

AHS FOOTBALL

Tougher competition ahead, expectations remain

By Nolan Ruth
The Community News

It was October of 2007 when Aledo last lost a district game, falling 35-28 to the Everman Bulldogs. Since that night, the Bearcats have won nine more state championships and 103 consecutive district games.

For the first time since that year, Aledo is not the favorite to win its district. Despite being ranked third in the state, the Bearcats sit one ranking behind their brand new district opponent, Denton Ryan.

With Aledo being promoted to Class 5A Division I, the team now looks ahead to facing tougher competition with the Ryan Raiders being the biggest threat to the near 15-year old district winning streak.

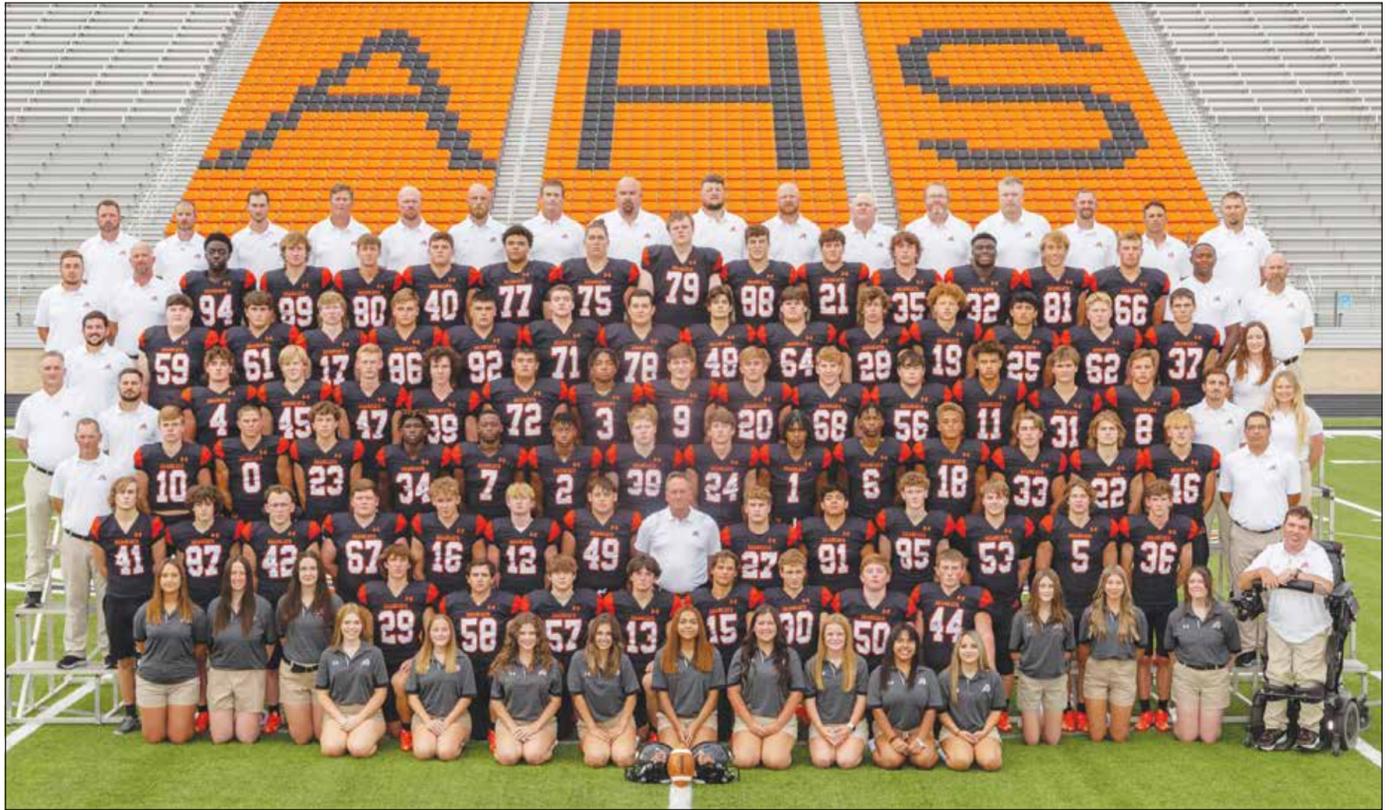
However looking too far ahead could prove troublesome, and head coach Tim Buchanan knows that.

"Their kids play good," Buchanan said. "But if you're sitting around worried about playing Denton Ryan, and that's all you're worried about then somebody else is going to beat you. We don't play Denton Ryan till the second-to-last game of the season. We need to have our heads on a swivel and we need to be looking at who we have each week."

Who the Bearcats have each week is a mix of old rivals and teams not yet played against. The Bearcats open the season with two teams who both played for state championships in 2021.

The Parish Episcopal Panthers, Aledo's first opponent, won the state title in the largest private school division in Texas. The week after facing off with the Panthers, the Bearcats renew their rivalry with the Denton Guyer Wildcats, who played for the 6A Division II state title where they fell to Austin Westlake.

"Parish Episcopal is as talented a football team as we'll see all year



AHS Varsity Football Team

long," Buchanan commented. "You go through and look at how many offers their kids have, their size, speed and strength, it kind of turns your stomach upside down."

However, those two are non-district opponents. Aledo opens district play on a Thursday against the Northwest Texans out of Justin. While Northwest is not a new face for Aledo, they do have a weapon unlike any they have had before in quarterback Jake Strong who is considered one of the best in the state.

Later in the year, the Bearcats will face off with Azle and Burleson Centennial, who have been common opponents recently. Both teams have made incredible strides in the pedigree of their programs since last facing Aledo.

"You can never just count any game as a win," Buchanan said. "That's especially the case with Burleson Centennial and how tough and physical they are, not even just the way they play but the scheme that they run. That's always going to be a challenge and we're going to

have to be prepared for it."

Once out of district and into the playoffs, the Bearcats will once again be turning their attention westward. After four seasons in Region II, which encompasses the metroplex from east to west, Aledo is now back in Region I which spans from El Paso to Interstate-35W running from Fort Worth to Belton.

El Paso Del Valle is an opponent that Aledo faced in the playoffs back in 2014, and could be poised to make another playoff run again. Amarillo Tascosa is another team

that has recently made deep playoff runs at the 6A level and runs a similar style of offense to Burleson Centennial which is extremely difficult to stop.

Lubbock Cooper accompanied Aledo in the move up to 5A Division I, and faced the Bearcats in the 2019 semifinals, a game that ended 28-21 in favor of Aledo. Midlothian and Red Oak are two more teams that Aledo has a history with and will be looking for a chance to knock the Bearcats out come postseason play.

More on the BEARCATS, page B4

VOLLEYBALL

Experienced team has big goals

By Nolan Ruth
The Community News

The Aledo Ladycats volleyball team has seen quite a bit of success in the past 10 years. The Ladycats made it all the way to the state tournament in 2014 before falling to eventual state champion Lucas Lovejoy. Then in head coach Claire Gay's first year at the helm, 2017, Aledo once again made it to Garland for the state tournament, but again fell short to Leander Rouse.

Since then, the Ladycats have consistently made the playoffs. However, the past two years saw Aledo end up in a first round bout with teams from arguably the toughest district in the state. Both years resulted in first round exits, something that Gay hopes to avoid in 2022.

"They just happen to just grind it out every Tuesday and Friday," Gay mentioned. "At the end of the day, we're matching up against really quality teams no matter which team we were going to play out of that district. It was an unfortunate exit, it happened the year before and it's kind of eaten away at us so we're very hungry to prove ourselves."

The road will not be any easier in the new campaign, but with the majority of the 2022 squad returning the Ladycats are prepped for what could be a deep run well into November. Seniors Maddie Frank, Payton Hilmer, and Mia Little headline the returners who are looking for a state title in their final year at Aledo.

Joining them as returners are juniors Vivian Parker, Rylee Metts, and Skylar Lambert who are all expected to make a significant impact on the season for the Ladycats.



RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

The Ladycat volleyball season got under way on Aug. 5.

Big Differences

From year to year, changes happen throughout the offseason. Whether students move out of the district, into the district, or it is a change of coaching, the changes are usually significant in the landscape of Texas high school volleyball.

The biggest differences from 2021 are not so much involving the Ladycats, but with everyone else around them. The biggest difference is the addition of Justin Northwest to the district. The Lady Texans move into Aledo's district after spending the past two years in the same district that eliminated the Ladycats in 2020 and 2021.

"That adds another dynamic," Gay exclaimed. "That was a district that was so equal that any one of them would have competed very well. They ended up having a play-in round last year for the last two spots in the playoffs. They ended up second last year and lost to Grapevine, who made it to state. So that is just going to add to the competitiveness."

Aside from the addition of Northwest, many schools in the district saw changes in head coaches, most notably at Wichita Falls Rider, where the Lady Raiders have consistently been a thorn in Aledo's side.

With Wichita Falls ISD condensing their three existing high schools into just two in the coming

years, coaches from the high schools have been "jumping ship" to schools where there may be more job security. That could prove to be an issue down the stretch for Rider when the district schedule rolls around.

Long time rival Brewer is also among the schools in the district with a new head coach, and the Lady Bears are expected to look much different than they have in the past.

"It's going to look very different than what we expected the last couple of years," Gay commented. "They may look really different or they may not. Until we get around them we won't really know a lot unless we can follow their schedule."

The University Interscholastic League also did the Ladycats a favor when they separated the team from the schools that had knocked them out of the playoffs in the past. For the next two years, the Ladycats will most likely see a team from Fort Worth ISD in the first round of the playoffs before facing the more prestigious district in the second round.

New Faces

One addition that the Ladycats made in the offseason is senior Alyssa Gonzales who moved in from California and brings a new kind of spirit to the game that should benefit Aledo.

"She brings a whole different dynamic to the place," Gay said. "She brings a very beach style feel to our game, so she played a different style and she's learning our style and trying to mesh the two. It will take some time but she's very dynamic and blocks very well."

Sophomore Lauryn Mack, who spent the past few years at Fort Worth All Saints, also joins the squad and will fill in the role of outside hitter. One thing that stands out about Mack is her calmness and composure throughout the matches, especially whenever things get tough.

"She has looked very calm and smooth," Gay commented. "She has looked really consistent; she doesn't waiver very much emotionally and physically. Nothing seems to rattle her. I'm sure things may rattle her a few times but she never shows it and that says a lot."

Turn to V'BALL, page B4



KRISTIN MORALES

The AHS Varsity Tennis Team

TENNIS Racquetcats look for continued success

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

Like so many sports at Aledo, the Bearcats/Ladycats tennis program has a long history of success, and with half of the team returning from last season it's understandable why coach Joe McCoy is optimistic about that success continuing.

Last season in team tennis Aledo, after a third-place finish in District 5-5A, advanced to the third round of the playoffs before falling to district rival Wichita Falls Rider 10-9. Back from that squad are five boys and two girls.

The returning boys include seniors Ian Leslie and Hogan Posey, along with juniors Scott Mason, Craig Mason, and Ben Farmer. Girls back are senior Paige Federman and sophomore Bryanna Orr.

"Our kids are hungry, confident, and excited for the fall season. They have high expectations and have worked very hard throughout the summer to reach their goals," McCoy said. "I am excited for them and looking forward to watching them compete at a high level. Our expectations for the team is that they focus on things that they can control, their attitude and their effort, in everything they do, from practice to matches, school work, and their home life."

"To be great you've got to practice being great and that takes great effort and a great attitude every day. I am so proud of our kids. We have great players on and off the court. I am looking forward to a great season."

Redistricting this past February put Rider in the district again,

along with Granbury, Azle, Brewer, and newcomers Northwest HS and Saginaw. Last year's district champion, Wichita Falls, moved down to 4A.

"I suspect it will be a two-horse race for the district championship between Aledo and Rider this year (Aledo beat Rider in another very close match 10-8 in the first district match of the season). Our region is very tough with the Abilene and Lubbock schools, Amarillo, as well as, Argyle, who moved up in classification this year and was in the state championship last year in 4A," McCoy said.

"Sarah Carlson is our new assistant coach, coming over from Paschal HS. We are very glad to have her. She has already been a great asset to our program."

Bearcat/Ladycat golfers looking for state return with new head coach

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

Golf success is a long-standing tradition in Aledo, with both the boys and girls advancing to state with regularity — including each squad last season.

This season the Bearcats will have plenty of familiar faces playing, while they welcome a new head coach. Brian Mourning will coach both boys and girls.

"I just love the game. It's a lifetime sport," said Mourning, who has coached golf, baseball, and softball to success in stops at his alma mater of Godley and Fort Worth Southwest.

Bearcats

Mourning inherits a Bearcats team that returns every player who competed on the team at state last spring, including seniors Braylon Mahaney, Dylan Kiser, and Logan Ban, along with juniors Jett Moore and Jake Phillips.

Also on the team are seniors Payne Wellman and Hudson Knox; along with juniors Johnnie Reed and Bryce Wolf; sophomores Cade Moore, Noah Graham, Ethan Elmore, and Helton Mossiello; and freshmen Grayson Freeman, Braden Stokes, and Maddox Jessup.

Mourning said he is counting on the returning state qualifiers for not only competing, but also help bring the younger players along on their own quest.

Ladycats

Alyssa Saunders is gone from the Ladycats, having graduated and now competing for the University of Texas at Tyler. However, the

other four players who helped the team advance to state are back.

They are seniors Mallory Miller, Sanaa Lemen, and Madison Warner and junior Kyla Morales. Alongside them on this season's squad are junior Kennedy Parker; sophomores Reagan Gilliland, Catherine Haney, Taylor Thurman, Avalon Anderson, Sarah Michaelis, Abby Gray, Brooke Green, Aubrey Morin, and Chandler Edwards; with freshmen Emily Crick, Harper Price, and Karlee Shaw.

Mourning said he is counting on the experienced players to do more than compete. He believes it is their responsibility to help raise the younger players up as well — which he said they all understand.

"A lot of those older kids are taking the young ones under their wing, that's how you get the continued success the program has had," he said.

Mourning recalled his own younger days when he fell in love with golf.

"Growing up we didn't have much money. We had to drive to Cleburne to play, and I had two full-time working parents," he said. "When my brother turned 16 we went out and played and we loved it. After I shot a 90 in an early high school round I was hooked."

That love for the game has now extended to his own son, 12-year-old Dylan.

"He's just now getting into it. I enjoy watching him play. It takes me back to my younger days. I've been playing since I was about 13," Mourning said.

After a couple years as an assistant baseball coach in Godley, Mourning got out of coaching and education for a short time because

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he said it took him away from his family too much. He was a tax appraiser in Glen Rose for six months before Aledo came calling.

"I told my wife if the right job came through I'd consider coming back. I got on the computer and saw Aledo needed somebody," he said.

So he called his old friend, former Godley football head coach and longtime Aledo assistant John Rhodes to get some advice. Next thing Mourning knew, he was hired to coach the Bearcats and Ladycats, replacing Joe Roquemore (boys) and James Mullins (girls), both of whom he praised for helping him transition to the new job.

And though he enjoyed success with the limited golfers he had, he's happy to be in a program where the players come to him, unlike, for example, his teams at Southwest.

"I had to walk the halls to find kids," he said. "We had some talented kids there, but we were in a district with Granbury, Arlington Heights, and Aledo. We had some really good golfers who didn't get out of district."

He's certain that won't be the case now.

"They love golf here, and I'm so happy that I can be a part of this tradition," he said.

Mourning's assistant coaches are Tom Croft and Andrew Groff. Croft is a retired teacher/coach from Springtown, while Groff is a second-year coach (first at Aledo) who grew up as a coach's kid.

Aledo Ladycats 2022 Fall Golf Schedules
Varsity Black
 Date Tournament
 Sept. 16-17 Granbury Fall Classic, Harbor Lakes
 Oct. 11 District Preview, Sugartree
 Oct. 16 Aledo Golf Fundraiser, Split Rail
 Nov. 4-5 State Preview, Whitewing, Georgetown
 Nov. 11-12

Lady Tiger Invitational, Texarkana Country Club

Varsity Orange
 First three tournaments same as Black
 Oct. 27 Battle at the Creek, Squaw Creek
 Nov. 2 Burleson Centennial, Southern Oaks

Junior Varsity
 Sept. 14 Granbury, Nutcracker
 Sept. 20 Argyle, Champions Circle
 Oct. 4 Weatherford, Cleburne Links
 Oct. 16 Aledo Golf Fundraiser, Split Rail
 Oct. 19 Burleson Centennial, Southern Oaks
 Oct. 24 Argyle, Decatur Country Club

Aledo Bearcats 2022 Fall Golf Schedules
Varsity Black
 Sept. 16-17 Bart Granger Memorial, Pecan Valley, Benbrook
 Oct. 6-8 Jay Brewer Memorial, Texarkana Country Club
 Oct. 11 District Preview, Sugartree
 Oct. 16 Aledo Golf Fundraiser, Split Rail
 Nov. 4-5 Pioneer Invitational, Iron Horse

Varsity Orange
 Sept. 28 Flower Mound Marcus, Tour 18
 Oct. 11 District Preview, Sugartree
 Oct. 16 Aledo Golf Fundraiser, Split Rail
 Oct. 28-29 Mansfield, Squaw Valley, Glen Rose
 Nov. 4-5 Pioneer Invitational, Iron Horse.

Junior Varsity
 Sept. 14 Granbury, Nutcracker
 Sept. 20 Argyle, Champions Circle
 Oct. 4 Weatherford, Cleburne Links
 Oct. 16 Aledo Golf Fundraiser, Split Rail
 Oct. 19 Burleson Centennial, Southern Oaks
 Nov. 1 Midlothian Heritage, Prairie Lakes



RANDY KECK/THE COMMUNITY NEWS

The 2022 Aledo High School cross country team is looking for another trip to state.

CROSS COUNTRY

Bearcats seek another run to state

By Rick Mauch
 The Community News

It's really not that far from Aledo to Round Rock. And if you follow the path the Aledo Bearcats cross country team took last season, it gets even shorter.

With four members returning from last season's team that advanced to the Class 5A Boys State Cross Country Meet at Old Settler's Park in Round Rock, optimism is high for more success in 2022.

"We're looking forward to another strong season. We should have another strong boys team, and some very talented girls as well," head coach Mike Pinkerton said.

Back for the Bearcats is sophomore Jack Fink, who broke the top 100 individually at state last year with a 94th-place finish. He is joined by fellow state returners juniors Vincent Luffey and Sam

Haught, along with senior Henry Zedler.

Fink also won District 5-5A last season, while Luffey was fifth, Haught was sixth and Zedler was seventh.

Fink and Haught also enjoyed success this summer with the Mach I Track Club out of Weatherford, both qualifying for the Amateur Athletic Union Junior Olympics in Greensboro, North Carolina. Fink finished fifth in the nation in the Boys 15-16 3,000-meter race.

Newcomers among the girls include freshmen Molly Garrison, Elizabeth Griffin, and Sophia Brandenburg, while freshman Anderson Smith is joining the team among the boys, along with senior Isaac Cupp, a transfer from Weatherford Christian School.

Cupp placed second in the state in TAPPS 2A cross country last season.

The Bearcats and Ladycats will once again be competing in District 5-5A with Azle, Granbury, Northwest, Saginaw, White Settlement Brewer, and Wichita Falls Rider.

"Same district, but added Northwest and Saginaw. It will be a tough district," Pinkerton said.

Aledo Bearcats/Ladycats 2022 Cross Country Schedule

Date	Meet	Time
Aug. 13	Hotter Than Buzzy, Azle	7 a.m.
Aug. 20	Cowtown Challenge, FW	7 a.m.
Aug. 27	Southlake Invitational	7 a.m.
Sept. 2	Elk Run, Burleson	7 a.m.
Sept. 10	Mineral Wells Invitational	8 a.m.
Sept. 17	Paschal Invite, FW	7:30 a.m.
Sept. 22	Flyin' Hawks Invitational, FW	7:30 a.m.
Sept. 30	Race for the Loot, Granbury	8:30 a.m.
Oct. 14	Dist. 5-5A, White Settlement	9 a.m.

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V'BALL

from page one

Positions

Middle Attackers - Maddie Frank, Skylar Lambert, Haley Lowe

"Skylar was on the team last year," Gay pointed out. "She's stepping into more of a playing role, and Haley is pushing, just keeps getting better every day. And then of course Maddie returns from last year."

Outside - Vivian Parker, Lauryn Mack, Alyssa Gonzales, Payton Hilmer, Kinley Elms

"Vivian and Lauryn are more of our ball handlers," Gay explained. "Then you've got Alyssa who can also ball-handle, Payton is playing more on the outside, especially on the right more frequently. All of them can really be outside or right side and that's nice to have. Kinley is going to be a force to be reckoned with on the right side. She plays very hard and practices well."

Setters - Rylee Metts, Ava Reding, Catie Messer

"They're all kind of new to this level," Gay mentioned. "Rylee played last year, learned a lot and continues to get better. Ava is a sophomore and Catie is a junior and so we're working hard to get them up to where we need them at this pace."

Defensive Specialists - Natalie Anderson, Morgan Estevez, Maddy Jarvis, Logyn Denbow, Kenrie Pruitt, Madison Widemayer, Parker Dwinell

"We've got a lot of defensive specialists," Gay said. "Natalie does a good job competing and we definitely need to get her rep count up. All of them are kind of new to varsity and they're just battling it out every day."

Libero - Mia Little

"I'm definitely glad to have Mia returning at libero," Gay said. "She's worked a lot and gotten much better at her serve-receive. She worked really hard in the offseason on that."

AHS FOOTBALL – DEFENSE

Buchanan says defense 'Best We've Had'

By Nolan Ruth
The Community News

Aledo Head Coach Tim Buchanan knows the old saying "Defense Wins Championships." If one were to look at any of the ten Aledo state champion teams, they would see that has held true since that first title in 1998.

However, in the 29 years Buchanan has been at Aledo, he believes that the 2022 defense might be among the best the Bearcats have ever seen.

"We have a lot of new faces," Buchanan said. "But looking at what we bring back and where the new guys fit in, they're going to be pretty darn good. By the end of the regular season they might turn into one of the best we've had."

Brad McCone returns for his 10th season on the Aledo coaching staff and will head up the defense. McCone spent 13 years as the head coach at Crowley High School where he led the Eagles to a district championship in 2001. In 2013 he came to Aledo to become the defensive line coach, and with the departure of Billy Mathis as defensive coordinator in 2017, McCone took over as the defensive coordinator.

Defensive Line: Ansel Din-Mbuh, Bryon Wheeler, Lawson Moore, Christian Hillman

Din-Mbuh and Wheeler return as the main defensive tackles, and with the experience they gained in Aledo's new wrestling program, will look to add a new level of physicality to the defensive front. Meanwhile Moore and Hillman are first time starters on the varsity level, but played a significant amount of time in 2021.

"Both Moore and Hillman played a bunch last year," Buchanan explained. "They're new starters but they both played well last year and had a great spring."

Linebackers: Davhon Keys, Cap Mooney, Andrew Parkhurst, Cooper Kohan, Ky Howington

Keys returns at middle linebacker after a stellar 2021. Mooney is expected to take many snaps on the offensive side at running back, along with Keys when the situation calls for it. Parkhurst moves forward from the safety position but is still expected to be a force in stopping the run. Kohan and Howington are new faces to the starting roster that will both see significant playing time in the box this season and should fill the gaps nicely.

"Kohan and Howington are two kids that will be really good," Buchanan mentioned. "They'll allow Davhon and Cap to come play running back a bit for us."

Defensive Backfield: Hawk Daniels, Jake Gillespie, Jaden Allen, Chris Johnson

Allen returns for the first time without his brother behind him at safety, but brings an element of speed to the outside at cornerback where he has spent the past two years. Johnson will join him on the opposite side of the defense, again adding speed and quickness to the secondary. Daniels rejoins the Bearcats at safety after a brief but notable stint at Brewer High School where he was a massive force for the Bears, while Gillespie will be the strong safety after moving into town after his father took the defensive coordinator job at TCU. Gillespie is also known to be very physical and will add a bit of extra strength to the Aledo defense.

"Hawk is an old Bearcat," Buchanan said. "He was here in middle school and then moved to Brewer, he's back and he's a really talented young man. Gillespie had an incredible spring and we're excited to see what he's going to bring to the table."

After graduating seven defensive starters from 2021, it is somewhat of a mystery as to just how the defense is going to look for the team. However, Buchanan is confident in what he has now more than ever, and expects a stellar year from the affectionately named "Black Shirts."

AHS FOOTBALL – OFFENSE

Young but talented

By Nolan Ruth
The Community News

Aledo's offense has been a major factor in the success they have had over the past 30 years since head coach Tim Buchanan came to town. One of the most impressive stats over that time seems to be just how much the Bearcats have outscored their opponents.

While many big names have played on the offensive side of the ball for Aledo, it's the young names that will make the difference in 2022. Offensive coordinator Robby Jones is no stranger to that particular situation as he has been calling plays for the Bearcats since the early 2000s and has always found a way

to manufacture a productive offense no matter who is on the field.

"We graduated seven offensive starters from last year's squad," Buchanan said in an interview. "There are going to be a lot of new faces, some familiar ones as well, but we're

Turn to **OFFENSE**, page B5



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OFFENSE

from page four

going to be really young. Especially up front is where we're going to have some new guys."

Offensive Line: Alex Arana, Devron "DJ" Williams, Garrett Muhtadi, Isaac Knott, Isaac Sohn

Both Knott and Sohn are the two that will attract attention on the offensive front. The two returning tackles will be tasked with fending off the outside rushers from some of the biggest defensive lines Aledo has ever faced, but their experience up front should give them a leg up against the competition. Arana and Williams are both juniors and are new starters on the offensive line. Arana will be the anchor of the line as the center for the Bearcats.

"Those three guys in the middle are all new," Buchanan noted. "Arana, Williams, and Muhtadi are new to the varsity and they'll be the three middle linemen. And then Sohn is probably the best tackle we've ever had. He is really, really good."

Receivers: Zach Reynolds, Gavin Olenjack, Tyson Timms, Kaydon Finley, Austin Keith

Reynolds and Olenjack will be the biggest targets in the passing game with both having incredible hands and speed. Olenjack will run out of the slot, while Reynolds will be out wide and splitting time with freshman Kaydon Finley who also shows amazing speed and agility. Timms takes over at tight end after the departure of Jason Llewellyn. Timms impressed coaches with his route running ability and a similar catching ability to his predecessor.

"Olenjack played a bunch last year," Buchanan recalled. "He played a bunch in the South Oak Cliff game, played a bunch in the playoffs. Timms is a new face who is a really good possession receiver. Not as big as Llewellyn but same type hands and I think a better route runner. We're gonna have a battle between Reynolds and Finley but they'll both get plenty of reps. They're both great assets to have."

Running backs: Cap Mooney, Davhon Keys, Ryan Cox, Caleb Pope

Much the same as the past couple of years, the Bearcats will have somewhat of a

running back by committee. While Mooney made the full move to the offensive side from linebacker, Keys will also come in to run for short yardage situations. Cox could also see significant playing time in the backfield along with Pope. Both possess an element of speed that will help the offense, while Mooney and Keys will be looked to more as power runners.

"We've got a few running backs," Buchanan said. "Cox is a good, steady running back. He's not a real burner speed wise but he's going to play a bunch. Then of course we've got Keys and Mooney who will play a bunch."

Quarterback: Hauss Hejny

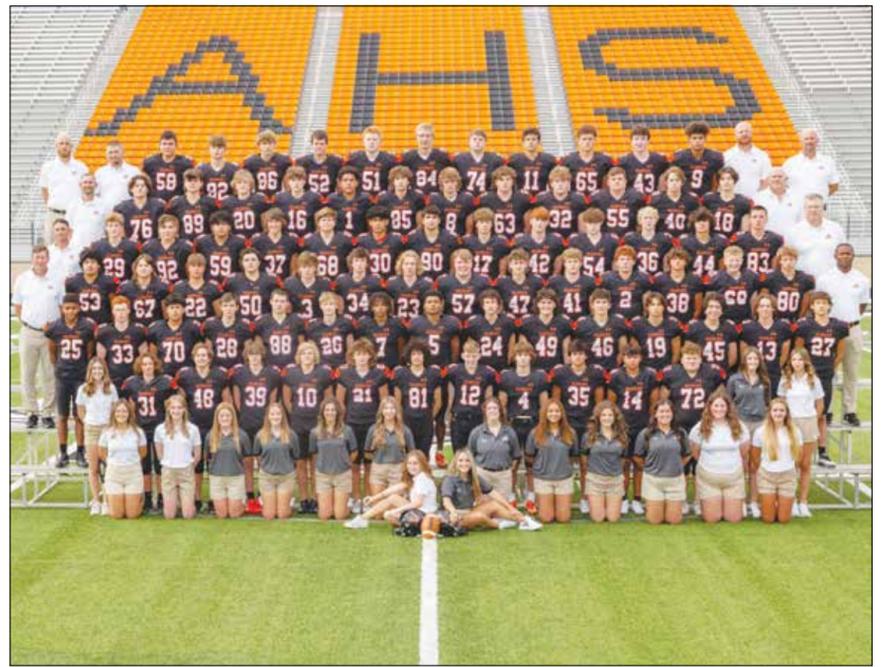
The big question on everyone's mind over the off-season was who the starting quarterback would be in 2022. At the start of the season, it was decided that Hejny would be the main signal caller for Aledo. While senior Brant Hayden is also a valuable weapon at quarterback should circumstances arise, Hejny brings a running ability to the quarterback position that allows the Bearcats to run the offense that they did when they had field generals with the last name of Bishop. Add that with his incredible accuracy whether in the pocket or on the run, Hejny earned the job as starting quarterback.

"Hejny is not new to the program," Buchanan said. "He was playing slot receiver for us last year, and he is going to be the guy who pulls the trigger at quarterback. He's just an all around athlete that will get the job done when it's needed."

Kicker: Cole Crawford

The Bearcats found themselves in a position they did not expect for 2022, as they suddenly found themselves without a kicker. As practices began, the sophomore Crawford stepped up and filled that need. Crawford will make his varsity football debut after an impressive freshman season on the varsity soccer team. It is unclear what his field goal range is just yet, but Aledo has put their trust in him to hold down the special teams in the new campaign.

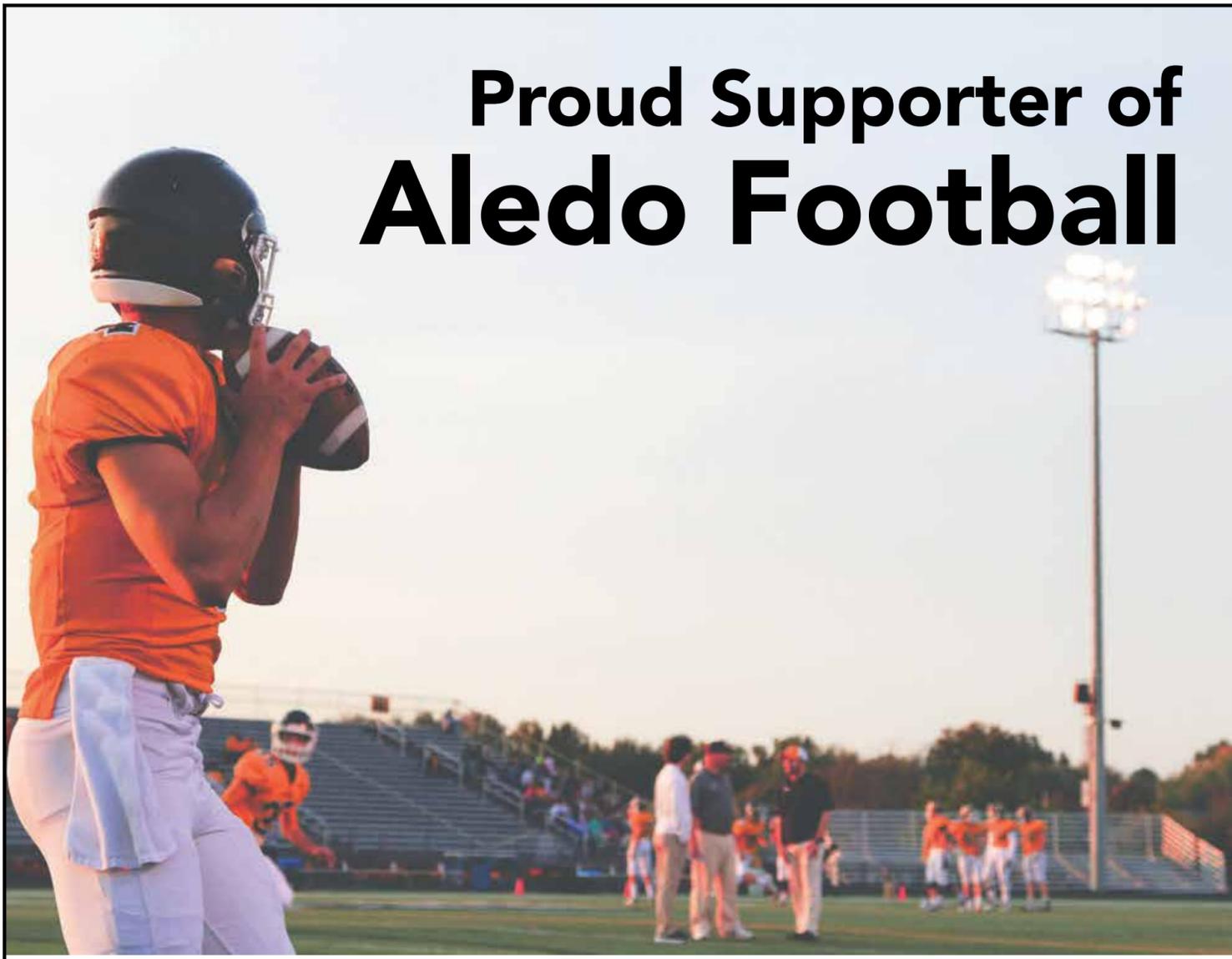
It should be an offense that will look very similar to what Aledo has become accustomed to. Only time will tell how this young bunch will fare, but the future looks promising.



AHS JV Football



AHS Freshman Football Team



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FOOTBALL

Eagles enter season with new coach, new stadium, new league, new hopes

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

There are a lot of new things connected to the Trinity Christian Academy Eagles football team this fall.

For starters, they have a new coach and athletic director, Bryan Marmian, who comes to lead the program with a wealth of experience in both the high school and college ranks. He replaces Joe Hamstra, who, likewise, was both head football coach and AD since 2015.

Hamstra left to start a ministry that identifies at-risk children and matches them with Christian schools.

Marmion's 30-year career includes 14 years of coaching collegiately, 16 years as a high school head coach and 20 years of high school administration experience, including 16 as athletic director. And he's enjoyed eight high school playoff appearances, three district titles, and one state semifinals appearance.

He restarted the Texas Lutheran football program after it had been disbanded 11 years prior to his arrival. He also started the football program at San Antonio Christian and built it into one of the top Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools Class 5A programs in the state.

Now, his plan is to return the Eagles to the prominence they knew not so long ago when they won a Texas Association of Private and Parochial Schools Division III state championship in 2018. Since, however, they have gone 7-22 over the past three seasons, though they have reached the playoffs each season.

The Eagles return nine starters whom played both offense and defense in 2021 for a squad that finished 2-8. The team was ravaged by COVID, particularly on the line and in the defensive backfield.



TCA Varsity Football Team

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"As happened with a lot of teams, it decimated a lot of positions. With us it was linemen, and then DBs," Marmian said, noting that the team dressed 13 players for one game.

Offense

The Eagles will switch to a spread offense this season, which means more throwing the ball.

They are led offensively by senior quarterback Evan Chrane. While he missed much of last season with a knee injury, he still managed to pass for 373 yards, one touchdown, and no interceptions. He is also the team's top returning rusher with 479 yards and three touchdowns, average 7.7 yards per carry.

"He's a good athlete. He's worked very hard on his mechanics and is a much better thrower," Marmian said. "And if that quarterback is a

runner it puts more pressure on the defense."

Senior tailback Caleb Nelson averaged 4.6 yards on 212 carries. Sophomore Asa Dowling, one of the team's leading rushers and receivers, transferred to Weatherford High School.

Chrane and Nelson have plenty of experience blocking for them. Junior Jackson Sykes moved to the line following the team's COVID outbreak, and though he's listed as a wide receiver this season he could also see time back on the line. Seniors Ben Camp, a state discus champion, and Jack Lytle also return up front.

As to who Chrane will throw to, that is something of a question mark with all of last season's top receivers having graduated. The Eagles could be running a receivers-by-committee attack in 2022.

"Summer 7-on-7 was really good for us," Marmian said. "We were commenting on staff about how few drops we had in Week 1.

"There will be a little bit of committee. They have to get seasons, but as far as talent we feel good about the group."

Defense

The Eagles will run a 3-3 defense, Marmian said.

"It's not unique to us. At this level most defensive linemen go both ways," Marmian said. Nelson and Jackson Sykes return at linebacker, while his twin brother Matthew Sykes, also a junior, returns in the defensive backfield. Camp and Lytle return to highlight the defensive line.

Chrane will also see time in the defensive backfield.

Special teams

Oh, Chrane also punts. So does freshman Riley McCracken.

The placekicking chores will also be handled by McCracken, along with sophomore Micah Harless.

Newcomers

Some newcomers look to bring excitement to the team this season.

Junior receiver Nathan Williams, a transfer from Temple Christian, is expected to enhance the passing game. Likewise for junior Jake Anderson, whose family moved back to the area after a year in Argyle.

Also, junior tailback Jake Wallis is expected to contribute to both the rushing and receiving departments.

Youth

The Eagles' roster features five seniors, five juniors, six sophomores and nine freshmen.

"In Texas these kids are dreaming about wearing that varsity jersey for years. It's awesome when they finally get to," Marmian said. "We've got a fairly young team this year and we've got a lot of kids going through that process."

Marmian said he is putting as much emphasis on the middle school programs as the high school level to better prepare athletes for when they get to the higher level.

"We adjusted our full-time varsity coaches' schedule as much as possible to be available for our junior high athletic periods," he said. "It makes a huge difference in the mindset."

New digs

The Eagles' travel schedule will be a lot lighter this season. Whereas in the past they even had to travel down the road for home games, now they have a brand new on-campus

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FALL SPORTS

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VOLLEYBALL

Lady Eagles counting on plenty of returning experience

By Rick Mauch
The Community News

Many sports teams have gone from struggling to good, and most all have one thing in common.

Experience.

The kind of experience Willow Park Trinity volleyball coach Jessica Sims has on her Lady Eagles squad this season; she returns all 11 players from last season's team that was 3-21 overall and 2-6 in district.

"We are very excited about the upcoming season. We did not have any graduates last season, so there is a lot of varsity court experience with this 2022 team. Our program has grown significantly over the past year, with our numbers doubling in the high school program and the addition of another JV team," Sims said with excitement.

"Our biggest strength is the number of varsity starters we had return from last year, along with the addition of new athletes that will add a new dimension to our team."

Already the Lady Eagles have seen early success, defeating Dallas Covenant in their season opener



SPECIAL TO THE COMMUNITY NEWS
The Trinity Christian Academy Volleyball Team returns all starters from last season.

and following with a runner-up finish in the Silver Bracket of the TAPPS Spikedown Tournament at Game On Sports Complex.

"Exciting things are happening in TCA Lady Eagle Volleyball!" Sims exclaimed.

Returning for the Lady Eagles as seniors are outside hitter/defensive specialist Bella Sigala, middle blockers Faith Rodgers and Margaret Cowley, defensive specialist Meredith Miller, right-side hitter Maddie Bayles, and setter Rio Lipsky. Returning juniors are libero Caroline Thompson, setter Faith Brooks, and right-side hitter/defensive specialist Giuliana Marcantonio. The lone sophomore returning is outside hitter Olivia Quinn.

Last year in district play, Brooks led the Lady Eagles in aces and assists, Rodgers led with kills and blocks, while Sigala was right behind Rodgers in kills. Thompson led the team in digs.

Rodgers was named second-team All-TAPPS District 1-4A, along with receiving academic all-state honors. Sigala, Brooks, and

Thompson were honorable mention all-district.

Key new faces who could make an immediate impact include freshmen setter Sadie Gough and hitter Emily Ickert, Sims said.

Of Gough, she noted, "She is extremely court savvy with the ability to put the ball where it needs to go. She is a hard worker and strives for excellence on and off the court."

Of Ickert, she said, "She is controlled and very methodical about her game play. She adjusts well to different positions on the court, and she works hard to do what is necessary to win the point."

Sims said TAPPS District 1-4A is quite simply the toughest in the state in that classification.

"We will be competing against teams from Lubbock and Midland. We have multiple teams in our district rank in the Top 10 statewide in 4A," she said. "While it will be a tough district, we are coming in with more experienced players and looking forward to meeting these teams on the court in district."

EAGLES

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stadium. It will be debuted Sept. 9 at 7:30 p.m. when the Eagles host Dallas Christian Home Educators.

"Having an on-campus stadium creates a Friday Nights Lights experience," Marmian said. "A lot of good is going to come from us having an on-campus stadium."

"Before, everything was on the road. Once you pack up, it doesn't matter where you travel, you're still traveling."

Marmian noted the new stadium, which is part of a three-phase

project, required no increased tuition and no taking on debt. He said it was built through fundraising and donations.

The first phase also included a track inside the stadium. The second phase includes facilities for baseball, softball and tennis. Phase 3 includes an indoor workout facility.

New district

The Eagles will compete in the extremely challenging TAPPS Division III District 1 this season. Joining them will be perennial powers Arlington Grace Prep (10-1 in 2021), Pantego Christian (10-2), and Lubbock Christian (10-4), along

with Colleyville Covenant (7-4) and Fort Worth Lake Country (4-6).

Four teams from the district will advance to the playoffs, Marmian said.

Like the Eagles, Pantego, Grace and Covenant run the spread offense.

"There's going to be a lot of learning that will happen," Marmian said. "As long as we're improving each week, are mentally in tune, performing, practicing hard and show up and play our guts out, what more can I ask of them?"

"I've never been one to say we're building for the future. These kids here now deserve better than that."

Coaching staff

Along with Marmian, the coaching staff has a few other new faces.

Perry Myer is the new running backs/defensive line coach. He was formerly the head coach at Keller Harvest.

Billy Warren, who was at Aledo for 20-plus years, came of retirement to coach linebackers and running backs. He is also a mentor coach, Marmian said.

Brian Snow is the defensive coordinator and Cody McKenzie as offensive coordinator are back. Taylor Edwards will coach the

offensive line. Matt Edwards, a local pastor, is a part-time assistant.

Schedule

Date	Opponent	Time
Aug. 26	at Temple Christian	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 2	at Waco Reicher	7 p.m.
Sept. 9	DalCHE	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 16	Olney	7:30 p.m.
Sept. 23	at Dallas Covenant	7:30 p.m.
*Oct. 7	Lake Co. Chr. (HC)	7:30 p.m.
*Oct. 14	Grace Prep	7:30 p.m.
*Oct. 21	Pantego (Sr. Night)	7:30 p.m.
Oct. 28	at Lubbock Christian	6 p.m.
*Nov. 4	at Covenant Christian	7 p.m.

*= TAPPS Division III District 1 game

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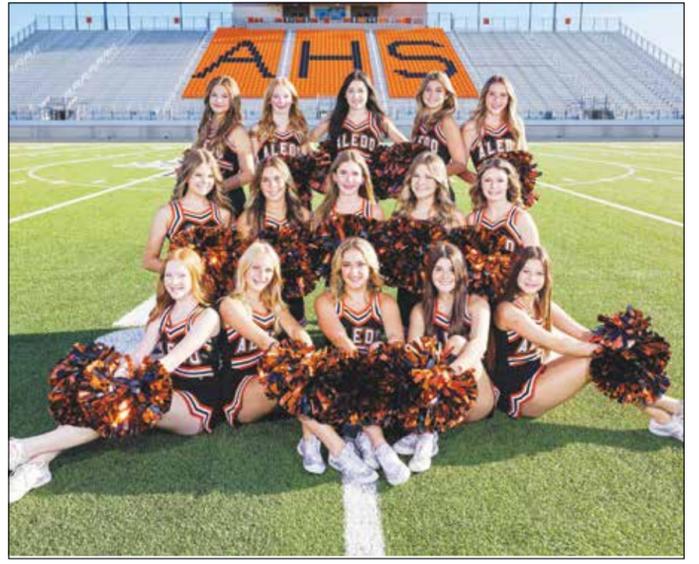
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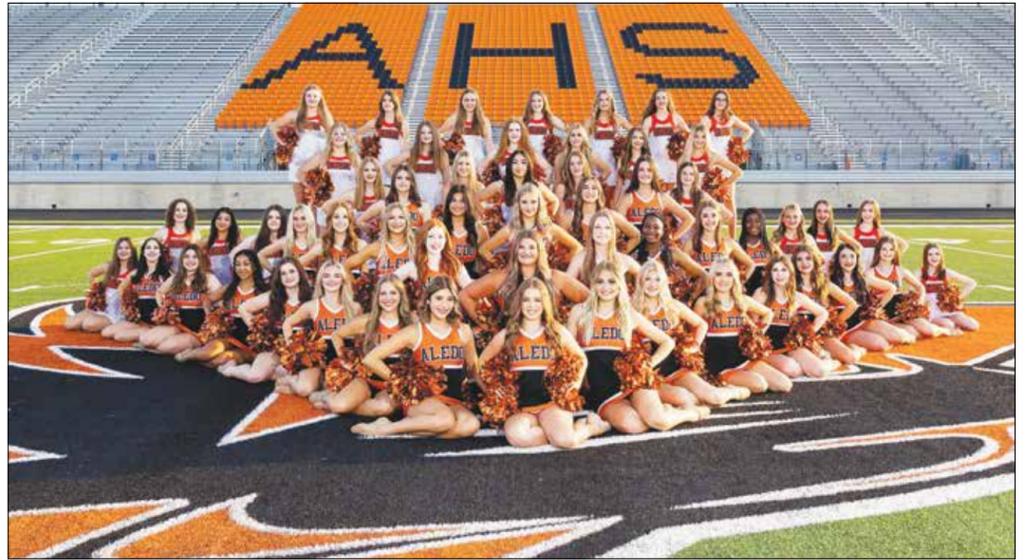
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