

Shelbyville Central High School



Photo by Gary Johnson

Shelbyville Central will open the 2022 season at Tullahoma on Thursday, August 18.

Culture main focus for Eagles as Dryden era kicks off

By **GARY JOHNSON**
Sports Writer

It's a new season and a lot has changed around the Shelbyville Central Golden Eagle football program in the offseason, most notably the departure of former head coach Josh Puckett and the promotion of Jud Dryden as the new head coach.

The Golden Eagles have adapted well in the change of leadership and one area that Dryden put a major emphasis on from the start was changing the culture of the team.

"I know I've talked a lot about this, but changing the culture of this team has been my top priority and these players continue to amaze me in how they have bought into that," Dryden said. "I can already see a difference and I know this will make us a better football team in the long run."

Shelbyville Central has talent, but that

talent is inexperienced or young.

The Golden Eagles only have one starter returning on offense that played the same position last year.

"Our offensive staff has really done a great job of using film, board time and practice to be able to play," Dryden said. "It's a process, but we are making great progress inside of that process."

Senior Jake Preston has been the backup quarterback and will guide the offense.

He is very strong and we will continue to be the tough and talented athlete that has been the backup quarterback the past few years, while exceling on the defensive side of the ball.

"Jake has been the backup quarterback for the past couple of years and he is prepared and ready for this," Dryden said.

"He has worked hard and he is going to play the position a little different that Kade

Cunningham did the last several years, but he is going to be just as effective."

The backfield will feature a number of underclassmen that are quick and talented.

Sophomore Rocky Chandler looks to get the majority of touches, with freshman Robert Lentz and junior Theo Washington in the mix.

"All of these guys bring a different skill set and are just getting better and better. Jake will get some carries from the quarterback position as well," Dryden said.

The offensive line is working hard and it's a group that will continue to improve as the season goes along.

"This group gets along and they really work hard together and they are gelling as a unit," Dryden said. "They are becoming craftsmen of their trade."

The Golden Eagle defense will run a 3-4 and that starts with the guys up front.

"We need our three guys up front to control the line of scrimmage, then line-backer Logan McBee anchors the defense from that point," Dryden said. "We are young on that defensive side with only two guys returning as starters."

Shelbyville Central is spending a lot more time on special teams and that's an area that should show much improvement from last season.

Sophomore kicker/punter Ben Betzelberger is doing an excellent job and has a very bright future.

"We are spending a lot of time on special teams and we will continue to," Dryden said.

Look for Lebanon to be the team to beat in the region with every other team showing improvement over last year.