

Wyoming High School **Football** **Guide**

2021

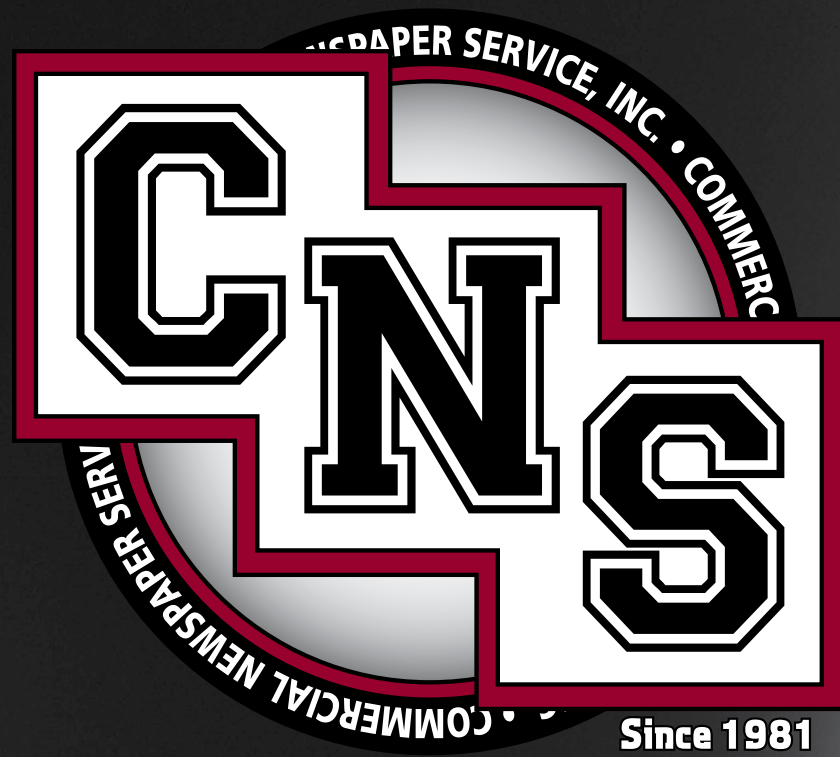
The road to Laramie is...

Wide Open

4A is a scramble, but title favorites loom in 3A and 2A



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Due to COVID-19 schedules for the 2021 season are subject to change.

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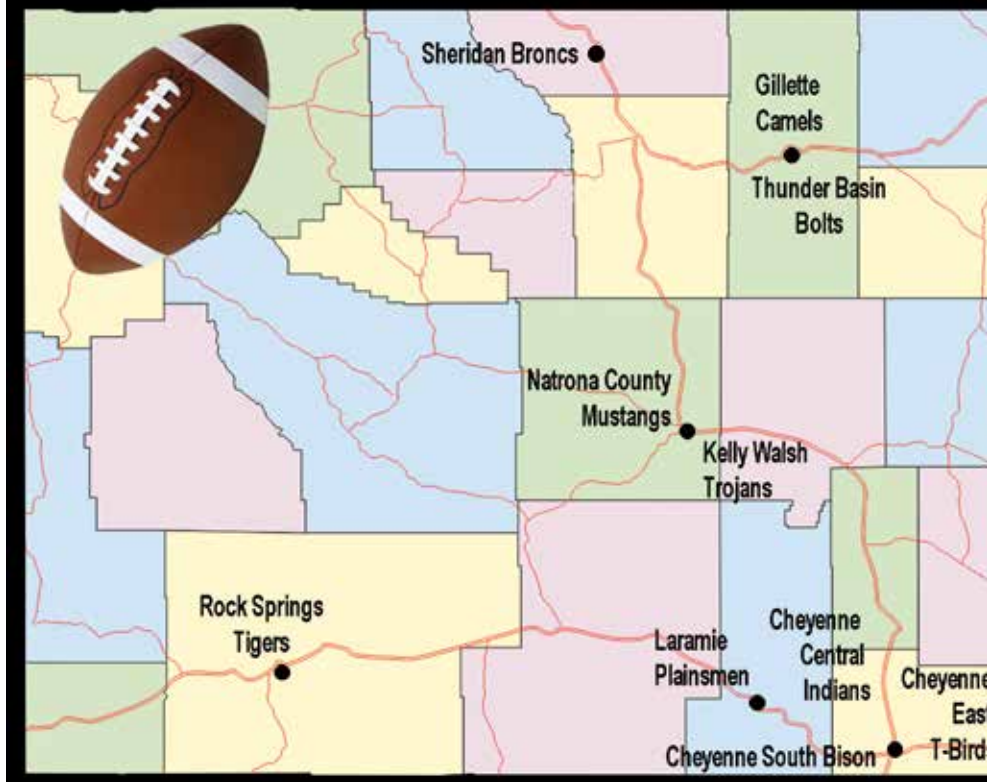
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4A Preview



4A is wide open with lots of new faces

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four questions to answer

Let's start simple: Who's the 4A favorite? Simple?!?! This is by far one of the hardest questions to answer, statewide in any classification, heading into 2021. With Class 4A's turnover this year, the classification is as unpredictable as ever.

Why is this so difficult? Most of last year's teams were heavy on seniors. Only six (out of 39) first-team all-state choices are back this year, and only 15 (of 76) first-team all-conference players return.

Who'd the coaches say? Rock Springs, Thunder Basin, Cheyenne East, Cheyenne Central, Natrona, Sheridan... each one got some indication of being title threat. Also, Kelly Walsh was a semifinalist last year, Campbell County returns more starters than any other 4A program and Laramie has a new coach.

Is this year a harbinger of things to come? It's likely. East, Natrona and Sheridan are the only programs to win 4A

Key games

Thunder Basin at Cheyenne East, Aug 27. The season starts with a bang as the 'Bolts and Thunderbirds meet in a rematch of last year's championship game. This game was the only

game East lost all last year.

Cheyenne Central at Kelly Walsh, Sept. 3. Think the Indians won't be hyped for this one? This is Central's chance for revenge on the team that surprised it in the first round of last year's playoffs.

Natrona at Sheridan, Oct. 1. One of the most epic games of the 2020 season was the four-overtime breath-taker between the Mustangs and Broncos. But that's no surprise — games between these two programs rarely disappoint.

Rock Springs at Cheyenne East, Oct. 22. If the Tigers keep improving as they have been the past couple years, this game against defending champ East in the final week of the regular season could be the most critical game not only for the two teams involved but for all of 4A.

Predicted order of finish

Rock Springs, Cheyenne East, Natrona, Sheridan, Thunder Basin, Cheyenne Central, Campbell County, Kelly Walsh, Laramie, Cheyenne South.

Way-too-early title game score prediction

Rock Springs 21, Cheyenne East 20. Realistically, though, any team that makes the playoffs will have a good shot at winning it all. Be ready for weirdness, upsets and a surprise champion.

State Champs
Cheyenne East
Thunderbirds



2020 State Playoffs

State Championship

Cheyenne East 29, Thunder Basin 15

State Semifinals

Cheyenne East 31, Sheridan 21
Thunder Basin 55, Kelly Walsh 14

State Quarterfinals

Cheyenne East 49, Laramie 7
Sheridan 35, Rock Springs 6
Thunder Basin 19, Natrona 14
Kelly Walsh 28, Cheyenne Central 14

Players to watch

Isaac Schoenfeld, Rock Springs

Schoenfeld, a University of Wyoming commit, has the size and skill to frustrate opponents. He does a bit of everything on defense and was the Tigers' top receiver last year. He ran the ball, too.

Cam Burkett, Kelly Walsh

KW's lone all-state player last year will be the focus of every opponent. He carried for 1,090 yards and 17 TDs last year, and with the Trojans losing their next four top rushers to graduation, Burkett may have to do even more in 2021.

Ryan Baker, Thunder Basin

He completed 159 of 271 passes for 2,084 yards and 19 touchdowns last year. In a season where several teams are changing quarterbacks, Baker's return gives Thunder Basin some much-needed offensive stability.

Cadon Shaklee, Rock Springs

One of the top defensive players in the classification, no other player in 4A coming back this year can match Shaklee's 101 tackles from a year ago. He also notched four sacks. He doesn't have a big role on offense, but that could grow.

Kaeden Wilcox, Natrona

Wilcox was Natrona's statistical leader on defense last year, with an even 100 tackles, 40 solo tackles, six interceptions and seven pass break-ups. As the Mustangs rebuild their defense this year, Wilcox will provide steadiness and consistency.



Mascot: Camels

Division: Class 4A

Colors: Purple and yellow

Coach: Andrew Rose,
third year at Campbell
County

2020 Record: 1-8, did not
qualify for playoffs

Key Players

RB/LB: Will Miller, Sr.

RB/DB: Ian Carter, Jr.

OL/DL: Taylor Foss, Sr.

WR/RB/DB: Brady Tompkins, Sr.

2021 Schedule

8-27: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.

9-3: vs. Laramie, 7 p.m.

9-10: at Cheyenne East, 7 p.m.

9-17: vs. Cheyenne South, 7 p.m.

9-24: vs. Thunder Basin, 7 p.m.

10-1: at Cheyenne Central, 7 p.m.

10-8: at Natrona, 7 p.m.

10-15: vs. Sheridan, 7 p.m.

10-22: at Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.

Camels have solid foundation

Consistently competitive, while simultaneously short on the scoreboard, created some frustration for Campbell County last season.

In their fourth consecutive losing season – the first time that’s happened to the Camels since 1979 – the Camels had flashes of good play but did not quite have the depth to stay with Class 4A’s top teams.

“We played well in the closing weeks but it was just a little too late,” coach Andrew Rose said. “Our main takeaway at the end of the day was to ensure we are giving our guys more opportunities for football in the offseason months and allowing them time to develop then rather than in the months of August.”

With the concerns of the COVID-19 pandemic mostly in the past, Campbell County gets that exact opportunity leading into 2021.

Rose said the Camels are “working to reestablish a culture of high expectations and accountability. We are seeing more and more total buy-in from kids from the lower classes and that’s putting the heat on the upper-level kids.”

*“We are looking
to simplify some
thing(s) this year...”*

**~Coach
Andrew Rose**

Campbell County starts from a good place, bringing back eight players who started on offense, eight who started on defense, and two first-team all-conference returners in seniors Taylor Foss and Will Miller.

The defense has a chance to be loaded, too. Campbell County could bring back as many as seven of its top eight tacklers from last year’s defense, led by Miller and senior Remar Pitter.

“We are looking to simplify some thing(s) this year and look to perfect plays rather than look to misdirect or try and be flashy,” Rose said. “We have... good, talented kids returning that have varsity experience under their belt and a chip on their shoulder.”

Miller had 66 tackles to finish second on the team last year; four of those tackles were for loss. Pitter added 50 tackles, good for third on the team, as well as a team-high two interceptions.

Foss and senior Brady Tompkins had 26 tackles apiece last year. Other returning players who had double-digit tackles last year were seniors James Pelton (12 tackles) and Jace Walter (10) and junior Ian Carter (10).

On offense, running behind a line led by Foss, Miller led the Camels’ rushing attack with 549 yards on 130 carries, including three touchdowns.

Pitter, who was second for the Camels with 195 receiving yards last year, is Campbell County’s top returning receiver in terms of yardage. Miller had 17 catches for 177 yards. They are the only two receivers among the seven Camels who had at least 40 receiving yards who will return this year.

Sophomore Aiden Dorr, who fought an ankle injury last season, returns at safety and will also compete to start under center.

Indians expect growing pains

There’s only one solution for inexperience.

Cheyenne Central coach Mike Apodaca is ready to implement that solution this fall.

Make no mistake: Apodaca has confidence in his team. He said the Indians have a good mix of size and speed, and they also have a good understanding of the systems the team runs.

However, his expectations are tempered by the inexperience of his returners.

“The reality is it’s going to take a little time, and so we’ve got to be patient and realize it’s a long season,” Apodaca said.

The numbers bear out that mentality. Central graduated eight of its nine all-conference choices, with senior wide receiver/defensive back Nathaniel Talich the only returner from that group.

The Indians have just two returning starters on offense and three on defense.

Talich is one of those players on both sides. He was second for Central last year in receiving yards (491), catches (38) and receiving touchdowns (six). He is the only one of Central’s top four receivers to come back this fall.

He was also fourth on the team in defensive points and seventh in tackles. He had four interceptions and six pass break-ups, both team highs, to go along with 38 tackles.

Apodaca said Talich has been a leader by example as an underclassman but will need a more vocal role as a senior.

“Nate’s really got to take ownership of the senior class... and he’s more than capable of it,” Apodaca said. “I have no doubts he has that ability in him, and excited to see that next step for him.”

Junior lineman Chris Benboe is the only other returning starter on offense.

Junior Jaxon Lobatos is

Central’s top returning rusher, carrying 53 times for 277 yards last year. Lobatos’ resume already includes a 100-yard game, which he got against Laramie last year when he had to start due to injuries.

Lobatos also had 50 tackles, third-best on the team.

“His demeanor says, ‘It’s my turn and I’m going to make the best of it,’” Apodaca said.

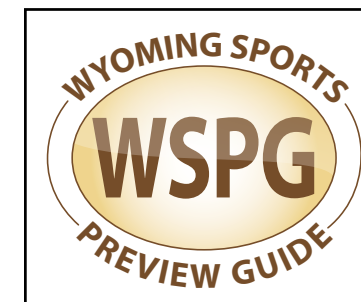
Of the top 12 players in defensive points a year ago, Central returns only three.

Senior Eli Castillo had 45 tackles to tie for fourth-best on Central last year; his two sacks tied for the team lead.

Senior Ethan Wilkins had 27 tackles last season and classmate Jackson Davis added 22.

Apodaca said the Indians’ quick exit from the playoffs last year – a quarterfinal loss to No. 7 seed Kelly Walsh – should keep the returners focused, helping them overcome the problems that come with inexperience.

“You’ve got to be playing your best football at the end, and you’ve got to be able to handle the grind of nine or 10 weeks,” Apodaca said.



Mascot: Indians

Division: Class 4A

Colors: Red and black

Coach: Mike Apodaca,
fourth year at Cheyenne
Central

2020 Record: 7-3, lost
to Kelly Walsh in state
quarterfinals

Key Players

WR/DB: Nate Talich, Sr.

OL/DL: Chris Benboe, Jr.

RB/LB: Jaxon Lobatos, Jr.

RB/LB: Eli Castillo, Sr.

2021 Schedule

8-27: vs. Natrona, 7 p.m.

9-3: at Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.

9-10: vs. Sheridan, 6 p.m.

9-17: at Thunder Basin, 7 p.m.

9-24: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.

10-1: vs. Campbell County, 7 p.m.

10-8: at Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.

10-15: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.

10-22: vs. Laramie, 6 p.m.

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Champs will be challenged

Cheyenne East coach Chad Goff said his returning players’ dedication to improvement should help the defending Class 4A champions absorb the losses they had to graduation.

He can literally smell it in weight training.

“It’s like someone threw a ball of sweat in your face when you walk in that room,” he said.

Goff said he can keep his expectations high because of what his players have shown him – that they know starting spots are available and they will work hard to seize that opportunity.

“That’s exciting for kids, and as a coach I’m always just excited for kids to come make their own name, no matter what position,” Goff said. “We don’t get to keep kids forever, and these kids have worked hard for their opportunity, their shot, and they’ll get that this fall.”

Senior wide receiver/defensive back Gavin Goff is the only returning all-state selection of East’s eight picks, leaving plenty of opportunities for less experienced players to fill important positions on the Thunderbirds’ depth chart.

CONTINUED PAGE 7



Mascot: Thunderbirds

Division: Class 4A

Colors: Blue and silver

Coach: Chad Goff,
16th year at Cheyenne
East

2020 Record: 11-1, beat
Thunder Basin in state
championship

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Mascot: Bison
Division: Class 4A
Colors: Black and gold

Coach: Dan Gallas,
 sixth year at Cheyenne
 South
2020 Record: 0-9, did not
 qualify for playoffs

Key Players

QB/P: Braeden Hughes, Sr.
OL/DL: Lars Quinlivan, Sr.
WR/DB: Jakub Randles, Sr.
OL/DL: Dylan Choate, Jr.

2021 Schedule

8-27: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
9-3: at Sheridan, 6 p.m.
9-10: vs. Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
9-17: at Campbell County, 7 p.m.
9-24: at Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
10-1: vs. Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
10-8: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
10-15: vs. Laramie, 6 p.m.
10-22: at Natrona, 6 p.m.

Bison look to rebound

A winless season could send players one of two ways – motivated to do better or discouraged from trying at all.

For the Cheyenne South Bison, last year's 0-9 season has done a bit of both.

Some players, like quarterback Braeden Hughes, linemen Dylan Choate and Lars Quinlivan and receiver/defensive back Jakub Randles, have been inspired to do better and lift South out of its struggles, coach Dan Gallas said.

"Then we have others that have been very discouraged by it," Gallas said. "At the same time, we have those kids that love the game of football and want to play it at a high level, and they're excited to get that opportunity."

The Bison went 0-9 last year and were outscored 525-76. The Bison's closest game was a 40-point loss in the season opener.

How the roster will shake out for South this year is still a bit of a mystery. Gallas said many players who were starters or key contributors to last year's team as juniors and sophomores have indicated they probably won't return to the team.

In each of Gallas' previous five seasons as South's head coach, though, he said he has always had more players in the program than in the previous season – a streak he hopes to continue in 2021.

Even if the team remains small, it will be close. Gallas took a group of Bison to a team camp at the University of Nebraska-Kearney this summer, and "it was the most close-knit group we've had," Gallas said.

Hughes, a senior, was South's top passer and rusher last year. He ran 132 times for 588 yards and five touchdowns, and he completed 19 passes for 269 yards and a pair of scores.

"He is extremely coachable," Gallas said. "He is a great leader. ... He's very competitive. He's got good speed, he's got some strength. His size is a little bit of a limiting factor for him, but he makes up for it with the size of his heart and desire."

Who will join him in the backfield isn't completely clear, but Gallas said senior Will

Aragon (33 carries, 117 yards) will return.

The Bison's run-first offense only generated 23 completed passes last year, so the receiving corps does not return any players who had triple-digit yards last year.

The Bison defense returns its top two tacklers and several others who contributed.

Hughes was South's top defensive player, leading the Bison in defensive points and notching a team-high 34 tackles, including 20 solo.

Junior Matt Rivera added 31 tackles, junior Robert Campbell had 14, Aragon had 13 and Choate, a junior, had 12.

"We're going to have to play a lot of people both ways," Gallas said.

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Trojans have turned the corner

Kelly Walsh was looking for a breakthrough.

In the first round of last year's Class 4A playoffs, they got it.

As the No. 7 seed, the Trojans beat No. 2 seed Cheyenne Central 28-14, the Trojans' second playoff victory since 2010.

Kelly Walsh's championship hopes ended the next week in the semifinals, but the playoff victory reinvigorated the Trojans' returning players.

"Our kids have really invested in our program and believed in themselves and each other," said coach Aaron Makelky, who is starting his third year at KW this fall. "The Central game was one where we played to our potential and showed we can compete with the best in the state. Now we need to do that more consistently."

"We have had great numbers of kids for weight room and summer camps. There is a lot of excitement building for this season."

Senior Cam Burkett was KW's only first-team all-state selection last year and is also KW's only returning first-team all-conference pick.

He ran 199 times for 1,090 yards and 17 touchdowns last year. However, he's the only one of KW's top five rushers to return this season.

He's also KW's top returning receiver, with 12 catches for 278 yards last season. The Trojans graduated five of their top six pass-catchers as well as their quarterback.

Makelky said Burkett will be the focus of every opposing defense, something for which the

Trojans are prepared.

"Cam has the most unique skill set of any player I have coached," Makelky said. "His combination of size, speed and ball skills are very tough to defend. We plan on using him in different positions and moving him around to create matchup problems for defenses. Lining your best player up in the same spot every play makes it easier to defend and game plan for."

The bulk of the Trojans' returning experience on offense is on the line. Seniors Chase Ortberg and Carlos Enriquez will be among Kelly Walsh's key returners in that area.

"Our line should be the strength of our team," Makelky said.

The Trojans' defense loses nine of its top 10 tacklers to graduation. The lone returner from that group is senior Nathan Costalez, who had 34 tackles and a team-high 10 pass break-ups.

Three other players – seniors Sam Neville (22 tackles), Ortberg (18) and Jesse Thornton (11) – were the only other returners in double-digit tackles last year. Both Neville and Thornton are coming off injuries that ended their 2020 seasons early.

"We have to get those guys game-like experience in the offseason and make sure they are putting in the work during speed (and) lifting sessions," Makelky said. "Our defensive coaches teach tackling and pursuit every day in practice, so they will be ready."



Mascot: Trojans
Division: Class 4A
Colors: Green and yellow

Coach: Aaron Makelky,
 third year at Kelly Walsh
2020 Record: 5-6, lost
 to Thunder Basin in state
 semifinals

Key Players

OL/DL: Chase Ortberg, Sr.
RB/LB: Cam Burkett, Sr.
DB: Nate Costalez, Sr.
OL/DL: Carlos Enriquez, Sr.

2021 Schedule

8-27: at Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
9-3: vs. Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
9-10: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
9-17: at Natrona, 6 p.m.
9-24: vs. Laramie, 6 p.m.
10-1: at Thunder Basin, 7 p.m.
10-8: at Sheridan, 6 p.m.
10-15: vs. Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
10-22: vs. Campbell County, 6 p.m.

CHEYENNE EAST CONTINUED-

Coach Goff said he will depend on the structure of what brought East success in the first place – consistency in teaching and a focus on playing the game with strong fundamentals.

"When you graduate as many as you did, you just hope that the way you run your program, that things will

work out," he said. "... We really preach knowledge and understanding the concepts. ... There's a purpose to everything we do."

Despite the losses to graduation, East returns several key contributors from last year's championship team.

Gavin Goff was third on the Thunderbirds in both receptions (40) and receiving yards (668). He scored nine receiving touchdowns.

Senior Cade Pugh, who was also a first-team all-conference choice, ran 156 times for 630 yards and six touchdowns to lead the East running backs. Junior Keagan Bartlett added 136 rushing yards and two touchdowns.

Junior Garett Schlabs added 34 catches for 452 yards and six touchdowns. Pugh (15 catches, 173 yards) and Bartlett (nine catches, 100 yards) were also viable aerial targets.

East's defense returns five of the 14 players who had at least 20 tackles last season but does lose its top six tacklers.

Bartlett had 50 tackles and tied for fifth on the team in defensive points last year; he finished with three interceptions and three fumble recoveries last season.

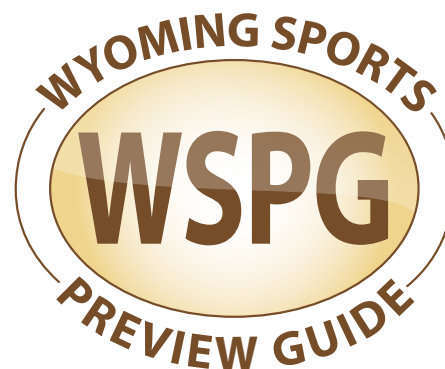
Senior Kaleb Romero had 43 tackles and led the team with five interceptions. Gavin Goff had 46 tackles, while senior Dom Lopez

added 39 and Pugh had 26.

Coach Goff said senior linemen Eli Collins and Braxton Rosner have also been showing their value in the offseason.

"We've had some tremendous gains and kids are working hard," he said.

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Mascot: Plainsmen
Division: Class 4A
Colors: Maroon and yellow

Coach: Paul Ronga,
first year at Laramie
2020 Record: 2-8, lost to
Cheyenne East in state
quarterfinals

Key Players
QB/LB: Ethan Jenkins, Sr.
WR: Cooper Gray, Sr.
WR/CB: Jackson Devine, Sr.
RB/LB: Grahm Jaques, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Sheridan, 6 p.m.
9-3: at Campbell County, 7 p.m.
9-10: vs. Natrona, 6 p.m.
9-17: vs. Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
9-24: at Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
10-1: vs. Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
10-8: vs. Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
10-15: at Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
10-22: at Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.



Mascot: Mustangs
Division: Class 4A
Colors: Orange and black

Coach: Steve Harshman,
31st year at Natrona
2020 Record: 5-5, lost
to Thunder Basin in state
quarterfinals

Key Players
RB/S/KR: Kaeden Wilcox, Sr.
C/TE/NG: Brendyn Nelson, Sr.
WR/CB: Roman Overstreet, Sr.
QB: Tyler Hill, Sr.

Laramie looks to new leader

Class 4A football is unrelenting, and for the better part of two decades, Laramie has been on the receiving end of that relentlessness.

New Plainsmen head coach Paul Ronga wants to change that.

Ronga, who comes to Laramie after spending more than 25 years as a football coach in New York, said he hopes to bring the Plainsmen up to the level that being in Class 4A demands from a program.

“I’m completely aware of the challenge ahead of us, and it’s a big challenge,” Ronga said. “... The philosophy for Laramie is to build a program that embraces a philosophy of consistency, being consistent in everything we do, being professional in everything that we do, and striving to deliver the most competitive product that we can on the field at all times.”

Ronga said the University of Wyoming football program first caught his attention. He said the more he learned about the city and its value for football, the more interested he became in the head coach opening at LHS.

In 2021, the Plainsmen will have a tougher challenge than most 4A teams, as they have both a small senior class and an inexperienced group returning.

Senior linebacker Grahm Jaques, Laramie’s lone returning first-team all-conference player, led Laramie’s defense in points, had team highs 70 tackles, nine tackles for loss and two interceptions.

He’s also Laramie’s only returning player who carried the ball last year; he had 10 carries for 47 yards.

The Plainsmen graduated their top five receivers, as well; senior Jackson Devine, who had nine catches for 79 yards, is the only returner who had more than three catches last season.

Devine was sixth for Laramie with 32 tackles, while senior Cooper Gray added 23 tackles and three sacks.

Jaques, Devine and Gray are the only players among Laramie’s top 11 tacklers who return this year.

Ronga said he was encouraged, though, by all the players coming

back. In addition to the statistical leaders who return, he said senior Ethan Jenkins has emerged as a potential quarterback and that seniors Will Daniel and Paul Crater and juniors Xavier Crater, Mike Jaskolski and Jacob Curtright could form the core of the leaders on the offensive and defensive lines.

Seniors Lucas Wall and Trey Enzi and juniors Mahlon Morris and Brett Heggie are athletic players who will find opportunities in Laramie’s offense and defense, Ronga said.

Ronga said he wants Laramie to run multiple sets on both offense and defense.

“We hope to build the program and move the program forward and lay a foundation down,” Ronga said. “And it’s a foundation that I’ve begun this spring into this summer that needs consistency, year after year, to build.”

Mustangs may rely on youth

Natrona typically has a lot of spots to fill left by graduating seniors.

What’s different this year is that those open spots aren’t necessarily going to the upcoming seniors replacing them.

“The senior class is a nice class, they’re just not as big, not as deep,” coach Steve Harshman said. “... “We’re going to have a lot of competition. We might even have a freshman or two in the mix who are really talented.”

The youth movement at Natrona is driven by numbers. Harshman said the Mustangs will probably have close to 25 seniors but will have about 50 juniors and 60 sophomores.

The open spots are plentiful. Natrona loses six first-team all-state and 10 first-team all-conference players, with senior Kaeden Wilcox the only returner back with such honors.

Senior Brendyn Nelson, who started at center

and noseguard last year but may also play fullback and tight end this year, is the only other returning player who started every game.

The Mustangs do return three of their top four tacklers and six of their top 12 but lost several important role players on defense.

Wilcox led the Natrona defense by far in tackles last season, racking up 100 while also snagging a team-high six interceptions and breaking up seven passes. He also had two defensive touchdowns last year.

Senior Beau Hawkins tied for the No. 3 spot for Natrona with 49 tackles, including four for loss, a mark that’s tops among the Mustangs’ returning players.

Senior Preston Propp also had 49 tackles, including 19 solo, junior lineman Cody Crawford contributed 33 tackles, Nelson chipped in 23 and senior Jake Sides had 22.

Tigers ready to cash in

Slowly but surely, the Rock Springs Tigers have grown from a team with hopes to a team with plans.

Third-year coach Mark Lenhardt has Rock Springs poised for a breakout season thanks to the quickness with which his players have learned, and thrived, in his system.

“They’re confident and they understand the volume of offense and defense that we want to run, and what we want to do on both sides of the ball,” Lenhardt said.

The Tigers get back two first-team all-state selections in seniors Isaac Schoenfeld and Cadon Shaklee; no other team in Class 4A has more than one returning first-team all-stater.

Schoenfeld verbally committed to the University of Wyoming this summer and will have a hand in both the rushing and receiving games for the Tigers.

“This is a kid who was on the B-team in junior high, and he just grew and got better,” Lenhardt said. “... When those guys over at Wyoming get their hands on him, he’s just going to blossom.”

Schoenfeld was Rock Springs’ top pass-catcher in 2020, leading the team with 37 catches for 610 yards and seven touchdowns.

Schoenfeld (24 carries, 168 yards, three touchdowns) and senior all-conference pick Andrew Skorcz (21 carries, 160 yards, two TDs) both saw time running the ball, as did senior Jacob Eddy (26 carries, 151

yards, three TDs).

Senior quarterback Brock Bider completed 117 of 184 passes for 1,671 yards and 12 touchdowns last year.

Skorcz added 29 catches for 317 yards and three touchdowns. Senior Henry Carrier (five catches, 131 yards) also returns, giving the Tigers back three of their top four receivers from last season.

“There’s a lot of different guys who can help us move the football and score points,” Lenhardt said. “It’s always nice to have smart guys who have some experience.”

However, Lenhardt said the offensive line, where only two starters return, will help dictate what Rock Springs can do.

“We’ve got to play to the strengths of our offensive line as well,” he said.

On defense, Rock Springs gets back seven of its top 10 tacklers. Lenhardt said Rock Springs will use its depth and experience to run more multiple, versatile looks on defense, including more specific personnel packages for certain situations.

Shaklee led the Tigers by a wide margin with 101 tackles last year. He had four sacks to front Rock Springs.

Senior Kelton Bournazian finished with 36 tackles, good for fourth on the team. Skorcz was fifth on the team with 35 tackles, while Carrier was seventh with 30.

Schoenfeld had 26 tackles and also notched three sacks, three fumble recoveries and a pair of pass deflections.

Eddy had 25 tackles and senior Tommy Faigl added 22.



NATRONA CONTINUED-

Offensively, success will be driven by the development of the offensive line, Harshman said. That group includes Nelson, Crawford, seniors Isaac Sutton, Jose Solorzano, Micah Fondevilla, Braden Candtrell and juniors Jace Brezina, Colby Harlin, Jared Marquardt and Rafael Ruiz, among others.

Harshman said the group has committed to improvement through 5:30 a.m. “breakfast club” lifting sessions.

“They’ve just done a great job, and they’re wearing their work,” Harshman said. “You can just see it on them.”

Senior Tyler Hill is in position to return

under center after he saw assorted time last year, completing 31 of 59 passes for 412 yards. He is also the Mustangs’ top returning rusher; he carried 49 times for 105 yards and six touchdowns last year.

No other returning rusher carried for more than 100 yards last year.

Similarly, the Mustangs graduated their top five receivers; junior Mason Weickum, who racked up 27 yards on one catch last year, is NC’s top returning receiver. However, senior receiver Roman Overstreet, who missed last year after breaking his leg in a four-wheeler accident, will return.



Mascot: Tigers
Division: Class 4A
Colors: Orange and black

Coach: Mark Lenhardt,
third year at Rock Springs
2020 Record: 5-5, lost
to Sheridan in state
quarterfinals

Key Players
TE/DE: Isaac Schoenfeld, Sr.
TE/LB: Cadon Shaklee, Sr.
QB: Brock Bider, Sr.
WR/DB: Andrew Skorcz, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Campbell County, 6 p.m.
9-3: at Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
9-10: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
9-17: at Sheridan, 6 p.m.
9-24: vs. Natrona, 6 p.m.
10-1: at Laramie, 6 p.m.
10-8: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
10-15: vs. Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
10-22: at Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.

Natrona Mustangs
2020 Schedule
8-27: at Cheyenne Central, 7 p.m.
9-3: vs. Cheyenne East, 7 p.m.
9-10: at Laramie, 6 p.m.
9-17: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
9-24: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
10-1: at Sheridan, 6 p.m.
10-8: vs. Campbell County, 7 p.m.
10-15: at Thunder Basin, 7 p.m.
10-22: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.



Mascot: Broncos
Division: Class 4A
Colors: Blue and yellow

Coach: Jeff Mowry,
 fourth year at Sheridan
2020 Record: 7-4, lost to
 Cheyenne East in state
 semifinals

Key Players
C/DL: Chris Larson, Sr.
WR/DB: Brock Steel, Sr.
WR/DB: Carter McComb, Sr.
MLB: Michael Greer, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Laramie, 6 p.m.
9-3: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
9-10: at Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
9-17: vs. Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
9-24: at Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
10-1: vs. Natrona, 6 p.m.
10-8: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
10-15: at Campbell County, 7 p.m.
10-22: at Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.

Young Broncos rely on tradition

The word Sheridan coach Jeff Mowry repeats often in preparing for 2021 is “ownership.”

Senior leaders making the team and the program their own is critical to the success at Sheridan, which has had 14 consecutive winning seasons.

“The more our kids understand our offense and our defense, the more ownership they have of it and the more ability they have to kind of adjust on the fly,” Mowry said.

With only two returning starters on defense and only three on offense, the big question the Broncos face this fall is how, and when, such a transition happens.

“I have all the confidence in the world they can do that,” Mowry said. “It’s just a matter of getting it done.”

Senior Carter McComb is Sheridan’s only returning first-team all-state selection from last year’s team, which finished 7-4 and reached the Class 4A semifinals, but senior Chris Larson and junior Colson Coon were also first-team all-conference selections.

Coon led Sheridan’s rushing game last year, carrying 112 times for 926 yards and 12 touchdowns. McComb chipped in 22 carries for 187 yards and senior Texas Tanner had 15 carries for 118 yards.

Senior Brock Steel was third on the team in both receptions (15) and receiving yards (193) in 2020 and leads the Broncos’ returners in the passing game. Senior Cody Kilpatrick had 10 catches for 141 yards, while McComb, a two-time all-state choice at return specialist, will have a bigger role on offense this year after catching seven passes for an even 100 yards in 2020.

“That’s exciting,” Mowry said of the potential of Sheridan’s offensive playmakers. “At the same time, we’ve got to find ways to get them in positions to make big plays. ... We can’t just expect it to happen.”

Larson will start at center and will shoulder the leadership of the offensive line as the only returning starter of that unit.


“We really expect him to be a leader in that group and take on those guys who don’t have a lot of varsity game experience and show them what’s expected up front,” Mowry said.

Sheridan graduated its top four tacklers, seven of its top eight and 12 of its top 14; senior Michael Greer, who had 58 tackles and two sacks last year, is the Broncos’ top returner on that side of the ball.

Steel added 44 tackles and three pass deflections, while Coon had 20 tackles, including two for loss.

Success for an inexperienced defense, as well as other spots on the field, comes back to ownership.

Mowry said previous players “put in tons and tons of hours of work. Our current players need to understand how much work it takes to win. It doesn’t just happen.”



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‘Bolts have holes to fill

Thunder Basin is caught in a frustrating pattern.

Over the past two seasons, the ‘Bolts have two appearances in the Class 4A championship game.

Both times, Thunder Basin faced a team it beat during the regular seasons. Both times, the ‘Bolts lost the rematch.

Thunder Basin coach Trent Pikula said the presence of mostly new players at the varsity level gives opportunities for the pattern to become motivation, not frustration, this year.

Of Thunder Basin’s 15 first-team all-conference players, senior quarterback Ryan Baker is the only one to return.

“The kids that will make up this year’s team, although felt the pain and disappointment of that loss, are ready to make their own legacy,” Pikula said. “I am

hopeful that they will use that loss as a learning tool and move on from it.”

Baker, Thunder Basin’s only returning starter on offense, completed 159 of 271 passes for 2,084 yards and 19 touchdowns last year.

“Ryan is a very smart and mature kid and I think he understands that he will have to play very good football, but at the same time let things happen naturally,” Pikula said. “He will have to learn to trust a whole new group of pass catchers and be able to allow the run game to take pressure off of his shoulders.”

The ‘Bolts graduated their top five rushers and their top five receivers from last year. Senior Caden Randall, who carried eight times for 31 yards last year, is Thunder Basin’s top returning

rusher. Meanwhile, Baker – who had one catch for 67 yards last year – is the ‘Bolts’ top returning receiver, too.

Despite this, Pikula said he is confident in his returning backs and receivers to fill the positions left open by graduation.

The offensive and defensive lines right now are question marks, as the ‘Bolts graduated all of their starters from those positions.

“To win football games you have to be solid in those two spots, so we will need our young guys, as well as our seniors, to step into those roles and be ready to go,” Pikula said. “Those two groups take a little longer to gel and come together, so they will need to put work in and hit the ground running.”

Thunder Basin also graduated its top six tacklers and 12 of its top 14 players in defensive points.

Senior Ryan Jordan, who had 36 tackles and three interceptions, is Thunder Basin’s leading returning tackler.

Randall had 32 tackles and three pass break-ups and junior Dillon Glick added 16 tackles. Senior Ethan Cox, with 12 tackles, is the only other returning player with double-digit tackles last year.

Senior Isaiah Haliburton will also see time at running back, defensive back and returner.



Mascot: ‘Bolts
Division: Class 4A
Colors: Blue and silver


Coach: Trent Pikula,
 fifth year at Thunder Basin
2020 Record: 9-3, lost to
 Cheyenne East in state
 championship

Key Players
QB: Ryan Baker, Sr.
WR/DB: Ryan Jordan, Sr.
RB/DB/KR: Isaiah Haliburton, Sr.
RB/LB: Caden Randall, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
9-3: vs. Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
9-10: at Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
9-17: vs. Cheyenne Central, 7 p.m.
9-24: at Campbell County, 7 p.m.
10-1: vs. Kelly Walsh, 7 p.m.
10-8: at Laramie, 6 p.m.
10-15: vs. Natrona, 7 p.m.
10-22: vs. Sheridan, 6 p.m.



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Cody 34, Jackson 13

State Semifinals
Cody 21, Powell 0
Jackson 21, Douglas 14

State Quarterfinals
Cody 51, Worland 7
Powell 15, Lander 7
Douglas 16, Star Valley 14
Jackson 61, Riverton 38

Players to watch

Lucas Chappell, Star Valley

The two-time all-state lineman will again be a marked man for opposing teams. His defensive numbers don't leap off the page — 30 tackles, three sacks a year ago — but he's constantly fighting other teams' plans to limit him.

Colter Dawson, Jackson

Dawson is an athletic multi-tool threat. He led the Broncs in defensive points as both a sophomore and a junior, and his play at tight end makes him a threat as a pass-catcher and a blocker.

Sadler Smith and Brody Hasenack, Jackson

With 2,093 yards, Hasenack led all 11-man teams in rushing last year; with 1,973 yards, Smith led Class 3A in passing. Success together will be reliant on the versatility and balance both showed last year.

Keltan Ewing and Rylan Wehr, Douglas

The dynamic pair of running back (Ewing) and wideout (Wehr) gives Douglas' offense balance; they also both have key roles on defense. Ewing was the 3A East offensive player of the year; Wehr was a first-team Casper Star-Tribune Super 25 player.

Aaron Carver, Worland

The Warriors could be 3A's surprise team, and Carver — 3A's leading returning tackler — is a big reason why. With 98 tackles last year, his experience will help an experienced Warrior defense keep growing.

3A Preview



Cody, Jackson are loaded with talent to win 3A

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four questions to answer

Broncs-Broncs again? Possibly. Cody and Jackson are both absolutely loaded with talent this year, and they start as the frontrunners to meet in the Class 3A championship game again. Jackson returns six all-state players and Cody returns four.

Can anyone else infiltrate the top tier? With as talent-filled as 3A is this year, absolutely. Douglas and Powell return three all-staters apiece, while Green River and Star Valley have two each. The Bearcats will make sure the road to the title will eventually go through Converse County.

Anyone else outside that group we should watch for? Maybe Worland. The Warriors, at least on paper, have the potential to be a spoiler this year. They have an offense capable of quick strikes and also have 3A's top returning tackler.

How many Division I players might come out of 3A this year? More than usual. Lucas Chappell of Star Valley (Air Force) was one of the first Division I commitments. Colter Dawson of Jackson also picked up an offer from Air Force, and Bronc teammate QB Sadler Smith had several D-I official visits this summer.

Key games

Star Valley at Cody, Oct. 8. Star Valley has won its last 12 games in Cody; the Broncs haven't beaten

the Braves at home since 1991. Moreover, Cody has lost seven of its past eight against Star Valley. A win here, and Cody can shake off a lot of history.

Riverton at Lander, Oct. 8. The Fremont County rivalry game always provides some interesting twists, and with both teams trying to keep pace with Douglas, this could be a make-or-break for either team.

Douglas at Worland, Oct. 22. The Bearcats' path to an East Conference title comes through Washakie County in Week 8. A developing Warriors team could be a surprise, even for a loaded Douglas squad, in this regular-season finale.

Jackson at Cody, Oct. 22. This is by far 3A's most anticipated game of the season. Both teams return loads of talent, and both teams have high aspirations for this year.

Predicted order of finish

East Conference: Douglas, Worland, Lander, Riverton, Buffalo, Rawlins. *West Conference:* Jackson, Cody, Powell, Star Valley, Green River, Evanston.

Way-too-early title game score prediction

Jackson 28, Cody 27. Last year's top two teams are also this year's top two teams, and anything could happen with teams as deep and experienced as these.

3A EAST

BUFFALO BISON

PAGE 13

Bison could get over hump

By the narrowest of margins, Buffalo's 2020 season became one of what could have been, over and over again.

Last season, the Bison lost five games by a possession or less — scores of 8-6, 14-6, 13-6, 27-23, and 20-17 — on their way to a 1-6 record.

"There were games that we could have won and should have won and didn't," coach Rob Hammond said.

However, Hammond said the Bison need to avoid the trap of thinking that an extra year of experience is all that's needed to turn close losses into victories.

With Buffalo returning several key contributors, including seven starters on offense and six on defense, that lesson has been impressed on the players all throughout the offseason.

While the Bison, like most teams in Class 3A, will turn to their upperclassmen for leadership and experience, an influx of sophomores will help give Buffalo more depth than they've had in several years.

"We have a really talented group of sophomores," Hammond said. "Our freshman team was undefeated (in 2020) and they only had one close game, to Cody."

Seniors Aidan O'Neill and Keegan Money and juniors Marko Glascock and Brogan Byram will help lead the offensive line, an area where Buffalo returns the most experience.

Senior quarterback Jackson Moon also returns. He completed 45 of 105 passes for 720 yards and four touchdowns last year.

"It's going to go through him, and even if we're not throwing the ball very much, he's got to put us in good situations," Hammond

said.

Junior Blake Bell, who had 12 catches for 229 yards last year to rank second on the team, is Buffalo's top returning receiver. Senior Tony Peters was third with 10 catches for 132 yards, while Camino was fourth in yards with 62 on four catches.

Senior Ben Camino is Buffalo's top returning rusher; he had 23 carries for 116 yards last season.

Buffalo graduated its top three tacklers but returns its next four.

Junior Charlie Wonka, the only one of Buffalo's five all-conference choices to return this year, leads all returners with 46 tackles last year; he had a team-high seven sacks in 2020.

Bell had 36 tackles, including 20 solo, while Camino had 31 to go with two interceptions.

Peters chipped in 27 tackles, four pass break-ups and a team-high three interceptions.

Senior Kegan Money added 23 tackles.

Beyond the stats, Hammond said the team has bonded well and has good camaraderie, something he saw on full display at a pair of team camps the Bison attended this summer.

"This team seems to get along really well," he said. "They're going to play hard for each other, which is something we've put a premium on."

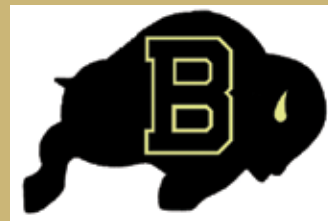


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Mascot: Bison

Division: Class 3A

Conference: East

Colors: Black and gold

Coach: Rob Hammond,
10th year at Buffalo

2020 Record: 1-6, did not
qualify for playoffs

Key Players

TE/DE: Charlie Wonka, Jr.

RB/LB: Ben Camino, Sr.

OL/DL: Aidan O'Neill, Sr.

QB: Jackson Moon, Sr.

2021 Schedule

8-28: at Big Horn, 1 p.m.

(Zero Week scrimmage)

9-3: at Newcastle, 6 p.m.

9-10: vs. Green River, 7 p.m.

9-17: at Cody, 6 p.m.

***9-24:** vs. Rawlins, 6 p.m.

***10-1:** at Riverton, 7 p.m.

***10-8:** vs. Worland, 7 p.m.

***10-15:** at Douglas, 6 p.m.

***10-22:** vs. Lander, 7 p.m.

* Conference game

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Mascot: Bearcats
Division: Class 3A
Conference: East
Colors: Blue and red

Coach: Jay Rhoades,
16th year at Douglas
2020 Record: 8-1, lost to
Jackson in state semifinals

Key Players
WR/CB/RS: Rylan Wehr, Sr.
RB/OLB: Keltan Ewing, Sr.
OL/DL: Dawson Curtis, Sr.
QB/WR/LB: Koby Case, Sr.

Bearcats loaded for deep run

When experience meets talent, good things can happen.

The Douglas Bearcats hope this simple equation can come true for them in 2021.

Douglas returns seven all-conference players, tied with Jackson for the most in Class 3A.

After an 8-1 season and a Class 3A semifinal playoff appearance, the Bearcats return the talent to be in position for another deep playoff run.

"I think our expectations are pretty high, as they are every year," Douglas coach Jay Rhoades said. "Our program has enjoyed some success, and I think that we're always striving to be in that top spot

"... Our goal is to always to win a state championship, but our focus is always on what it takes to get there."

Seniors Dawson Curtis, Keltan Ewing and Rylan Wehr were

all-state selections last year, but Douglas' returning experience goes well beyond that. The Bearcats get back seven starters on both offense and defense.

That experience showed itself in a summer camp. Rhoades, who normally focuses on Douglas' offense, had to coach the Bearcat defense during the camp as assistant coach Wes Gamble was assisting with the South Shrine Bowl team.

"I really didn't have to do a whole lot because these kids knew what to do," Rhoades said. "... They were calling a lot of the stuff themselves, and if there was something specific I wanted them to do, they jumped right into it real quick."

Douglas' defense returns four of its top six tacklers, while the offense returns its top rusher, passer and receiver.

"Our overall athleticism is pretty good," Rhoades said.

Ewing ran for 1,029 yards on 147 carries, scoring 12 touchdowns, and was third for Douglas with 48 total tackles and led the squad with three fumble recoveries and four pass deflections.

Wher was Douglas' top receiver, catching 29 passes for 550 yards and seven touchdowns.

Senior Koby Case completed 62 passes for 921 yards and 10 touchdowns; he also added 272 rushing yards on 84 carries.

However, Rhoades said Case

may move to an inside receiver position, with junior Jackson Hughes in position to take the quarterback spot.

Rhoades said the flexibility in position that his players have is "huge."

"It just shows the willingness of our kids to do what's best for the team," he said.

Junior Karson Ewing was second on the team with 54 tackles and led Douglas with 10 tackles for loss and tied for the team lead with four sacks.

Case was fifth with 43 tackles, while senior Jayden Archuleta added 35.

Senior Kyle Logar had 28 tackles and two sacks, Hughes contributed 18 tackles and had a team-high four interceptions, junior Luke Skeen had 21 tackles and Wehr had 16.

2021 Schedule

8-27: at Cody, 5 p.m. (Zero Week)

9-3: vs. Torrington, 7 p.m.

9-10: vs. Belle Fourche, S.D., 6 p.m.

9-17: at Powell, 6 p.m.

***9-24:** vs. Riverton, 7 p.m.

***10-1:** at Lander, 6 p.m.

***10-8:** at Rawlins, 7 p.m.

***10-15:** vs. Buffalo, 6 p.m.

***10-22:** at Worland, 6 p.m.

* Conference game

Tigers lack size, not effort

Lander's football team will not be the biggest in Class 3A this year, or the fastest.

But they are making every effort to make sure they are the hardest working team in 3A.

Coach John Scott said he has been impressed with the blue-collar effort his players have given not only in preparation for this season but in previous seasons, too.

"Consciously, they're a very effort-driven team," Scott said. "To make up for some physical shortcomings, we're making up for it in effort, and these returning players, they've demonstrated that in so many ways. "What they've really bought in to is all the things we can try to do to close that gap... and they give it a great effort in all they do."

Lander will take a new approach on offense this year. The Tigers graduated their top

three rushers, leaving junior Matisse Weaver – who had 52 carries for 185 yards last year – as the top returning ball carrier.

The Tigers did not have a touchdown through the air last season. All 27 offensive touchdowns were rushing TDs as Lander adopted a smashmouth approach, something a smaller Tiger team will not do this season as it strives for more balance.

Junior quarterback Brenon Stauffenberg comes back under center after completing 27 of 68 passes for 395 yards, while senior Tisso Guina caught eight passes for 120 yards to lead the Tigers in both categories. Of Lander's top four receivers, he is the only returner.

"Now Brenon and his receiving corps will have to take that next step," Scott said.

The defense is experienced, though, as Lander returns six of its top 13 tacklers.

Junior Gabe Harris had 67 tackles, second-best on the team, tied for the team lead with three sacks and led Lander with two fumble recoveries.

Guina had 23 tackles and led the Tigers with five interceptions and eight pass break-ups.

Other contributors include a core of seniors: Jace LeClair (37 tackles), Frank Armajo (33 tackles), Robert Koivupalo (28 tackles and a team-high four sacks) and Ernesto Cabriaes (18 tackles).

"We've really held to that we're a no-hero defense," Scott said. "We're going to put (players) in positions to make some plays... and that's what you've got to do."

Weaver was also an all-state selection at kicker, successfully converting seven field goals and 28 extra points.

Scott said he is proud of the progress he has seen from the senior group leading the Tigers this fall. The group is not huge, only about nine fourth-year players this fall, but Scott said "with that, they really bonded. We're small in numbers, but they're a tighter unit, and really do a good job of pulling for each other."



Mascot: Tigers
Division: Class 3A
Conference: East
Colors: Green and black

Coach: John Scott,
fourth year at Lander
2020 Record: 6-3, lost to
Powell in state quarterfinals

Key Players

QB: Brenon Stauffenberg, Jr.
TE/DE: Robert Koivupalo, Sr.
RB/K: Matisse Weaver, Jr.
WR/CB: Tisso Guina, Sr.

2021 Schedule

8-27: vs. Pinedale, 4 p.m.

(Zero Week)

9-3: vs. Green River, 6 p.m.

9-10: vs. Powell, 6 p.m.

9-17: at Evanston, 3 p.m.

***9-24:** at Worland, 7 p.m.

***10-1:** vs. Douglas, 6 p.m.

***10-8:** vs. Riverton, 6 p.m.

***10-15:** at Rawlins, 6 p.m.

***10-22:** at Buffalo, 7 p.m.

* Conference game


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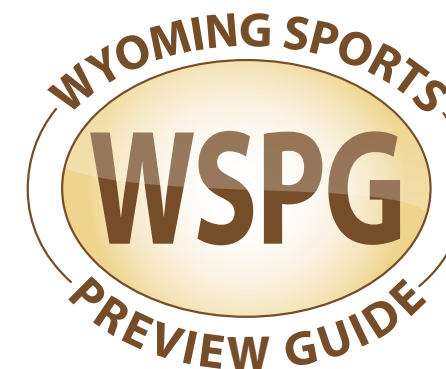
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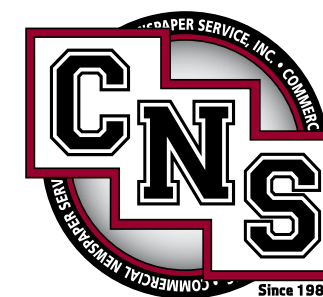
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~Coach John Scott

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Mascot: Outlaws
Division: Class 3A
Conference: East
Colors: Red and black

Coach: Clayton McSpadden,
fourth year at Rawlins

2020 Record: 0-9, did not
qualify for playoffs

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Wheatland, 7 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-3: vs. Lyman, 3 p.m.
9-10: at Moffat County, CO, 7 p.m.
9-17: vs. Star Valley, 5 p.m.
***9-24:** at Buffalo, 6 p.m.
***10-1:** at Worland, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Douglas, 7 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Lander, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** at Riverton, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

Outlaws will be speed demons

Rawlins faces a common, but frustrating, football conundrum this fall.

“Our whole team is going to be fast,” coach Clayton McSpadden said. “With that, our whole team is going to be small, too.”

The challenge of size vs. speed is as old as football, and this year, the Outlaws will need to rely on their speed for success in a program that doesn’t have a ton of size.

After an 0-9 finish last season, though, the Outlaws do return some key contributors, and McSpadden said the group he has this season has been good to coach.

“We have a group of kids that have been playing together for a while, and we have no egos right now,” he said. “We have kids who want to win and want to play together.”

Although they return nine players on both offense and defense who started at some point last year, Rawlins’ biggest strength in 2021 may be its defense. The Outlaws return their top three tacklers from last year and their top four players in defensive points.

Junior Josh Smith led Rawlins’ defense with 74 tackles, senior Jase Smith added 55 tackles and led Rawlins with 28 solo tackles, and senior J.C. Ice had 36 tackles.

Junior Dian Henson, Rawlins’

lone returning all-conference selection, added 26 tackles, senior Canyon Greene added 24 and senior Erick Martinez had 20.

McSpadden said he’s excited to work with the defense and to use their experience and understanding of what needs to be done on that side of the ball to create more opportunities.

“I think it’s really going to set us up for success on both sides of the ball,” he said.

The offense returns several key contributors, as well. However, of the seven players who scored offensive touchdowns last season, only three return – Henson, senior Jarron Mascarenas and senior Elijah Kern.

Henson was Rawlins’ top rusher. However, his 51 carries for 137 yards did not result in a touchdown all season, as Rawlins produced only two rushing touchdowns in 2020.

Henson was also a dangerous kick returner, averaging 32.8 yards per return, including an 80-yard touchdown return.

Greene, who’s in line to be the Outlaws’ quarterback this season after seeing a bit of time there last season, added 32 carries for 35 yards.

Kern led the Outlaws’ receiving group with 27 catches for 241 yards. Mascarenas, who

“These kids that are coming up are hungry...”

~Coach Clayton McSpadden

McSpadden said might be the fastest player on the roster, added 20 catches for 162 yards.

McSpadden said he’s pleased with the effort his players have given, even as they fought through a winless season in 2020.

“These kids that are coming up are hungry, they love to play football and they’re excited for their turn,” he said.

Key Players
WR/LB/DB: Elijah Kern, Sr.
QB/DB: Canyon Greene, Sr.
WR/RB/DB: Dian Henson, Jr.
RB/LB: Jase Smith, Sr.

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Mascot: Warriors
Division: Class 3A
Conference: East
Colors: Orange and black

Coach: Patrick Sweeney,
second year at Worland
2020 Record: 3-6, lost to Cody in state quarterfinals

Warriors seek missing ingredient

Worland has a strong culture of success in its school right now.

The Warriors were Class 3A champions in both basketball and soccer and finished third in wrestling last year.

Now, the goal for the Worland football program is to translate that momentum onto the gridiron, where it’s been 11 years since the last winning season and last playoff victory.

Second-year coach Patrick Sweeney said he’s seen good commitment from his players this offseason, a good sign for a team that returns several key contributors.

“The kids are successful at a lot of different activities, so the fact that we can also get buy-in and commitment is a testament to the culture in Worland right now, and what the other sports and activities have set as far as examples,” Sweeney said.

The Warriors return four all-conference players, second only to Douglas in the 3A East Conference. Junior Brock Douzenis was an all-state choice, while seniors Jorey Anderson, Aaron Carver and Taylor Pierce were all-conference.

Douzenis led the Warriors in every major receiving category, catching 53 passes for 704 yards and seven touchdowns.

Anderson was second with 42

Wolverines making progress

When Riverton coach Troy Anderson speaks to his players about commitment, they listen.

At least, now they do.

The second-year coach said the Wolverines “have got a core group of guys that are very bought in.”

Now, the next big goal for program-wide success in Anderson’s eyes is to prevent attrition – about 30 of last year’s 60 or so players were freshmen.

Anderson said he hopes the commitment of his upperclassmen will trickle down to the younger players and, through that, the program will grow.

“We’re very confident that if we can get guys to stay with us... that we can do some really good things,” Anderson said.

The Wolverines finished with their second consecutive 4-6 season last year, again exiting in the first round of the playoffs.

Anderson said this year’s team

will start ahead of where last year’s did because of their mental grasp of the game.

“I don’t think we were massively different from what (former coach) Pat (Patterson) did, but some of the terminology... it can be enough to potentially be confusing,” Anderson said. “I think a lot of our guys feel much more comfortable with that.”

Still, Riverton lost a lot to graduation – senior Lucas Engle is the only one of eight all-conference players to come back to Riverton this year.

Engle will help give the Wolverines a proven threat on offense. A two-time all-state pick, he led Riverton in receiving yards last year with 583 on 32 catches.

Riverton will need to find a quarterback and almost everyone on the offensive line.

Anderson said junior Nathan Hutchison, a wide receiver

last year will likely move to quarterback. However, aside from senior Kris Topaum, “we have to replace our fronts on both sides of the ball. ... There are going to be some young guys, invariably, who are going to play there.”

The Wolverines also lose their top two rushers; senior Blake Dale, who carried 28 times for 65 yards last year, is the team’s top returning ballcarrier. Dale added 36 catches for 411 yards and three touchdowns.

The defense is more experienced, as the Wolverines retain three of their top eight tacklers.

Hutchison was second for Riverton with 54 total tackles but led the team with 38 solo tackles and also tied for the team lead with two interceptions.

Topaum had 45 tackles, and junior Braden Vincent had 40. Also, senior Kailer Girgen had 25 tackles and five pass deflections.

Anderson said Riverton still has several unknowns, but players will have plenty of opportunities to prove themselves during camps and summer workouts.

“They’ll get very immediate feedback on how they stand against competition, and we’ll see how our guys respond to that,” he said.

“They’ll get very immediate feedback on how they stand against competition...”

~Coach Troy Anderson

Key Players
WR/DB: Jorey Anderson, Sr.
RB/LB: Aaron Carver, Sr.
RB/LB: Taylor Pierce, Sr.
OG/DT: Josh Rose, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Thermopolis, 1 p.m.
(Zero Week scrimmage)
9-3: at Powell, 7 p.m.
9-10: vs. Cody, 7 p.m.
9-17: at Green River, 7 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Lander, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Rawlins, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** at Buffalo, 7 p.m.
***10-15:** at Riverton, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Douglas, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

WORLAND CONTINUED-

catches, 488 yards and six receiving touchdowns.

“Brock Douzenis and Jorey Anderson really fed off each other,” Sweeney said. “If one was covered, the other one was open.”

The Warriors will need a new quarterback, but junior Kade Weber will likely step into that role, Sweeney said.

Pierce led Worland’s rushing game with 599 yards on 157 carries. He also had 14 catches for 171 yards and three touchdowns.

The line has experience with seniors Josh Rose, Ty Harris and Christian Peterson, while senior



Mascot: Wolverines
Division: Class 3A
Conference: East
Colors: Maroon and black

Coach: Troy Anderson,
second year at Riverton
2020 Record: 4-6, lost to Jackson in state quarterfinals

Key Players
QB/SS: Nathan Hutchison, Jr.
WR/DB: Blake Dale, Sr.
OL/LB: Braden Vincent, Jr.
WR: Lucas Engle, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Powell, 6 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-3: vs. Cody, 7 p.m.
9-10: at Evanston, 7 p.m.
9-17: at Jackson, 6 p.m.
***9-24:** at Douglas, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Buffalo, 7 p.m.
***10-8:** at Lander, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Worland, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Rawlins, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

solo, and three sacks.

Pierce was second with 75 tackles. Rose had 53 tackles and led Worland with six tackles for loss.

Anderson contributed 44 tackles and led the Warriors with four interceptions, while Douzenis had 36 tackles and five pass deflections.

Junior Carter Clark chipped in 28 tackles and four pass break-ups, while Cole had 24 tackles in limited time.

“That always feels good knowing you have tacklers coming back,” Sweeney said. “... Our goal is to cut the explosive plays we gave up, way down.”



Defending champs still talented

Winning a state championship has created a problem for the Cody Broncs.

A good problem, but still, a problem.

With a deep and talented senior class now gone, the Broncs now need to refocus for 2021, coach Matt McFadden said, making sure they keep in mind past success doesn't guarantee future success.

"We have to be able to separate last year from this year," McFadden said. "To this point, they have done a great job, but time will tell if we can come together as a team and create our own chemistry and identity."

Returning a bevy of starters and

four all-state players from a team that went 10-1 and won the Class 3A championship last year is a good place to start for success nonetheless.

Seniors Daniel Gorman and Jon Williams and juniors Matt Nelson and Luke Talich were all-state last year, and they'll lead the way for a deep and talented stable of players.

"Having that success has made them hungry for more," McFadden said. "They are excited to take over the leadership roles and lead this team."

Cody's defense returns five of its top seven tacklers in Gorman,

Talich and juniors Jackson Schroeder, Remy Broussard and Jace Grant.

Moreover, the Broncs installed a new defense last year, giving this year's returners another year in the system.

"With so many kids coming back, it allows us to expand our (defensive) scheme while still allowing our kids to play fast," McFadden said.

Schroeder had 52 tackles to lead the Broncs' returners. Gorman had 40 tackles, including four for loss, while Broussard had 36, Talich 35 and Grant 33.

Nelson led the Broncs with seven pass break-ups. He finished 2020 with 17 tackles.

Senior Nathan Wilson (21 tackles) also saw significant defensive playing time.

In all, nine players who started at some point on defense come back this fall.

The Broncs ran a lot of running backs through the backfield last year – nine backs finished with at least 100 rushing yards, but none had more than 567. Of those, six return.

Junior Jackson Schroeder is Cody's top returning rusher; he had 63 carries for 342 yards and six touchdowns in 2020.

Senior Chaz Cowie (39 carries, 288 yards); senior Drew Trotter (45 carries, 268 yards); junior Remy Broussard (35 carries, 257 yards); senior Nathan Wilson (16 carries, 133 yards) and Talich (15 carries, 119 yards) also contributed.

The Broncs will need a new quarterback and will need to rebuild their passing game, as their top three receivers also graduated.

Senior Jackson Gail, who had 18 catches for 160 yards, is the only Bronc returner who finished with double-digit catches last year.

Williams, Gorman and Grant will help lead the linemen.

2021 Schedule

8-27: vs. Douglas, 5 p.m.

(Zero Week)

9-3: at Riverton, 7 p.m.

9-10: at Worland, 7 p.m.

9-17: vs. Buffalo, 6 p.m.

*9-24: vs. Powell, 7 p.m.

*10-1: at Evanston, 6 p.m.

*10-8: vs. Star Valley, 5 p.m.

*10-15: at Green River, 7 p.m.

*10-22: vs. Jackson, 6 p.m.

* Conference game



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Mascot: Broncs

Division: Class 3A

Conference: West

Colors: Blue and gold

Coach: Matt McFadden,
ninth year at Cody
2020 Record: 10-1,
beat Jackson in state
championship

Key Players

OL/DL: Jon Williams, Sr.

OL/DL: Daniel Gorman, Sr.

RB/LB: Drew Trotter, Sr.

RB/DB: Chaz Cowie, Sr.

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Red Devils looking stronger

A good football team has both depth and senior leadership.

This year, for the first time in a while, Evanston has both.

Third-year coach Jim Burton said he is excited to have a deep senior class of 20 players backed by a strong junior class willing to push them for playing time.

That combination has the Red Devils ready to break out of a two-year slump that has them winless in Class 3A West Conference play and 1-16 overall.

"We should be tough this year," Burton said. "... We have to make sure to enjoy the little successes and focus on growth as a team."

The excitement starts at quarterback, where senior Jaxin Moore is Evanston's top returning passer and rusher. He completed 28 of 63 passes for 361 yards and was second on the team last year with 65 carries for 367 yards.

Moore was also third for Evanston in defensive points, notching 35 tackles, tying for the team lead with two interceptions and leading the Red Devils with four pass break-ups.

"It is a huge advantage to

return a senior quarterback," Burton said. "He will also still lock down a corner spot for us on defense, although hopefully he'll be needed less on that side of the ball."

However, of the Red Devils' top six players in defensive points last season, Moore is the only one returning. Coach Burton said the variety of open positions on defense will force the team to find a new balance between those who are returning and those filling new spots.

Among running backs, senior David Perez is the top returner; he had only eight carries, but he finished with 133 yards. Senior Payton Vernon will also see time.

The Red Devils return their top two receivers in seniors Quinton Elmer and Peyton Cornia. Elmer led Evanston in receiving yards with 133, on six catches, while Cornia tied for the team lead in catches with eight and was second behind Elmer with 79 receiving yards. No other returner had more than one catch last season.

Seniors Rigan Hoggatt and Payt Burton will return to lead the offensive and defensive lines.

A key defensive returner is

senior Wade Barker. He had 34 tackles last year, good for fifth on the team, and tied for the team lead with two sacks.

Cornia notched 18 tackles, senior Blake Ross added 17 and junior Pheonix McComb had 15.

"We did lose a couple of studs on D, but we have some key guys coming back from injury to hopefully fill the void," coach Burton said.

The Red Devils could also benefit from some good old-fashioned luck. Evanston is 0-5 in one-possession games the past two years.

"We have to make sure to enjoy the little successes..."

**~Coach
Jim
Burton**



Mascot: Red Devils

Division: Class 3A

Conference: West

Colors: Red and blue

Coach: Jim Burton,
third year at Evanston
2020 Record: 1-8, did not
qualify for playoffs

Key Players

QB/DB: Jaxin Moore, Sr

RB/LB: Payton Vernon, Sr.

OL/DL: Rigan Hoggatt, Sr.

OL/DL: Payt Burton, Sr.

2021 Schedule

8-27: at Ben Lomond, UT, 7 p.m.

9-3: at Mountain View, 4 p.m.

9-10: vs. Riverton, 7 p.m.

9-17: vs. Lander, 3 p.m.

*9-24: at Green River, 7 p.m.

*10-1: vs. Cody, 6 p.m.

*10-8: vs. Jackson, 6 p.m.

*10-14: at Star Valley, 7 p.m.

*10-22: at Powell, 6 p.m.

* Conference game

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Mascot: Wolves
Division: Class 3A
Conference: West
Colors: Green and white

Coach: Kevin Cuthbertson, second year at Green River
2020 Record: 2-6, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players
OT: Austyn Maser, Sr.
WR/FS: Dylan Taylor, Sr.
DE: Jacob Schieve, Sr.
QB: Caleb Lake, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Mountain View, 6 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-3: at Lander, 6 p.m.
9-10: at Buffalo, 7 p.m.
9-17: vs. Worland, 7 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Evanston, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** at Jackson, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** at Powell, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Cody, 7 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Star Valley, 7 p.m.
* Conference game

PAGE 20GREEN RIVER WOLVES3A WEST

Wolves young, but hungry

Green River might field the youngest starting lineup in Class 3A this season.

The Wolves' young players, though, are ready for the challenge. Most of them gained quality experience through necessity last season when injuries swept through the Wolves' ranks.

"Young doesn't necessarily mean inexperienced or less athletic," Green River coach Kevin Cuthbertson said. "... It's not going to be a shock to their system to walk out under those lights on a Friday night."

Juniors have emerged as the vocal leaders on the team, and for good reason. Their experience under fire last season will help them fill numerous opportunities left open by a big departing graduating class.

Cuthbertson said in his 22 years of coaching, he's never been around a team that's been so led by underclassmen.

"I think that the biggest difference is last year we had a ton of seniors, and it's a whole change of culture bringing in this younger group," he said.

Seniors Jacob Schieve and Dylan Taylor were both all-state selections last season, the Wolves' only picks, and senior offensive tackle Austyn Maser is the only other returning starter Green River has this year.

Taylor led the Wolves' receivers with 27 catches for 450 yards; he tied for the team lead with four receiving touchdowns.

However, he's the only one of Green River's top four receivers to return.

Junior Caleb Lake played some spot duty at quarterback, completing five of 11 passes for 122 yards.

Tim Cassity will take over as the offensive coordinator this season – a unique situation as he was the freshman coach two years ago and the JV coach last year.

"You don't get that very often, where the offensive coordinator, the guy who's going to be calling the plays, has been working with the quarterback three years in a row," Cuthbertson said. "... I'm anxious and excited to see the product they put on the field."

Junior Bracken Miller was second for the Wolves with 189 rushing yards on 37 carries; he's the only returning ball-carrier who had positive yards last season. Senior Hayden Roberts will also be in competition in the backfield.

The Wolves do return three of their top five tacklers, but they're the only three of Green River's top 14 players in defensive points who return.

Schieve led the Wolves' defense with 74 tackles, including five sacks, and had two fumble recoveries.

Taylor was fourth on the team with 43 tackles, while senior Alex Atkinson was fifth with 42.

Seniors Jaxson McGee (12 tackles) and Roberts (10) are the only other returners who finished with double-digit tackle totals last season.

Cuthbertson said senior Luis Batista and junior Jack Mitchell will also contribute defensively.

3A WESTPOWELL PANTHERSPAGE 21

Panthers haven't missed a beat

Of all the first-year head coaches in Wyoming last season, the transition may have been smoothest for Powell's Chase Kistler.

Formerly the Panthers' offensive coordinator, Kistler's hiring allowed the Panthers to continue running the offensive and defensive sets they had run all along. After the frustrating summer of COVID-19, that familiarity with the system let the Panthers hit the ground running when the season started.

That helped Powell to a 7-3 finish and a Class 3A semifinal berth.

Now, as Kistler starts his second year, the focus is on getting back to normal, not on catching up from missed chances left over from 2020.

"We've got a great coaching staff," Kistler said, "and (the players) looked really sharp at camp."

Powell gets back three all-state players in seniors Toran Graham, Lane Schramek and Hawkin Sweeney. Graham was second for Powell in rushing last year, carrying 78 times for 388 yards and six touchdowns. Senior Reed Smith contributed 69 carries for 337 yards.

"We've got a great run game, especially if we can stay healthy," Kistler said.

Kistler said the two players in position to take over at quarterback, sophomore Jhett Schwahn and senior Sam Whitlock, can both throw well. The Panthers want to take advantage of that.

"We were really run-heavy last year, so we want to be more balanced, run-pass," Kistler said.

Senior Zach Ratcliff, an all-conference choice, was second for Powell with 107 receiving yards and third in receptions with six. He's the only one of Powell's top four receivers to return.

The Panthers' offensive line returns three starters in Schramek and seniors Karson Lamb and Sheldon Shoopman. Powell does lose five of its top seven tacklers from last year, but seven players who started at some point last year will be back this fall. Graham, who was Powell's No. 1 tackler in 2020, provides some consistency at middle linebacker.

Graham led Powell in defensive points and was the top tackler with 86, including eight tackles for loss.

"He's the type of kid who does things right on the field and off the field, so it's easy to build off of him because he's such a positive leader," Kistler said. "... It's just that culture that you really want to build of how to do things right, and I think we have a lot of guys who have bought into that and follow his lead."


Ratcliff added 52 tackles, fourth on the team, and notched four pass deflections.

Smith had 33 tackles, Shramek had 31 and Whitlock had 23.

Junior Lannon Brazleton (19 tackles) and Shoopman (16 tackles, three sacks) also saw time defensively.

Sweeney, meanwhile, returns after an all-state season at kicker last year.

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Mascot: Panthers
Division: Class 3A
Conference: West
Colors: Orange and black

Coach: Chase Kistler, second year at Powell
2020 Record: 7-3, lost to Cody in state semifinals

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Riverton, 6 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-3: vs. Worland, 7 p.m.
9-10: at Lander, 6 p.m.
9-17: vs. Douglas, 6 p.m.
***9-24:** at Cody, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** at Star Valley, 5 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Green River, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** at Jackson, 5 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Evanston, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

3A WESTJACKSON BRONCS

Business as usual for Broncs

Getting players to offseason workouts has been no problem in Jackson this year.

After almost a year of working around some of the most restrictive COVID-19 protocols in the state, the Broncs are back to normal.

And the players can't wait to be a part of some normalcy, coach David Joyce said.

"Around here, their hands were cuffed, so once their hands were uncuffed after spring break, it was easy to get them to volunteer (workouts)," Joyce said.

In the middle of working within those restrictions, Jackson found success, finishing as the Class 3A runners-up last year.

All six of Jackson's all-state selections come back from last year's runner-up team, and all six are seniors – Matt Carney, Colter Dawson, Brody Hasenack, Will Pew, Sam Scott and Sadler Smith.

The core of seniors Jackson has this year came from a group that played a lot as sophomores.

"They play with a lot of intelligence and savviness just because of the amount of time they've had on a varsity football field," Joyce said.

The Broncs have myriad offensive weapons with Hasenack, Smith, Scott and Dawson.

Hasenack led all 11-man teams statewide last year with 2,093 rushing yards, carrying 325 times to reach the mark. He had 23 touchdowns, as well.

Smith, meanwhile, threw for 1,973 yards – a number that led all Class 3A quarterbacks – completing 130 of 221 passes for 16 touchdowns.

Scott led the Broncs in receiving, snagging 39 passes for 725 yards and seven scores. Dawson wasn't far behind with 32 catches for 536 yards and four scores. Jackson also returns senior Nate Keipert at wide receiver, who missed most of last year due to injury but returned for the title game – where he drew double-coverage.

Dawson received an offer from Air Force over the summer, while Smith made several official visits to Division I programs in the region.

Jackson's rapid-fire offensive pace also keeps opposing teams off balance.

"If you give Barry Bonds 50 swings versus 70 swings, how many more home runs is he going to hit?" Joyce said. "And we have home run hitters."


The Broncs also return their top two players in defensive points in Dawson and Pew and nine of their top 13 tacklers from last season.

Dawson led the Broncs with 92 total tackles, including 33 solo tackles, and nine tackles for loss.

Pew had 52 tackles and a team-high five sacks.

Senior Fort Crain Evenson had 37 tackles and a team-high five pass deflections.

Scott contributed 33 tackles and four pass break-ups, senior Clancy Meagher had 38 tackles, senior Alexei DiDonato had 26 tackles, senior Henry Berezay added 30 tackles and a team-high four sacks, Carney had 26 tackles and Hasenack had 15.



Mascot: Broncs
Division: Class 3A
Conference: West
Colors: Black and orange

Coach: David Joyce, fifth year at Jackson
2020 Record: 9-3, lost to Cody in state championship

Key Players
QB: Sadler Smith, Sr.
RB: Brody Hasenack, Sr.
OT: Matt Carney, Sr.
TE/LB: Colter Dawson, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Teton, Idaho, 7 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-3: vs. Bear Lake, Idaho, 7 p.m.
9-10: at Pocatello, Idaho, 7 p.m.
9-17: vs. Riverton, 6 p.m.
***9-24:** at Star Valley, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Green River, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** at Evanston, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Powell, 5 p.m.
***10-22:** at Cody, 6 p.m.
* Conference game



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Mascot: Braves
Division: Class 3A
Conference: West
Colors: Crimson and yellow

Coach: McKay Young,
 sixth year at Star Valley
2020 Record: 4-6, lost to
 Douglas in state quarterfinals

Key Players
OL/DL: Lucas Chappell, Sr.
RB/OLB: Lane Oesch, Sr.
FB/MLB: Conner Hart, Sr.
WR/CB/KR: Winston Green, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Summit Academy, Utah, 7 p.m.
 (Zero Week)
9-3: at Preston, Idaho, 7 p.m.
9-10: vs. Sugar-Salem, Idaho, 7 p.m.
9-17: at Rawlins, 5 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Jackson, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Powell, 5 p.m.
***10-8:** at Cody, 5 p.m.
***10-14:** vs. Evanston, 7 p.m.
***10-22:** at Green River, 7 p.m.
 * Conference game

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STAR VALLEY BRAVES

3A WEST

Braves back in title chase

Star Valley prides itself on its offseason program. When COVID-19 threw that program into disarray, the Braves needed time to find their way back.

After starting 1-5, the Braves recovered to win their final three regular season games, but lost to Douglas 16-14 in the Class 3A quarterfinals.

“I don’t believe we ever really recovered our swagger after taking a few lumps,” coach McKay Young said. . . . We feel we hang our hat on our offseason program, and unfortunately last year’s seniors weren’t able to do really any of that.”

This year’s team has the full benefit of that offseason program; with that, Young said he brings high expectations into 2021 for his team, which won four Class 3A titles between 2015 and 2019.

The excitement starts with seniors Lucas Chappell and Lane Oesch, who were all-state selections – Chappell for the second time with the Braves – and senior Conner Hart, who was an all-conference choice.

Chappell will draw attention for multiple reasons. First, his versatility makes him a threat at multiple positions, including lineman, tight end, running back and linebacker. Second, he has already committed to playing at Air Force. Third, he stands out at 6 feet, 3 inches tall and 260 pounds.

“I expect him to play with a ton of confidence and have a great senior season and show the state why a D1 program fell in love with him and was so excited to get his services,” Young said.

Oesch led the Braves’ running game last season, carrying 152 times for 847 yards and seven touchdowns. He’s the only one of Star Valley’s top four rushers to return. Moreover, as Star Valley also graduated its quarterback, Oesch will have to take on a larger responsibility early in the season.

“It is definitely nice to know he will be back and ready to lift a lot of the burden off of our offense as we seek to find our identity and rhythm with a new quarterback,” Young said.

The line returns three starters in Chappell and seniors Kysen Hebdon and Mason Hutchison. Senior Winston Green led the Braves with 49 catches last year; his 370 receiving yards was second on the squad.

Junior Chase Stewart added eight catches for 117 yards and senior J.D. Morris had 15 catches for 89 yards.

On defense, the Braves return two of their top three tacklers but graduated five of their top eight. Hart was second for the Braves with 60 total tackles and led Star Valley with 34 solo tackles. Senior Zac Patterson had 52 tackles; Hebdon had 39 tackles and three sacks; Chappell had 30 tackles and three sacks; Green and junior Derek Astle had 28 tackles apiece; and Morris had 18.



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2A Preview



2A title could go through Torrington

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four questions to answer

OK, out with it — who’s the favorite?

Torrington. The Trailblazers were 2A runners-up last year and were junior-loaded, so it makes sense for Torrington to be a preseason No. 1. The ‘Blazers have good depth and experience on both sides of the ball.

Who’s Torrington’s biggest threat? Probably Wheatland. The Bulldogs have a passing game that can’t be topped in the 2A ranks, and with Kade Preuit calling the signals, Wheatland will be tough to slow down.

What about the West? Look for parity. Last year’s West race was defined by it, and this year is shaping up similarly on paper. Similar to 2020, Lovell, Lyman, Cokeville, Mountain View, Big Piney and Thermopolis are all threats.

Isn’t that last answer a cop-out? No. In talking with 2A coaches this summer, they, too, were flummoxed as to who might win it all this year. This year’s 2A champ may end up being a lot like Lyman was last year — overlooked at the start of the season but undeniable by season’s end.

Key games

Lovell at Mountain View, Sept. 10. Two teams with a ton to prove this year meet in the West Conference opener, with the winner putting a big stamp of validity on its claims to a title run.

Upton-Sundance at Wheatland, Sept. 17. The Patriots are 3-0 against the Bulldogs the past three seasons, so if Wheatland wants to make a run at the East Conference title, the first task is to overcome that trend.

Big Piney at Lyman, Sept. 23. The Eagles’ only loss last year came to the Punchers, odd considering Lyman went on to win the 2A title and Big Piney missed the playoffs. The Eagles will certainly be motivated here.

Big Horn at Torrington, Oct. 1. Another lost moment in the 2020 season was the Rams’ victory against the Trailblazers in the programs’ first game against each other. The rematch in Week 5 will help dictate the direction of the East Conference.

Predicted order of finish

East Conference: Torrington, Wheatland, Upton-Sundance, Burns, Tongue River, Big Horn, Newcastle, Glenrock. *West Conference:* Lyman, Mountain View, Lovell, Big Piney, Cokeville, Thermopolis, Kemmerer, Pinedale.

Way-too-early title game score prediction

Torrington 34, Wheatland 27. Two longtime rivals in a championship game? You love to see it – unless you’re from one of the 14 other programs trying to prevent this from happening.

State Champs

Lyman Eagles

2020 State Playoffs

State Championship
Lyman 14, Torrington 3

State Semifinals
Torrington 31, Mountain View 20
Lyman 37, Upton-Sundance 15

State Quarterfinals
Torrington 34, Cokeville 14
Mountain View 34, Wheatland 30
Lyman 42, Big Horn 7
Upton-Sundance 41, Lovell 16

Players to watch

Jake Hicks, Wheatland

A two-time all-state pick, Hicks led 2A in receiving yards per game last year (86.4), finishing with 42 catches for 778 yards He’s also Wheatland’s top returning tackler and had four interceptions last year.

Connor Micheli, Mountain View

The Buffalos will lean a lot on Micheli, their only returning all-state player. He led Mountain View in passing and rushing last year (1,160 passing yards; 404 rushing yards) and he’s the only one of Mountain View’s top eight defensive players coming back.

Kade Preuit, Wheatland


Class 2A’s top returning quarterback threw for 1,474 yards and 16 touchdowns last year, thanks in part to looking deep. His accuracy wasn’t great last year (46.6%), but he’s a risk taker, with his 18.2 yards per completion leading Class 2A in 2020.

Beau Bivens, Torrington

Bivens is looking for redemption after dislocating his ankle in the semifinals last year and missing the title game. Prior to the injury, Bivens had thrown for 1,339 yards and 18 touchdowns.

Rho Mecham, Lyman

The Eagles’ defense was rock solid last year’s title run, and Mecham was a big reason why. His 10 sacks led Class 2A, and his 86 total tackles was one short of the team lead.



Mascot: Rams
Division: Class 2A
Conference: East
Colors: Maroon and yellow

Coach: Kirk McLaughlin,
fourth year at Big Horn
2020 Record: 5-4, lost to
Lyman in state quarterfinals

Key Players
OL/DL: Josh Thompson, Sr.
OL/LB: Sean Walker, Sr.
WR/DB: Jax Zimmer, Sr.
WR/DB: Cade Butler, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-28: vs. Buffalo, 1 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-3: at Lovell, 7 p.m.
***9-10:** at Wheatland, 6 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Newcastle, 6 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Burns, 2 p.m.
***10-1:** at Torrington, 5 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Glenrock, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** at Tongue River, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

Rams adjusting to 2A ranks

Coming off back-to-back undefeated seasons, expectations were high for the Big Horn Rams last year.

Their finish – 5-4 record, a first-round playoff exit – might have been a success for some programs, but not for Big Horn. Moving from Class 1A to Class 2A came with more bumps than anticipated, but those bumps are now part of the team’s preparation for 2021.

“It took some time to recover with how the season ended, especially with all the success we had the previous two seasons,” coach Kirk McLaughlin said. “... But we have made adjustments, we have a better mentality and have put more work into what we need to do to be better prepared in 2021.”

That mentality has carried the Rams through the offseason. Even though Big Horn sits squarely in the middle of the pack in terms of returning experience – five returning starters on both offense and defense – McLaughlin said he is hopeful the right mentality and work ethic will help younger players develop quickly.

“We rode into 2020 with the wrong mindset,” he said. “We know we have to do more to continue to play at a high level. I feel that the 2021 team is putting in more time and has more focus in our preparation for what will be a very competitive field of opponents.”

Senior Josh Thompson is Big Horn’s lone returning all-state selection and is a two-time all-state pick. McLaughlin said Thompson’s presence on the offensive and defensive lines will be huge for the Rams.

“Josh brings a lot of leadership and physicality to a team that needs all we can get,” McLaughlin said. “His leadership will be greatly needed helping his younger less experienced teammates.”

Senior Cade Butler was an all-conference choice last season; he led the Rams in every major receiving category with 26 catches for 321 yards and three

touchdowns.

Junior quarterback Cooper Garber completed 99 of 173 passes for 1,276 yards and 12 touchdowns last year. He spread the ball around a lot, as eight receivers had at least 95 yards. Of those, three return in Butler, junior Dylan Greenough-Groom (nine catches, 110 yards) and senior Jax Zimmer (11 catches, 107 yards).

Zimmer, who ran 33 times for 107 yards, is Big Horn’s leading returning rusher.

Senior Sean Walker, who led the Rams in defensive points, fronts the returners on defense. Zimmer was fourth in defensive points and tied for the team lead with two interceptions.

Thompson was seventh on the team in defensive points and had a team-high three sacks. Butler was ninth in defensive points and also had two i nterceptions.

Junior Dawson Richards also saw significant defensive playing time, finishing ninth on the team in tackles.

Broncs have ample seasoning

Part of what happened to Burns last year wasn’t wholly unexpected.

After losing numerous seniors from Class 2A semifinal team, and with only two seniors, the Broncos fell to 2-5.

Those struggles, though, make the 2021 the Broncos experienced, hungry and improving.

“These cycles happen in small-school football,” Burns coach Brad Morrison said. “One year you’re in the state semis and the next you’re at the bottom of the totem pole. I think we will be bigger, stronger, smarter, faster and better decision makers across the board this coming season.”

Seniors Jackson Kirkbride and Cody Winslow were both all-conference choices in 2020, and they’ll lead a team that returns nine starters on both offense and defense. The Broncos return every single player who ran, threw or caught the ball last year, and they also return six of their top seven players in defensive points.

“The players we have returning will be a tremendous asset,”

Morrison said. “These guys took some lumps last year, but they stayed tough and improved.”

Kirkbride led Burns’ receivers with 18 catches, 246 yards and four touchdowns – all team highs. Juniors Cody Hape (10 catches, 214 yards) and Cooper Lakin (15 catches, 198 yards) also played big roles in last year’s passing attack.

Senior quarterback Caden David completed 54 of 121 passes for 745 yards and seven touchdowns.

Three backs broke triple digits rushing last year, as junior Riley McLaughlin’s 156 yards led Burns. Senior Joel Morales (133 yards) and junior Jared Allen (111 yards) give depth to the rushing game.

Winslow and juniors Cale Haws and Brandon Winslow will lead the line.

“We will look to add to the offense and build around an identity that we found late last year,” Morrison said. “We should be really good throwing the ball, and will need to find a consistent

running game to win games in the cold.”


Burns returns its top four players in defensive points. Lakin led Burns in defensive points and was second with 61 tackles; Cody Winslow led Burns with 64 tackles, including two sacks.

David had 29 tackles and Kirkbride chipped in 28. Junior Cale Haws added 24 tackles, including nine for loss.

Junior Carter David had 22 tackles and Allen had 21.

The unexpected part of 2020 came in lost opportunities. The Broncos canceled two games because of COVID-19 – one a Zero Week game against Yuma, Colorado, as Colorado abandoned fall football, the other against Torrington. Another game, against Newcastle, was rescheduled.

“COVID was definitely tough for us last year,” Morrison said. “We felt like we followed the protocols and did everything right. I’m proud that we decided to follow the protocols even though they were difficult and, at times, worked against us.”



Mascot: Broncos
Division: Class 2A
Conference: East
Colors: Orange and black

Coach: Brad Morrison,
fourth year at Burns
2020 Record: 2-5, did not
qualify for playoffs

Key Players
OL/DL: Cody Winslow, Sr.
QB/DB: Caden David, Sr.
WR/DB: Jackson Kirkbride, Sr.
WR/LB: Cooper Lakin, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Yuma, Colo., 7 p.m.
9-3: vs. Mitchell, Neb., 7 p.m.
***9-10:** at Tongue River, 2 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Glenrock, 7 p.m.
***9-24:** at Big Horn, 2 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Wheatland, 7 p.m.
***10-8:** at Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m.
(at Sundance)
***10-15:** vs. Newcastle, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** at Torrington, 7 p.m.
* Conference game

Downing leads young Herders

Glenrock was an improved team in 2020.

However, most of the players who helped push that improvement have graduated. New coach Paul Downing inherits a team that lost all five of its all-conference selections.

Downing, who comes to Glenrock after three years as the head coach at Coal Ridge High School and two years at Highland High School, both in Colorado, has more than 15 years of coaching experience.

Downing said his interview with Glenrock AD Jim Downs helped him see the potential in the football program, the school and the town.

“I was interested in the community and what he described and the football tradition,” Downing said. “When I interviewed, I really liked the school, the administration, the facilities, and thought this would be a great place for my family.”

Downing has three boys, the oldest of which is entering eighth grade.

“I’m committed for the long term,” he said. “I want to be at this school for a long period of time. ... With three boys and a family, I’m looking to put down roots and looking to create a winning tradition there.”

Downing, who was a linebacker at Division III Alma (Mich.) College, said he puts an emphasis on defense and special teams.

“I’ve always emphasized fundamentals and just getting players to play fast and believing in what they do,” he said.

Senior Terrin Fauber is Glenrock’s leading return tackler; he’s the only one of Glenrock’s top five players in defensive points to come back this fall.

Fauber had 27 tackles, third for Glenrock last year, and notched a fumble recovery and an interception.

Seniors Will Pinkerton and Kyle Hiser had 19 and 18 tackles, respectively; junior Logan Jones had 12. They are the only four of Glenrock’s top 11 tacklers to return in 2021.

Jones, who was second for Glenrock with 365 rushing yards on 72 carries last year, is Glenrock’s top returning rusher. Of the five backs who had at least double-digit yards last year, he’s the only one back.

The Herders only attempted 27 passes last season, and Jones – with two completions for 54 yards – is also Glenrock’s top returning passer. Fauber, who had one catch for 19 yards, is the only returner who caught a pass last year.

Glenrock has long run a double wing offense, but Downing said the Herders may look to change their approach on offense.


“They’ve had a lot of success with it in the past years,” Downing said. “I think in high school football, anything you commit to can work, but I’ve always wanted to have more balance.

“... I think what you’ll see is a more balanced offense, one that’s creative and uses players’ strengths.”



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Pierre Etchemendy
Agent



Mascot: Herders
Division: Class 2A
Conference: East
Colors: Purple and silver

Coach:Paul Downing,
first year at Glenrock
2020 Record: 4-5, did not
qualify for playoffs

Key Players
FB: Terrin Fauber, Sr.
OL/DL: Will Pinkerton, Sr.
RB/FS: Kyle Hiser, Sr.
RB: Logan Jones, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Natrona sophs, noon
(Zero Week)
9-3: at Pinedale, 6 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Torrington, 7 p.m.
***9-17:** at Burns, 7 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Wheatland, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** at Newcastle, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** at Big Horn, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Upton-Sundance, 7 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Tongue River, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

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Mascot: Dogies
Division: Class 2A
Conference: East
Colors: Orange and black

Coach: Matt Conzelman,
 13th year at Newcastle
2020 Record: 0-8, did not
 qualify for playoffs

Dogies 2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Hot Springs, S.D., 6 p.m.
 (Zero Week)
9-3: vs. Buffalo, 6 p.m.
***9-10:** at Upton-Sundance, 7 p.m.
 (at Sundance)
***9-17:** at Big Horn, 6 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Tongue River, 6 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Glenrock, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** at Torrington, 7 p.m.
***10-15:** at Burns, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Wheatland, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Dogies have hidden potential

Newcastle's second offensive series of its 2020 season was a microcosm of its season.

Quarterback Slade Roberson ran the ball on an isolation play, ran 62 yards, turned to cut past the final two defenders – and then tore ligaments in his knee despite not being touched.

Every bit of progress the Dogies made in 2020 was tempered by bigger problems. Consequently, Newcastle enters 2021 having won just two of its past 26 games, including an 0-8 finish last year.

"It takes the right ingredients," coach Matt Conzelman said. "... You take out your quarterback, it just changes the whole dynamic of what you're trying to do."

This year, though, Newcastle has a good mix of experience and talent, enough to have Conzelman excited for what's to come.

"It's the first time that we're kind of loaded up on juniors (and) seniors for a while," he said. "You can see the potential."

Roberson returns after missing last year and is both bigger and stronger than he was

last year, Conzelman said.

He'll be joined by a bevy of others.

Junior Holden McConkey, an all-conference choice who led the Dogies in rushing last year, is one of the team's top threats on both sides of the ball.

He ran 132 times for 460 yards last year; he scored four of Newcastle's five rushing TDs last year. He also leads all Dogie returners with 48 tackles last year, including four tackles for loss. He was second on the team in defensive points last year.

Junior Quint Perino completed 42 of 99 passes for 501 yards and four touchdowns. Senior Aidan Chick was the top target in the passing game, catching 19 passes for 195 yards and a score.

Junior Hogan Tystad added nine catches for 172 yards, including three touchdowns.

Seniors Josh Womack and Darren Simmons and juniors Jaxson Lamb and Jacob Prell will likely be leaders on the

Eagles have talent to compete

Tongue River's last playoff qualification came in 2016.

This year's Eagle team will try to break that streak – but their hopes for success are based on more than just will.

They're based on facts.

The Eagles return eight starters on both offense and defense and have a deep senior class ready to lead the program out of its postseason drought.

"This is by far the most complete team I have had at (Tongue River) since 2016," coach Steve Hanson said, "and if we can stay healthy and unselfish, we should be very competitive."

The depth starts on defense, where Tongue River returns nine of its top 12 tacklers from last year.

Junior Nate Guimond leads Tongue River's defensive returners; he was second for the Eagles last year with 53 tackles and tied for the team lead with

six tackles for loss.

Senior Cache Van Tassell, an all-conference choice, added 44 tackles, fourth-best on the team, and had six tackles for loss and five sacks.

The Eagles have a host of other defensive returners. Junior Tavis Aksamit had 45 tackles, senior Adam Stainbrook chipped in 36, junior Bonner Wood had 34, sophomore Caleb Kilbride added 25, senior Eli Cummins had 24, senior Jacob Knobloch 23 and sophomore Alex Barker notched 21.

"I think my group is poised to be dominant on defense," Hanson said. "I think we can put four down on the line that create matchup nightmares for teams. We will have the depth and ability to run multiple looks in fronts and coverage each game."

Hanson said the Eagles will run a defensive scheme similar to the one

Tongue River ran while playing in back-to-back Class 1A 11-man championship games in 2015 and 2016.

The offense, too, has numerous key returners.

Van Tassell leads the Eagles' returning backfield players; he was third on the team last year with 70 carries for 346 yards.

He'll be joined by Cummins, who completed 41 of 105 passes for 532 yards and eight touchdowns last year. Hanson said Cummins could also play wide receiver this year as the Eagles try to take advantage of match-up problems for opposing defenses.

Guimond was the Eagles' top receiver last year with 10 catches for 185 yards; four of those 10 catches went for touchdowns. Aksamit added 55 receiving yards on three catches and will also see time at running back.

Senior Garrett Ostler will also play at wide receiver.

Knobloch, an all-conference choice in 2020, and Stainbrook will each be starting for their fourth year on the Eagles' offensive line.

"Depth has been building for us these past few years, and this year should be our highest number on the roster in over 15 years," Hanson said.



Mascot: Eagles
Division: Class 2A
Conference: East
Colors: Green and white

Coach: Steve Hanson,
 fifth year at Tongue River
2020 Record: 2-6, did not
 qualify for playoffs

Key Players
RB/DE: Cache Van Tassell, Sr.
QB/WR/LB: Eli Cummins, Sr.
OL/DE: Jacob Knobloch, Sr.
WR/DB: Ryan McCafferty, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-28: vs. Lovell, 1 p.m.
 (Zero Week)
9-3: vs. Thermopolis, TBD
***9-10:** vs. Burns, 2 p.m.
***9-17:** at Torrington, 6 p.m.
***9-24:** at Newcastle, 6 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** at Wheatland, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Big Horn, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** at Glenrock, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

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line.

The Dogies return six of their top seven players in defensive points.

Tystad was third in defensive points and fourth on the team with 41 tackles last year.

Womack was third on the team with 43 tackles. Junior Tate Engle added 43 tackles and senior Braden Jenkins had 35.

Chick added 28 tackles and led the team with four interceptions. Lamb added 21 tackles, Perino had 16 and Prell had 15.

Conzelman said the Dogies will have more players out this year than in previous years, including a group of about 14 freshmen. For the first time in four years, the program will run a full junior varsity schedule to help players gain more experience.

"I'm excited for this crew," Conzelman said. "(They're) just a bunch of guys that are fun to be around."

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Mascot: Trailblazers
Division: Class 2A
Conference: East
Colors: Maroon and Silver

Coach: Russell Stienmetz,
third year at Torrington
2020 Record: 8-3,
lost to Lyman in state
championship

Key Players
QB: Beau Bivens, Sr.
RB/LB: Carson Schultz, Sr.
WR/DB/K: Chase Miller, Sr.
RB/LB: Cole Parriott, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Gering, Neb., 7 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-3: at Douglas, 7 p.m.
***9-10:** at Glenrock, 7 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Tongue River, 6 p.m.
***9-24:** at Upton-Sundance, 6
p.m. (at Upton)
***10-1:** vs. Big Horn, 5 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Newcastle, 7 p.m.
***10-15:** at Wheatland, 7 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Burns, 7 p.m.
* Conference game

Blazers loaded for title run

After coming up just short of a Class 2A championship last season, the Torrington Trailblazers and their returning players are ready to try again.

No other team in the classification is better prepared.

Torrington's three returning all-state players is more than any other team in Class 2A, and its six all-conference returners is matched only by Wheatland.

However, the Trailblazers will need to replace their offensive and defensive lines – areas hit hard by graduation.

Nevertheless, coach Russell Stienmetz said a talented senior class will help set the pace for another attempt at a championship.

"Several of these seniors have been two-way starters since they were sophomores," Stienmetz said. "They have experience and are willing to get better each season."

Seniors Beau Bivens, Chase Miller and Carson Schultz were all-state selections last year, while seniors Deagan Keith, Cole Parriott and Kieser Wolfe made the all-conference team.

Bivens completed 88 of 157 passes for 1,339 yards and 18 touchdowns last year. However, he didn't play in the state championship game against Lyman after dislocating and breaking his ankle in the Trailblazers' semifinal victory against Mountain View.

Stienmetz said Bivens is ahead of his rehab schedule and has been throwing since March.

Torrington's top three receivers are also back.

Wolfe led the Torrington receiving corps with 34 catches for 525 yards and six touchdowns. Miller was second with 15 catches for 273 yards and five scores, while Keith had 15 catches for 179 yards and a pair of scores.

Schultz was third on the team last year with 283 rushing yards on 73 carries. He is Torrington's top returning rusher.

Still, the o-line needs to develop, and Stienmetz said the summer will be critical to making sure the players up front can help keep Torrington in contention.

"We are going to be challenged each Friday and us coaches are going to start pushing these players in the summer at weights," he said. "The weight room is going to be crucial to the longevity of

our upcoming season."

The Trailblazers get back two of their top three tacklers in Parriott (97 tackles) and Schultz (94). Schultz added seven tackles for loss and three fumble recoveries.

Keith was seventh on the team in defensive points and eighth in tackles with 46, while Miller added 19 tackles and a team-high five interceptions.

Senior Kyler Shields added 17 tackles.

Behind all the talent is the motivation that comes from losing a championship game, a motivator Stienmetz said he wants to see carry the returning players through the summer.

"The players are still upset about that game and hungry," he said. "... Each opponent is going to give us their best shot, and that is what we need."



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Patriots look to take next step

The Upton-Sundance Patriots have been one of Wyoming's most consistent high school football teams over the past five years.

That's both good and frustrating.

The good? The Patriots are a combined 43-10 since 2016, one of the top records in the state in that span.

The frustrating? The Patriots' past five seasons have all ended in the same place, the semifinal

"I feel like it's going to kind of be a rebuilding year..."
~Coach
Andy Garland

round of the playoffs.

Last year, in Upton-Sundance's first year of Class 2A play, the Patriots lost to eventual state champion Lyman after finishing with a regular-season record of 7-1.

Upton-Sundance coach Andy Garland said he's been happy with the success his program has had, but everyone associated with the program is keenly aware of the heartache that has come with ending just short of a championship opportunity.

"We talk about it, and it's been kind of a frustrating end in the semifinal games," Garland said. "We talk just about preparation, things they need to do in the offseason to take that next step."

In 2021, for the Patriots to maintain their successful run, and overcome the semifinal hurdle, they will need to rely on proven leaders to bring along younger players.

Upton-Sundance returns three all-conference picks in seniors Nathan Baker, Reece Barritt and Levi Rudloff. With a smaller senior class of only

about six total, "our season is going to depend on those three, a lot," Garland said. "... They're all three really good kids and fun to coach, and I expect with some of our younger kids coming up, they'll be good leaders and have some high expectations."

Rudloff was second for the Patriots in 2020 in rushing, finishing with 88 carries for 602 yards and three touchdowns. He is the only one of the team's top four rushers to return.

The Patriots do lose their quarterback, but Barritt and Rudloff were both effective receivers. Barritt was second on the team with 16 catches for 282 yards and six touchdowns, while Rudloff had 11 catches for 140 yards.

Baker, meanwhile, returns to lead the offensive line.

Those three are also the Patriots' defensive leaders.

Baker is the only one of Upton-Sundance's top five tacklers to return. He was second on the team with 72 total tackles, including five for loss. Rudloff had 48 tackles, while Barritt had 35 and a team-high 12 pass break-ups.

Junior linemen Jeral Nehl and Jameson Fleenor are the only other returners with more than 10 tackles; Nehl had 18 and Fleenor 16.

"Even though we have a few good seniors, I feel like it's going to kind of be a rebuilding year for us until we get some younger kids some reps and some experience under their belts," Garland said.



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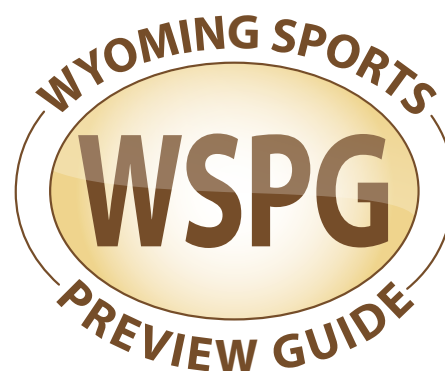
Mascot: Patriots
Division: Class 2A
Conference: East
Colors: Blue and red

Coach: Andy Garland,
18th year at Upton-Sundance
2020 Record: 8-2, lost to
Lyman in state semifinals

Key Players
RB/DE: Levi Rudloff, Sr.
RB/WR/DB: Reece Barritt, Sr.
OL/LB: Nathan Baker, Sr.
OL/LB: Jameson Fleenor, Jr.

2021 Schedule
9-3: at Lead-Deadwood, S.D., 6 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Newcastle, 7 p.m.
(at Sundance)
***9-17:** at Wheatland, 6 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Torrington, 6 p.m.
(at Upton)
***10-1:** at Tongue River, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Burns, 6 p.m.
(at Sundance)
***10-15:** at Glenrock, 7 p.m.
***10-22:** at Big Horn, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

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Mascot: Bulldogs
Division: Class 2A
Conference: East
Colors: Blue and yellow

Coach: Cody Bohlander,
fourth year at Wheatland
2020 Record: 7-3, lost
to Mountain View in state
quarterfinals

Key Players
QB: Kade Preuit, Sr.
WR/DB: Jake Hicks, Sr.
WR/DB: Rodee Brow, Sr.
OL/DL: Ora Borton, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Rawlins, 7 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-3: at Kemmerer, 4 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Big Horn, 6 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m.
***9-24:** at Glenrock, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** at Burns, 7 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Tongue River, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Torrington, 7 p.m.
***10-22:** at Newcastle, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

Bulldogs should have some bite

Experience, depth and talent is a dangerous mix.

Wheatland has all three this year.

With eight returning starters on defense, seven starters back on offense, and six all-conference players returning – a number matched in Class 2A only by Torrington – the Bulldogs are set up well for success.

Seniors Jake Hicks and Kade Preuit were all-state picks; seniors Ora Borton, Rodee Brow and Jordyn Pearson and junior Drew Smialek joined them on the all-conference team.

Preuit, Hicks, Brow and Borton, all seniors, will be in their third year starting for Wheatland this fall.

Bohlander said those players, along with the entire senior class, will help put Wheatland in contention, but the Bulldogs’ depth will help push everyone.

“I foresee us having some pretty intense battles for starting spots this year with a good group of juniors and sophomores in the mix,” he said.

At least a couple positions, though, are set.

Preuit piloted the offense under center, completing 81 of 174 passes for 1,474 yards and 16 touchdowns. He’s also the Bulldogs’ top returning rusher, finishing second on the team last season with 55 carries for 170 yards.

“It has been great to be able to have a quarterback coming in as a starter knowing exactly what he

is doing and being able to trust his decisions in the game,” Bohlander said. “... We are able to hit the ground running and add some wrinkles in our offense that we think will make us successful.”

Hicks, already a two-time all-state selection, led Wheatland’s receiving corps with 42 catches for 778 yards and seven touchdowns, while Brow added 21 catches for 395 yards and six scores.

“They are a great duo to have on the field and really make defenses think about how to defend our passing game,” Bohlander said.

Borton, Pearson and Smialek return as starters offensive line. Bohlander said they “were a big part of our offensive success and will be a big part in this season.”

Bohlander also said seniors Hyannie Fausto, McCrea Call and Devin Weber would provide depth and experience at running

back, tight end and wide receiver, respectively.

Hicks and Borton lead the defensive returners. Hicks was second on the team with 73 tackles, including 40 solo, and led the Bulldogs with four interceptions and three defensive touchdowns.

Borton had 50 tackles, including five for loss.

But they’re the only two of Wheatland’s top six tacklers to return.

Brow was seventh on the team with 28 tackles and also had three interceptions. Junior Maxx Meyer also had 28 tackles, and junior Ryland Petroski had 24 and senior Karson Kenast had 20.

Bohlander said sophomores Braden Nilson, Aric Suko and Cole Goertz will also contribute this year.

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Panthers prove they belong

Cokeville’s choice to be the smallest 11-man program in Wyoming did not come without consideration.

Despite being less than half the size of any other Class 2A program, Cokeville found motivation in its first season opting up to play larger schools.

Cokeville’s move to Class 2A didn’t stop any tradition – the Panthers notched their 33rd consecutive winning season and 28th consecutive playoff berth.

But the Panthers lost in the quarterfinals of the 2A playoffs, just the third time in that 28-year stretch that they didn’t make it to at least the semifinals.

At the same time, Cokeville coach Todd Dayton said the move to Class 2A was the right one.

“We were very happy,” Dayton

said. “It was very challenging, but it’s good to be able to play a quality team every week, and we have to be at our best every week, so that makes us better.”

Senior Treyson Dayton was Cokeville’s most consistent aerial threat last year, catching 28 passes for 373 yards and four touchdowns to lead the Panthers across all three receiving categories. No other returning receiver had more than 30 yards last year.

Junior quarterback Landon Walker completed 45 of 101 passes for 648 yards and eight touchdowns last year; he’s also Cokeville’s leading returning rusher, having gained 165 yards on 47 carries last season.

Returning their quarterback and their top receiver is a big advantage, coach Dayton said.

“It makes you sleep at night a little better,” he said. “... We’ve got some good linemen coming back, too.”

“... We’ve got experienced players all over. We don’t have to start all over at any one key position.”

Seniors Garrett Reece and Ian Clements will help provide stability on the line, while junior Moe Uasike added 143 rushing yards on 19 carries last year and will give depth to the backfield.

Reece leads Cokeville’s defensive returners; he was fourth on the team last year with 67 total tackles, including 13 tackles for loss. Treyson Dayton added 62 tackles and tied for the team lead with three interceptions, while Walker also had 62 tackles and four pass break-ups.

Uasike (33 tackles), Clements (32), junior Cael Thompson (30), junior Jesus Bencomo (27), senior Hunter Thomas (22) and sophomore Jack Dayton (20) also notched at least 20 tackles. In all, Cokeville returns nine of its top 14 tacklers.

Coach Dayton said one priority overrides the defense’s plans.

“We’ve got to get better at defending the pass,” he said. “That was a big challenge for us last year and it will probably be so again this year. We’ve got to defend the whole field, and that’s something that’s going to be a top priority for us.”



Mascot: Panthers
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Black and orange

Coach: Todd Dayton,
42nd year at Cokeville
2020 Record: 5-4, lost
to Torrington in state
quarterfinals

Key Players
QB/LB: Landon Walker, Jr.
OL/LB: Garrett Reece, Sr.
RB/LB: Treyson Dayton, Sr.
OL/DL: Ian Clements, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-28: at Kemmerer jamboree, TBD
(Zero Week)
9-3: at Rich County, Utah, 1 p.m.
***9-10:** at Lyman, 11 a.m.
***9-17:** vs. Mountain View, 3 p.m.
***9-24:** at Pinedale, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Thermopolis, 1 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Kemmerer, 4 p.m.
***10-15:** at Big Piney, 2 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Lovell, 4 p.m.
* Conference game

Punchers prime rushing attack

Big Piney’s philosophies aren’t changing this year.

But they are adapting.
With a bigger line and

inexperience at quarterback, the Punchers’ offense – which had nearly triple the number of passing yards per game (195.6) as rushing (74) last year – will rely more on the run.

The defense, meanwhile, returns more than half of its top 12 tacklers, leading a team that finished 2020 at 5-3 but missed the playoffs.

“For all the younger kids, especially those 16 (returning) seniors, it provided a lot of motivation,” Puncher coach

Ryan Visser said. “It was a good learning opportunity, where they had three opportunities in a row to get a win to go to the playoffs, and we didn’t get it done.”

“... Nothing’s given in life. You can’t rest on your laurels and say, ‘We’ve got this.’ We had a bit of bad luck with some injuries, but the world doesn’t care. We’ve got to go out and still get the job done.”

Although Big Piney is senior-laden, with 16 players of the 35 to 40 expected out this year,



Mascot: Punchers
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Red and white

Coach: Ryan Visser,
third year at Big Piney
2020 Record: 5-3, did not
qualify for playoffs

BIG PINEY

Key Players

QB/WR/S: Dalton Bell, Sr.
OL/DL: Seth Stoutenburg, Sr.
QB/WR/S: Thomas Barron, Sr.
WR/LB: Koy Walton, Sr.

2021 Schedule

9-2: at Evanston JV, 2 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Thermopolis, 2 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Pinedale, 2 p.m.
***9-23:** at Lyman, 4:30 p.m.
***10-1:** at Lovell, 7 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Mountain View, 2 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Cokeville, 2 p.m.
***10-22:** at Kemmerer, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

BIG PINEY CONTINUED-

senior Dalton Bell is the only one of Big Piney’s five all-conference choices who’s coming back in 2021.

Bell and senior Thomas Barron are in competition for the quarterback spot. Visser said both bring dual-threat running and passing abilities, and whoever isn’t under center will play at receiver. Moreover, Big Piney could use both players in both positions, maybe even on the same play.

“Both of them are very coachable and they’re both seniors, and we feel like both of them will do a good job,” Visser

said.

Bell is Big Piney’s leading returning receiver; he was second for the Punchers last year in catches (35) and receiving yards (467).

But the running game, and the offensive line, will have a bigger role. Visser said in his three years at Big Piney, “this is our biggest line, both offensively and defensively, and we’re going to rely on that.”

Junior Jovany Munoz is Big Piney’s top returning tackler; he was third on the team last year with 53 and was third with 23 solo tackles.

Senior lineman Seth Stoutenburg was fifth on the team

with 84 defensive points and leads all returners with five sacks a year ago.

Junior Thomas Howard added three sacks and was fifth on the team with 46 tackles, while Bell added 36 tackles and sophomore Karsyn Gurr had 34. Senior Jaspur Brower (27 tackles) and seniors Jaron Petty (20) and Koy Walton (17) also saw significant minutes on a defense that was third in Class 2A in points allowed per game.

“Defense is a huge part of who we’re going to be again this year,” Visser said.





Mascot: Rangers
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Red and black

Coach: Bart Jernigan,
fifth year at Kemmerer
2020 Record: 0-8, did not
qualify for playoffs

2021 Schedule
8-28: Kemmerer jamboree, TBD
(Zero Week)
9-3: vs. Wheatland, 4 p.m.
***9-10:** at Pinedale, 7 p.m.
***9-17:** at Thermopolis, 5 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Mountain View, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Lyman, 7 p.m.
***10-8:** at Cokeville, 4 p.m.
***10-15:** at Lovell, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Big Piney, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

Rangers relying on defense

The Kemmerer Rangers haven't had the opportunity to use the scoreboard to gauge their improvement.

Rest assured, though, that the improvement coach Bart Jernigan is looking for is there.

After two consecutive winless seasons, the Rangers will try to turn a corner this year, and optimism is high because of that improvement, even if it hasn't always shown up in the numbers in lights.

"I've been proud of our kids in really just putting a focus on getting better," Jernigan said. "... In reality, the score is far more indicative of your individual work usually. I think our kids have put in the work to take the next step as a program to have a little bit more success than we've had on the field previously, and hopefully put us in a position to compete for a playoff spot."

Key Players
QB/S: Tommy Skidmore, Sr.
OL/LB: Matt McMillan, Sr.
HB/LB: Tyson McKane, Sr.
RB/LB: Rigger Walker, Jr.

The reason for the optimism starts with an experienced defense, which returns five of its top seven players in defensive points.

Senior Matt McMillan, junior Jake Kampman and junior Rigger Walker finished second through fourth, respectively, for Kemmerer in tackles a year ago. McMillan had 50, Kampman 44 (including a team high two sacks) and Walker 42.

The presence of those three players on a defense that returns seven starters will help carry Kemmerer, especially early in 2021; McMillan and Walker were both all-conference choices last year.

Senior Tyson McKane added 27 tackles, two interceptions and a fumble recovery, while senior Tommy Skidmore had 34 tackles.

Juniors Tim Peck and Seth Krell and senior Zack Malone also played key minutes on defense last year.

Jernigan said he is excited to see his players' growth not just physically but mentally on defense.

"A lot of times we gave up scores not necessarily because

we got physically beat but because we made it easier on our opponents with a mistake," Jernigan said.

On offense, Skidmore returns at quarterback and will be one of Kemmerer's leaders; he threw for 216 yards and ran for 263 last season, and is Kemmerer's top returner in both categories.

"He's going to be a steady force for us out there," Jernigan said. "He's got the ability to make some plays for us, and calms us down and gets guys going in the right direction. ... I'm looking forward to seeing him take that role even further as a senior."

Kampman was the Rangers' top receiver last year with 50 receiving yards on six catches.

Up front, McMillan and Peck both return as starters on the offensive line.

And Jernigan knows his players will work hard.

"I think our kids are going to come out and battle," he said. "There's some grit and tenacity to our kids."

Champs still have talent

Lyman's path to the Class 2A championship last season started with a bit of intrinsic motivation.

And it ended with the Eagles holding the first-place trophy.

"We talk about with our kids constantly to be the best version of themselves, the best version of you," Lyman coach Dale Anderson said. "... That's what we really want to see out of our kids, push themselves to be the best."

That happened in 2020. The Eagles won their fifth state title in program history and first since 2012.

Lyman graduated six all-state choices – the Eagles had six seniors who were two-way starters last season – but return enough players to be contenders for another title.

"We do return some pretty good skill kids," Anderson said. "... We hope to kind of build around those kids a bit."

Senior Rho Mecham and junior McCoy Smith were all-state selections last year, while senior Chevy Fackrell was an all-conference choice.

The receiving game is solid, as the Eagles return five of their top six pass-catchers.

Smith was Lyman's most consistent target in the passing game, finishing with team highs in catches (23), receiving yards (454) and receiving touchdowns (six).

Junior Ashton Houskeeper added eight catches for 157 yards and

senior Alex Bradshaw had seven catches for 61 yards.

Houskeeper, though, is tentatively slated to be the Eagles' quarterback.

Anderson said he isn't worried about run-pass balance as much as he is Lyman's ability to keep opposing defenses guessing.

"We're never going to be a team that comes out and throws 30 times a game, but if we can throw 10 or 15 times and be efficient, that's what we're looking for," Anderson said.

The Eagles graduated their top three rushers, including their quarterback, leaving Fackrell (34 carries, 196 yards) as the lone backfield player with significant experience.

Mecham, a defensive end, he was second for Lyman with 83 total tackles but led the Eagles with 14 tackles for loss and 10 sacks. He

also shared the team lead with four pass break-ups.

However, he's the only one of Lyman's top four tacklers to come back. Moreover, Anderson said Mecham will need help from the rest of the defensive line to keep teams from simply running away from Mecham's side.

"We've just got to kind of find those pieces to put around him to help him out," Anderson said.

On the bright side, the Eagles return six of the 12 players who finished with at least 20 tackles last year.

Fackrell finished with 40 tackles last year. Smith had 36 tackles and tied for the team lead with Houskeeper with three interceptions.

Bradshaw had 26 tackles, while Houskeeper and senior Kody Richardson each chipped in 22.



Mascot: Eagles
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Blue and white

Coach: Dale Anderson,
10th year at Lyman
2020 Record: 11-1,
beat Torrington in state
championship

Key Players
RB/LB: Chevy Fackrell, Sr.
TE/OT/DE: Rho Mecham, Sr.
OL/DL: Landon Heaton, Sr.
OL/DL: Briggs Richards, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Malad, Idaho, 3 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-3: at Rawlins, 3 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Cokeville, 11 a.m.
***9-17:** at Lovell, 7 p.m.
***9-23:** vs. Big Piney, 4:30 p.m.
***10-1:** at Kemmerer, 7 p.m.
***10-8:** at Thermopolis, 4 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Pinedale, 3 p.m.
***10-21:** vs. Mountain View, 3 p.m.
* Conference game

Bulldogs tough in trenches

Finding Lovell's strengths this season won't be too difficult.

Just look for the strongest guys.

The Bulldogs will have one of Class 2A's most experienced set of linemen this fall. The remainder of the Lovell roster

doesn't have the experience the linemen do, giving the Bulldogs chances to control games on the line of scrimmage – something that should allow less experienced players to develop around them.

"We do have a fair number of returning linemen, so that experience there (is a strength), and they're getting a lot stronger," coach Nicc Crosby said.

Four of the Bulldogs' five starters on the offensive line return. Senior Quinn Lindsay, an all-conference selection, helps lead a group that includes seniors

Kobe May and Sam Cornia and junior Connor Strong.

The rest of Lovell's offense is not as experienced, but Crosby said the returners outside the linemen possess quite a bit of potential.

Of Lovell's top four rushers, senior Amos Monterde is the lone returner; he had 31 carries for 212 yards last year, good for fourth on the team.

Senior Casen Hiser is Lovell's top returning receiver, as the top four receivers are no longer with the program; he had two catches for 34 yards.

And no returning player has



Mascot: Bulldogs
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Blue and white

Coach: Nicc Crosby,
third year at Lovell
2020 Record: 6-3, lost to
Upton-Sundance in state
quarterfinals

Key Players
OL/DL: Quinn Lindsay, Sr.
OL/DL: Kobe May, Sr.
OL/DL: Sam Cornia, Sr.
RB/LB: Dallen Mangus, Sr.

LOVELL

2021 Schedule
8-28: at Tongue River, 1 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-3: vs. Big Horn, 7 p.m.
***9-10:** at Mountain View, 4 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Lyman, 7 p.m.
***9-24:** at Thermopolis, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Big Piney, 7 p.m.
***10-8:** at Pinedale, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Kemmerer, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** at Cokeville, 4 p.m.
* Conference game

LOVELL CONTINUED-

taken a snap under center at the varsity level.

However, between Monterde, senior Dallen Mangus and junior twins Preston and Tyler Nichols, Crosby said the Bulldogs will have good speed and athleticism in the backfield this fall.

"I feel good about the options we have there, and we'll just have to see who kind of comes out on top as we get into the season," Crosby said.

The defense has some holes to fill, too, as only four of Lovell's

top 12 players in defensive points come back this year – and most of them will have key responsibilities on offense, too.

Preston Nichols, Lovell's No. 2 tackler last year, leads the Bulldogs' returners on defense. He had 53 tackles last year, tops among Lovell's returning players.

Lindsay added 39 tackles and two blocked kicks.

Senior Casen Hiser chipped in 37 tackles, Monterde had 19 tackles and three pass break-ups and Ben Nichols had 20 tackles.

The Bulldogs are also trying to

overcome a disappointing streak of early playoff exits. Lovell's past two seasons have ended in the Class 2A quarterfinals, including a 41-16 loss to Upton-Sundance in last year's first round.

"As soon as the offseason began, we talked about that," Crosby said. "We've won a fair number of regular-season games, but we've got to figure out how to win in the postseason."

"... Now we've got to be hungry to take that next step and make some noise in the playoffs."

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Mascot: Buffalos
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Purple and silver

Coach: Brent Walk,
10th year at Mountain View
2020 Record: 7-3, lost to
Torrington in state semifinals

Key Players
QB/LB: Connor Micheli, Sr.
RB/WR/DB: Tanner Collins, Sr.
OL/DL: Carson Tims, Sr.
WR/DB: Josh White, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Green River, 6 p.m.
(Zero Week scrimmage)
9-3: vs. Evanston, 4 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Lovell, 4 p.m.
***9-17:** at Cokeville, 3 p.m.
***9-24:** at Kemmerer, 7 p.m.
***10-2:** vs. Pinedale, 1 p.m.
***10-8:** at Big Piney, 2 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Thermopolis, 3 p.m.
***10-21:** at Lyman, 3 p.m.
* Conference game

Buffalos have gained experience

Mountain View’s returning players gained a ton of experience last year – just not in the way they expected.

A rash of injuries last year forced players into roles that they may not have been ready for otherwise.

“It gave guys the opportunity to step up, and they did,” coach Brent Walk said. “Normally, guys who would have been JV guys, they turned into varsity starters.”

The program success kept rolling even despite the injury problems, and the Buffalos reached the Class 2A semifinals. They tallied their ninth consecutive winning season in the process.

Responsibilities for continuing that momentum fall to those players who gained that unexpected experience in 2020 and younger players who will step into any one

of several open spots.

Senior Connor Micheli was an all-state choice last year, but he is the only one of Mountain View’s four all-state and eight all-conference choices coming back in 2021.

Micheli led the Buffalos in both passing and rushing, throwing for 1,160 yards while completing 72 of 122 passes for 12 touchdowns and running 105 times for 404 yards and six touchdowns, all team highs.

He is also the only one of Mountain View’s top eight players in defensive points to come back this year. Micheli had 68 total tackles, second-best on the team last year.

On defense, Walk said Micheli will transition from safety to linebacker this year to take advantage of his experience.

And on offense, “Connor’s going to be one of the best football players in the state at the quarterback spot,” Walk said. “... And we definitely think we’re going to have some guys to put around him.”

With Micheli, senior Tanner Collins and junior Braden Walker, the Buffalos return their top three rushers. Collins ran 102 times for 340 yards and Walker added 41 carries for 259 yards.

However, the Buffalos graduated their top three receivers. Junior Josh White, with nine catches for 153 yards last year, is Mountain View’s top returning receiver.

Seniors Carson Tims, Wyatt Rees and Josh Cushing and junior Dane Branson will be among Mountain View’s leaders on the offensive line.

Even with an abundance of running back experience, “we need to be better at running the ball... so we’re putting an emphasis on that,” Walk said.

Defensively, White was 12th on the team last year with 31 tackles but also had a team-high eight pass break-ups while snagging three interceptions.

Walker added 47 tackles, Tims added 32 and Collins had 28.

Seniors Adan Vargas and Morgan Kellum will also see time, Walk said.

On special teams, senior Teancum Piekola returns for his fourth year as the Buffalos’ kicker.

“I’m really, really excited about this team,” Walk said.

Bobcats motivated by narrow gap

The Thermopolis Bobcats’ gap between success and failure is as small as it is frustrating.

All that separated Thermopolis from a winning 2020 season, and potentially a playoff berth, was five points.

A 14-12 loss to Big Piney and a 23-20 loss to Lovell kept Thermopolis out of the postseason but with a clear focus on its goals for 2021.

“It’s on the staff to make that difference up,” Thermopolis coach Matt McPhie said. “... There are no small things and we need to do a better job of capitalizing on all opportunities both within our team, and versus the opponent.”

The Bobcats only graduated four seniors and return numerous contributors, so the gap is narrowing.

Senior Eli McCumber and junior Roedy Farrell were all-conference choices last year, and they lead an experienced defense where they were the top two tacklers a year ago.

McCumber led Thermopolis’ defense in 2020 with 66 total tackles, including 25 solo. He also had four tackles for loss and two defensive touchdowns.

Farrell was third for Thermopolis in defensive points and second with 41 tackles.

McPhie said the defense will benefit from their

experience, but on a unit that has nine players returning who started last season, they won’t have to shoulder the entire burden.

“We have some nice pieces to place around them,” McPhie said. “The truth is, they are both really good football players. They play the game at a high level, and they make the players around them better. We are excited for what they bring to the team day in and day out.”

Senior Elijah Skelton added 32 tackles, finishing fifth on the team.

Senior lineman Adley Coyne, with 26 tackles, is the only other returning player with more than 20 tackles last year. However, junior Gavin Shumway and senior Wyatt McDermott also logged quality defensive minutes in 2020.

Junior running back/linebacker Carson Williams will also see time.

The offense returns eight starters. Farrell carried 127 times for 694 yards and six touchdowns last year, leading the Bobcats across all three categories. He was also third on the team in receptions (nine) and receiving yards (104) and leads all returning receivers for Thermopolis.

Shumway returns after completing 38 of 79 passes for 565 yards and four touchdowns last year. However, McPhie indicated Shumway may play wide receiver this year.

Seniors Hazen Thurgood and Austin Barrall will lead the efforts on the offensive line.

“We have some experience and expect these players to continue to grow, compete and get better quicker as we go along,” McPhie said. “We lost two all-state players. We have to fill those holes, but I believe this group is up to the task.”



Mascot: Bobcats
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Purple and yellow

Coach: Matt McPhie,
sixth year at Thermopolis
2020 Record: 3-5, did not qualify
for playoffs

Key Players
RB/LB: Roedy Farrell, Jr.
RB/OLB: Adley Coyne, Sr.
WR/LB: Eli McCumber, Sr.
WR/DB: Wyatt McDermott, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Worland, 1 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-3: at Tongue River, TBD
***9-10:** at Big Piney, 2 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Kemmerer, 5 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Lovell, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** at Cokeville, 1 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Lyman, 4 p.m.
***10-15:** at Mountain View, 3 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Pinedale, 5 p.m.
* Conference game

Wranglers looking for consistency

In an unexpected twist, Pinedale’s geography might be the best thing going for it this season.

Thanks to Pinedale’s isolation, COVID-19 hasn’t been as much of a problem there as it has been in other communities.

Consequently, the Pinedale football team started its summer workout program on time, something that not a lot of schools could do this year.

“We’re pretty fortunate to

live in a town that hasn’t seen much in the way of infections,” second-year coach Clay Cundall said. “Because of that, we’ve been able to lift since the very beginning of summer and we were able to have our team camp at the very beginning of summer.”

The Wranglers’ roster is only slightly changed from 2019 to 2020, as only four seniors graduated. Of this year’s 32 anticipated players, about 10

will be seniors.

“It’ll be very exciting to see that come together this year,” Cundall said. “... Now they get their shot to make some noise.”

Senior Colby White, Pinedale’s only all-state selection from 2019, will help that effort.

White led Pinedale’s rushing game with 131 carries for 803 yards and nine touchdowns, all team-highs.

White also led the Wranglers’



Mascot: Wranglers
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Green and orange

Coach: Clay Cundall,
third year at Pinedale
2020 Record: 1-7, did not
qualify for playoffs

PINEDALE

2021 Schedule

8-27: at Lander, 4 p.m.
(Zero Week scrimmage)
9-3: vs. Glenrock, 6 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Kemmerer, 7 p.m.
***9-17:** at Big Piney, 2 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Cokeville, 7 p.m.
***10-2:** at Mountain View, 1 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Lovell, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** at Lyman, 3 p.m.
***10-22:** at Thermopolis, 3 p.m.
* Conference game

Key Players

QB/CB: Konner Ziegler, Sr.
RB/LB: James Kervitsky, Sr.
RB/S: Ethan Jensen, Jr.
OG/LB: Bryton Nelson, Sr.

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PINEDALE CONTINUED-

defense, more than doubling up all his teammates with 82 total tackles and 157 defensive points. His 32 solo tackles, seven tackles for loss and three fumble recoveries all led Pinedale last season.

“He’s been a workhorse for us, and he’s tough, and he’s durable, and he’s coachable,” Cundall said.

Moreover, Cundall said White has developed as a leader and has shown younger players “how to work hard, how to be reliable, those kinds of things we look for.”

But he won’t be alone.

The Wranglers’ four returning all-conference selections – White, seniors Dodge Westercamp and Carson Gregory and junior Konner Ziegler – is second in number to only Big Piney in the Class 2A West Conference.

Ziegler ran 94 times for 336 yards and also completed 19 of 40 passes for 282 yards. Only

four players caught passes for Pinedale last year, but three of them return – including senior Kaleb Bigelow, who had 90 receiving yards on a team-high 10 catches.

Gregory, Westercamp and junior Skyler Erickson are returners on the offensive line.

Bigelow was second on the team in defensive points and finished with 35 total tackles and a team-high three pass break-ups.

Erickson was fourth in defensive points, finishing with 38 total tackles and three sacks, which led the team.

Gregory finished with 33 tackles, while seniors Troy Later (23 tackles) and Westercamp (22 tackles) also contributed on defense.

“I feel like they’re just a great group of kids,” Cundall said, “and I’m excited to see them and what they can do this season.”

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Southeast
Cyclones

2020 State Playoffs

State Championship
Southeast 47, Lusk 28

State Semifinals
Southeast 44, Shoshoni 18
Lusk 52, Rocky Mountain 35

State Quarterfinals
Southeast 63, Riverside 7
Shoshoni 48, Pine Bluffs 4
Rocky Mountain 44, Saratoga 40
Lusk 54, Greybull 0

Players to watch

Cord Herring, Southeast

A first-team Casper Star-Tribune Super 25 player last year, Herring will be key to the Cyclones’ title defense. He ran for 797 yards and 17 touchdowns last year and also led the Cyclones in defensive points.

Ryan Clapper, Southeast

Clapper is one of only two two-time all-state players playing in Class 1A nine-man this year. He averaged 10.6 yards per carry, finishing with 1,090 rushing yards and 18 touchdowns last season.

Pehton Truempier, Shoshoni

The junior leads all of the Wranglers’ returners in tackles with 98. He also ran for 537 yards and eight touchdowns last year. He’ll be asked to do even more in 2021.

Dayne Lamp, Lusk

As a sophomore, Lamp finished with more tackles (157) than any other player in Class 1A nine-man. He also helped clear the way on the Tiger offensive line.

Stu Lerwick, Pine Bluffs

As a sophomore, he led nine-man with 1,857 passing yards, completing more than 55% of his passes. No other returning quarterback in nine-man threw for more than 900 yards last year.



Southeast, Lusk could clash for title again

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four questions to answer

Are we going to see another Southeast-Lusk championship game? Possibly. On paper, the defending champion Cyclones from Yoder and the last year’s runner-up Tigers from Lusk have the two strongest teams in Class 1A nine-man. Southeast was hit harder by graduation, giving Lusk an early edge.

Is anyone else a threat? Not really. Shoshoni and Rocky Mountain are the two teams in the West with the highest preseason expectations, and Pine Bluffs will be improved as well. Those three teams are the most likely outside shots at a title.

Will another running back crack 3,000 yards this year? Don’t count on it. Drake Lamp did that for Lusk last year, rushing for 3,057 yards; no other player was above 1,300, showing just how much of an anomaly the record-setting year actually was.

Will we field a full set of teams this year? Thankfully, yes. Last year’s schedule was a bit wonky as both St. Stephens and Wyoming Indian had to cancel their seasons due to COVID-19. Both the Eagles and Chiefs are ready to return this fall.

Key games

Shoshoni at Rocky Mountain, Sept. 10. Barring something unexpected, the Grizzlies and Wranglers are likely the top two teams in the West, and this conference opener for both teams will have big implications.

Lusk at Pine Bluffs, Sept. 10. The Hornets have an opportunity to turn an entire classification on its ear if they can knock off the Tigers in the conference opener. Pine Bluffs has all four of its all-state selections coming back and could be a challenger in the East.

Wyoming Indian at St. Stephens, Oct. 14. After a year away, the Chiefs and Eagles get to return to the field this year. These two programs have a deep basketball rivalry but have only played each other in football once.

Southeast at Lusk, Oct. 15. The game that decided the 1A nine-man championship last year could also decide the East Conference champion this year. As noted, both the Cyclones and Tigers have lots of returning experience, making this one THE most anticipated game of the season.

Predicted order of finish

East Conference: Lusk, Southeast, Pine Bluffs, Moorcroft, Saratoga, Lingle, Wright. *West Conference:* Shoshoni, Rocky Mountain, Riverside, Greybull, Wind River, St. Stephens, Wyoming Indian.

Way-too-early title game score prediction

Lusk 37, Southeast 24. On paper, the Tigers are nine-man’s most balanced and most talented team. But the East Conference is loaded this season, full of teams ready to capitalize if the Tigers slip.

Gifford moves up to lead man

Lingle-Fort Laramie, by default, is a team building for the future.

With only two seniors out this year, the Doggers don’t have too many other options.

Even so, first-year head coach Brandon Gifford, who’s been an assistant with Lingle for nearly a decade, enters 2021 optimistic about where the Doggers could be – and where they are now.

“I am excited this year as one of our strengths will actually be depth,” Gifford said. “We have a great crew of freshmen coming up and our numbers will be up, so this will help with our depth.”

Gifford has been a part of the LFL program at the 11-man, six-man and nine-man levels, so adapting to new situations is nothing new for him or his players.

“The players already know me and my coaching philosophy so the transition will be much smoother,” he said. “It will allow us to hit the ground running and focus on skill development more than installs.”

The Doggers are in their second year of the biggest installation of last year, a new offense. Running from a single wing formation modified for nine-man, the Doggers only threw the ball 17 times last season.

This year, Lingle will still need to find a new quarterback and some dependable receivers. The Doggers’ returners combined to catch three passes for 1 yard last year.

Gifford said he wants the Doggers to play fast but will stick with the single wing, which Gifford called “our bread and

butter.”

“We will have better team speed this year, and we want to utilize that speed on the edges as well as take advantage of mismatches at the perimeter,” he said.

Juniors Slade Hopkins and Corey Ducheneaux lead the returning rushing attack. Hopkins had 71 carries for 373 yards and seven touchdowns, finishing third on the team in rushing yards, while Ducheneaux was fourth with 164 yards on 24 carries.

Defensively, Ducheneaux is the only one of Lingle’s top five players in defensive points to come back in 2021. He was fourth on the squad with 34 tackles and led Lingle with two interceptions.

Sophomore Nolan Spears added 28 tackles, including 19 solo tackles to lead all returners.

Junior Hadley Fleming had 26 tackles, while juniors Owen Schillref and Boyd Oliver added 18 apiece and Hopkins 17.

Seniors Quirt Lee and Jaden Houk and sophomore Wyatt Sylvester will also be involved.

The defensive line will be small, Gifford said, forcing the Doggers to attack more on defense.

“It will be imperative to get those young guys developed quickly,” Gifford said. “The nice thing is that those young guys played a lot last year and that experience will help us to play faster and play downhill.”



Mascot: Doggers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Blue and red

Coach: Brandon Gifford, first year at Lingle
2020 Record: 3-5, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players
QB/RB: Nolan Spears, Soph.
OL/DL: Owen Schilreff, Jr.
RB: Slade Hopkins, Jr.
WR: Corey Ducheneaux, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Pine Bluffs, 4 p.m. (Zero Week scrimmage)
9-3: at Wind River, 5 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Southeast, 7 p.m.
***9-17:** at Wright, 7 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Lusk, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** at Saratoga, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** at Pine Bluffs, 7 p.m.
10-22: vs. Greybull, 5 p.m.
 * Conference game

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Mascot: Tigers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Red and white

Coach: Ryan Nelson, seventh year at Lusk
2020 Record: 8-3, lost to Southeast in state championship

LUSK TIGERS

1A 9-MAN EAST

Tigers ready for title run

Since its last state title in 2002, Lusk has gone 0-6 in championship games.

The latest oh-so-close run came last year, when the Tigers finished 8-3 but lost to Southeast in the Class 1A nine-man championship.

This year, though, the Tigers are ready to break the streak.

“Expectations are as high as they’ve been since I’ve taken over,” Lusk coach Ryan Nelson said. “With a large group of returning starters they want to make a run at playing in Laramie next season.”

Lusk returns five all-state players, the most in nine-man, from seven total selections. Seniors Aiden Applegarth, Riley Blackburn, Dylan Molzahn and Mason Wells, along with junior Dayne

Lamp, give the Tigers an experienced returning squad.

Senior Walker Kupke was also an all-conference choice. The Tigers’ six returning all-conference players is also tops in the classification.

And they’re ready to put last season’s title-game loss in the category of inspiration, Nelson said.

“Our guys took it pretty hard, especially since we held the lead in the fourth quarter,” he said. “It has motivated our returning seniors and juniors. They’ve responded well in the weight room and have been on the field since the weather has allowed them to be.”

Another thing working in the Tigers’ favor is their offensive approach. Lusk’s

rushing game was tops in Class 1A nine-man last season, and the Tigers return their entire offensive line from last season.

“With our returning experience on the O-line we’ll continue to be run first,” Nelson said. “We may have to be more diverse with how we accomplish that but have some young backs that will need to step up.”

Molzahn, a two-time all-state choice, is Lusk’s top returning rusher. He carried 61 times for 572 yards and six touchdowns last year, good for third in all categories. Kupke completed 20 of 42 passes for 325 yards; Wells was the team’s top receiver with seven catches for 126 yards, including six touchdowns.

CONTINUED PAGE 38



Mascot: Wolves
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Green and white

Coach: Travis Santistevan,
fourth year at Moorcroft
2020 Record: 3-5, ineligible
for playoffs

Key Players
QB/S: Zane Linder, Sr.
RB/LB: Randy Peters, Sr.
TE/DE: Kyler Smith, Jr.
OL/DL: James Long, Jr.

2021 Schedule
9-3: at Greybull, 6 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Saratoga, 2 p.m.
***9-17:** at Lusk, 6 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Wright, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Southeast, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** at Lingle, 6 p.m.
10-15: vs. Riverside, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** at Pine Bluffs, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

Preparation key for Wolves

Moorcroft's success in 2021 may come down to how many of the Wolves' players maximize their abilities before the season starts.

The concept is simple, but for Moorcroft coach Travis Santistevan, it's rooted in the reality of what his team has as well as what it lost.

Santistevan said last year's group of six seniors had a lot of natural ability that allowed them to succeed. This year's team will need a strong commitment to offseason preparation to make up that gap.

"The big thing is that our younger guys have to start buying into that summer weight room and that bigger, faster, stronger mentality," he said. "... Hopefully they will buy into it and grow into those roles."

This year's Wolves will rely on an experienced signal caller to provide leadership for those younger players.

Senior Zane Linder was Moorcroft's only all-state choice last year. Linder led the Wolves' offense in both passing and rushing last year, completing 69 of 139 passes for 897 yards and nine touchdowns and running 113 times for 636 yards and 10 touchdowns, as well.

"He sees the field very well, whether it's running the ball or throwing the ball," Santistevan said. "... There are many times when he's throwing when I'm like, 'Who's he throwing to?' and we catch it because someone's wide open."

No other returning back cracked triple-digit yardage last year. The Wolves also graduated their top four receivers, as sophomore Chaz Dewey (four catches, 41 yards) is Moorcroft's top returning receiver.

Linder is also Moorcroft's top returning player on defense, where he finished third on the team in tackles with 34 and fourth in defensive points. He leads all returners with three interceptions last year.

Junior Dane Connally had 33 tackles last season, and junior Kyler Smith had 32. Of the six Moorcroft players who had more than 20 tackles, they are the only three to return.

However, sophomore Trenton Sheehan had 16 tackles and junior James Long had 13.

Peters, a senior and an all-conference choice last season, will have a big role in the offensive backfield and will also play linebacker.

In all, the Wolves return five starters on both offense and defense, including several juniors who saw significant playing time as sophomores.

"They got more varsity experience (as sophomores) than previous years," Santistevan said.

Moorcroft will be ineligible for the postseason for the second year in a row, as the Wolves are opting down from Class 2A. Santistevan said that although the lack of postseason is frustrating, the decision still worked to fit the participation levels.

"It was a really good move for us because of the numbers we get out," he said.

Hornets should make some noise

Don't blame the Pine Bluffs Hornets too much if they enter 2021 feeling overlooked.

In the same conference with defending champion Southeast, defending runner-up Lusk and a group of competitive contenders, the Hornets still want to stand out.

With four returning all-state and five returning all-conference players, a number that's topped only by Lusk's six in Class 1A nine-man, they will.

Pine Bluffs coach Will Gray said playing in a competitive East Conference "is very helpful to creating a competitive atmosphere at practice. Playing good teams means you don't get away with bad habits, so practice reps are more meaningful."

All four of the Hornets' all-state selections from 2020 – seniors Ty Sweetter and Reed Thompson and juniors Stu Lerwick and Diego Paniagua – are back this season.

Lerwick led the Hornets' passing game, completing 94 of 170 passes for 1,857 yards – a yardage total that led Class 1A nine-man – and 14 touchdowns.

Gray said Lerwick helps give the offense consistency, leadership, versatility and the chance to install new ideas quickly.

Thompson led the Hornets in both catches (30) and receiving yards (502). Sweetter had a team-high six receiving touchdowns, catching 18 passes for 435 yards to finish second behind Thompson.

Junior Dalton Schaefer, an all-conference pick, was fourth on the team in both catches (12) and yards (215).

Schaefer led a balanced Hornet rushing attack last season with 390 rushing yards and six touchdowns. Lerwick was fourth with 100.

"We have a ton of athletic kids who can make plays with the ball in their hand," Gray said.

In all, seven offensive starters return.

On defense, Pine Bluffs returns its top five tacklers from a year ago in Paniagua, Thompson, Sweetter, Schaefer and senior Tyler Christofferson. Paniagua led the team by far with 111 tackles, including 39 solo. Schaefer had 62 tackles, Sweetter and Christofferson 58 apiece and Thompson 50, including a team-high nine tackles for loss.

"They are experienced guys who know how to play," Gray said. "It allows us to be more basic and just let them play to their strengths."

Junior Collin Jessen chipped in 34 tackles, seventh on the team, while senior Brian Flores had 33 and Lerwick 30. Of the 11 players who had at least 30 tackles in 2020, eight return.

Also back is junior Ryan Fomstrom, who missed last year with an ACL injury, as well as junior Alex Sloan and sophomore linemen David Merryfield and Wyatt Carter.

Gray said the returning experience is helpful, but "We have to tackle, plain and simple. We were in a position to win several more games last year but we couldn't get our opponents to the ground. We'll give ourselves a chance if we can eliminate missed tackles."

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Lingle, 4 p.m.
(Zero Week scrimmage)
9-2: at Riverside, 2 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Lusk, 7 p.m.
***9-17:** at Saratoga, 6 p.m.
***9-24:** at Southeast, 7 p.m.
10-1: vs. Shoshoni, 2 p.m.
***10-8:** at Wright, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Lingle, 7 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
* Conference game



Mascot: Hornets
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Purple and yellow

Coach: Will Gray,
11th year at Pine Bluffs
2020 Record: 5-4, lost
to Shoshoni in state
quarterfinals

Key Players
WR/LB: Reed Thompson, Sr.
TE/LB: Ty Sweetter, Sr.
QB/LB: Stu Lerwick, Jr.
OL/LB: Diego Paniagua, Jr.

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LUSK CONTINUED-

The Tigers return their top two tacklers, four of their top five and seven of their top nine. Lamp led Lusk in defensive points and had 157 total tackles; Molzahn was second and had 141 tackles, including a team-high 19 for loss.

Blackburn added 72 tackles and Applegarth notched 67 tackles and a team-high three interceptions.

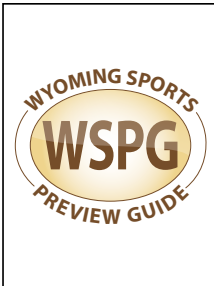
Wells (30 tackles), senior Jayce Cummins (26 tackles) and junior Miles Ashurst (26 tackles) also played significant defensive minutes.

Senior Cody Taylor and juniors Colin Taylor and Colten Coffman will give depth to the offensive and defensive backfields.

"We're hoping we can play faster and improve the pass defense," Nelson said. "The guys have been working getting our schemes down better so we can possibly add to them as the season progresses."

LUSK
Key Players
OL/RB/LB: Dylan Molzahn, Sr.
OL/DE: Riley Blackburn, Sr.
TE/DE: Mason Wells, Sr.
RB/DB: Aiden Applegarth

2021 Schedule
8-27: Casper Jamboree, 4 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-3: vs. St. Stephens, 5 p.m.
***9-10:** at Pine Bluffs, 7 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
***9-24:** at Lingle, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Wright, 6 p.m.
10-8: at Rocky Mountain, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Southeast, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** at Saratoga, 5 p.m.
* Conference game



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Mascot: Panthers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Purple and yellow

Coach: Logan Wright,
fourth year at Saratoga
2020 Record: 3-5, lost to
Rocky Mountain in state
quarterfinals

Key Players
QB/S: Geoffrey Johnson, Sr.
TE/DE: Heston Fisher, Jr.
C/DT: Kellen Reeder, Jr.
OG/MLB: Slayd Daley, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Casper Jamboree, 4 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-3: vs. Wyoming Indian, 6 p.m.
***9-10:** at Moorcroft, 2 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Pine Bluffs, 6 p.m.
9-25: at St. Stephens, 1 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Lingle, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** at Southeast, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** at Wright, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Lusk, 5 p.m.
* Conference game

Panthers have built confidence

A late start put a damper on Saratoga's 2020 season, and by the time the Panthers realized they could play with the best teams in Class 1A nine-man, their season was over.

A 44-40 loss to Rocky Mountain in the quarterfinals was the third time Saratoga played tough against one of the top three teams in the state.

Now, coach Logan Wright said his players are excited to see how they can grow.

"I think their hunger is high because I think they realize what they can do," Wright said. "Up until that point (against Rocky Mountain), I think it was kind of an afterthought they could win. ... I think it's a confidence booster and something they needed to see to actually believe in themselves."

This year's Saratoga team will be younger and less experienced – the Panthers graduated three all-state players and four all-conference players, leaving senior Geoffrey Johnson, an all-conference pick, as the only returning player with postseason honors attached.

Wright he said only expects three seniors but 10 juniors out this year.

The strength of the offense is the line, where Saratoga lost just one starter. Juniors Kellen Reeder (center) and Slayd Daley (guard) will lead the way.

"I think we have some nice depth up front, and as they go, we go as a program," Wright said.

One of the challenges was learning line calls in the nine-man game, a definite transition from six-man that Saratoga played before. But Wright said his players understand the mental end of line play; now it's time to develop the physicality.

"Now that we've got all that, now let's get the strength and kind of the brutality just to go along with it," he said. "Two years of all these o-linemen's going to be really fun."

Sophomore Tuger Carricato is Saratoga's top returning rusher; he was second on the team last year with 41 carries for 154 yards. He is the only one of the Panthers' top six ball-carriers to come back this year.

Junior Heston Fisher was second on the team in catches (18) and receiving touchdowns (four) and third in receiving yards (170); he is the team's top returning pass-catcher.

Johnson added 12 catches for 86 yards; however, Wright said Johnson is the most likely candidate to take over at quarterback.

The Panthers' top three tacklers graduated, leaving Johnson – who had 51 tackles last year – as the top returning defensive player.

Daley was fifth on the team with 42 tackles, while Fisher was seventh with 32. Carricato, who had 28 tackles, is the only other returner with more than 15 tackles.

Saratoga also returns junior Deke Herring, who started three games before injury ended his season.



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Mascot: Cyclones
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Blue and silver

Coach: Mark Bullington,
23rd year at Southeast
2020 Record: 11-0, beat
Lusk in state championship

Key Players
TB/CB: Ryan Clapper, Sr.
FB/LB: Cord Herring, Sr.
QB/S: Grand Logsdon, Sr.
OG/NG: Kirk Kay, Sr.

2021 Schedule
9-3: at Shoshoni, 5 p.m.
***9-10:** at Lingle, 7 p.m.
9-17: vs. Wind River, 5 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Pine Bluffs, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** at Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Saratoga, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** at Lusk, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. Wright, 7 p.m.
* Conference game

Champs have holes to fill

Expectations for football success are high in Yoder.

And they should be, especially since last year's Southeast team finished 11-0.

Trying to carry the load of expectations for Southeast in 2021, one year after an undefeated season, will be a talented, but small, group.

Southeast graduated seven all-state and eight all-conference selections, leaving both opportunity and uncertainty for Class 1A nine-man's defending champions.

"We have some good talent, we just don't have numbers," coach Mark Bullington said. "We'll be lucky to have 20 kids out."

"... I'm not saying we don't have a shot at (repeating). We have some good talent... but, just, numbers is the problem we have right now."

The talent Bullington is referring to starts with seniors Cord Herring and Ryan Clapper. Clapper is a two-time all-state performer, and Herring was a Casper Star-Tribune Super 25 first-team player last year.

Clapper and Herring were 1-2

for the Cyclones' rushing game last year. Clapper carried 103 times for 1,090 yards and 18 touchdowns, while Herring ran 99 times for 797 yards and 17 scores.

Senior Grant Logsdon is penciled in to be the quarterback and will also play safety. Bullington said Logsdon can throw the ball but will also be a running threat; combined with Clapper's speed and Herring's power and game savvy, "that will give us three (options) back there," he said.

Also, sophomore Matthew Chapman was fifth on the team in rushing last year, contributing 29 carries for 150 yards and three touchdowns.

The Cyclones graduated their quarterback and their top two receivers, though. Herring leads the crew of returning receivers, having caught 12 passes for 155 yards last year; Clapper contributed five catches for 127 yards. No other returner had more than one catch last year.

Herring is the only returner among Southeast's top five players

in defensive points from last year; however, he led the team in defensive points and was second with 72 tackles. His three fumble recoveries and three interceptions both led the team.

Senior lineman Kirk Kay added 54 tackles, good for fourth on the team, and leads all of Southeast's returners with 10 tackles for loss last year.

Senior Will Baker, an all-conference pick last year, chipped in 34 tackles, junior Austin Short had 16 and Clapper 14.

Southeast will also benefit from the return of junior Wyatt Campbell, who missed last season with a dislocated kneecap. Senior defensive end Jakob Kramer will also see time.

Bullington said he hopes the Cyclones will also play this season in memory of former assistant coach Crockett Herring, a Southeast alumnus who died at age 50 this summer after a heart attack.

"I hope that's a little drive for them," Bullington said.

Panthers look to regain form

After two consecutive playoff berths in 2018 and 2019, the Wright Panthers couldn't keep the postseason momentum rolling in 2020.

Wright beat Moorcroft 8-6 for its only league victory of 2020. But that wasn't enough, as Panthers lost their other five Class 1A nine-man East Conference by a combined score of 224-41. Consequently, Wright finished last in the conference standings and missed the playoffs for the first time in three years.

Entering 2021, the Panthers are trying to regain that momentum despite graduating all three of their all-conference selections.

On the plus side, Wright returns six starters on both offense and defense, including an experienced quarterback and defensive backfield, giving the Panther faithful reasons for

optimism.

Junior Parker Worman leads the offense under center as the Panthers' top returner in both passing and rushing. He completed 25 of 80 passes for 314 yards and three touchdowns last year and was second on the team with 88 carries for 348 yards and three touchdowns on the ground.

Worman's experience will be helpful, Wright coach Larry Yeradi said, "but we may find other ways to utilize his skill set. We had a freshman step in a couple times because of injury and produced well. Right now, we are still 'in the lab' and mixing some different thoughts about as to where we go."

Worman is also the only one of Wright's top three rushers to return; senior Grant Mills was fourth on the team last year in

rushing, carrying eight times for 125 yards.

Mills is also Wright's top returning receiver. He was second for the Panthers in 2020 with nine catches for 123 yards.

Yeradi said the Panthers need to find players who will compete for starting positions that were left open in the backfield and on the offensive line, as "graduation took some people from those areas."

The defense, too, lost some top-end talent to graduation but also has a solid group of contributors who are back from 2020.

Worman was second on the team in tackles last year; he's the only one of Wright's top four to come back. He had 60 tackles, including 41 solo, last year.

Senior Charlee Thomson contributed 39 tackles, fifth-best on the team, and had a team-high 12 tackles for loss. Mills was eighth with 23 tackles, and senior Dawson Prieve was just behind with 22.

"Our basic premise on defense is to find guys who want to be the hammer and not the nail," Yeradi said. "I believe we have a good core group returning, and seeing how the puzzle comes together... will be interesting."

Junior tight end/linebacker Boe Preston and junior wide receiver/linebacker L.J. Morgan have also shown potential, Yeradi said.



Mascot: Panthers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Black and gold

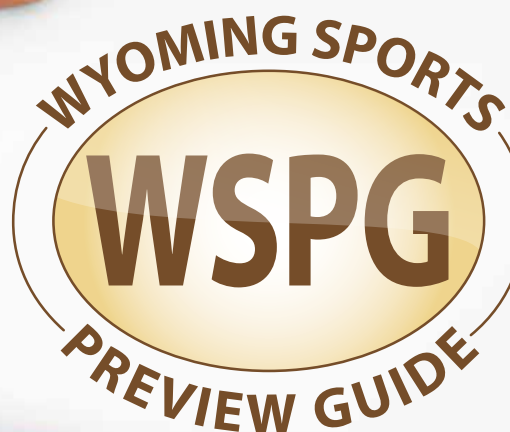
Coach: Larry Yeradi,
27th year at Wright
2020 Record: 2-6, did not
qualify for playoffs

Key Players
RB/LB: Grant Mills, Sr.
OL/DL: Charlee Thomson, Sr.
OL/DL: Dawson Prieve, Sr.
QB/DB: Parker Worman, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Casper Jamboree, 4 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-3: vs. Rocky Mountain, 6 p.m.
9-10: at Wyoming Indian, 6 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Lingle, 7 p.m.
***9-24:** at Moorcroft, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** at Lusk, 6 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Pine Bluffs, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Saratoga, 6 p.m.
***10-22:** at Southeast, 7 p.m.
* Conference game

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Mascot: Buffaloes
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Blue and yellow

Coach: Jeremy Pouska,
first year at Greybull
2020 Record: 2-7, lost to
Lusk in state quarterfinals

Key Players
RB/DB: Irving Castro, Sr.
WR/DB: T.J. Davis, Sr.
RB: Isaak Gaytan, Soph.
FB/LB: Jake Schlattmann, Jr.

2021 Schedule
9-3: vs. Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
***9-10:** at Wind River, 7 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Wyoming Indian, 7 p.m.
***9-24:** at Rocky Mountain, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. St. Stephens, 7 p.m.
***10-8:** at Riverside, 7 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Shoshoni, 7 p.m.
10-22: at Lingle, 5 p.m.
* Conference game

Pouska takes reins in Greybull

Jeremy Pouska will become a head high school football coach for the first time at Greybull this season, after three years of being an assistant coach at rival Riverside.

With just eight miles between them, Pouska has the benefit of already knowing quite a bit about the players and the program he will lead. “I’m thoroughly excited to be given the opportunity to be a head coach at the high school level,” Pouska said. “Our goal is to definitely be playoff contenders, but we really want to start laying the foundations for a successful program moving forward.”

Senior Irving Castro and junior Jake Schlattmann were all-conference team members last year, and they’ll be leaders on a junior-heavy, 30-player squad.

The offensive approach will put some pressure on Castro at running back as Pouska said the Buffaloes will put their offensive focus on running the ball. He said Greybull will try to mix in draws, option, lead plays, counters and traps, “running a lot of different looks out of just a few formations so we’re not very easily read.”

Castro can shoulder that responsibility. He led the Buffaloes with 121 carries for 841 yards and seven touchdowns last year.

Sophomore Isaak Gaytan will also see time carrying the ball, Pouska said.

Junior Cale Wright returns at quarterback after completing 39 of 85 passes for 586 yards and nine touchdowns last year.

The Buffaloes graduated their top four receivers, leaving senior T.J. Davis, who had one catch but had it go for 73 yards, as the team’s top returning receiver. Junior Chase Oster will also be a target in the passing game.

Juniors Cannon Cook and John Haley will lead the efforts on the offensive line.

Schlattmann leads Greybull’s returning players defensively; he had a team-high 111 tackles last year, including 33 solo.

“I really want to trust his judgment on reading backs and really playing instinctive football,” Pouska said. “... We kind of want to release that

aggressiveness and see where that fits in to our scheme.”

Oster was fourth for Greybull with 55 tackles, including three sacks. Castro added 54 tackles and broke up a team-high seven passes.

Davis contributed 30 tackles, senior Weston Haley had 29, junior Bryan Galvez had 26 and junior Aiden Reece had 22.

Overall, Greybull returns seven of its 12 players who tallied at least 20 tackles a year ago, a level of experience Pouska said will ease the transition to a new head coach.

“That should help out pretty tremendously because there’s guys that have already got a good essence of teamwork,” he said. “... (They understand) how they can work together as a team and how they can trust in each other.”



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Mitchell takes lead for Rebels

The Riverside Rebels picked up several lessons in their first year of nine-man football.

With a big crew of returning players on both offense and defense, Riverside will get the chance to apply those lessons in 2021.

And they’ll get to do so with a new coach, one who has experience coaching sub-11-man football and who is intrigued by the possibilities nine-man offers.

First-year head coach Jason Mitchell spent six years as a head coach in Nebraska, with three at Valentine, two at Minatare and one at Lodgepole. Minatare and Lodgepole had eight-man teams while he was there.

Mitchell left teaching and coaching for about a decade but came back in the last couple years and spent last year as a volunteer

assistant at Burns.

“When I saw that opening come up (at Riverside), I did a little bit of research, and I love the idea of coaching in a community small enough where you get to know the players beyond (football),” he said.

Mitchell will take over a team that has potential for improvement and could be a threat to reach the postseason for the second consecutive year.

The Rebels return three all-conference players in senior Garret Ellis-Rudd and juniors Dylan Alexander and Porter Duncan. Riverside returns experienced players in the backfield and at wide receiver as well as on defense.

Duncan was second for the Rebels last year with 241 rushing yards and is the team’s leading returning rusher.

The Rebels will need to find a

new quarterback, but whoever it is, they will inherit an experienced receiving corps.

The team’s top receiver was Ellis-Rudd, who had 23 catches for 376 yards and three touchdowns last year. Junior Trenton Coronel added seven catches for 116 yards, while Duncan had six catches for 69 yards, good for second and third on the team respectively behind Ellis-Rudd.

Mitchell said he wants the Rebels to be diverse offensively. He said he’s had players run for 2,000 yards in a season before, but he’s also had quarterbacks throw for 300-yard games.

“I have been very fluid in catering my system to what the athletes have to offer in any given year,” Mitchell said. “... Having a full set of offensive weapons is a huge plus for the nine-man game.”

Riverside’s defense returns five of its top six players, with Alexander, Duncan, Ellis-Rudd, Coronel and senior Griffin Zapata.

Alexander tops all returners with 91 tackles last year, including a team-leading 58 assisted tackles.

Duncan chipped in 52 tackles, Ellis-Rudd had 41 and Zapata had 31. Also, senior Oscar Martinez contributed 30 tackles and sophomore Ty Strohschein had 21.

Senior lineman Brian Gesch returns as a starter on both offense and defense.



Mascot: Rebels
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Red and silver

Coach: Jason Mitchell,
first year at Riverside
2020 Record: 2-7, lost to
Southeast in state
quarterfinals

Key Players
RB/DE: Dylan Alexander, Jr.
WR/DB: Garret Ellis-Rudd, Sr.
RB/LB: Porter Duncan, Jr.
OL/DL: Griffin Zapata, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Burlington, 11 a.m.
(Zero Week scrimmage)
9-2: vs. Pine Bluffs, 2 p.m.
***9-11:** at St. Stephens, 1 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Rocky Mountain, 1 p.m.
***9-23:** at Wyoming Indian, 5 p.m.
***10-1:** at Wind River, 7 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Greybull, 7 p.m.
10-15: at Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
***10-21:** vs. Shoshoni, 7 p.m.
* Conference game

Grizzlies on youth movement

Rocky Mountain graduated 10 seniors from last year’s team.

In nine-man football, that feels like a lot.

But Grizzlies’ coach Richard Despain said neither he nor his team is entering into 2021 completely without experience.

The Grizzlies return two players who started both ways in junior Nate Minemyer, the only one of the Grizzlies’ six all-state players to return, and senior Tyson Christiansen, who missed most of the season with an ACL

injury suffered against Greybull.

Junior lineman Dylen Clendenen was an all-conference selection and a consistent offensive starter.

Beyond that, the Grizzlies don’t have a ton of experience, a problem unintentionally exacerbated by the makeup of last year’s senior-heavy roster. However, with a big group of experienced players in front of them, the returners learned how to put forth their best effort.

“When we graduated such

a big athletic group in front of them, they were fighting for time,” Despain said. “They took whatever they could get. So they don’t have a lot of that big-game experience, but they are working hard.”

Minemyer, Christiansen and Clendenen are all linemen or ends, which gives Despain reasons to be excited.

“With those three, I expect them to really control their spot on the defensive and offensive line, and be leaders, leaders in



Mascot: Grizzlies
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Brown and yellow

Coach: Richard Despain,
sixth year at Rocky Mountain
2020 Record: 7-1, lost to
Lusk in state semifinals



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Grizzlies Key Players
OL/DL: Nate Minemyer, Jr.
TE/DE: Tyson Christiansen, Sr.
QB/DB: Carsyn Weber, Jr.
OL/DL: Dylen Clendenen, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-28: at Casper Jamboree, TBD
9-3: at Wright, 6 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Shoshoni, 6 p.m.
***9-17:** at Riverside, 1 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Greybull, 7 p.m.
***10-2:** at Wyoming Indian, 1:30 p.m.
10-8: vs. Lusk, 6 p.m.
***10-15:** at Wind River, 7 p.m.
***10-22:** vs. St. Stephens, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CONTINUED-
the huddle and on and off the field,” Despain said. “... If we can fill in those other spots, we look to have that experience up front really pay off for us this year.”

Junior Carsyn Weber is the leading returning passer and is in line to be the Grizzlies’ quarterback. He completed seven of 12 passes for 130 yards and five TDs in spot duty last season. With 10 carries for 107 yards, Weber is also Rocky Mountain’s top returning rusher.

The Grizzlies graduated their top six receivers; Christiansen, who had one catch for 41 yards last year, is the team’s top returning pass-catcher.

Junior Maddox Ames, who will be counted on to produce in the running game, added 17 carries for 96 yards in 2020.

Rocky’s top five players in defensive points and seven of their top 10 graduated.


Minemyer, who was fifth for Rocky with 32 tackles, is the leading returning player on defense.

Clendenen added 30 tackles to finish seventh on the team.

Senior Bo Arnold added 21 tackles, the only other returner to finish with at least 20 tackles.

Despain said this year’s group will be motivated by last season’s ending, where Rocky Mountain’s undefeated season ended in the semifinal round.

“I think there’s some hunger,” Despain said. “The guys that are returning feel like we left something on the field, and they want to go get that chance to take it back.”



Mascot: Wranglers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Blue and yellow

Coach: Tony Truempler, ninth year at Shoshoni
2020 Record: 7-3, lost to Southeast in state semifinals

Key Players
WR/CB: Nathon Cousineau, Sr.
QB/S: Alex Mills, Jr.
RB/OLB: Pehton Truempler, Jr.
WR/CB: Trey Fike, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Casper Jamboree, 4 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-3: vs. Southeast, 5 p.m.
***9-10:** at Rocky Mountain, 6 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. St. Stephens, 3 p.m.
***9-24:** vs. Wind River, 7 p.m.
10-1: at Pine Bluffs, 2 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Wyoming Indian, 3 p.m.
***10-15:** at Greybull, 7 p.m.
***10-21:** at Riverside, 7 p.m.
* Conference game

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SHOSHONI WRANGLERS

1A 9-MAN WEST

Wranglers face early test

Shoshoni’s 2020 season ended in Yoder with a loss to eventual Class 1A nine-man champion Southeast in the playoff semifinals.

The fact that the first game of Shoshoni’s 2021 season is against Southeast – this time in Fremont County – has the Wranglers motivated.

“We’ll get a good test right out of the chute,” Shoshoni coach Tony Truempler said.

For a team that, coming off a 7-3 season, is in position to make a run at a West Conference championship and another deep playoff run, Week 1 will provide the kind of early season gauge necessary to test those hopes.

Although senior Nathon Cousineau is Shoshoni’s only returning all-state selection, three other Wranglers – juniors Alex Mills, Jaxson Stanley and Pehton Truempler – were all-conference choices. No other team in the West Conference has as many all-conference players returning as Shoshoni does with its four.

The Wranglers will be led by a deep junior class, although the six seniors are willing to lead by example, coach Truempler said.

“The seniors I do have, they’re tough,” he said. “They’re kind of quiet leaders. ... They just go and do their jobs.”

Pehton Truempler was third for the Wranglers last year in rushing, carrying 78 times for 537 yards and eight touchdowns. He is the only one of Shoshoni’s top four rushers to return, though.

However, coach Truempler said the running game should be a strength of the team, as the Wranglers have a mix of both power and speed backs, including junior Cannon Campbell, who is recovering from a shoulder injury sustained in wrestling. The offensive line is also experienced with senior center Corbin Dewitt and senior Braeden Cash, who’s back after injury sidelined him for most of 2020, and junior Jaxson Stanley at guards.

“We’re going to ride our run game pretty hard, because I have four good backs,” he said. “... We have a very good mix, and it’s an all-junior backfield.”

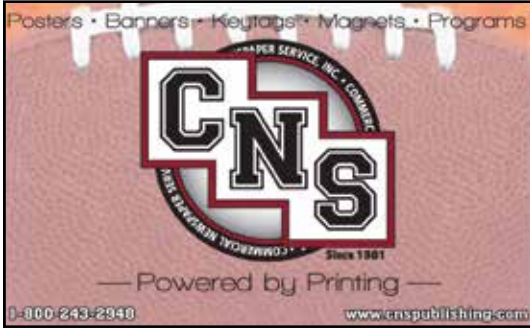
Cousineau lead Shoshoni in receiving yards with 308 and was second in catches with 13. Pehton Truempler added six catches for 104 yards, good for third on the squad.

Mills will be in position to take over at quarterback. Coach Truempler said Mills has a strong arm and will help keep opposing defenses honest.

The defense has some important shoes to fill, as Pehton Truempler is the only one of Shoshoni’s top five tacklers to return in 2021. He had 98 tackles last year, good for third on the team.

Cousineau was sixth with 36 tackles and also had six pass break-ups.

Junior Cannon Campbell chipped in 35 tackles, Mills added 31 tackles and a team-high seven interceptions, and junior Trey Fike added 30 tackles and six pass break-ups.



1A 9-MAN WEST

WIND RIVER COUGARS

PAGE 45

Cougars look to snap streak

The challenge for the Wind River football program is clear.

Fortunately for coach Mykah Trujillo, the Cougars’ players have embraced the clearest answer to that challenge.

The 2020 season was Wind River’s 11th consecutive losing season, but Trujillo said the players on his young team – only three seniors are projected for this year’s team – have wholeheartedly bought in to moving forward together on the same path.

“We have a very coachable group of kids, probably the most coachable group of kids that I’ve ever had since I’ve been out here at Wind River,” said Trujillo, who is in his seventh year with the Cougars. “... They want to put in the time and the effort to get better.”

“... I know that the coaching staff’s excited, because we’re going to get that group of kids that want to work, that want to do well and are coachable. We know if we get the right things going, we’re going to have some successful years from the program coming up.”

Wind River’s prospects for 2021 start with senior Jaden Miller and junior Jaycee Herbert were all-conference selections in 2020.

Miller was second for the Cougars with 84 carries for 281 yards and three touchdowns last year; he was also the No. 2 receiver in the Cougars’ run-first offensive approach with 35 receiving yards on one catch.

Herbert ran 16 times for 134 yards, finishing third on the team in rushing.

Herbert and Miller were also two of Wind River’s top three tacklers last year; Herbert was second for Wind River with 42 tackles, while Miller was third with 39.

“A few kids stepped up (at summer camp), but having those two guys back will really help,” Trujillo said.

“They’re not snot knockers, but they wrap up well and they’re both quick athletes.”

Of the seven players who had at least 20 tackles, the Cougars get back five. Four juniors are part of that group; in addition to Herbert, Brayden Leonhardt was fifth with 26 total tackles, Tucker Jensen added 23 and Calder Johnson chipped in 20.

On offense, the Cougars only completed 18 passes last year; senior quarterback Trey Mulholland completed 12 of those for 126 yards. Herbert had 10 catches for 112 yards to lead the receiving corps.

Jensen and junior Casey Befus will lead the offensive line, while sophomore Cooper Fredrick will give depth to the backfield.

Trujillo said the Cougars made a conscious shift to putting an emphasis on running the ball last season.

“We’ve got a lot of kids who want to work hard, and that’s why we’re going to run the ball, because we’ll have kids that are going to work hard,” Trujillo said.



Mascot: Cougars
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Purple and silver

Coach: Mykah Trujillo, seventh year at Wind River
2020 Record: 2-5, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players
WB/SS: Jaden Miller, Sr.
OL/LB: Casey Befus, Jr.
OL/DL: Tucker Jensen, Jr.
WR/DB: Jaycee Herbert, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Casper Jamboree, 4 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-3: vs. Lingle, 5 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Greybull, 7 p.m.
9-17: at Southeast, 5 p.m.
***9-24:** at Shoshoni, 7 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Riverside, 7 p.m.
***10-7:** at St. Stephens, 4 p.m.
***10-15:** vs. Rocky Mountain, 7 p.m.
***10-21:** at Wyoming Indian, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

1A 9-MAN WEST

ST. STEPHENS EAGLES

Eagles hitting restart button

For three years, Dee Harrison and Billy Brost had tried to mold the St. Stephens Eagles into a team that could make a playoff run.

Then COVID-19 ended the Eagles’ season before it could begin. St. Stephens’ school closed as students took virtual classes, and fall sports were one of the casualties.

Brost, who had been head coach for the past four seasons, left in July, and Harrison stepped in to take over the program he and Brost had been building together.

“We’ve kind of been in this together and we’ve kind of helped each other out for the whole four, five years we’ve been doing this,” Harrison said. “... It’s a just a matter of taking the reins and continuing to rebuild and hopefully building some more on it.”

Harrison was previously a head coach at both Firth and at West Jefferson, schools in Idaho, and was also an assistant football coach and track coach at Eastern Oregon University.

The Eagles will be young in 2021 – St. Stephens will likely have just four seniors and four juniors to be on a team that should have 25 to 30 players in uniform.

“We’ve got a really, really young team now this year,” Harrison said.

And they’re still re-adjusting to the weight room and the structure of the program after a year away from it all.

“Losing a year, it basically sets you back two years,” Harrison said. “You basically take your juniors and seniors and put them back into freshmen, sophomore type of caliber because they just lose that much.”


“... It academically hurt us. It hurt us physically. It hurt us scheme-wise just because we didn’t have the ability to improve.”

Junior Bluebird Talksdifferent was the team’s top tackler as a freshman, notching 23 solo tackles and 33 total tackles two years ago. Senior Jeremiah Willow had 17 tackles in 2019.

Senior Jordan Barraza will add depth at the wide receiver and defensive back positions, while senior Jude Jenkins is a Swiss-Army-knife of offensive options and could see time both in the backfield and receiver.

Senior Jaymon Shoyo will play both receiver and cornerback, and junior Aynjle Monroe will compete for a starting spot at quarterback with Jenkins, who completed 13 of 27 passes for 152 yards to lead the Eagles in 2019. Sophomore Jai’ron Rhodes will be in the offensive backfield and will also contribute, while sophomore Adrian C’Hair will have an impact at linebacker.

Junior Virgil Monroe will start at center, while sophomore Jonathan Spoonhunter and junior Lennis Arthur will add depth to the line. The Eagles will have three players bigger than 300 pounds, helping form the core of the offensive and defensive lines.



Mascot: Eagles
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Red and black

Coach: Billy Brost, fifth year at St. Stephens
2020 Record: did not play due to COVID-19

Key Players
RB/LB: Jeremiah Willow, Sr.
C/DL: Virgil Monroe, Jr.
RB/WR/LB: Jude Jenkins, Jr.
RB/CB: Bluebird Talksdifferent, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-28: at Glenrock Jamboree, TBA (Zero Week)
9-3: at Lusk, 5 p.m.
***9-11:** vs. Riverside, 1 p.m.
***9-17:** at Shoshoni, 3 p.m.
9-25: vs. Saratoga, 1 p.m.
***10-1:** at Greybull, 7 p.m.
***10-7:** vs. Wind River, 4 p.m.
***10-14:** vs. Wyoming Indian, 4 p.m.
***10-21:** at Rocky Mountain, 5:30 p.m.
* Conference game



Mascot: Chiefs
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Blue and red

Coach: Nate Reinhardt, third year at Wyoming Indian
2020 Record: did not play due to COVID-19

Key Players
WR/RB/S: Josh Slow Bear, Sr.
RB/LB: Marques Returns To War, Sr.
OL/DL: Ben St. Clair, Jr.
WR/LB: Vidale C’Bearing, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-28: at Glenrock Jamboree, TBA
9-3: at Saratoga, 6 p.m.
9-10: vs. Wright, 6 p.m.
***9-17:** at Greybull, 7 p.m.
***9-23:** vs. Riverside, 5 p.m.
***10-2:** vs. Rocky Mountain, 1:30 p.m.
***10-8:** at Shoshoni, 3 p.m.
***10-14:** at St. Stephens, 4 p.m.
***10-21:** vs. Wind River, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

WYOMING INDIAN CHIEFS

1A 9-MAN WEST

Chiefs looking for new start

The Wyoming Indian football team will have seniors this year.

They won’t be typical seniors, though.

With the Chiefs sitting out last year due to school closures tied to the COVID-19 pandemic, coach Nate Reinhardt said his players, in all grades, are still learning.

“The majority of our kids were underclassmen two years ago, so losing a year, it’s just like they’re underclassmen, skill and knowledge-wise,” Reinhardt said.

With the pandemic striking the Wind River Reservation particularly hard, reservation schools closed for extended periods. From March 2020 to January 2021 – prime football time – the Chiefs had no practices, no in-person team meetings, no weight room sessions, no team workouts or conditioning due to the school closure.

“We didn’t get to do anything,” Reinhardt said.

Once Wyoming Indian switched from virtual to hybrid classes and restarted athletic programs in late January, players have embraced the opportunity to return to normalcy. Reinhardt said one of the Chiefs’ biggest issues this year may be eligibility, as academic performance fell off when students didn’t have athletics to help motivate them to do well in school.

“They don’t see the importance of the school stuff until it clicks in and it’s too late, and then there’s a lot of catch-up there,” said Reinhardt, noting that many players are enrolled in summer school courses to try to be eligible for fall. “... It’s just a trickle-down effect from having something like that occur.”

This summer and preseason practices in the fall will be critical for the Chiefs’ success this fall. Reinhardt said he wanted to implement a few new schemes on both offense and defense, but without opportunities to work through it together prior to January, their implementation has been slow.

“I can talk about it, I can show them some clips, but until we’re able to physically do that, it doesn’t necessarily sink in,” he said. “... That’s the biggest thing right now, for summertime, is to get workouts in so we can put in some different concepts we want to try.”

Three players who saw significant playing time as starters during the 2019 season as sophomores and freshmen will help lead those efforts.

Senior Josh Slow Bear was an all-conference choice as a sophomore. He is Wyoming Indian’s top returning receiving threat. Slow Bear will also play safety.

Senior Marques Returns To War will help form the Chiefs’ linebacking corps, and Junior Ben St. Clair will have key spots on both the offensive and defensive lines.

Senior Vidale C’Bearing, who didn’t play as a sophomore but who has been with the team the past two years, will help provide depth to the wide receiver, tight end, linebacker and defensive backfield positions.



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“It’s a just a matter of taking the reins and continuing to rebuild”

~Coach Billy Brost



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State Semifinals
Farson 42, Encampment 41
Meeteetse 46, Kaycee 38

State Quarterfinals
Farson 70, Hanna 0
Encampment 59, Hulett 20
Kaycee 47, Snake River 43
Meeteetse 63, Guernsey 7

Players to watch

Dace Bennett, Meeteetse

Bennett was the only player in 1A six-man last year to both run and throw for at least 1,000 yards (1,406 passing, 1,282 rushing yards). He also had 100 tackles and four interceptions on defense.

Zander Risner, Snake River

Risner is a two-time all-state selection already, and his defensive prowess has earned him those honors. He tied for the lead in six-man with 21 tackles for loss last year and was fourth overall in the classification with 121 total tackles.

Koye Gilbert, Encampment.

He had 32 catches for 524 yards and nine touchdowns last year. He was also one of the classification's top defensive players, finishing seventh in six-man in defensive points per game while notching 86 tackles.

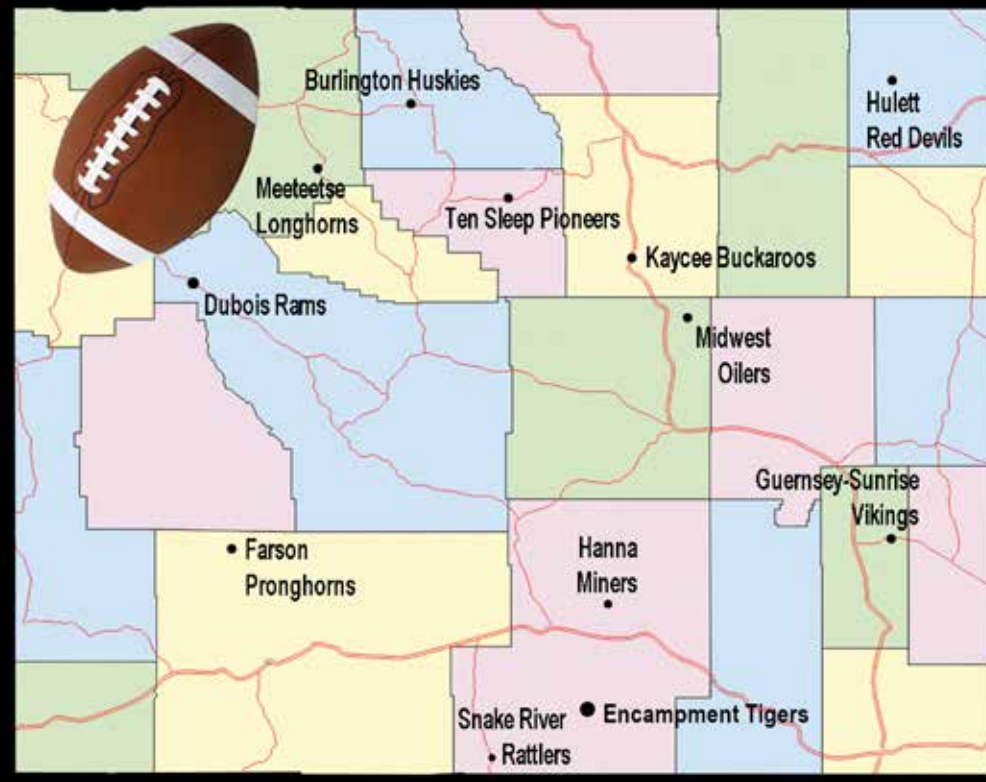
Max Claar, Dubois

Claar is a senior on a team full of younger players, so his leadership will be just as important as his play. He led Dubois in scoring last season, was third in tackles and found success both running and receiving the ball.

Kalvin Erickson, Meeteetse

Erickson led six-man in receiving yards (695) and receiving touchdowns (15) and was second in the classification in catches (33). He also led the classification in total tackles with 153.

1A/6-man Preview



Power lies in the West for six-man

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four questions to answer

Which is the stronger conference? The West.

All six of the returning all-state players in six-man are in the West Conference. The West has six teams this year to the East's five, with no weaklings in the group. And three of last year's final four came from the West.

Of those West teams, who's looking the most like a champ? On paper, Meeteetse. The Longhorns had a breakthrough season in 2020 and finished as runners-up to Farson. They did lose some key players to graduation but return some of six-man's best playmakers.

Who else is in the discussion? Everyone in the West. Snake River didn't graduate anyone; Dubois was young but explosive; Encampment nearly dethroned Farson in the semis and gets back several important players; Burlington is always tough; Farson is the defending champ.

The East is really that weak? This year, yes. Kaycee, despite losing all three of its all-state picks from last year, is the best of the bunch in early goings, and Hulett and Guernsey-Sunrise could be competitive, too. However, every team in the East is chasing to catch up to the standard set in the West.

Key games

Encampment at Snake River, Sept. 10. The Carbon County adversaries meet in Week 2 in both teams' West Conference openers. A loss here will be difficult to overcome for either team.

Dubois at Meeteetse, Sept. 18. Dubois hung tight with Meeteetse last year, and with another year of experience, the young Rams could put themselves on everyone's radar if they can finish the job they couldn't in 2020.

Hulett at Guernsey, Oct. 1. After Kaycee, the Red Devils and Vikings return more key players than any other squads in the East. This game could end up deciding who's at home in the first round of the playoffs.

Farson at Meeteetse, Oct. 16. The rematch of the 2020 title game comes in Week 7, and chances are good that by the time this game rolls around, last year will be the furthest thing from anyone's mind.

Predicted order of finish

East Conference: Kaycee, Hulett, Guernsey, Hanna, Midwest. *West Conference:* Meeteetse, Snake River, Encampment, Farson, Dubois, Burlington.

Way-too-early title game score prediction

Meeteetse 48, Snake River 40. The Longhorns have the playmakers and the experience to do big things this season. The biggest question mark will be surviving a rugged West Conference.

1A 6-MAN EAST

GUERNSEY-SUNRISE VIKINGS

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Vikings' numbers on the rise

The Guernsey-Sunrise Vikings are getting bigger – in more ways than one.

The first way the Vikings are growing is in numbers. After several years of 10-15 players, and an available group of players as small as eight last season, coach Curtis Cook said this year's roster could be as big as 18 or 19 players.

The second way the Vikings are growing is in literal size. Some of the spots on the expanded roster will be filled by transfers and by players who are coming out for football after a couple years away, and those players have the height and weight to help Guernsey rely on the run more than last season.

"We'll see what actually transpires,

but we're excited about what could happen," Cook said. "We might actually have some size, especially on our front line, so we're going to try to transition back to what we do, which is ground and pound."

The Vikings graduated just two seniors – including one who was their top rusher, receiver and tackler – from last year's 4-5 team.

Cook said the biggest benefits from playing so many young players will be in the experience they gained and the mentality they developed.

"When you're constantly the smaller team on the field, you learn to find a way," Cook said. "You find a way to overcome that as much as you can, and for a lot of years our kids have been

undersized to the teams that we've played. Now that they're older, we'll start to see that shift, but that mentality will probably remain the same."

Senior Rawland Isabell and junior Brian McCoid were all-conference choices last year.

McCoid, who started under center as a freshman, ran Guernsey's offense again last year. He completed 92 of 199 passes for 1,506 yards and 20 touchdowns last season. He also ran for 353 yards and six touchdowns on 65 carries.

"He knows the systems and commands the offense," Cook said. "Toward the middle of the season, you could just see it, especially in a season where week to week we didn't know who was going to be available."

Isabell was the No. 2 receiver for the Vikings last season, catching 18 passes for 310 yards and a team-high seven receiving touchdowns in 2020.

Sophomore Kaleb Foggie was also a valuable offensive weapon, finishing third on the team in rushing yards (161) and fourth in receiving yards (207).

Isabell was second on the team with 41 total tackles, while McCoid and sophomore Cooper Harriman added 35 apiece.

Sophomore Aidan Noggle added 22 tackles while sophomore Tristan Hohnholt and junior Alex Sturdivant tallied 15 tackles apiece.

Cook said senior fullback/defensive end Hunter Warner will also see time.



Mascot: Vikings

Division: Class 1A six-man

Conference: East

Colors: Black and yellow

Coach: Curtis Cook, sixth year at Guernsey
2020 Record: 4-5, lost to Meeteetse in state quarterfinals

Key Players

QB: Brian McCoid, Jr.

WR/DE: Rawland Isabell, Sr.

RB/LB: Tristan Hohnholt, Soph.

MLB: Cooper Harriman, Soph.

2021 Schedule

8-27: at Midwest, 3 p.m.

(Zero Week)

9-3: vs. Farson, 4 p.m.

9-11: vs. Cheyenne Central JV, 2 p.m.

9-17: vs. Sioux County, Neb., 7 p.m.

***9-25:** at Hanna, noon

***10-1:** vs. Hulett, 6 p.m.

***10-8:** at Kaycee, 2 p.m.

10-15: vs. Burlington, 1 p.m.

***10-22:** vs. Midwest, 6 p.m.

* Conference game

HULETT RED DEVILS

1A 6-MAN EAST

Expectations high for Red Devils

Some consistent success has the Hulett Red Devils looking for more.

Back-to-back winning seasons, the program's first since 2007-08, has boosted the Red Devils' confidence and momentum.

After finishing 8-2 in 2019, Hulett went 5-3 last season, finishing second in the Class 1A six-man East Conference and earning home playoff games both seasons.

That success has translated into higher expectations, something head coach Boz Backen said should continue this year. The 2021 team is heavy with juniors, Backen said, making winning part of the expectation of the program

for players who have known no different.

At the same time, Hulett has enough seniors on this year's team to provide the leadership necessary for continuing its roll.

"The last few years the kids have bought into what we are trying to accomplish as a team," Backen said. "My coaches and I do our best to put our kids in the best position to succeed, but at the end of the day, the kids put the hard work (in) and it's showing for them."

Hulett does not keep team or individual statistics. However, Backen said the Red Devils return five starters on offense and four on

defense. Returning seniors Bryce Ackerman and Tyler Kromarek were all-conference selections in 2020.

Juniors will make up most of the roster, though, which Backen said he expected to top out at 13 to 15 total players.

"Some of the kids will need to step up and pick up from where we left," he said. "(We) have a big junior class, so some younger classman will be required to do a little more than what they had last year."

Even so, Ackerman and Kromarek will help provide leadership. Last year's roster had four seniors,

HULETT CONTINUED ON PAGE 48

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Mascot: Red Devils

Division: Class 1A six-man

Conference: East

Colors: Red and black

Coach: Boz Backen, seventh year at Hulett
2020 Record: 5-3, lost to Encampment in state quarterfinals



Mascot: Miners
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: East
Colors: Blue and orange

Coach: Zack Scott,
ninth year at Hanna
2020 Record: 2-6, lost to
Farson in state quarterfinals

Key Players
QB/DE: Dylan Romero, Sr.
RB/LB: Joseph Borah, Sr.
RB/LB: Tom Wagner, Jr.
C/DT: Rayce Ward, Jr.

2021 Schedule
9-4: at Snake River, 2 p.m.
9-11: at Cheyenne East sophs, noon
9-18: at Natrona sophs, 10 a.m.
***9-25:** vs. Guernsey, noon
***10-1:** at Midwest, 6 p.m.
10-9: vs. Encampment, 2 p.m.
***10-16:** vs. Hulett, noon (at Midwest)
* Conference game

Miners plan return to form

With as many losses in 2020 as in the previous three seasons combined, the Hanna-Elk Mountain-Medicine Bow Miners did not have a season up to their standards.

The Miners went 2-6 in 2020 after going 5-4, 7-1 and 10-1 in the 2017-19 seasons consecutively.

The path back to a winning season this season will be a challenge, as six seniors graduated from last year's team and HEM will have only about 10 players out this year.

However, coach Zack Scott is looking to his two seniors, Dylan Romero and Joseph Borah, to lead the way for a group that will need to adapt quickly to uncertainty to find consistent success.

"It will be a season defined by our willingness and ability to adapt to new roles and responsibilities," Scott said.

All of HEM's returning players, though, saw action last year, so the Miners' experience and knowledge of the game will not be in question.

Scott said a roster full of younger

players isn't concerning because of that.

"We are always building for the future," he said. "These boys are amazing young men and will make a great foundation for our future here at HEM."

Romero split time under center and finished his season completing 38 of 66 passes for 383 yards. He is the only returning Miner player to have completed a pass last season.

Sophomore Hayden Atencio is the only one of Hanna's top five rushers to return; he was second on the team with four carries for 140 yards, with all four going for touchdowns.

The Miners' top four receivers also graduated. Juniors Quinn Felton and Rayce Ward are the leading returners in the passing game. Felton had nine catches for 85 yards, while Ward caught seven passes for 83 yards.

The defense, too, lacks significant statistical standouts, but all the players coming back saw at least some time.

Only one of HEM's seven players with at least 20 tackles is back this

year, as junior Thomas Wagner was third for Hanna with 56 tackles a year ago.

Sophomore Anthony Solaas added 13 tackles, Romero had 12 and junior Howard Bame had 10 in 2020.

The Miners will be a part of a restructured East Conference that will have only five teams this season. A hole in the schedule in Week 6 allowed HEM to schedule Carbon County rival Encampment for the first time since Encampment restarted its football program in 2019.

Even though last season did not go as well as the team would have liked, their coach said the players' mental toughness gives them a good starting point for improvement in 2021.

"The boys are positive and hard workers," Scott said. "Their attitude has never changed."

Buckaroos back in title chase

Kaycee's path back to playoff success ended with a bit of frustration.

In 2020, the Buckaroos won their first playoff game in three seasons and advanced to the Class 1A six-man semifinals.

But the dream ended there with an eight-point loss to Meeteetse.

Consequently, coach Dave Largent said he saw mixed emotions after the game and into the offseason — happy to be back in the title chase, frustrated the chase didn't end with Kaycee hoisting a championship trophy.

In fact, Kaycee's only two losses in 2021 came to Meeteetse and Farson, who played each other in the six-man championship.

"My hope is that being that close motivates them and us as coaches to find a way to get a win in that situation next fall," Largent said.

This year, Kaycee is back in position to make another deep playoff run.

The Buckaroos get back three all-conference players, more than any other team in Class 1A six-man, in seniors Harley Davis and Samuel Ramsbottom and sophomore Vaun Pierson. Senior Josh Cleveland also started for Kaycee last year.

Largent said those four players will help form Kaycee's core.

"We will have some good experience and leadership returning as these players have had significant minutes the last few years," Largent said.

For Kaycee to find success, though, they'll need more than just those four players. Largent said he expects 10 to 12 total players out this year, with young players having important responsibilities immediately.

"We anticipate a good group of freshmen coming in to join our experience," Largent said. "We will be working hard to get everyone up to speed and fill holes left by the seniors. I think the senior leadership will be key in building a strong team atmosphere and brining the young players up to speed to put together a strong, successful season."

Pierson was second for the Buckaroos in rushing last season, carrying 46 times for 345 yards and three touchdowns. Cleveland added 16 carries for 239 yards and two touchdowns to finish third on the team, while Davis was fourth with 27 carries for 209 yards and three more scores.

Davis completed 48 of 94 passes for 863 yards and 20 touchdowns, against only two interceptions, last year.

Kaycee does graduate its top three receivers, and Pierson, with 11 catches for 117 yards, is the team's top returning pass-catcher.

Ramsbottom, meanwhile, does most of his work on defense. He was Kaycee's No. 2 tackler last year with 103. His eight tackles for loss tied for the team lead, and he also had a team-high three blocked kicks.

Davis was fourth with 76 tackles; he also had eight interceptions, seven pass deflections and three defensive touchdowns. Pierson had 36 tackles.



Mascot: Buckaroos
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: East
Colors: Blue and red

Coach: Dave Largent,
third year at Kaycee
2020 Record: 8-2, lost to Meeteetse in state semifinals

Key Players
QB/WR/S: Harley Davis, Sr.
C/LB: Samuel Ramsbottom, Sr.
RB/DE: Josh Cleveland, Sr.
WR/DE: Vaun Pierson, Soph.

2021 Schedule
9-3: vs. Dubois, 2 p.m.
9-11: vs. Meeteetse, 2 p.m.
9-18: vs. Edgemont, S.D., 2 p.m.
***9-25:** at Hulett, 1 p.m.
10-1: at Farson, 2 p.m.
***10-8:** vs. Guernsey, 2 p.m.
***10-15:** at Midwest, 6 p.m.
***10-23:** at Hanna, noon
* Conference game

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HULETT CONTINUED-

leaving a leadership void the two all-conference players can fill.

Kromarek will be the Red Devils' quarterback, with Ackerman joining him as a running back.

"They are great kids and I feel that they are ready for whatever I ask of them," Backen said. "I hope they grab ahold of the freshmen (and) sophomores and show them how to become better every day."

Backen said juniors Hunter Reilly, Kade Smith and Devlin Riley and seniors Lane Jay and Eddie Tokarczyk will also be big this fall. Tokarczyk will be a running back, the others receivers.

Reilly and Smith will form the Red Devils' defensive ends.

"I like the makeup of our team and the kids are working hard by going to camps this summer and committing to the weight room," Backen said. "... These guys have played in the playoff games the last two years. They know what is expected of them, and I am excited to see what they can do."



HULETT

Key Players

RB/LB: Bryce Ackerman, Sr.
QB/LB: Tyler Kromarek, Sr.
RB/LB: Hunter Reilly, Sr.
WR/DE: Kade Smith, Year.

2021 Schedule

9-3: at Burlington, 2 p.m.
9-10: vs. Edgemont, S.D., TBD
9-17: at Sheridan JV, TBD
***9-25:** vs. Kaycee, 1 p.m.
***10-1:** at Guernsey, 6 p.m.
***10-9:** vs. Midwest, 1 p.m.
***10-16:** vs. Hanna, noon (at Midwest)
10-23: vs. Dubois, TBD (at Ten Sleep)
* Conference game

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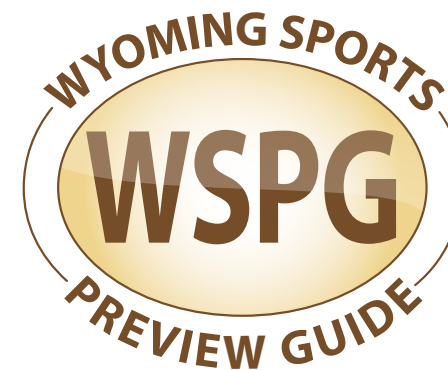
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Mascot: Oilers
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: East
Colors: Maroon and white

Coach: Joe Campbell,
second year at Midwest
2020 Record: 0-8, did not
qualify for playoffs

Midwest Key Players
RB: Jacob Hutchings, Sr.
WR: Dominic Harley, Sr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Guemsey, 3 p.m.
(Zero Week scrimmage)
9-3: vs. Encampment, 6 p.m.
9-10: at Dubois, 2 p.m.
9-18: vs. Natrona sophs, 10 a.m.
9-25: vs. Kelly Walsh sophs, 10 a.m.
*10-1: vs. Hanna, 6 p.m.
*10-9: at Hulett, 1 p.m.
*10-15: vs. Kaycee, 6 p.m.
*10-22: at Guemsey, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

Oilers should be improved

After an 0-8 season, it would be easy to overlook Midwest's chances this year.

But Oiler coach Joe Campbell has a pretty simple message for anyone who would do that: don't.

"I think we're going to shock a lot of teams," Campbell said. "... We got way younger, but we got way better."

An influx of at least eight incoming freshmen will make an immediate impact on the Oilers, who return only six players total in grades 10 through 12.

While last year's team faced problems of attrition during the season, occasionally playing games with only one or two substitutes available, this year's Midwest team will have the depth, the athleticism and, maybe most importantly, the attitude to compete.

"We're quick, we're fast, we're athletic, we're young and we're real hungry," Campbell said. "They want to win, and they're competitive. They compete at everything."

Among the Oilers' returners, the difference-maker is senior Jacob Hutchings.

Hutchings was the focal point of the offense last season, running 90 times for 750 yards and six touchdowns. He also leads all Midwest returners with nine catches for 106 yards.

And on defense, Midwest graduated three of its top four

tacklers, with Hutchings – who led the team with 36 tackles – the only returner from that group.

Of the Oilers' 10 offensive touchdowns last season, Hutchings had seven; none of the others who scored return this year.

"He's been putting in a lot of work, going to a lot of camps," Campbell said. "... I expect a lot of big things from him this year."

Senior Dominic Harley was the team's leading passer with 15 completions for 174 yards. Harley added 14 tackles on defense.

But the incoming freshmen, as well as some transfer players from Cheyenne, should give the Oilers enough depth to be competitive this fall.

"Last year it was tough to get six (players) in a game," Campbell said. "The buzz around the school is way more positive."

Moreover, the Oilers have a better understanding of the approach that Campbell, who is in his second year as head coach, wants to take with the program. Last year's offseason was limited by Campbell's summer hiring and by COVID-19, neither of which was as problematic in 2020 as it was in preparation for 2021.

"I think they have the knowledge of our offensive and defensive schemes is way better," Campbell said.

For a team that was outscored by an average of 64-11 last year, the optimism is a welcome change. That change was on full display at the Rocky Mountain College six-man camp in Montana, Campbell said.

"We held our own against all of them up there and did really well," he said.



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Huskies relying on speed

Burlington proved last season it can play with the best six-man teams in Wyoming.

Unfortunately for the Huskies, they didn't prove they could beat them.

Against the two teams that ended up playing for the Class 1A six-man championship last season, the Huskies played tough. Burlington gave Farson its biggest regular-season scare of its unbeaten season, but the Huskies still lost 31-24.

And against Meeteetse, the Huskies were in the game until the final gun but still lost 42-38.

Losses to Snake River and Encampment kept Burlington out of the postseason for the first time since making the move to six-man in 2016.

"I think last year's disappointment has translated into a bit more resolve to improve and work harder for the team," sixth-year coach Trent Aagard said. "For me personally as a coach, it has made me evaluate the way I'm doing things and trying to improve there. When you have a team that was so close, but still so far away, it makes you reflect on what I could have done to help them more."

This year's team will be less experienced than last year's, with only two or three players coming back with starting experience. However, Aagard said the Huskies have good team speed, the right attitude and enough depth to keep practices competitive and players fresh during games, especially with a large group of freshmen bolstering the roster.

Aagard said his goal is to help his players play "fast and confident."

"We have a group who wants to compete and get better," Aagard said.

Returning their quarterback will help Burlington overcome some of the early-season

learning curve. Junior Seth Wardell ran the majority of quarterbacking responsibilities for the Huskies, completing 38 of 75 passes for 580 yards and eight touchdowns last season. However, the Huskies' top six receivers all graduated.

"I think having a guy back (who) made good decisions and some big plays will help the confidence of the team," Aagard said. "(They) did it before, so they feel better about being able to do it again."

Junior Cohen Schlenker was second on the team last year in rushing, carrying 35 times for 229 yards and two touchdowns.

He'll be joined by senior Brac Walker in the backfield. Meanwhile, seniors Caleb Call and Dillion Schatz will lead efforts on the offensive line.

The defense lacks the experience the offense has, as only two of Burlington's top seven tacklers return in 2021.

Schlenker finished third on the team last year with 55 tackles while senior Jack Gotfredson was fourth with 38.

Walker, who had 21 tackles, also saw significant defensive playing time. But no other Burlington returner had more than seven tackles last season.



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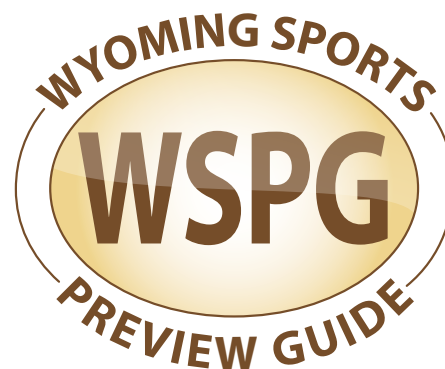
Mascot: Huskies
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: West
Colors: Black and orange

Coach: Trent Aagard,
sixth year at Burlington
2020 Record: 3-4, did not
qualify for playoffs

Key Players
FB/LB: Brac Walker, Sr.
DE: Jack Gotfredson, Sr.
QB/DB: Seth Wardell, Jr.
QB/RB/DB: Cohen Schlenker, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: vs. Riverside, 11 a.m.
(Zero Week scrimmage)
9-3: vs. Hulett, 2 p.m.
*9-11: at Farson, 1 p.m.
*9-17: vs. Snake River, 2 p.m.
*9-24: vs. Meeteetse, 2 p.m.
*10-1: at Dubois, 2 p.m.
10-8: Open
10-16: at Guemsey, 1 p.m.
*10-22: vs. Encampment, 2 p.m.
* Conference game

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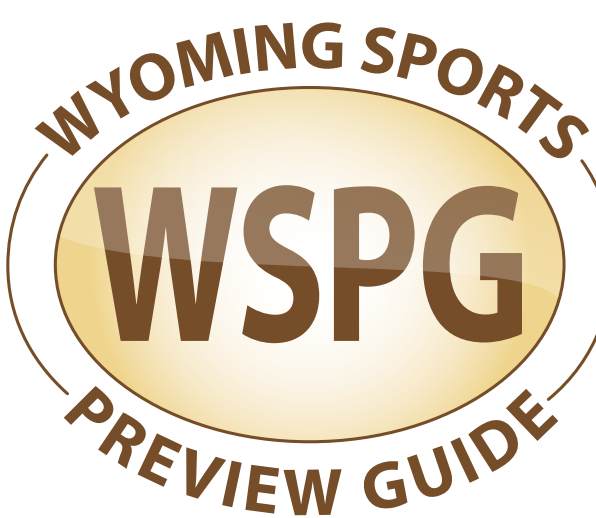
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Mascot: Rams
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: West
Colors: Blue and yellow

Coach: David Trembly,
 24th year at Dubois
2020 Record: 3-5, did not
 qualify for playoffs

Key Players
RB/DE: Max Claar, Sr.
QB/DB: Ryan Wells, Jr.
RB/LB: Wyatt Trembly, Soph.
TE/LB: Clayton Rux, Jr.

2021 Schedule
8-27: at Encampment, noon
 (Zero Week scrimmage)
9-3: at Kaycee, 2 p.m.
9-10: vs. Midwest, 2 p.m.
***9-18:** at Meeteetse, noon
***9-25:** at Snake River, 2 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Burlington, 2 p.m.
***10-9:** vs. Farson, 2 p.m.
***10-16:** at Encampment, 3 p.m.
10-23: vs. Hulett, TBD (at Ten Sleep)
 * Conference game

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Rams on upward trajectory

Bigger, faster, smarter.

In every aspect of the game, Dubois should be an improved football team in 2021.

An improved Ram squad went 3-5 last season, just missing the Class 1A six-man playoffs. After only graduating two seniors from last year's team, the Rams' trajectory continues to point up.

Youth will continue to be a concern – of the 14 to 16 players coach David Trembly expects to have out this season, he will again only have two seniors – but the underclassmen have shown they are growing into their roles, literally.

"We should be gaining on size," Trembly said. "We've been tiny forever because they were so young, and now instead of freshmen (and) sophomores we're going to be juniors (and) seniors."

Senior Max Claar, Dubois' lone all-state or all-conference selection, did a bit of everything. He led the team in scoring with 14 touchdowns and was third on the team with 67 tackles, including a team-high 11 tackles for loss and four sacks. He notched 462 rushing yards and 174 receiving yards.

Also, sophomore Wyatt Trembly led the Rams in receiving, rushing and defensive points last year. He carried 131 times for 902 yards and seven touchdowns and also caught 18 passes for 225 yards and three more scores. On defense, he led Dubois with 99 total tackles, including 52 solo.

Sophomore Jonah Oard added 44 carries for 342 yards, while junior Clayton Rux contributed 11 catches for 215 yards to round out the offensive attack.

Although the Rams only graduated two players, one was the team's quarterback, leaving a big hole on offense to fill. Trembly said junior Ryan Wells should slot into that position.

Rux was second defensively for the Rams with 81 tackles, including nine for loss and three safeties. Wells added 26 tackles, 11 deflected passes and three defensive touchdowns.

Oard had 20 tackles and junior Kaden Chamley had 15. Trembly said senior Jack Hinkle and sophomore Kaleb Gleim will help add depth.

The Rams' inexperience was a major hurdle last season,

"I'm really hoping
 that I just get to
 turn them loose"

~Coach
 David
 Trembly

something that took time to overcome.

"I can go back and watch the films right now, and our first two, three games... they were more worried about making mistakes than playing the game," Trembly said.

By the end of the season, though, that kind of tentativeness had disappeared, Trembly said, pointing the way for even more improvement this year.

"I'm really hoping that I just get to turn them loose," Trembly said. "I kind of expect that that's going to happen. ... We can actually worry about football instead of if we can play. If we can have our mindset right, I think it'll be a pretty good group to run with."

Tigers building on success

Often, the first full varsity season of football with a new program is a struggle.

Not at Encampment.

Playing their second season and their first varsity season since the 1990s, the Tigers went 6-3 last year, nearly knocking out the eventual state champion Farson in the semifinal before succumbing 42-41.

This year's Tiger team is in position for more success. Encampment returns several key players from last year's team, including four of its top five players in defensive points.

To have similar success in 2021, though, the Tigers have to overcome both a deep Class 1A six-man West Conference and their own inexperience in some key spots.

"I feel like our program took a big step last year," coach Kegan Willford said. "While it was disappointing losing by one point in the semifinals, it gave our players some good experience and confidence heading into the 2021 season. ... There is a lot of excitement in our school and community for our upcoming season."

Senior Koye Gilbert,

Encampment's only returning all-state choice, represents one of the best passing targets in six-man. He had 32 catches for 524 yards and nine touchdowns last season. However, Encampment lost its top two passers to graduation.

Even so, Willford said he likes the multiple options the Tigers have on offense. Senior Caysen Barkhurst, an all-conference selection, led the rushing attack with 76 carries for 791 yards and 11 touchdowns; sophomore Quade Jordan was third on the team with 57 carries for 593 yards and nine TDs.

"Having a diverse offense can be a big advantage in my opinion," he said. "With that, it is difficult for a defense to key on just one or two players. We should have the depth to continue to do that again this year."

Encampment returns four of its top five players in defensive points from last year in Gilbert, Jordan, Barkhurst and sophomore Kaben Pickett.

Gilbert had 86 tackles last year, including a team high with eight tackles for loss, three sacks and four fumble recoveries.

Jordan added 48 tackles, Barkhurst 45 and Pickett 26.

Senior Lane LaBorde added 28 tackles and senior Michael Anderson notched 22.

Willford said the returning depth Encampment has will allow the team to run a deeper defensive playbook and give players a chance to play with more confidence.

Behind it all, though, is the motivation of knowing how close they were to a state championship game, or maybe even a title, in their first season of play.

"It took some time to get over the loss, but I feel like as time has passed it has motivated our returning players to where we have had a great commitment to our summer program," Willford said.



Mascot: Tigers
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: West
Colors: Red and black

Coach: Kegan Willford,
 third year at Encampment
2020 Record: 6-3, lost to
 Farson in state semifinals

Key Players
TE/DE: Koye Gilbert, Sr.
RB/DB: Caysen Barkhurst, Sr.
WR/LB: Michael Anderson, Sr.
RB/LB: Quade Jordan, Soph.

2021 Schedule
8-27: Encampment Jamboree, noon
 (Zero Week scrimmage)
9-3: at Midwest, 6 p.m.
***9-10:** at Snake River, 2 p.m.
***9-17:** vs. Farson, 2 p.m.
9-25: vs. Natrona sophs, noon
***10-1:** at Meeteetse, 3 p.m.
10-9: at Hanna, 2 p.m.
***10-16:** vs. Dubois, 3 p.m.
***10-22:** at Burlington, 2 p.m.
 * Conference game

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Mascot: Pronghorns
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: West
Colors: Green and yellow

Coach: Marvin “Trip” Applequist,
10th year at Farson
2020 Record: 11-0,
beat Meeteetse in state
championship

Key Players
RB/DB: Cree Jones, Sr.
QB/LB: Trevor Jones, Sr.
RB/LB: Levi Johnson, Sr.
OL/DL: Ory Johnson, Soph.

2021 Schedule
9-3: at Guernsey, 4 p.m.
***9-11:** vs. Burlington, 1 p.m.
***9-17:** at Encampment, 2 p.m.
9-24: Open
10-1: vs. Kaycee, 2 p.m.
***10-9:** at Dubois, 2 p.m.
***10-16:** at Meeteetse, 2 p.m.
***10-23:** vs. Snake River, 2 p.m.
* Conference game

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Champs relying on new stock

Farson graduated 10 seniors from last year’s unbeaten, championship team – an unheard-of number for a Class 1A six-man program.

Even so, the Pronghorns will return good numbers this year, and “players with knowledge of what it takes to win,” coach Trip Applequist said.

In part, it comes from last year’s group being unselfish.

“That group of seniors was very good about working with underclassmen and being on-field teachers and coaches,” Applequist said. “Their work with younger players allows us to continue to be competitive.”

Senior Cree Jones is the only one of six all-state and seven all-conference choices to come back to the Pronghorns this season.

But he has support, as several players got some important playing time last year despite competing with that loaded senior class for spots on the field.

Senior Levi Johnson, who was third for the Pronghorns last year with 34 carries for 283 yards, is the team’s top returning rusher. Senior Trevor Jones wasn’t far behind with 16 carries for 252 yards, and Cree Jones contributed 20 carries for 164 yards.

“They all three are extremely familiar with the offense, and will be able to easily step into those positions,” Applequist said. “They all have great ball running skills, and we will expect Trevor to be able to throw the ball as well.”

The passing game is where Farson lacks experience, as no returning player completed more than one pass last season; Farson also graduated its top four receivers.

Junior Sage Romero, who had 55 receiving yards on one catch last year, is Farson’s leading returning receiver.

Klaine Halladay, a senior, will give depth to the running game, and sophomores Ory Johnson, who saw

starting time as a freshman last year, and Connor Weese will provide line support.

Farson also says goodbye to five of its top six tacklers, as Cree Jones (55 tackles, seven pass deflections) leads the defensive returners.

Weese added 35 tackles, sophomore Ory Johnson had 22, Levi Johnson had 15 and Trevor Jones 10.

Applequist said Trevor Jones, Levi Johnson and Halladay will make up the linebacking corps, with Cree Jones leading the secondary and Ory Johnson and Weese taking charge of the line.

One intangible Farson has going for it is a history of success. The Pronghorns have program momentum, with two undefeated seasons in the past three years and a streak of seven consecutive winning seasons heading into 2021.

“The success of our program can really be attributed to players wishing to carry on that winning tradition and to be a part of that culture,” Applequist said. “Our players work hard on and off the field, and are willing to put in the extra time that is required.”

“The success of our program can really be attributed to players wishing to carry on that winning tradition”

~Coach Marvin “Trip” Applequist

Rattlers have returning talent

No one on Snake River’s roster last year was a senior.

But for 2021, nothing is guaranteed for a team that will look almost identical to last year’s.

Slope River coach Jack Cobb said this year’s Rattler team will be experienced but will also be bolstered by some returning talent as well as incoming freshmen who can contribute.

So, despite obvious similarities, 2021 won’t be 2020.

“I think the boys are very comfortable with where we ended last year and moving into a new year and already having an idea where players fit, but, in saying that, we are having some great battles to fill the starting spots on our team,” Cobb said.

That kind of competitive fire should help the Rattlers improve on a 4-5 finish from 2020, especially in a Class 1A six-man West Conference that should be one of the most competitive in years.

“We will have great depth this year with quite a bit of experience returning from last year’s team,” Cobb said. “We had numerous players get

Key Players
FB/DE: Zander Risner, Sr.
TB/LB: Kannadis Peroulis, Jr.
QB/S: Hadley Myers, Jr.
TE/DE: Landon Prestrud, Sr.

significant playing time last year, which should help.”

Senior Zander Risner, an all-state selection the past two seasons, was a handful on defense. He led the Rattlers with 121 total tackles, including a monster 21 tackles for loss and a team-high five sacks. He also blocked three kicks and recovered three fumbles.

Junior Hadley Myers, an all-conference choice, added 101 tackles, while sophomore Seth Maxson had 76 and junior Kannadis Peroulis had 67. Senior Landon Prestrud and sophomore Isiah Skalborg will add depth.

On offense, Peroulis carried the Rattlers’ rushing game, running 127 times for 986 yards and 14 touchdowns.

Myers completed 76 of 150 passes

for 1,035 yards and 16 touchdowns. He also ran 58 times for 726 yards and seven scores, ranking second on the team.

Risner and sophomore Tanner Duncan led Snake River’s receivers. Duncan led the team with 293 receiving yards on 18 catches, while Risner had a team-high 25 catches, with 262 yards and seven touchdowns.

Maxson added 11 catches for 189 yards and Peroulis had 11 catches for 148 yards.

Any parallels between the 2019 Snake River team that went undefeated and won the six-man state title and the 2021 team, though, aren’t quite accurate, Cobb said. The 2019 team was led by seniors; this year’s team, despite being experienced, is still young and will rely on lots of underclass contributors. The roster could be as many as 22 or 23 players, with about five or six seniors leading the way.

“This year’s team has that same opportunity (as 2019) in front of them, so we’ll see if they can commit and come together as a team to reach their goals,” Cobb said.



Mascot: Rattlers
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: West
Colors: Purple and yellow

Coach: Jack Cobb,
fifth year at Snake River
2020 Record: 4-5, lost to
Kaycee in state quarterfinals

2021 Schedule
9-4: vs. Hanna, 2 p.m.
***9-10:** vs. Encampment, 2 p.m.
***9-17:** at Burlington, 2 p.m.
***9-25:** vs. Dubois, 2 p.m.
10-2: Open
***10-9:** vs. Meeteetse, 2 p.m.
10-15: at Natrona sophs, 3 p.m.
***10-23:** at Farson, 2 p.m.
* Conference game

Longhorns rely on seniors

The 2021 season for the Meeteetse Longhorns might be as close to “now or never” as any team ever is.

With only about nine anticipated players out – and four of those nine as seniors – the Longhorns’ window of opportunity for continued success is tight.

Fortunately for the Longhorns, last year’s Class 1A six-man runners-up, they return more all-state selections than any team in the classification. So despite their lack of depth, their talent makes Meeteetse a tough matchup.

Clearly, this year’s team will have to rely on its seniors to try to build on the success the program had in 2020, coach Zeb Hagen said.

“We’ve got some experience,

especially with that senior group coming in,” he said.

That group is led by Dace Bennett and Calvin Erickson, all-state selections who both return this season.

Bennett broke four figures in both rushing and receiving. He ran 106 times for 1,282 yards and 23 touchdowns and completed 89 of 187 passes for 1,406 yards and 28 touchdowns, leading the Longhorns in all categories.

“For us, his ability to run the ball is a really, really big weapon,” Hagen said. “Sometimes when we get in the groove... teams can forget about that. He’s pretty fast and he sees the field pretty well.”

Erickson led Meeteetse’s defense with 153 tackles, including a team high with 81 solo; he also

led the Longhorns with seven interceptions.

“He’s always on the play, and he doesn’t gripe about much.” Hagen said. “He just goes out there and does his work. ... He’s got a knack and a nose for the football, and he’s just a good tackler.”

He was also the team’s top receiver, catching 33 passes for 695 yards and 15 touchdowns. His 695 yards was the top total in the classification last season.

Beyond that, Meeteetse has players who are experienced – just not that many of them.

Senior Jonathan Blessing added 11 catches for 85 yards. Blessing and Erickson are the only two of Meeteetse’s top five receivers to return.

Bennett was fifth with 100



Mascot: Longhorns
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: West
Colors: Red and white

Coach: Zeb Hagen,
seventh year at Meeteetse
2020 Record: 8-2, lost to
Farson in state championship

Key Players
QB/LB: Dace Bennett, Sr.
WR/DB: Calvin Erickson, Sr.
QB/DE: Mickie Ogden, Sr.
C/DE: Jonathan Blessing, Sr.

“If you try to execute and play together as a team, good things can happen.”

~Coach Zeb Hagen

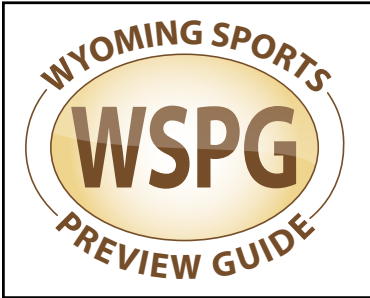
2021 Schedule
8-27: at Bridger, Mont., 7 p.m.
9-3: Open
9-11: at Kaycee, 2 p.m.
***9-18:** vs. Dubois, noon
***9-24:** at Burlington, 2 p.m.
***10-1:** vs. Encampment, 3 p.m.
***10-9:** at Snake River, 2 p.m.
***10-16:** vs. Farson, 2 p.m.
10-22: Open
* Conference game

MEETEETSE CONTINUED- tackles; he also notched four interceptions.

Blessing added 62 tackles, sophomore Joe Pina had 45 and senior Mickie Ogden had 34.

As a group, though, Hagen said he likes his team’s experience, especially what this year’s returners learned from participating in a state championship game.

“I think they were disappointed for sure, but knowing that they were able to compete with a bigger team like they did was good for them,” Hagen said. “... Everything from midseason through the semis, I think they realized that even if you don’t have the most numbers... if you try to execute and play together as a team, good things can happen.”



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