. 11 BYE	
Oct. 24 at Beachside (5A, 9-1) 18 + 0	18
Nov. 1 vs. Clay (4A, 4-6) 8 - 1	7

82/200

41% Strength of Schedule

## Keystone Heights (5-2A, 6-5)

District 5-2A: Bradford, Newberry, Palatka, Santa Fe

	Points
Aug. 16 at Ridgeview (4A, 1-9)	
Aug. 23 at Interlachen (SSAC, 2-8) 4 - 2	2
Aug. 30 vs. Union County (Rural, 8-4) 16 - 1	15
Sept. 6 BYE	
Sept. 13 at Newberry (2A, 9-3) 18 + 0	18
Sept. 20 vs. Dixie County (Rural, 7-4) 14 - 1	13
Sept. 27 at Bradford (2A, 14-1) 28 + 0	28
Oct. 4 vs. West Nassau (Freelance, 3-7) 6 - 2	4
Oct. 11 at Santa Fe (2A, 0-10)	0
Oct. 18 vs. Chiefland (Rural, 4-7) 8 - 1	7
Oct. 25 vs. Palatka (2A, 7-4) 14 + 0	14
Nov. 1 at Crescent City (1A, 4-6) 8 - 1	7

108/200

54% Strength of Schedule





Middleburg and Clay's football is bolstered by strong cheerleader squads that want to see both teams make playoff runs in 2024.

Fleming Island's first big win of season against a contender.

- Oakleaf at Orange Park
- Union County at Keystone
- Middleburg at NFEI
- Yulee at Clay

### Upset of the Week

#### Ridgeview at West Nassau

Should Merlin Smith's team give Marcus Wimberly's team a good game in season opener, Ridgeview may be primed to get first win of many for Merlin the Magician. Smith likes the power, off tackle game and West Nassau could be susceptible at the point of attack. QB Jack Buchholz is a John Elway like tough guy and this game could reset the Panther tone for the rest of the season.

### Week Three September 6



**Oakleaf at Fleming Island**

Both warmed up against a tough Riverside team; one at home, one on the road. If my Game to Watch proved fruitful, this game will be a barnburner.

Can Broughton to Burney outrun Kitchens, Pryce and Kaylib Singleton (Fleming Island transfer, Oakleaf secret weapon on either side of ball)?

Can Foy and Foy pummel Cioffi and Nate Van Hof?

Oakleaf already took out Fleming Island once and Carlos Witherup is back in the Oakleaf lineup. Witherup and Singleton, Price and Connor, that's a tough cover for Fleming Island secondary.

- Englewood at Ridgeview
- Orange Park at Riverside

### Upset of the Week

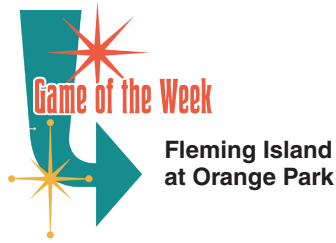
#### Clay at Middleburg

Call this an upset only because Middleburg being able to let loose without facing Final Four finishers from the previous season may be unleashing a new look for Broncos.

Upset only if Broncos (and I don't think coach Ryan Wolfe will allow it) don't factor in that Clay is just as dangerous an opponent as Bishop Kenny or Bradford or Ponte Vedra were in the first half of their previous schedules.

Bronco quarterback Carson Stewart has looked sharp over the summer, but put pads on and things work differently and Clay's front defensive guys; Goosby, Stacy and Swilley, maybe Roberts on the edge, will make Stewart run. J Jenkins was able to avoid collisions in the backfield last year.

### Week Four September 13



**Fleming Island at Orange Park**

Orange Park is now in same district with Fleming Island and Raider coach Marcus Wimberly wants a playoff spot. Don't know if Gabe Taylor can read the Fleming Island linebacker crew; Cohen Cioffi, AJ Witt and David Smith, and that could present disaster. The Fleming Island pressure will be the key to the rattle.

Should Taylor get time and receivers getting open, his arm is lethal and this could get ugly fast. Taylor vs. Broughton in a shootout would be fun to watch.

- Tocoi Creek at Clay
- Hollis Christian at Middleburg
- Keystone Heights at Newberry

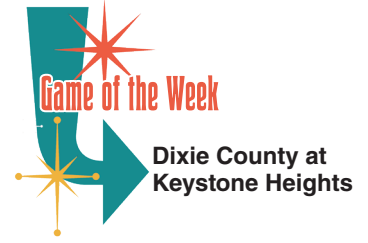
### Upset of the Week

#### Oakleaf at Hawthorne

Oakleaf will have survived some early tests but will run into a monster in Hawthorne; Hawthorne being twice the Class 1A champions and undefeated (13-0) last year. That being said, Hawthorne beat Madison County for that title last year in a tussle and Oakleaf already beat Madison County pretty resoundingly in Madison County's "Boot Hill", stadium nickname.

On the other side of the coin, Hawthorne returns a hot quarterback; CJ Ingram (2618 YDs, 38TDs) and his favorite RB (Kennon Johnson 1594 TDs, 16TDs).

### Week Five September 20



**Dixie County at Keystone Heights**

Dixie County is a pretty good rural school with a strong football following and this is going to be a first test for Keystone Heights at home. Indians can ride some momentum with a win here Bradford up next. Quarterback Baylor Ford should be running the engine hot by now with the running tandem of Zane Leger and Colton Hollingsworth and Parmeter downfield catching passes.

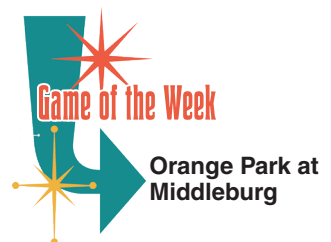
- First Coast at Clay
- Middleburg at Ridgeview
- Bartram Trail at Orange Park

### Upset of the Week

#### Oakleaf at Bolles

Bolles anywhere will be a rough game and Oakleaf took the Bulldogs to task last year with a nearly magnificent upset with three of the four quarters being within one point; 6-6 1st, 14-14 3rd, 8-7 4th. That pesky 17 point second quarter was the difference last year in the 44-28 win for Bolles. Stay close and Oakleaf has a great kicker for the winner; Andrew McDaid (24-26 PAT, 5-5 FG)

### Week Six September 27



**Orange Park at Middleburg**

Orange Park surprised Middleburg last year and with one more win, the Raiders may have been in the playoffs. This year, this game may be the first game



of consequence for the Broncos with their schedule much lighter than the previous two seasons.

Orange Park showed off their team speed in last year's upset and the Broncos will want some revenge.

- Fletcher at Oakleaf
- Ponte Vedra at Fleming Island
- Clay at Ridgeview

### Upset of the Week

#### Keystone Heights at Bradford

I'm thinking Steve Reynolds gets his team ready for this game and the team responds. Big guys up front, tough running, good pass catchers and a test quarterback that can deliver the goods.

Bradford graduates their playmaker; QB/RB Daejon Shanks (1360 pass YDs, 18TDs, 1104 YDs rushing 14 TDs).

### Week Seven October 4



Fletcher at Oakleaf

Oakleaf coach Chris Foy knows Fletcher and needs this win to snag his playoff spot. Fletcher plays big and puts points on the board. It's going to be a slugfest at the line of scrimmage with the big guys battling. Speed on both sides makes this a track meet.

- West Nassau at Keystone
- Westside at Orange Park
- Ridgeview at KIPP Bold City

### Upset of the Week

#### Creekside at Fleming Island

Creekside was a surprise finisher last season with three strong wins; one over Fleming Island, to notch a playoff spot,

but had to beat a tough Ponte Vedra team twice in the last two weeks. Ponte Vedra won the second one to get into playoffs but ran into the Buchholz buzzsaw. Fleming Island will need to be at eight cylinders here with Broughton peaking as commander. Creekside returns a strong quarterback and his two favorite receivers; QB Sean Ashenfelder (Rutgers commit in September) and Kaleb Taylor-Burch (57 catches, 6TDs) and Eros Taufer (25 catches, 5TDs).

### Week Eight October 11



Middleburg at Ponte Vedra

- Clay at St. Augustine
- Ridgeview at Columbia
- Beachside at Fleming Island (Oct. 10)
- Keystone at Santa Fe
- Oakleaf at First Coast

### Upset of the Week

Clay over St. Augustine, I'm going out on a limb here, but I think coach Kyle Kennard will have his best pregame speech ever for this one and defenders Daylon Brown and Antonio Thomas will go toe to toe with two 60-plus wide receivers and a top-tier quarterback while Goosby and friends create chaos chasing QB Locklan Hewlett, a commit to University of South Florida.

### Week Nine October 25



Palatka at Keystone Heights

Palatka football coach Lantz Lowery gets to return to his former sidelines with Keystone Heights hosting Palatka in an irony of sorts.

- Columbia at Clay
- Ridgeview at St. Augustine
- Fleming Island at Middleburg
- Orange Park at Beachside (Oct. 24)
- Mandarin at Oakleaf

### Upset of the Week

Would I step out and give Merlin Smith an upset over St. Augustine? Maybe next year, especially if my call on Clay over St. Augustine proves true. Otherwise, Oakleaf has a big, strong Mandarin to town and that will be an All/Frazier heavy-weight bout. Does Oakleaf have the chin to win?

### Week Ten November 1



Clay at Orange Park

A game that could be the pivot for either coach; Kennard or Wimberly, as this season should be good for both of them. Orange Park likes Hoyt B. Cotney field for an upset (Middleburg 2023) and this could be enough drama for a tough game.

### Oakleaf (2-6A, 4-6)

District 2-6A: Fletcher, Mandarin, First Coast

	Points
Aug. 23 vs. Riverside (4A, 9-3)	18
18 - 2	
Aug. 30 at Orange Park (5A, 4-6)	7
8 - 1	
Sept. 6 at Fleming Island (5A, 3-7)	2
3 - 1	
Sept. 13 at Hawthorne (Rural, 12-0)	19
24 - 5	
Sept. 20 at Bolles (2A, 8-6)...16 - 4	12
Oct. 4 BYE	
Oct. 11 at First Coast (6A, 6-5)	12
12 + 0	
Oct. 18 vs. ED White (4A, 7-5)	12
14 - 2	
Oct. 25 vs. Mandarin (6A, 11-4)	22
22 + 0	
Nov. 1 vs. Toco Creek (6A, 5-5)	10
10 + 0	

112/200

56% Strength of Schedule



Former Fleming Island High standouts; Jackson Bull, left, who was part of Valdosta State NCAA Div. II national championship, and Anfernee McCaskill, were strong players for region playoff runs under coach Damenyum Springs.

- Toco Creek at Oakleaf
- Keystone Heights at Crescent City
- Middleburg at North Marion
- Ft. White at Fleming Island
- Ridgeview at Episcopal

### Upset of the Week

This could be Merlin Smith's best game against a good Episcopal season and will add roster numbers for next year.



# Lischio's Look



By Mike Lischio

## St. Augustine Yellow Jackets

**Head Coach:** Brian Braddock  
9th Season (71-25 at SAHS, 94-35 11 yrs overall)

**Key Returners:** QB Locklan Hewlett, WR Trenton Jones, WR Carl Jenkins, LB Mike Wright, LB Matteo Bernardi, DB Braylon James. DB Jimmie Wheeler.

**Key Newcomers:** OT Josh Singleton, WR Julio Santiago

Last year, I predicted 2023 would be St. Augustine's best chance at a title run since they lost the state championship to Naples in 2007. The Yellow Jackets found themselves in Tallahassee just two seconds from their second title when Mainland's Jacob Gettman kicked a game winning field goal. The goal in 2024 is to return to the final. They enter the season on a 14 game regular-season win streak with their sights set on another championship game.

University of South Florida commit Locklan Hewlett will once again be the trigger man after throwing for 2700 yards and 23 TD's in just 11 games last year. The senior brings

back three of his top four targets. Seniors Carl Jenkins Jr. (1172 yards, 15 TD) who is a 4-star USF commit, Trenton Jones (1007 yards 6 TD) who currently has 11 FBS offers and is also return threat and Junior Somourian Wingo (531 yards 6 TD) Graduating WR Myles Simmons who had 874 yards and 12 TD will be replaced by Julio Santiago who had 69 catches for Toco Creek last season. The biggest question mark on offense is the loss of 1500 yard rusher RB Devonte "Bam" Lyons now a freshman at Florida International University. Junior Trendell Anderson is the likely replacement. Former Flagler-Palm Coast Bulldog great Josh Singleton should bring stability to the offensive line. With three of their four leading tacklers now in college, if the Yellow Jackets intend to bring home their first title since 2005 they will need the returning players to take the next step. Seniors DL Brent Bell, DL Bubba Gardner, LB Mike Wright and LB Matteo Bernardi will anchor the front seven. The secondary remains among the best in the area with seniors Braylon James who is a Cornell commit, Jimmie Wheeler and Kyon Wilcox leading the way.

## Menendez Falcons

**2023 Record 4-6 did not make playoffs**

**Head Coach:** Anthony Rivers  
2nd season 4-6

**Key Returners:** QB Cash Downey RB Mason Lynch LB/ RB Joseph Soto WR Nate Carr DE/TE Aiden Brubaker LB Maddox Lehman OL Ransom Rhodes OL Colby Barnes

**Key Newcomers:** WR Westin Spindle

Anthony Rivers was hired in the spring 2023 to bring stability to a Falcon program that had 6 coaching changes in the previous 3 seasons. The young Falcon team struggled early but matured and grew throughout the season finishing October with upset wins against Clay and 7-win playoff-bound Matanzas in October. The Falcons have a tough schedule, but if they can take care of the teams on the bottom half of their schedule, a wild card berth is a real possibility.

QB Cash Downey won the

starting job in summer as a freshman and threw for 1600 yards including 282 against 9-1 Beachside, 270 against Matanzas and 251 against Toco Creek. Downey will look to seniors Nate Carr and Aiden Brubaker to anchor the receiving corps joined by transfer Westin Spindle who returns after a season at border rival Matanzas. Sophomore Mason Lynch and senior Joseph Soto will handle the carries at running back behind an experienced offensive line including C Colby Barnes and G Ransom Rhodes.

Rivers was a defensive coordinator at Ponte Vedra prior to arriving on State Road 206. The defense will be tough and physical. Joseph Soto is the quarterback of the defense. He can play both linebacker positions and even on the line, possessing one of the best football minds in the area. Juniors Luke Harmon and Gene Bryant are hard hitters and senior Liam Molloy has a nose for the ball. The defensive backfield will be rebuilt with the departure of CB Jason Watson.





## 2023 Record 8-4 Lost 34-21 to Buchholz in Region Semifinal

**Head Coach:** Steve Price  
3rd season (17-15 at Ponte Vedra, 157-107 26th overall)

**Key Players:** RB Brian Case, OT Brody McLeod, LB Talan Babin, LB Mason Hauseman, DE Robby Greico

Steve Price is known as a program builder having won two state titles in Georgia and one at North Florida Christian. Despite a 7-1 start, the Sharks struggled down the stretch losing three of their last four. Still the team took a big step forward last season, winning their first playoff game since beating Clay in 2016. They will be the favorite for a district title in 2024.

Quarterback Benjamin Burk has graduated. In addition to leading the team in passing, he was the Sharks second leading rusher. Drew Price is the favorite to win the starting job. The Sharks will be a physical team up front anchored by junior OT Brody McLeod who already had FBS offers as a sophomore. Ponte Vedra will need to overcome the transfer of TE Landon Okla to a high school in Tennessee and graduation of center Jake Guanera who will suit up for Big Blue at the University of Michigan this fall. RB Brian Case is a senior who rushed for 21 TD's and despite being power runner, showed ability to break the big play. PV will lean on him heavily in 2024. There is a big question mark at receiver with Ponte Vedra losing their top 4 receivers from 2023.

Defensively the Sharks return veterans upfront in DE Robby Grieco and DL J.P. Dolan and a stout linebacking group with Talan Babin (son of former NFL All-Pro Jason) who was second in the team in tackles last season as a sophomore and senior Mason Hauseman. They will need to put pres-



*Mandarin High, the state runnerup last year to Miami Columbus, will be making an historic visit to Oakleaf near season's end that could turn into a Super Bowl level game for both teams.*

sure on the quarterback, with likely three new starters in the secondary. The biggest key to Ponte Vedra's success will be finishing close games. Their three regular season losses were by a total of nine points last season.



## 2023 Record 5-5. Did not make playoffs

**Head Coach:** Zach Harbison  
2nd season (5-5 at Tocoi Creek, 16-23 5th overall)

**Key Players:** QB Ryan Killmer, RB Vincent Gallela, TE Zander Erasmus, S Dakota Wright, DL Trenton Kelly, DL Garrett Mitchell, LB Aidan Matos

**Key Newcomer:** RB Davian Garcia (injured in 2023)

Zach Harbison enters year two in greater St. Augustine with a revamped defensive staff and a new district. The Toros best path to the playoffs will be an at large bid in 2024. 2023 was an up and down season with upset wins against Beachside and then undefeated Palatka but losses to Matanzas by six, Bishop Kenny by three, and

Clay by two. Like most up and coming teams their success will depend on their ability to put teams away late.

The offense will be led by QB Ryan Killmer, a Trevor Lawrence doppelganger who threw 16 TD passes last season. Junior RB Vincent Gallela got better as the season went on rushing for 831 yards and will form a thunder and lightning combination behind a massive offensive line, with speedster RB Davian Garcia who missed all of 2023 with an injury who may also get looks at receiver. A large part of the receiving corps left with a diploma after last season, and junior Julio Santiago took his 69 catches to St. Augustine. Imposing 6'-4" TE Zander Erasmus had 25 grabs in 2023, the remainder of the returning team combined for just eight catches a year ago and their growth may determine how far the offense will go in 2024.

S Dakota Wright led the team in tacklers but the next 6 on the leaderboard either graduated or transferred. Defensive back coach Ronnell Ray is now the coordinator, a role he held at Menendez previously and will be tasked with the development around veterans CB Caden

Walden, and LB's Aiden Matos & Xavier Santana in his 3-3-5 defense. The defensive line will be led by seniors Trenton Kelly and Garrett Mitchell.



## 2023 Record 8-5, Lost 37-17 to Buchholz in Regional Final

**Head Coach:** Cory Johns 2nd season (8-5 at Bartram Trail, 60-53 12th overall)

**Key Players:** RB Arthur Lewis IV, QB Jaden Weatherly, WR D'Andre Caldwell, TE Connor Winn, C Zach Marshall, CB Tamajh Mitchell

The perennial powerhouse made another deep playoff run in 2023 under new coach Cory Johns who took over for Darrell Sutherland, the only coach in school history to that point. Five losses a year ago do not tell the whole story. Those losses were to State Champion Mainland, State Runner-Up St. Augustine, Superteam IMG and two losses to State Semi-Finalist Buchholz. The district could ultimately be decided against Buchholz October 25th but most likely Bartram Trail will make the playoffs for the 16th straight season.

Junior QB Jaden Weatherly, a dual threat, has patiently waited his turn behind outgoing UCF Bound Riley Trujillo, taking hold of an offense that averaged nearly 40 points a game. Arthur Lewis IV is likely the best running back in the county replacing Utah Ute Laython Biddle who led the state with 2198 yards last year. Lewis is a dangerous returner and was the team's leading receiver and 3rd leading rusher. The Bears will be a run-oriented team behind an offensive line that returns 4 starters and will average 290 including C Zach Marshall. Junior WR De'Andre Caldwell will be the go to guy in the passing game, while sophomore TE Connor Winn showed



his potential as big play receiver last year.

The defense will be overhauled this year with 11 new starters. CB Tamajh Mitchell had 2 interceptions as a 10th grader will anchor one side of the field. Look for LB Kru Casey, CB Tristan Allen and S James Deleo to take advantage of additional playing time and improve a defense that allowed 30 points a game a year ago.



**2023 Record 6-5, Lost to Ponte Vedra 49-36 in First Round**

**Head Coach:** Sean McIntyre 8th Season 41-32

**Key players:** QB Sean Ashenfelder, RB Harrison Garrido, WR Kaleb Taylor-Burch, S Jackson Earle,

S David Beasley, CB/RB Danny Approbato, LB Luke Millinor, LB Colton Leavell, DE Tyce Donnelly

Back in 2014, I called a game between Creekside and Matanzas where the Knights recovered a fumble in the red zone with a minute left, scored and won 7-6. When Sean McIntyre was hired three years later, he inherited a program with one winning season in school history and a 22-game losing streak. McIntyre has turned the program around finishing .500 or better in the last five years with four consecutive playoff appearances. The team scored 33.4 points per game last year. Unfortunately, they allowed 33.2 points per game including an average of 46.2 in their losses. Like last season they will likely need an upset or two to keep their playoff streak alive.

There is a lot of continuity on the Knights high-octane offense. QB Sean Ashenfelder enters his 3rd year as the starter.

He threw for 1774 yards ran for 591 more and had 26 total TD's. Sean will join RB Harrison Garrido who ran for 1300



*Ponte Vedra has been known for fast moving offenses; here last year quarterback Benjamin Burk with his 2200 passing yards, will be replaced but yet another gunslinger for Sharks for the season ending trio of games with Fleming Island, Middleburg and Orange Park.*

yards and 15 TD's to control the ground game. WR Kaleb Taylor-Burch is coming off a 57 catch season and will be the primary target in the passing game and WR Eros Taufer will have an increased role.

S Jackson Earle is a sideline-to-sideline player leading the team in tackles and interceptions as a sophomore. S David Beasley and CB Danny Approbato round out the secondary, while Luke Millinor and Colton Leavell were tackling machines at linebacker. If the defense expects to improve in 2024 DE Tyce Donnelly, who led the team in sacks last year, along with returning tackles Tyler Jenkins and Liam Ross will need to get more pressure on

the quarterback for a defense that managed only 13 sacks in 11 games.



**2023 Record 9-1 (was independent)**

**Head Coach:** Pete Duffy 3rd Season 15-5 (223-47 22nd overall)

**Key Players:** QB Edward Jordan, WR Drew Watson, WR Marco Lanza, DT Aiden Rivera, DE Riley Hofrichter, DE/ OLB Peyton Mooningham, DE/ OLB Nigel Eldridge, ILB Nate McCleese



*Creekside High cruised into the playoffs last year with a season ending win streak to the regions starting with 49-48 thriller over Fleming Island. Knights get Fleming Island October 4. Thank You Florida football Gods as Bartram Trail exits the District of Doom that has been Achilles Heel to Fleming Island and Oakleaf for past years come playoff time, but Orange Park must contend with perennial state power on September 20.*



Beachside (Nine miles inland if you were wondering) opened in 2021 and hit the ground running with the hiring of California coaching legend Peter Duffy.

The Barracudas enter the season on a 9-game winning streak after a week one 38-35 loss to Toco Creek. Beachside was an independent but joins the FHSAA for 2024 and will have a more challenging schedule featuring Nease, Ponte Vedra and Bishop Kenny. They should contend for a wild card and are an upset away from a district title.

QB Edward Jordan garnered some FBS offers after throwing for 2500 yards and 35 TD's in 10 games last season. While the Barracudas are a pass heavy team, there is no running back on the roster who had a carry last year and no word at this point who will be the primary carrier.

The Barracudas are deep at WR returning Drew Watson, Marco Lanza, Brennan Monaco, and Drew Aldrich who combined over 100 passes for 1200 yards and 14 TD's. Time will tell if the offense mirrors last year's 368 yards per game output against a more challenging schedule.

Beachside had 33 sacks but the players returning only made 12 of them with eight regulars donning caps and gowns this past May. Their strength is on the D-line led by DT Aiden Rivera who had seven sacks and DE Riley Hofrichter. Peyton Mooningham and Nigel Eldridge are versatile players who can line up on the edge or at outside backer. Junior Nate McCleese will be the inside backer.

All 11 interceptions last season were made by departing players and the young secondary will have to get up to speed, essentially in the first two weeks, with their September schedule stacked with effective passing attacks.





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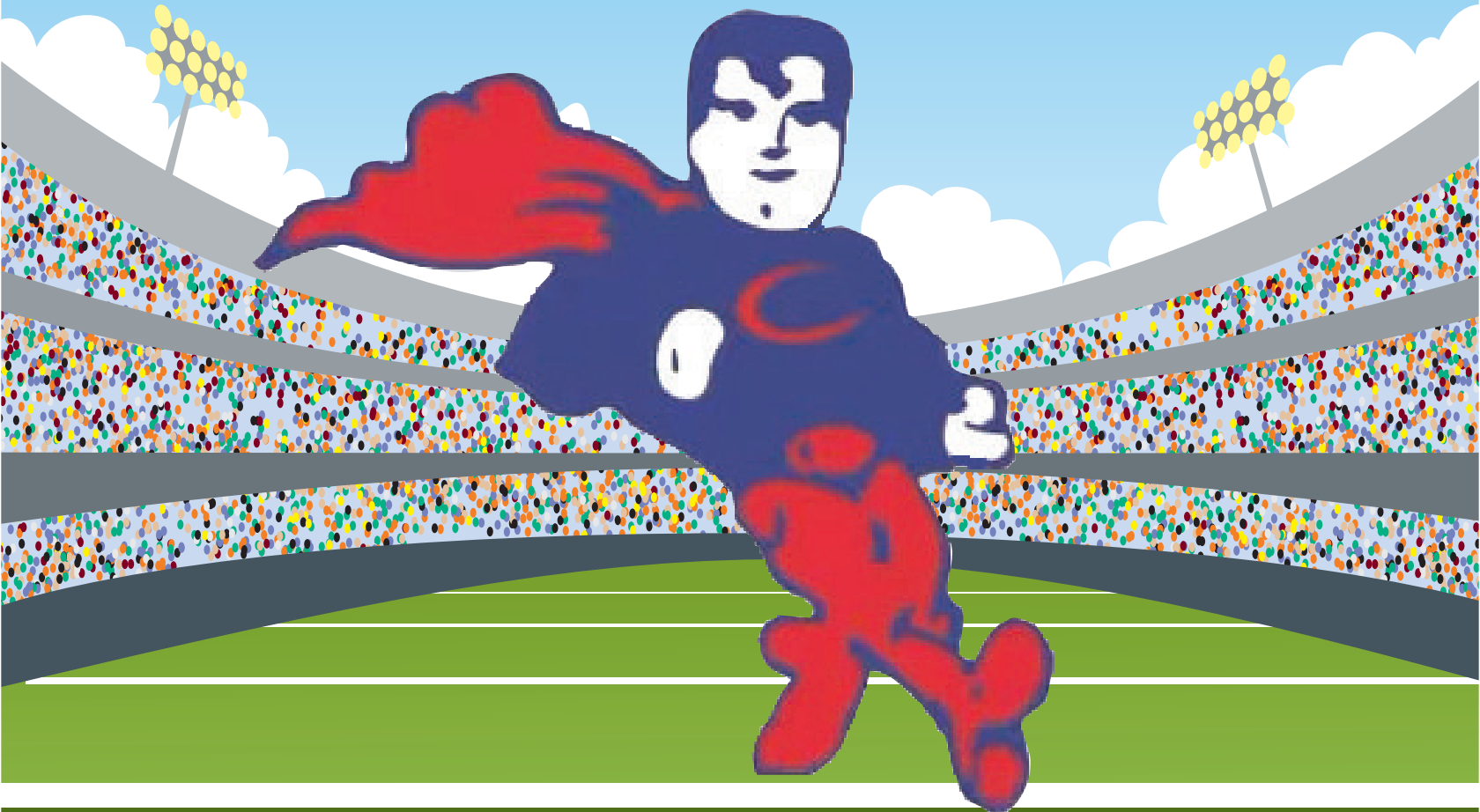
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