

Wyoming High School **FOOTBALL** **GUIDE**

2023

WILL THE RATTLERS EVER LOSE AGAIN?

**Snake River enters 2023 on a 21-game
winning streak**



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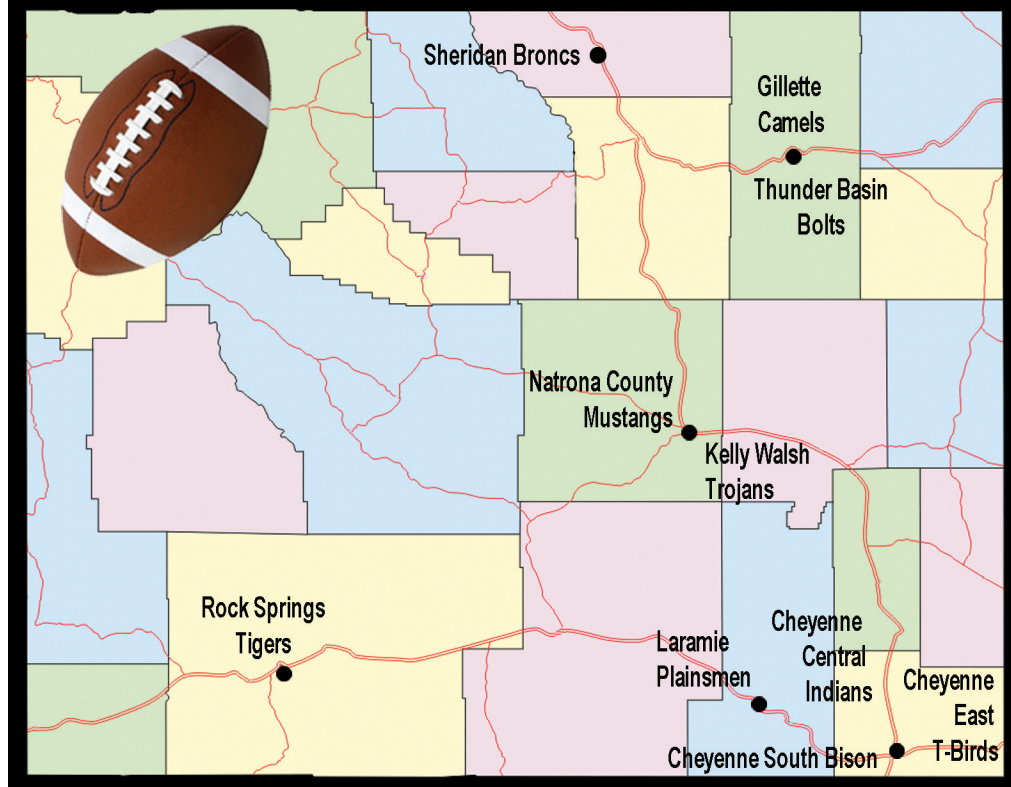
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4A Preview



Cheyenne East has Plenty of Firepower

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four Questions to Answer

Can we expect the usual suspects again in 4A this year? Yes, but parity is slowly creeping in. It's Sheridan, Cheyenne East and Natrona, per usual, who are among the favorites. However, Cheyenne Central has reached the semifinals twice in the past four years, and Thunder Basin is eager to re-establish itself.

Where does defending champ Sheridan have an advantage? The offensive line. Two of Sheridan's closest competitors, East and Natrona, will have new starters on the line; Sheridan, meanwhile, returns beaucoup experience up front.

Is this the year of the quarterback in 4A? Potentially. The five players who had the most passing yards per game in Class 4A – Thunder Basin's Alonso Aguilar, Cheyenne East's Cam Hayes, Campbell County's Mason Drube, Rock Springs' Michael Faigl and Laramie's Ben Malone – all return, but each team except for Rock Springs lost, at minimum, its top receiver from 2022.

What else is it the year of? The tackler. Of the top eight players in defensive points last season, six of them are back -- Campbell County's Levi Palmer, Sheridan's Dane Steel and Alex Haswell, Cheyenne East's Colby Olson and Kolbe Dierks and Cheyenne South's Damien Pino.

Four Key Games

Cheyenne Central at Natrona, Sept. 8. Both

the Indians and Mustangs have been on the edge of breakthroughs the past couple years, but neither one has players who knows what it feels like to be in a championship game.

Thunder Basin at Cheyenne East, Sept. 8. After two consecutive quarterfinal playoff exits, the 'Bolts are eager to prove they belong in the championship conversation. Well... what better opportunity to do so than here?

Sheridan at Cheyenne East, Sept. 29. The consensus top two teams in Class 4A this year meet in Week 5 in the Capital City. Whether they'll still be 1-2 by this time remains to be seen.

Natrona at Sheridan, Oct. 13. In a rivalry that speaks for itself, the annual game between the Mustangs and Broncos has typically been key in deciding playoff seeding and, eventually, home-field advantage in the playoffs.

Predicted Order of Finish

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

Way-too-early Title Game Score Prediction

Cheyenne East 40, Sheridan 32. The Thunderbirds' talent on offense should make other defenses nervous, but East's defense is also top-notch.

State Champs

**Sheridan
Broncs**



2022 State Playoffs

4A Championship

Sheridan 34, Cheyenne East 23

Semifinals

Sheridan 63, Cheyenne Central 42
Cheyenne East 55, Natrona 36

Quarterfinals

Sheridan 52, Laramie 27
Cheyenne Central 41, Thunder Basin 10
Cheyenne East 49, Rock Springs 24
Natrona 63, Campbell County 6

Players to Watch

Drew Jackson, Cheyenne East. The East Conference offensive player of the year in 2022 ran for 1,017 yards and 11 touchdowns and also had 601 receiving yards and six more TDs. Defensively, he led East with five interceptions.

Cam Hayes, Cheyenne East. One of Wyoming's most complete quarterbacks entering 2023, Hayes went 216-of-309 last year for 2,867 yards and 40 touchdowns; he also ran for 621 yards and seven more TDs.

Dane Steel, Sheridan. The reigning West Conference defensive player of the year, Steel led the Broncos with 103.5 tackles last season. He was nearly as busy on offense, reeling in 22 catches for 390 yards.

Alex Haswell, Sheridan. He controlled the Broncos' defense up front -- and he put up some big numbers in doing so. His 15.6 defensive points per game ranked him fifth among all players in Class 4A.

Levi Palmer, Campbell County. Palmer was the only player in the classification last year to average more than 10 tackles per game. He also had five tackles for loss, two sacks and three interceptions.

Noah Sides, Natrona. Sides led Natrona's defense with 76.5 tackles. As Natrona's only returning first-team all-conference selection, Sides' presence on the Mustang defense will be accentuated.



Mascot: Camels
Division: Class 4A
Colors: Purple and Yellow

Coach: Orah Garst, first year at Campbell County
2022 Record: 4-6, lost to Natrona 63-6 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

ILB: Levi Palmer, Sr.
WR/DB: Aidan Dorr, Sr.
OT/DT: Wyatt Herther, Sr.
QB: Mason Drube, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
9-1: vs. Laramie, 6 p.m.
9-8: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
9-15: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
9-22: at Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
9-29: vs. Thunder Basin, 7 p.m.
10-6: at Natrona, 6 p.m.
10-13: at Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
10-20: vs. Sheridan, 6 p.m.

Camels Look to Build Foundation

When new Campbell County head coach Orah Garst looks at the Camels, he sees a team physically capable of competing with any Class 4A team.

"The talent's there," he said. "Now it's on the coaching staff... to bring it together and put them into positions to win."

Garst takes over a Camel program that has made incremental progress the past few years but still has six consecutive losing seasons. As a Campbell County alumnus, Garst is fully aware of the potential the program has.

"We just have to learn how to win, and a lot of that just having to do with believing and having confidence and not losing before you step foot on the field," he said.

Garst comes to Campbell County after more than a decade coaching college football. He has coached in various positions with a focus on both offense and defense and gained insights from working with recruiting at

TCU, Baylor and, most recently, Nebraska.

Garst said the jump to high school coaching has "been phenomenal, and the kids are just incredible. These players have opened me with open arms."

The Camels' offense will present multiple looks but will take advantage of its returning talent. That starts under center.

Junior Mason Drube completed 141 of 292 passes for 2,081 yards and 25 touchdowns last season. However, the Camels' top three receivers in terms of yardage all graduated.

Senior Aidan Dorr, a first-team all-conference choice who had a team-high 28 catches and was fourth on the squad with 268 receiving yards, is Campbell County's top returning receiver.

Junior Trent Rosenau was the Camels' top rusher with 38 carries for 200 yards and a touchdown last year; Dorr added 67 carries for 191 yards and three scores.

Up front, seniors Wyatt Herther, Zane Morrison and

Talan Gompf will be a part of the approach.

Three of the Camels' top four tacklers return, but only six of the top 15 are back in total.

Senior Levi Palmer, the Camels' only returning first-team all-state selection, was by far Campbell County's top tackler last season, rolling up 104 total tackles while also intercepting a team-high three passes.

Senior Talan Gompf was third on the team with 46 tackles. Dorr had 34 tackles, a pair of interceptions and three pass deflections. Drube added 24 tackles, junior Zach Wofford had 21 and Herther added 18.

Garst said the Camels' defense, just like the offense, will present the opposition with multiple looks, but that won't change what needs to happen once the play is in motion.

"It's going to come down to tackling and coming off blocks," Garst said. "... Those are the basic things we've got to be elite at, the fundamentals of football."



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Indians Need to Take Next Step

When Mike Apodaca took over as the head coach at Cheyenne Central, one of his long-term goals was to rebuild the Indians into a consistent contender.

With seven victories in three of the past four seasons, and anticipating more success this fall, Apodaca said he's happy with the trajectory of the program.

The goal now? "You've got to figure out how to beat the top teams," Apodaca said.

That is how Central enters 2023 – consistently competitive, but still on the outside of the championship chase.

To make that step this year, Central will have to rely on a small but athletic senior class, an explosive defense and an offense redefining itself with new personnel.

Senior kicker Brock Pedersen, the only returning first-team all-state selection, is one of five returning first-team all-conference players (Pedersen and seniors Mason Counter, Marcus DeHoff, Colten Prindle and

Chase Talich), tied with Cheyenne East for the most in Class 4A.

The bulk of the experience is on defense. The Indians lost three of their top four tacklers to graduation but return several players who played significant minutes.

Apodaca said the defense will be more opportunistic than in the past and "create havoc."

"I think we've got the kids to do that," he said.

Prindle was third for Central with 56 tackles and also had three sacks.

Talich tied for fifth on the team with 48.5 tackles and also had four sacks, two fumble recoveries and five pass deflections.

Marcus DeHoff was seventh with 46 tackles and led the Indians with five interceptions, and senior Mason DeHoff, Marcus' twin brother, was eighth on the team with 35 tackles and also had two interceptions. Senior Miles Porwoll added 18.5 tackles.

Offensively, Talich was had 17 catches for 338 yards from the tight end spot; five of those went

for touchdowns. Similarly, though, Talich is the only one of the Indians' top six receivers to return.

Porwoll, after two years at wide receiver, will take over at quarterback. Apodaca said Porwoll brings strength and explosion under center, but at the same time, "our identity will definitely be running the football quite a bit and using that strength to open up some passing opportunities."

Counter finished second for Central in rushing last season, carrying 82 times for 419 yards and eight touchdowns. However, he's the only one of Central's top six rushers to return this fall.

Prindle and senior Tyler Gaer will lead the offensive line.

Pedersen led Class 4A with 38 touchbacks on kickoffs; he also made eight of 10 field goals and 49 of 52 extra points.

Together, they will carry Central's hopes for continued success.

"We should absolutely be a tough out for anybody, any week," Apodaca said.



Mascot: Indians

Division: Class 4A

Colors: Red and Black

Coach: Mike Apodaca, sixth year at Cheyenne Central

2022 Record: 7-4, lost to Sheridan 63-42 in state semifinals

Key Players

TE/LB: Chase Talich, Sr.

OL/DL: Colten Prindle, Sr.

QB/DB: Miles Porwoll, Sr.

OL/DL: Tyler Gaer, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Sheridan, 6 p.m.

9-1: at Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.

9-8: at Natrona, 7 p.m.

9-15: vs. Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.

9-22: vs. Laramie, 6 p.m.

9-29: at Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.

10-6: vs. Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.

10-13: vs. Campbell County, 6 p.m.

10-20: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.

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"We should absolutely be a tough out for anybody, any week."

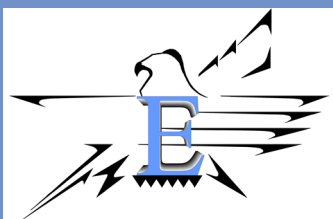
~Coach Mike Apodaca

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T-Birds are Primed for Title Run

Mascot: Thunderbirds
Division: Class 4A
Colors: Blue and Silver

Coach: Chad Goff, 18th year at Cheyenne East
2022 Record: 10-2, lost to Sheridan 34-23 in state championship

Key Players

QB: Cam Hayes, Sr.
RB/S: Drew Jackson, Sr.
ILB: Kolbe Dierks, Sr.
OL/DL: Colby Olson, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Campbell County, 6 p.m.
9-1: vs. Natrona, 6 p.m.
9-8: vs. Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
9-15: at Laramie, 6 p.m.
9-22: vs. Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
9-29: vs. Sheridan, 6 p.m.
10-6: at Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
10-13: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
10-20: at Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.

One statistic shows just how much Cheyenne East is working with in 2023.

The Thunderbirds return five first-team all-state players; the rest of Class 4A, combined, only returns four.

For coach Chad Goff, though, the Thunderbirds' opportunities for success won't be borne from last year's accolades. They'll be borne, in part, by the feeling the returners had after walking off the field in a championship-game loss.

"You've got to have a little chip on your shoulder and come out and prove you can finish the way you need to finish," Goff said.

The five all-state picks — seniors Kolbe Dierks, Cam Hayes, Drew Jackson, Nathan Mirich and Colby Olson — will lead the way for a squad primed for another deep playoff run.

East has reached the semifinals of the Class 4A playoffs 15 times in Goff's 17 years as head coach.

Hayes is effective both running and passing. He completed nearly

70% of his passes last season, finishing with 216 completions on 309 attempts, piling up 2,867 yards and 40 passing touchdowns. He also ran 112 times for 621 yards and seven more touchdowns.

Jackson, last year's 4A East Conference offensive player of the year, was a consistent backfield threat, carrying 135 times for 1,017 yards and 11 touchdowns. He is also East's leading returning receiver after catching 37 passes for 601 yards, good for second on the team, and six touchdowns.

Mirich is the only other receiver among East's top five to return. He finished with 31 catches and tied for fourth on the team with 348 receiving yards.

Senior Renton Jensen added 58 carries for 275 yards and five touchdowns to rank third on the team in rushing.

The offensive line doesn't return any starters, but Goff said the group has players who know the system and who work hard in the weight

room.

"The little nuances on the offensive line come as the season goes, but they've already gotten a lot of reps in their career here, so those nuances will come quickly," Goff said.

Olson and Dierks finished 1-2 in tackles and defensive points last year for East. Olson led the Thunderbirds with 113.5 total tackles, including team highs in tackles for loss (12.5) and sacks (six). Dierks had 106 tackles, 9.5 tackles for loss and three pass deflections.

Mirich finished fourth for East with 69.5 tackles and added two interceptions and four pass break-ups.

Jackson finished sixth for East with 55.5 tackles and led the team with five interceptions.

Senior Brenden Bohlmann added 37.5 tackles and led East with nine pass deflections to go with three interceptions.

Jensen added 28.5 tackles, senior Caleb Ruff had 27.5, senior David Hondel had 24 and senior Jason Zahm had 22.

Bison Look to Snap Losing Skid

As Cheyenne South's second-year head coach Eli Moody works with players this year, he sees the things he can do that he couldn't last year when the coaching staff implemented new approaches.

"Instead of it being everything from the ground up, they have that solid season under them," Moody said. "We were able to dive deep way faster."

Experience, coupled with vocal and experienced senior leaders, could help boost South out of Class 4A's bottom spot. South enters the 2023 season on a 29-game losing streak, the longest in program history for the Bison, who in their first 12 years as a program have never had a season with more than three victories.

The Bison graduated their top three rushers, top seven receivers and seven of their top nine tacklers, but Moody said the Bison return enough players with experience to potentially be an improved group despite the losses.

"We were pretty fortunate to be able to rotate a lot of kids in, so most of our varsity going into this year have taken varsity snaps," Moody said. "They do need to step up and take on the starter role, but they should know what a varsity game feels like."

Senior Damien Pino, South's lone returning first-team all-conference player, was South's leading tackler last year, notching 75.5 tackles and leading the team with 41 solo tackles from the safety position.

Moody said Pino is "a little sparkplug" on defense who could see more opportunities on offense, as well.

"We're gonna use his energy on both sides of the ball," Moody said.

The only other player who was a consistent defensive contributor last year senior Noah Haggberg, who was third on the team with 50 tackles and also notched a pair of fumble recoveries.

The only other players returning who had double-

digit tackles last season are seniors Michael Mendoza (13 tackles) and Noah Damey (11 tackles).

Damey, who had 20 carries for 44 yards, as South's top returning rusher.

Senior Osayas Garcia saw time at quarterback and is the team's top returning passer after completing 14 passes for 131 yards in limited duty last season. However, Moody said Garcia's time in the offseason was limited due to injury.

The receiving corps was hit hard by graduation. Haggberg, with three catches for 9 yards last season, joins Damey as the only returning players who caught a pass last year.

Moody said senior James Hushbeck will be a leader on the offensive and defensive lines, while sophomore Jayden McNeill will add athleticism at wideout and defensive back. Moody also said seniors Dylan Willmar and Gabe Hernandez, contributors to South's basketball team but new to football, will help build athleticism and depth.



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

Coach: Eli Moody, second year at Cheyenne South
2022 Record: 0-9, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

S: Damien Pino, Sr.
FB/MLB: Noah Haggberg, Sr.
OL/DL: James Hushbeck, Sr.
WR/DB: Jayden McNeill, Soph.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
9-1: at Sheridan, 6 p.m.
9-8: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
9-15: at Campbell County, 6 p.m.
9-22: vs. Natrona, 6 p.m.
9-29: vs. Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
10-6: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
10-13: at Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
10-20: vs. Laramie, 6 p.m.

Trojans are Still Growing

Between graduation and transfers away, the Kelly Walsh Trojans will – by necessity – have a bunch of new faces on the field this fall.

With that, the Trojans will have to lean on their younger players to find some success after an 1-8 finish last season.

And that's not all bad, as coach Aaron Makelky said many of those players saw varsity time last season, although usually in more limited roles.

"We have some good younger kids that have developed ahead of schedule, especially this junior class," he said. "We started 12 different sophomores at some

point last year. ... That's hopefully good for the long run."

One of the Trojans' most experienced areas is the offensive backfield, where two of KW's three top rushers return.

Junior Brant Blocker had 67 carries for 283 yards, good for second on the team last year, and junior Mekhi Bovee notched 22 carries for 162 yards and two scores.

Makelky said the running back position is "definitely where we have the most depth and experience."

Junior Landon Walker added 11 catches for 75 yards and is the team's top returning receiver.

The line will be young, Makelky said, and the starting quarterback won't be decided until fall camp.

In all, KW only returns two of its top 12 players in defensive points: Blocker had 38 tackles, good for fifth on the team, while Walker ranked sixth with 24.5 tackles and was second on the team with three sacks.

Senior Caleb Ortberg, who had 10 tackles last season, is the only other returning player who had double-digit tackles last season. However, Ortberg missed several games last year due to injury.

"The strength of our defense is going to be

CONTINUED PAGE 10



Mascot: Trojans

Division: Class 4A

Colors: Green and White

Coach: Aaron Makelky, fifth year at Kelly Walsh
2022 Record: 1-8, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

DE: Caleb Ortberg, Sr.

RB/LB: Mekhi Bovee, Jr.

RB/S: Brant Blocker, Jr.

WR/DE: Landon Walker, Jr.



Mascot: Plainsmen

Division: Class 4A

Colors: Maroon and Yellow

Coach: Paul Ronga, third year at Laramie
2022 Record: 2-8, lost to Sheridan 52-27 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

TE/LB: Kyler Roberts, Sr.

RB/LB: Porter Trabing, Sr.

QB: Ben Malone, Sr.

TE/DE: Tyler Ennist, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Natrona, 7 p.m.

9-1: at Campbell County, 6 p.m.

9-8: vs. Sheridan, 6 p.m.

9-15: vs. Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.

9-22: at Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.

9-29: at Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.

10-6: vs. Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.

10-13: vs. Rock Springs, 6 p.m.

10-20: at Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.

Early Schedule Will Test Plainsmen

One way or another, Laramie will find out quickly just how well it competes against the top teams in Class 4A this season.

In the Plainsmen's first five games of 2023, they will play all four of the teams that reached the semifinals last season, with games against Natrona in Week 0, Sheridan in Week 2, Cheyenne East in Week 3 and Cheyenne Central in Week 4.

"We are the only team in the state of Wyoming in any sport, going from tennis to golf to swimming to volleyball, that has a schedule, in its first four games, plays the one, two and three seeds," coach Paul Ronga said. "That's very daunting, and very tough. No one else is really confronted with that obstacle."

Wrapped up in that obstacle is another – the challenge that comes with trying to turn around a program long stuck in first gear. In 2022, Laramie had its 22nd consecutive losing season, tied with Newcastle from 1984-2005 for the longest

such streak in state history.

However, earning a playoff berth last season was another step in the right direction, Ronga said.

"It meant a lot to us," he said. "(We're) working very hard on a culture change to improve our feelings about ourselves and the community's feeling about ourselves and trying to improve and get better. That is us in a nutshell."

The Plainsmen will feature some strong and experience players in the backfield but don't return a single starter on the line, which Ronga called "our biggest unknown."

Senior Ben Malone returns at quarterback for the Plainsmen; he completed 117 of 207 passes for 1,467 yards and 13 touchdowns against just four interceptions.

However, Ronga said a pair of juniors, Fisher Frude and Max Alexander, will push Malone for the starting spot under center.

Senior Porter Trabing, who

was third on the team with 23 catches for 205 yards and two touchdowns last year, is the team's top returning receiver. He is also the Plainsmen's leading returning rusher, with 45 carries for 120 yards last season; his rushing yardage total was second-best on the team last year.

Senior Dakota Ledford led Laramie with 46.5 tackles last season and Trabing was second with 43. However, despite returning their top two tacklers, Laramie only returns the pair of Ledford and Trabing from its top nine tacklers from 2022.

Senior Tyler Ennist had 21 tackles, senior Bodie Livingston and junior Max Alexander had 16 apiece and senior Kyler Roberts had 14.5.

Ronga said junior linemen Jamison Bade and Deayn Robinson will also factor into the Plainsmen's plans.

"Last year we had five seniors starting on the offensive line... so it is a completely open competition," Ronga said.



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

Coach: Steve Harshman, 33rd year at Natrona
2022 Record: 8-3, lost to Cheyenne East 55-36 in state semifinals

Key Players

LB: Noah Sides, Sr.
WR/CB: Bridger Anderson, Sr.
S/LB: Beau Russell, Sr.
RB/LB: Will Cantrell, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Laramie, 7 p.m.
 9-1: at Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
 9-8: vs. Cheyenne Central, 7 p.m.
 9-15: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
 9-22: at Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
 9-29: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
 10-6: vs. Campbell County, 6 p.m.
 10-13: at Sheridan, 6 p.m.
 10-20: at Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.

Mustangs are Built for Speed

Throughout Steve Harshman's long coaching career, football has changed in some dramatic ways.

Bit by bit, the Mustangs have always managed to adjust; last year was Natrona's 13th consecutive season either at or above .500, including four state championships.

"That's the beauty of this game," said Harshman, who's entering his 33rd year as Natrona's head coach. "It changes every year."

One noticeable area of change is a focus on defensive speed. And that's where Natrona has a decided advantage entering 2023.

Natrona returns seven of its top 13 tacklers from 2022. However, to mesh returners with new players, Harshman said some players may have to change positions.

"We're going have to have all of those guys on the field... however that works out," Harshman said. "And they change a lot in a year. One year is a lot of time in a young person's life."

Fortunately, Harshman said, most of the returning players

are "utility men. They can do a lot of different stuff."

Senior Noah Sides, the Mustangs' only returning first-team all-conference selection, led Natrona's defense with 76.5 tackles last season; his totals included 5.5 tackles for loss and two sacks.

"He's certainly got to be in the middle of our defense," Harshman said.

Junior Tucker Sides added 42 tackles to finish fourth on the team; he had five tackles for loss and two sacks.

Senior William Cantrell added 37 tackles and led Natrona with three fumble recoveries.

A host of other returning players had important responsibilities on defense last year. Senior Beau Russell had 28.5 tackles and two interceptions, senior Timothy Edmondson had 23.5 tackles, senior Kaiden Lee had 23 tackles and three sacks, and senior Bridger Anderson had 22 tackles.

Offensively, though, the Mustangs return few players from last year's unit.

The Mustangs graduated

their top four receivers; junior Rogan Potter, who had 10 catches for 119 yards and two touchdowns, is Natrona's top returning pass-catcher.

Senior Trig Berens is the only returning player who competed a pass last year; he had six completions for 33 yards in limited time. Harshman said Berens and Russell will be the top candidates for the quarterback spot.

Russell, whose 16 carries for 101 yards and two touchdowns ranked him third on the team last year, is Natrona's top returning rusher.

"I think it'll be a real battle between those two and a good competition, and I think it'll make them both better," Harshman said.

Meanwhile, all five starting offensive linemen graduated, which Harshman said is "not unusual for us." Some key candidates include seniors Shawn Benson, Keegan Crow, Jasper Jardine, Ben Spencer and Shaun Baysinger and junior Josh May.

Seniors Daniel Yates, Dallin Bertagnole and Aydan Fuller will also see time.

ROCK SPRINGS TIGERS

4A

New Coach Has Found a Home

Ted Holmstrom's appreciation for Rock Springs football runs back more than a decade.

As the head coach at Lyman from 2009-11, he would occasionally have the chance to watch the Tigers play on Friday nights if the Eagles – who don't have lights on their field – played at home, as well.

"I thought, 'Man, I'd love to coach here some day,'" Holmstrom said. "... When I saw it was open, this was like a dream come true."

If all goes according to plan, the oft-traveled coach will be making his final stop.

Since coaching at Lyman, at Laramie in 2012 and Riverside in 2013, Holmstrom has coached at high schools in Michigan and South Dakota and coached college in Minnesota. That included a one-year stint at Mobridge-Pollock High School in South Dakota, where he was the head coach last season.

"I told them in the interview that this is the job," Holmstrom said. "There is no other job I desire. This is it. ... I want to be there a long time."

Holmstrom inherits a team that returns three first-team all-conference selections

in seniors Brycen Coombs, Michael Faigl and Goodness Okere, all key contributors on offense, and a defense that returns nine of its top 12 tacklers from last season.

Faigl completed 167 of 262 passes for 1,925 yards and 12 touchdowns and also ran 117 times for 328 yards and nine more scores.

"The sky's the limit with him, so we're really excited," Holmstrom said.

Coombs led the rushing attack with 97 carries for 711 yards and eight touchdowns.

Okere led Rock Springs' receivers in yards (509) and

CONTINUED PAGE 10



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

Coach: Ted Holmstrom, first year at Rock Springs
2022 Record: 3-7, lost to Cheyenne East 49-24 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

QB: Michael Faigl, Sr.
WR: Goodness Okere, Sr.
WR: Kael Anderson, Sr.
RB: Brycen Coombs, Sr.

Broncs Loaded for Title Repeat

Sheridan coach Jeff Mowry is in a unique spot this year – not only for him but for pretty much every team that’s coming off an undefeated, state championship season.

That spot? He has a deep and talented senior class.

While graduation took its toll, the Broncs will still have more than 20 seniors, a number Mowry said was one of the best Sheridan has had in the past decade. Several are returning starters, and two – seniors Alex Haswell and Dane Steel – were all-state choices last year.

But Mowry also said the seniors won’t win a state championship on their own.

“I think the team chemistry will be huge this year,” he said. “... Our senior class is strong, but they don’t have everything, so they’ve got to open their arms to those underclassmen.”

Sheridan enters the 2023 season on a 19-game winning streak and the kind of momentum that back-to-back state titles can provide.

Steel and Haswell went

1-2 last year for Sheridan in defensive points and will front an experienced unit in which five players who started last year’s championship game will return.

Steel led the Broncs with 103.5 tackles and had 10 tackles for loss, 5.5 sacks, two interceptions and five pass deflections.

Haswell ranked third on the team with 92.5 tackles but led the squad with 13 tackles for loss and 9.5 sacks.

“They’re tremendous leaders, and when you have some of your best athletes as some of your hardest workers, they make for good players to follow,” Mowry said.

Senior Jackson Lynn was fourth on the team with 84 tackles. Senior Terran Grooms added 54.5 tackles and senior Aiden O’Leary had 48 tackles and two interceptions.

Senior Noah Williamson had 32 tackles, seniors Wyatt Philipp and Cody Dunham had 23 apiece, senior Jacob Ormseth had 21, senior Will Brooks had 20 and senior

Payton Jack had 18.

Mowry said how the returning players embrace players filling open spots will be critical.

Offensively, the Broncs will lean on an experienced offensive line to help offset losses among the backs and receivers. Seniors D.J. Elchlinger and John Henry Justice will join Haswell, Williamson, Brooks and Jack among that group.

Steel finished second on the team in both catches (22) and receiving yards (390) and led Sheridan with six receiving touchdowns.

Senior Dominick Berrettini was third on the team in receiving yards with 250, on 13 catches, and also scored a pair of touchdowns; however, Mowry said Berrettini may move to quarterback this year. No other returner caught more than one pass last season.

Grooms was third on the team last year with 324 rushing yards on 33 carries, including four touchdowns; he’s Sheridan’s leading returning rusher.



Mascot: Broncs

Division: Class 4A

Colors: Blue and Yellow

Coach: Jeff Mowry, sixth year at Sheridan

2022 Record: 12-0, beat Cheyenne East 34-23 in state championship

Key Players

WR/S: Dane Steel, Sr.

OT/DE: Alex Haswell, Sr.

OT/DE: D.J. Elchlinger, Sr.

WR/OLB: Jackson Lynn, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.

9-1: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.

9-8: at Laramie, 6 p.m.

9-15: vs. Rock Springs, 7 p.m.

9-22: at Thunder Basin, 7 p.m.

9-29: at Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.

10-6: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.

10-13: vs. Natrona, 6 p.m.

10-20: at Campbell County, 6 p.m.



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Rock Springs Tigers

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
9-1: at Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
9-8: vs. Campbell County, 6 p.m.
9-15: at Sheridan, 7 p.m.
9-22: at Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
9-29: vs. Natrona, 6 p.m.
10-6: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
10-13: at Laramie, 6 p.m.
10-20: vs. Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.

PAGE 10

ROCK SPRINGS CONTINUED-

was second in receptions (35). Coombs, meanwhile, led the team with 39 catches and was fourth in receiving yards with 282.

Senior Kael Anderson chipped in 27 catches for 241 yards and two touchdowns.

Rock Springs' defense returns numerous contributors but graduated

their top three players in defensive points from 2022.

Junior Sam Thornhill leads all returners with 45 tackles last season, a total that ranked him second on the team.

Anderson had 38 tackles, Okere had 37 tackles and 2.5 sacks, while senior Kyle Cahill had 36 tackles and three tackles for loss.

Faigl added 33 tackles and Coombs had 27.

Seniors Ethan Saunders and Pablo Meza and junior

Sam Eddy added 15 tackles apiece.

Holmstrom has typically built separate offensive and defensive platoons, something he'd like to do in Rock Springs, as well. Even though Holmstrom said all players will earn their positions, the promise of time can build enthusiasm.

"Once they realize that they're going to play, then you get a lot of kids buying in, then you get a lot of people buying in," he said.

KELLY WALSH CONTINUED-

our front four because we have some experienced guys coming back and some athleticism, and that was a place we had some success last season," Makelky said. "... We have some long, rangy track guys that D-end that don't look like defensive linemen, but they fit our system and will be some of the anchor points on

our defense."

The senior class will be typically sized for KW, about 18-20 players. Makelky said the returning seniors are hard workers and good leaders and have done well at building the culture of the program, but many will lack varsity experience entering 2023. However, Makelky said the juniors, sophomores and freshmen

are more than capable of filling the gaps.

"I think we're finally stringing together back-to-back-to-back classes that don't have a gaping weakness," he said. "... We've just got to keep building on that and trust that our seniors will grow and do some things that, on paper, people don't expect (but) that they're capable of."

Kelly Walsh Trojans 2023 Schedule

8-25: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
9-1: vs. Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
9-8: at Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
9-15: at Natrona, 6 p.m.
9-22: vs. Campbell County, 6 p.m.
9-29: vs. Laramie, 6 p.m.
10-6: at Sheridan, 6 p.m.
10-13: at Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
10-20: vs. Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.



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Bolts Look to Regain Form

Thunder Basin's playoff victory drought now stands at two seasons.

For coach Trent Pikula, that's two seasons too long.

One year after losing to Cheyenne Central in the first round to finish 5-5 – tied for the worst record in the 'Bolts' short program history – Pikula said while offseason preparation for 2023 has gone well, "the success that we expect at TBHS has not been reached the past two years. We need to get better, work harder and be more disciplined to get back there."

The team's hopes in 2023 will rely on improved offensive and defensive lines, an experienced quarterback and good leadership, but also on the necessity for offensive backs and receivers and defensive backs to develop quickly.

The 'Bolts don't return any first-team all-state selections but get back three first-team all-conference choices in seniors Alonso Aguilar, Peyton Brown and Caden Parker.

Aguilar had a breakout junior season at quarterback where he completed 186 of 297 passes for 2,575 yards and 25 touchdowns. He also chipped in 161 rushing yards and two touchdowns.

The 'Bolts graduated or lost to transfer their top five receivers, though. No returner from last year's receiving corps finished with triple-digit yards for the season. However, Pikula said Aguilar also had to work with an inexperienced group of receivers last year, too.

"He had a tremendous season last year with receivers that did not have much experience going into the season," he said. "I think we'll see a lot of the same from him (this season)."

Meanwhile, Brown and Parker bring

experience to the offensive line, along with seniors Jaxson Viergets, Dalton Huffman and Kavontae Montgomery and junior Kingston Hanson.

Senior P.J. Hatzenbuehler is Thunder Basin's top returning rusher. He was second on the team last year with 240 rushing yards on 33 carries; he also chipped in four catches for 81 yards.

The defense as a whole will be one of the 'Bolts' least experienced units, especially in the defensive backfield. Thunder Basin graduated its top six players in defensive points and 11 of its top 12 tacklers.

Brown was sixth on the team with 30.5 tackles and also had 6.5 tackles for loss and three sacks.

Hatzenbuehler added 13 tackles, while Viergets added 12.5 and senior Nolan Hottell added 12.

Pikula also said senior wide receiver/defensive back Landon Scalise and junior tight end/linebacker Cort Catlin will contribute.

"Just like every team every year, we graduated a lot of kids with experience," Pikula said, "but like always we have kids ready to step in and get their shot. We as coaches have to make sure they are ready, and they as players have to put the work in to get better and be ready to go."



Mascot: 'Bolts

Division: Class 4A

Colors: Blue and Silver

Coach: Trent Pikula, seventh year at Thunder Basin

2022 Record: 5-5, lost to Cheyenne Central 41-10 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

QB: Alonso Aguilar, Sr.

OL/DT: Peyton Brown, Sr.

OL/DL: Caden Parker, Sr.

OL/DL: Jaxson Viergets, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.

9-1: vs. Rock Springs, 6 p.m.

9-8: at Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.

9-15: at Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.

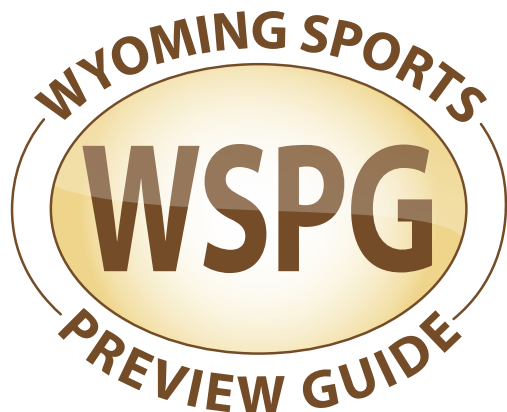
9-22: vs. Sheridan, 7 p.m.

9-29: at Campbell County, 7 p.m.

10-6: at Laramie, 6 p.m.

10-13: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.

10-20: vs. Natrona, 6 p.m.





State Champs Star Valley Braves

2022 State Playoffs

3A Championship

Star Valley 14, Cody 7

Semifinals

Cody 42, Buffalo 7

Star Valley 48, Douglas 27

Quarterfinals

Cody 63, Worland 14

Buffalo 21, Jackson 10

Douglas 27, Powell 21

Star Valley 41, Lander 17

Players to Watch

Tegen Seeds, Douglas. The Class 3A East lineman of the year had 59.5 tackles and a team-high three sacks last year, putting him among Douglas' top defenders. And his prowess as an offensive lineman is already well-known by opposing coaches.

Trey Stenerson, Powell. He can frustrate an opposing defensive backfield -- his 54 catches for 813 yards and 10 touchdowns shows that -- but he also caused chaos on defense, with three interceptions and six pass break-ups in 2022.

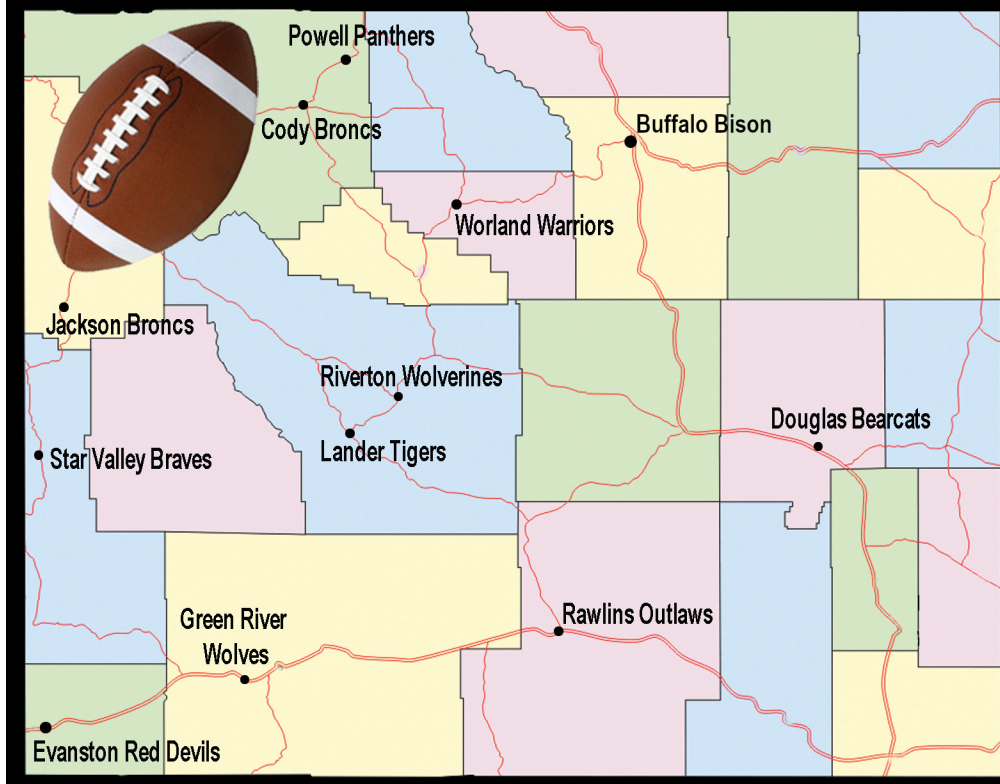
Jayden Crook, Star Valley. Crook will be the focus of Star Valley's young defense. He was third on the team in 2022 with 65.5 tackles and had a team-high five interceptions.

Trey Rinn, Douglas. No other returning 3A quarterback threw for more yards (1,789) or touchdowns (23) as Rinn did last season. He also added 543 rushing yards.

Cohen Morrow and Brady Roberts, Evanston. The backfield pairing combined for 1,126 rushing yards (Roberts 650 from the running back spot, Morrow 526 at quarterback) and 137 tackles (Morrow 81, Roberts 56).

Daniel Lopez, Worland. Lopez split time between Worland and Colorado last year and only got to play about half his sophomore year with the Warriors. But he made an immediate impact on Worland's offensive and defensive lines.

3A Preview



Look for Star Valley to Stay on Top

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four Questions to Answer

Who will it be -- Cody or Star Valley? Early advantage, Star Valley. These two programs have combined to win the past nine Class 3A championships and played against each other in last year's 3A title game. It makes sense that the early eyes are on 3A's two most consistent programs.

Does anyone else have a chance? Yes, but statistically there's always a chance. Programs like Douglas, Buffalo and Powell have the most realistic chances of breaking through the Cody/Star Valley championship monopoly this year, in part because they're the programs that return the most players from teams that had some success last year.

How much will four new coaches change the look of 3A? Maybe not much in the first year, but look out long term. Four Class 3A programs will have new head coaches, including three of the four programs that failed to make the playoffs last year. Combined, those four teams were 10-26 last year, and Lander was the only one to make the playoffs.

And how's the rest of the classification looking? Better than usual. The bottom half of 3A could make some significant strides this year, and several teams -- including all the teams with first-year coaches, as well as Jackson, Rawlins and a handful of others, could give the top-tier teams a challenge.

Key Games

Lander at Evanston, Sept. 15. Don't call it the "Burton Bowl" just yet, but it will be interesting to see how coach Jim Burton's new team, Lander, matches up against his team from last year, Evanston.

Riverton at Star Valley, Sept. 15. New Riverton coach Mark Lenhardt starts his Wolverine tenure with a murderer's row of West Conference opponents -- Powell, Cody, Evanston and Star Valley -- in the first four weeks.

Buffalo at Douglas, Sept. 29. All signs point to this game being the one that will eventually decide the East Conference title.

Star Valley at Cody, Oct. 6. I mean, come on.

Predicted Order of Finish

East Conference: Douglas; Buffalo; Worland; Riverton; Lander; Rawlins.

West Conference: Star Valley; Cody; Powell; Evanston; Jackson; Green River.

Preseason top five: 1. Star Valley; 2. Douglas; 3. Cody; 4. Powell; 5. Buffalo.

Way-too-early Title Game Score Prediction

Star Valley 28, Douglas 20. The Braves' depth is a feature not many 3A teams can match.

Bison Have Three-way Threats

If all goes according to Buffalo's plan, the Bison may be one of the hardest Class 3A teams for opposing defenses to prepare for.

As Buffalo returns two key seniors in the backfield, all-state running back Will Hammond and all-conference quarterback Eli Patterson, the Bison offense has three equally productive ways they can attack opposing defenses.

With Patterson, the Bison have the flexibility to run or throw. Patterson completed 41 passes for 563 yards and five touchdowns and was just as effective rushing the ball, carrying 116 times for 579 yards and seven touchdowns last year.

And with Hammond, the traditional run game can flourish, too. Hammond led the Bison rushing attack with 133 carries for 936 yards and 12 touchdowns.

"They give me a lot of options, especially when (the offense) can really be a three-way threat," Buffalo coach Rob Hammond said.

The Bison will still have graduation losses to overcome, including their top four receivers and several key contributors on defense. But they also return two other all-conference players in seniors Hazen Camino and Lance Rabel and a host of others who contributed to last year's semifinal team.

Senior tight end Cohen Gossard, whose two catches went for 57 yards last year, is by default Buffalo's top returning receiver. Will Hammond, who had one catch last year, is the only other returner who caught a pass last year. However, coach Hammond said junior Zayne Huber could also be a weapon at wide receiver this year.

"At the skill positions, we're very experienced and fast and athletic," coach Hammond said. "... The past few years, we've kind of gone all in on developing speed."

Rabel and junior Hayden Jawors will be among the leaders on the line.

On defense, three of Buffalo's top four tacklers graduated, leaving Will Hammond – whose 82.5 tackles last year ranked second on the team – as the top returner on defense.

Camino was fifth on the team with 46 tackles and also had a team-high three

interceptions and five pass break-ups.

Patterson contributed 41.5 tackles, a fumble recovery and an interception.

Senior Bryce Camino added 33 tackles, Jawors had 30 and Gossard had 21.

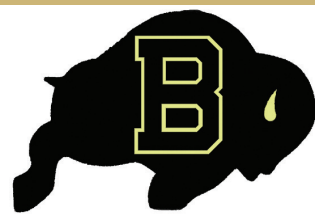
Buffalo, as the smallest Class 3A school, will still be challenged by depth, something that has pushed Bison coaches to reorganize practices the past couple years to keep players healthy.

"Depth is an issue no matter what, especially in those key positions," coach Hammond said.

Still, coach Hammond said the Bison have embraced the underdog mentality.

"It's a rallying cry," he said. We know we have to be more physical and we know we have to be tough.

"... It's a fun thing to see the kids embrace it."



Mascot: Bison

Division: Class 3A

Conference: East

Colors: Black and Gold

Coach: Rob Hammond,
12th year at Buffalo

2022 Record: 6-4, lost
to Cody 42-7 in state
semifinals

Key Players

QB/MLB: Eli Patterson, Sr.

RB/MLB: Will Hammond, Sr.

RB/FS: Bryce Camino, Sr.

OL/DL: Lance Rabel, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-26: vs. Lovell, noon,
scrimmage (Zero Week)

9-1: at Newcastle, 6 p.m.

9-8: vs. Loveland
Resurrection Christian,
Colorado, 6 p.m.

9-15: at Cody, 6 p.m.

*9-22: vs. Lander, 6 p.m.

*9-29: at Douglas, 7 p.m.

*10-6: vs. Worland, 7 p.m.

*10-13: at Riverton, 6 p.m.

*10-20: vs. Rawlins, 7 p.m.

* Conference game

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Bearcats Covered at Key Positions

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

Coach: Jay Rhoades, 18th year at Douglas
2022 Record: 8-2, lost to Star Valley 48-27 in state semifinals

Key Players

QB/FS: Trey Rinn, Sr.
OL/DL: Tegen Seeds, Sr.
RB/LB: Carter Archuleta, Jr.
OL: Malachy Lehnen, Sr

2023 Schedule

9-1: vs. Jackson, 5 p.m.
 9-8: vs. Gering, Neb., 7 p.m.
 9-15: at Powell, 6 p.m.
 *9-22: at Worland, 7 p.m.
 *9-29: vs. Buffalo, 7 p.m.
 *10-6: vs. Riverton, 6 p.m.
 *10-13: at Rawlins, 6 p.m.
 *10-20: at Lander, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Quarterback. Middle linebacker. Lineman.

Ask a football coach where they want experience, and these three positions inevitably come up in the conversation.

Douglas is one of just a handful of teams in the state that can claim experience at all those position.

The challenge the Bearcats have is to find other players to fill the spots around these keystone positions. Fortunately for coach Jay Rhoades, Douglas has players in seniors Trey Rinn (quarterback) and Tegen Seeds (lineman) and junior Carter Archuleta (middle linebacker) who can lead that effort.

"I think we're going to have some great leadership," Rhoades said. "I really enjoyed this group at camp, just how they came together, so I think our chemistry and our team leadership is going to be a huge strength for us.

"... Especially when we're going to be counting on such a strong group of sophomores to step up and challenge for those spots, I think that leadership in those key positions

will be huge for us."

Rinn and Seeds were both all-state selections, while Archuleta was all-conference and led the Bearcats in tackles last year.

Seeds will be joined by classmates Malachy Lehnen, an all-conference choice, and Logan Ortega to lead up front.

Rinn completed 107 of 192 passes for 1,789 yards and 23 touchdowns last season, more passing yards than any other returning quarterback in Class 3A. He also was second on the team last season with 543 rushing yards on 84 carries, including four touchdowns, and is Douglas' leading returning rusher.

"I feel like he's one of the best in the state regardless of class," Rhoades said.

Douglas graduated its top five receivers, though, and no returner had more than two catches or 20 receiving yards last season.

Rhoades said senior Brody Wagner will add explosiveness out of the backfield and in the return game, while senior Trennan Pearson

will be an athletic wide receiver.

Only four of Douglas' top 13 tacklers from 2022 return this year. However, among those is Archuleta, who led the Douglas defense with 129 tackles and topped the team with 25 solo tackles.

Seeds was fourth on the team with 59.5 tackles and led the squad with three sacks.

Senior Brody Wagner had 51.5 tackles, while Rinn added 39 tackles, two fumble recoveries, two interceptions and five pass deflections.

Junior Cash Tillard had 23 tackles and senior Dominic Hernandez had 18.

Rhoades said although depth in the senior and junior classes is lower than usual, Douglas' expectations remain high. The Bearcats haven't lost a conference game in three years and have won 10 conference championships in Rhoades' 17 years.

"Being part of Bearcat football we expect to contend and compete every year," Rhoades said.

"I think we're going to have some great leadership."

~Coach Jay Rhoades

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3A EAST

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New Coach Brings Enthusiasm

One 48-hour period defined the busyness of new Lander coach Jim Burton's summer.

On June 2, he taught his final day in Evanston — where he was formerly the head coach of the Red Devils and a science teacher.

On June 4, he was at summer football camp in Chadron, Nebraska, with his new team, the Lander Tigers.

"The transition has been a little crazy," Burton said.

The challenge Burton faces as he takes over a new program is not insurmountable. The Tigers' coaching

staff will remain mostly intact from last year.

"The culture that (former head coach) John Scott has built here along with the great school and beautiful community brought me to Lander," Burton said.

In Lander, Burton takes over a program that has made five consecutive Class 3A playoffs but hasn't won a playoff game since 2004.

Philosophically, the Tigers' approach will remain similar, Burton said. He said one goal will be to continue building the program, "keeping things that

CONTINUED PAGE 15



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

Coach: Jim Burton, first year at Lander
2022 Record: 5-4, lost to Star Valley 41-17 in state quarterfinals

Outlaws' Needle is Pointing Up

Everything at Rawlins is trending up.

More players. More experience in a new system. More athleticism.

For a team that's won one game in three years, the Outlaws' preseason outlook is relatively rosy – and that's thanks in part to a renewed enthusiasm for the game.

"We just want the excitement to continue to build," second-year coach David Hastings said.

One quick example of the growth: Last year's Rawlins team only had four seniors. This year's team will have 11. And this year's junior class will have more than 20 players.

"Our experience is just way up," Hastings said. "We've got a lot more kids returning and we'll have a bigger senior class, as well."

Now, the challenge for the Outlaws is to turn that positive momentum into on-field success.

Offensively, that starts with the rushing game, on which the Outlaws put a lot of emphasis.

"It's no secret we want to run the ball, we want to pound the ball and that's what we're going to do," Hastings said.

Senior Sage Lonn was second for Rawlins' rushing game last year, carrying 93 times for 299 yards and two touchdowns.

Junior Brayden Torstenbo added 32 carries for 214 yards, good for third on the team. Seniors Zachary Covolo (33 carries, 167 yards) and Ezra Archuleta (39 carries, 146 yards) also saw significant playing time in the backfield.

Senior quarterback Jaxson Allard directed the offense; in the run-often approach, Allard completed only six passes last year for 36 yards and the offense as a whole had only seven completed passes.

Archuleta led the receivers by catching five of those passes for 26 yards, including the team's only receiving touchdown.

On defense, the Outlaws graduated their top two tacklers, but Lonn and Archuleta – who ranked third and fourth in tackles for Rawlins in 2022 – are both

back, as are eight players who started in total.

Lonn had 45 tackles and led the Outlaws with two sacks, while Archuleta added 41 tackles and a team-high two fumble recoveries.

Torstenbo finished fifth on the team with 28 tackles. Others who saw significant defensive playing time were junior Lucas Peterson (26.5 tackles), senior Marcellas Montoya (24.5 tackles), senior Charlie Fonseca (24 tackles) and Morales (17 tackles). Junior Vaughn Grant will also contribute.

Senior Jose Morales, Rawlins' only returning all-conference choice, handled punting and kicking duties for the Outlaws last season. He only made one field goal last season, but the one he did make came from 47 yards away.

"When you take over a program that has been down, you want to find small victories wherever they are," Hastings said, "and the kids are excited to get back on the field and show what they can do."



Mascot: Outlaws

Division: Class 3A

Conference: East

Colors: Red and Black

Coach: David Hastings, second year at Rawlins
2022 Record: 1-7, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

RB/MLB: Sage Lonn, Sr.

MLB: Ezra Archuleta, Sr.

TE/OL: Vaughn Grant, Jr.

TE/K: Jose Morales, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Burns, 6 p.m.
 (Zero Week)
 9-1: vs. Pinedale, 7 p.m.
 9-8: vs. Green River, 7 p.m.
 9-15: at Moffat County, CO 7 p.m.
 *9-22: at Riverton, 6 p.m.
 *9-29: at Worland, 7 p.m.
 *10-6: vs. Lander, 7 p.m.
 *10-13: vs. Douglas, 6 p.m.
 *10-20: at Buffalo, 7 p.m.
 * Conference game

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"The kids are excited to get back on the field and show what they can do."

~Coach David Hastings



Key Players

QB/DB: Bodie Moffat, Sr.
OL/DL: Kaleb Hamilton, Soph.
OL/DL: Tristan Osborne, Sr.
RB/LB: Caleb Larvie, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Mountain View, 4 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-1: vs. Green River, 6 p.m.
 9-8: vs. Powell, 6 p.m.
 9-15: at Evanston, 6 p.m.
 *9-22: at Buffalo, 6 p.m.
 *9-29: vs. Riverton, 6 p.m.
 *10-6: at Rawlins, 7 p.m.
 *10-13: at Worland, 6 p.m.
 *10-20: vs. Douglas, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

LANDER CONTINUED-

are working and augment those things that are not.
 "... We will be young across the board, but the kids are picking things up very fast."

Amid the transition, Burton will have to learn the strengths and weaknesses of his new team, some of which was accomplished over the summer with the Chadron camp as well as a minicamp with middle-school and elementary players in July.

"(The) process has been good," Burton said. "We are holding weights and open field practice several times a week. We are seeing buy-in, (and) the numbers are high but mostly in the ninth and 10th grade."

Still, replacing a senior class that was relied upon heavily last year will be a task that no coach would envy, whether in their first year or their 20th.

On offense, Lander graduated its top four rushers, its quarterback and its top five receivers;

defensively, the Tigers' top four tacklers and seven of their top nine are gone.

Burton said the Tigers' line play should be one of its strengths, though. Up front, senior Tristan Osborne and sophomore Kaleb Hamilton will help the Tigers through the transition.

Senior Bodie Moffat is in line to handle the quarterback position, and junior Caleb Larvie will be relied on both at running back and linebacker.

Senior Hunter Velarde is by default the team's top returning rusher and receiver; he had 12 carries for 30 yards and one catch for 22 yards.

Defensively, senior Ziam Cabriaes is the top returning tackler, as he finished fifth on the team with 44 tackles. Velarde was seventh with 36.

Junior Kaden Rowan (16 tackles) joins Hamilton (12.5) and Moffat (11) as other returning Tigers who had double-digit tackles last season.



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

Coach: Mark Lenhardt, first year at Riverton
2022 Record: 1-8, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

QB/DB: Darrick DeVries, Sr.
WR/DB: Ty Sheets, Sr.
WR/DB: Nick McIntosh, Sr.
OL/DL: Ryan Cox, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Powell, 6 p.m.
 (Zero Week)
 9-1: vs. Cody, 6 p.m.
 9-8: at Evanston, 6 p.m.
 9-15: at Star Valley, 6 p.m.
 *9-22: vs. Rawlins, 6 p.m.
 *9-29: at Lander, 6 p.m.
 *10-6: at Douglas, 6 p.m.
 *10-13: vs. Buffalo, 6 p.m.
 *10-20: vs. Worland, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Veteran Coach Likes What He Sees

When Mark Lenhardt decided to move from Rock Springs to Riverton, he saw several advantages in coaching the Wolverines.

"I don't see any reason why we can't build something successful," said Lenhardt, who previously built championship-contending programs in Rock Springs as well as in Torrington. "I think there's some advantages here."

For now, one is not tradition; the Wolverines have had seven consecutive losing seasons and haven't had a playoff victory since 2014.

"When you've won one game each the last two seasons, then you've got plenty of work to do," Lenhardt said.

However, Lenhardt said the caliber of athletes he's seen so far, and the work ethic he's seen from them, gives him reasons to be optimistic.

"I think there's no shortage of athletes," he said.

Riverton returns two all-conference players in seniors Darrick DeVries and Nick McIntosh.

DeVries is a dual-threat quarterback who led Riverton in both rushing and passing last season. He completed 75 of 135 passes for 615 yards

and six touchdowns and ran 107 times for 389 yards and three scores.

Senior Ty Sheets was Riverton's top receiver in both receptions (25) and yards (360) last season. McIntosh added 22 catches for 291 yards, ranking second for Riverton in both categories.

Although Riverton graduated most of its offensive backfield from last year, junior Jordan May and senior Branson Saltgaver will also contribute on offense.

"I don't think Riverton's ever lacking for tall, rangy athletes," Lenhardt said. "It's definitely one of the tallest teams I've ever coached."

Up front, juniors Ryan Cox and Tyree Harris-Aragorn and senior Xavier Garcia are among a group of about six or seven linemen who could contribute immediately.

The defense returns eight of its top 14 tacklers from a year ago. Harris-Aragorn and senior Zaryc Prosser are the team's top returning tacklers; they

tied for third on the team last year with 40 tackles apiece.

Sheets had 36 tackles to go with a team-high four interceptions. Saltgaver had 30 tackles; Cox had 25 tackles and two sacks; Garcia had 22; and McIntosh tallied 19 tackles, two interceptions and three pass break-ups.

Lenhardt said the top priority on defense will be stopping the run. The Wolverines finished last in Class 3A in rush defense in 2022, allowing more than 240 rushing yards per game, and were also last in overall defense at 405.6 yards allowed per game.

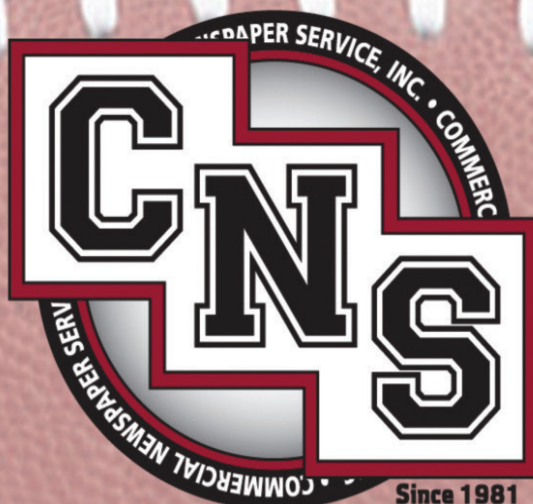
And on offense, Lenhardt said, the running game also has to improve. Riverton also finished last in 3A in total offense at 226.9 yards per game and were near the bottom in rushing yards.

"If we don't improve those statistics, those records won't improve," Lenhardt said. "... If you can't be physical, you'll never win."

"If you can't be physical, you'll never win."

~Coach Mark Lenhardt

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Warriors Rely on Junior Class

Worland is going to turn it up to 11 this year.

Well, 11 in terms of a big junior class.

The Warriors' senior chunk of the roster will be thinner this year at about six players, but a junior class that's triple the size will help carry that load and put lots of "11s" on the roster.

The Warriors graduated their top three rushers, top four receivers and quarterback, but they do return key contributors, especially on the defensive side of the ball.

Coach Patrick Sweeney said he's looking for his seniors to be "great role models and selfless individuals on and off the field," and that the juniors coming up will need to build in accountability and take advantage of their opportunities to play early by finding "as many ways to serve on the field as possible."

Together, the Warriors will try to break a long streak: Worland also enters the season on a 13-year streak without

either a winning season or playoff victory.

At the front of those efforts is the return of the Warriors' leading tackler from last year as well as a lineman who missed half the season – both juniors.

Roman Parra led the Warriors with 80 tackles last season, including four tackles for loss.

And Daniel Lopez, who had 31 tackles and three tackles for loss, played only half the season after re-establishing himself in Worland after a brief stint in Colorado.

"We were thrilled to get him back," Sweeney said. "He was probably our best lineman by the middle of July last year. He is really a pillar of this defense who will get the team to rally around him. Roman (Parra) will be a big part of setting the bar for our defense as well."

Between them, they'll help lead that deep junior class that also includes the team's top returning rusher and receiver.

Junior Ethene Burns,

with 43 carries for 143 yards, is the only one of Worland's top five rushers to return, and junior Cale Cheatham will also compete for time in the backfield. Meanwhile, junior Masen Decker, who had 10 catches for 78 yards and a touchdown, is the top returning receiver.

The defense does return several others who contributed last season.

Junior Brody Thiel was fifth on the team with 37.5 tackles, while Decker and Burns had 22 tackles apiece.

Others who contributed double-digit tackles last season were senior Wyatt Dickinson (19 tackles) and juniors Fisher Martinez (19.5 tackles), Keegan Busch (13 tackles) and Tillman Burns (10.5 tackles).

Sweeney also said some sophomores may have to come fill some spots this year – not perfect, "but you always look forward to the experience they have for the next couple of years."



Mascot: Warriors

Division: Class 3A

Conference: East

Colors: Orange and Black

Coach: Patrick Sweeney, fourth year at Worland

2022 Record: 4-5, lost to Cody 63-14 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

OT/DT: Daniel Lopez, Jr.

WR/S: Masen Decker, Jr.

HB/LB: Roman Parra, Jr.

RB/LB: Cale Cheatham, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Thermopolis, 7 p.m.
(Zero Week)

9-1: at Powell, 7 p.m.

9-8: vs. Cody, 7 p.m.

9-15: at Green River, 6 p.m.

*9-22: vs. Douglas, 7 p.m.

*9-29: vs. Rawlins, 7 p.m.

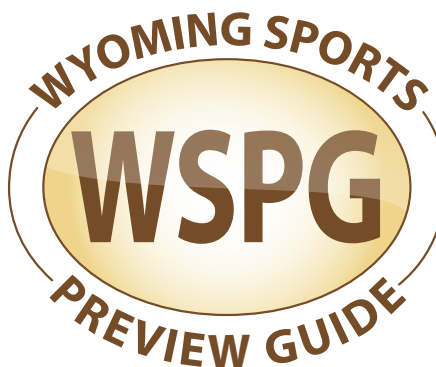
*10-6: at Buffalo, 7 p.m.

*10-13: vs. Lander, 6 p.m.

*10-20: at Riverton, 6 p.m.

* Conference game

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Mascot: Broncs

Division: Class 3A

Conference: West

Colors: Blue and Gold

Coach: Matt McFadden,
11th year at Cody

2022 Record: 10-1, lost to
Star Valley 14-7 in state
championship

Key Players

QB: Maddax Ball, Jr.

RB/CB: Dillon Brost, Sr.

RB: A.J. Baustert, Sr.

OG/LB: Connor Moss, Sr.

2023 Schedule

9-1: at Riverton, 6 p.m.

9-8: at Worland, 7 p.m.

9-15: vs. Buffalo, 6 p.m.

*9-22: vs. Jackson, 5 p.m.

*9-29: at Green River 6 p.m.

*10-6: vs. Star Valley, 5 p.m.

*10-13: at Evanston, 6 p.m.

*10-20: vs. Powell, 7 p.m.

* Conference game

Broncs Eye Return Trip to Laramie

For the first time in what seems like forever, Cody doesn't enter a season as defending Class 3A champions.

Still, the Broncs – whose 10-1 season ended with a loss to Star Valley in the championship game – enter 2023 ready to re-establish that tradition.

"Our program's success wasn't created by one win and it can't be stunted by one loss," coach Matt McFadden said. "It had been a long time since we lost and to do so (in the state championship) was hard. But it lit a fire under kids and coaches to continue to do the little things it takes to get back to Laramie."

Cody's coronation, the game that was supposed to earn the Broncs their 27th consecutive victory, their third consecutive Class 3A championship and their second consecutive undefeated season, never happened. Instead, Cody came up short in a 14-7 loss to Star Valley in the 2022 3A title game.

From that team, Cody graduated nine all-state and 13 all-conference players; the Broncs return none. The losses include Cody's top five rushers, top five receivers, its quarterback

and its top eight players in defensive points.

Even so, the Broncs' JV team went undefeated last year and move up to varsity with good chemistry and a familiarity with what it takes to develop success.

"These kids have had the benefit of playing together... for a number of games," McFadden said. "Although we lose a large senior class that had played together varsity minutes for three years, this group has a lot of team reps with each other."

Cody's top returning rusher is senior A.J. Baustert, who carried 13 times for 122 yards last year. Junior Grady McCarten added 17 carries for 115 yards, while junior Maddax Ball added 27 carries for 87 yards and senior Dillon Brost had 13 carries for 86 yards.

Ball also saw time under center, completing 39 of 75 passes for 364 yards and six touchdowns.

Senior Jacob Ball caught 13 passes for 113 yards, good for sixth on the team last year, and is Cody's top returning receiver.

Junior Chase Hatch chipped in seven catches for 101 yards but missed a good chunk of last season to injury.

Senior Connor Moss leads all of Cody's returners with 41 tackles last year.

Hatch notched 28 tackles and two interceptions, senior Logan Class had 22 tackles and two sacks, senior Trey Schroeder added 23 tackles and six pass deflections and senior Renich Arthaud had 18 tackles.

McFadden said this year's team doesn't have to be like the teams of the past to be successful.

"They have their own strengths and personalities," McFadden said. "I'm excited for them to take over the task as culture keepers for our program."



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"Our program's success wasn't created by one win and it can't be stunted by one loss."

~Coach Matt McFadden



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Moore Steps Up to Lead Role

For Steve Moore, the opportunity to coach his hometown's football team was simply too great an opportunity to pass up.

After 20 years as an assistant with the program, Moore ascended to the head coach's spot this spring – and he knows the job ahead.

"I have been a Red Devil my whole life and I take pride in that," Moore said. "I have had the privilege of being an assistant coach under some really good coaches and more importantly really outstanding men. I feel like I can build on the positives I have taken away from previous coaches and help regain a winning tradition."

The Red Devils are four years removed from a playoff berth and 16 years removed from a playoff victory, but Moore said Evanston has the right pieces for success.

Evanston returns a pair of all-state selections in seniors Cohen Morrow and Brady Roberts; however, no other returning players were as much as all-

conference.

Roberts and Morrow were a dynamic backfield pair. Roberts led the rushing game with 136 carries for 650 yards and five touchdowns. Morrow, meanwhile, ran 102 times for 526 yards and 12 touchdowns while also throwing for 452 yards on 31 completions, including six touchdowns.

"They are both going to be monumental in what we do on both sides of the ball," Moore said.

Also back is senior Kai Barker, Evanston's No. 1 receiver last year with nine catches for 192 yards and three touchdowns. He's the only returning player who caught a pass last season, though.

Moore said Evanston will likely change its offense quite a bit this year, using different formations and motions "to get the ball in the hands of our playmakers."

"We have several players that I feel can make a big impact when they get their hands on the ball," Moore said.

Seniors Steven Bowen and

Zayn Leland will lead the linemen.

The defense will remain steady, though, as the Red Devils return their top eight tacklers and eight starters from last season.

Morrow led the Red Devils with 81 tackles and Barker was right behind with 78.5. Barker's 37 solo tackles led Evanston.

Senior Cole Robinette had 62.5 tackles and led the team with 3.5 sacks.

Roberts had 56 tackles and four pass deflections.

Junior Braunsen Sims had 42 tackles and senior Drew Barker had 41.5. Drew Barker also had three pass break-ups.

Leland had 35.5 tackles, senior Aiden Liechty had 33.5 and junior Brecken Rich had 22.

"The success they had on the defensive side of the ball last year was awesome," Moore said. "... As a defense we can focus more on technique and individual development because they have a good understanding of our defensive scheme."



Mascot: Red Devils
Division: Class 3A
Conference: West
Colors: Red and Blue

Coach: Steve Moore, first year at Evanston
2022 Record: 2-7, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

QB/LB: Cohen Morrow, Sr.
RB/LB: Brady Roberts, Sr.
WR/LB: Kai Barker, Sr.
OL/DL: Steven Bowen, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Ben Lomond, Utah, 7 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-1: vs. Jordan, Utah, 7 p.m.
9-8: vs. Riverton, 6 p.m.
9-15: vs. Lander, 6 p.m.
*9-22: at Star Valley, 7 p.m.
*9-29: vs. Jackson, 6 p.m.
*10-6: at Powell, 6 p.m.
*10-13: vs. Cody, 6 p.m.
*10-20: at Green River, 7 p.m.
* Conference game



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

Coach: Blaine Christensen, first year at Green River
2022 Record: 2-7, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

RB/LB: Jaxxon Gomez, Sr.
WR/DB: Axel Mackinnon, Sr.
RB/LB: Garrett Smith, Sr.
OL/DL: Alex Cooley, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: Open (Zero Week)
9-1: at Lander, 6 p.m.
9-8: at Rawlins, 7 p.m.
9-15: vs. Worland, 6 p.m.
*9-22: at Powell, 6 p.m.
*9-29: vs. Cody, 6 p.m.
*10-6: at Jackson, 6 p.m.
*10-13: vs. Star Valley, 7 p.m.
*10-20: vs. Evanston, 7 p.m.
* Conference game

GREEN RIVER WOLVES

3A WEST

Young Wolves Need to Step Up

After losing a bunch of players to graduation and changing head coaches, it would be easy to count out the Green River Wolves before the season even begins.

But new head coach Blaine Christensen looks at the situation differently.

It's an opportunity, not a hindrance – and he's excited to see the Wolves respond to it.

"I don't think that it is a huge secret that we don't return a lot of varsity players from last season," he said. "... The one thing we get excited about as a staff is that we can really coach these guys to how we want them to play."

With that in mind, Christensen said, "trying to build some confidence and a winning mentality will be the first thing that we as a program need to fix."

The Wolves graduated their top four rushers, their top five receivers, their quarterback and their top five tacklers, a challenge for a program that has not made the playoffs – or won more than

two games in a season – since 2017.

An alumnus of Green River, Christensen spent the past four years as an assistant coach at nearby Rock Springs and knows the effort required to put the program back on track.

"It helps that I know a lot of the people who are connected with the program," he said. "To have some familiarity with the pride and tradition and what this community deserves really drives me to turn this thing around."

Christensen said Green River will run its offensive sets with multiple formations and personnel groupings and its defense with a focus on playing fast and sound.

Senior Jaxxon Gomez carried 47 times for 240 yards and four touchdowns to rank second on the team; he's the Wolves' top returning rusher. Junior James Herwaldt added 13 carries accounted for 92 yards and a touchdown.

Senior Adrian Ruiz leads all

returners with four catches for 69 yards and a touchdown last season.

Senior Kale Knezovich completed six of 14 passes for 98 yards and two touchdowns in limited time at quarterback.

The defense returns a handful of players who saw time last season. Senior Russell Raney had 22 tackles last season, a number that ranked him sixth on the team last year and leads all Green River returners.

Senior Axel Mackinnon had 15 tackles last year and both Ruiz and senior Alex Cooley had 14.

Senior running back/linebacker Garrett Smith will also contribute.

Even with the challenges, Christensen said the support he will have will make a difference.

"It's a unique place to coach because the whole administration team were once coaches, and successful ones," Christensen said. "They understand athletics and they understand what athletics can do for a school culture."



Mascot: Broncos
Division: Class 3A
Conference: West
Colors: Orange and Black

Coach: David White,
 second year at Jackson
2022 Record: 4-6, lost
 to Buffalo 21-10 in state
 quarterfinals

Key Players

QB/S: Seb Brunner, Sr.
RB: Thomas May, Sr.
TE/DE: Andrew Hanna, Sr.
LB: Justin Castagno, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Teton, Idaho, 7 p.m.
 9-1: at Douglas, 5 p.m.
 9-8: at Wood River, Idaho, 6 p.m.
 9-15: vs. South Fremont, ID, 7 p.m.
 *9-22: at Cody, 5 p.m.
 *9-29: at Evanston, 6 p.m.
 *10-6: vs. Green River, 6 p.m.
 *10-13: vs. Powell, 5 p.m.
 *10-20: at Star Valley, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Numbers are Up For Broncos

One number illustrates the difference between the first year and the second year at Jackson for coach David White.

That number is 87 – the number of players who said they'd come out for the team this fall. That number us up almost 30 from last year.

"I think that shows something not just to me but to other kids... something's going right," White said. "We've just got to capitalize on these opportunities if we can."

The Broncos graduated their quarterback and top two rushers and will have new players in key positions, but they've also got back key leaders on offense, defense and special teams to carry the program forward in 2023.

Senior Seb Brunner was Jackson's top receiver last year, catching 49 passes for 622 yards and four touchdowns. He's also Jackson's top returning rusher, with 31 carries for 161 yards last season.

However, White said Brunner

will move to quarterback this year, and the offense will adapt around his skills both running and passing.

"We have to put him in a unique situation where we can move him around... (and) put him in the best situation to have success," White said.

Brunner was one of six Jackson players to finish in triple-digit receiving yards last year, and of those, four return. In addition to Bruner, senior Thomas May added eight catches for 140 yards, senior Andrew Hanna had nine catches for 114 yards and senior Braden Hills had 10 catches for 107 yards.

White said May will likely move to running back this season.

Senior Justin Castagno, the Broncos' only returning all-conference choice, led Jackson's defense, tallying more than double the tackles of anyone else on the team with 98 last season.

White said Castagno did most of that while playing on an injured knee, something that was

fixed during the offseason.

"He's way stronger, faster, and I think he's playing with a lot more confidence because he's not playing with a knee injury anymore," White said.

May was second on the team with 41.5 tackles, Brunner ranked sixth with 29 tackles and also had a team-high four interceptions, and senior Cruz Fourre had 34.5 tackles, good for fifth on the team.

Junior lineman Jack Berezay, who's also recovered from injuries that took him out of a big chunk of last season, had 21 tackles. Hanna added 19 tackles and two blocked kicks and senior lineman Kaden Nield had 17 tackles.

Hills will return to his duties handling kicks.

White said the larger roster and more first-time players will also give Jackson the depth it was missing last year necessary to compete at the Class 3A level.

"We've just got a good vibe coming out," he said.

3A WEST

POWELL PANTHERS

Panthers Hope Experience Pays Off

The Powell Panthers earned experience in two different ways last year – one expected, one unexpected.

First, the expected: Young players contributed from the start and grew into their roles. This year, the Panthers return eight starters on both offense and defense, including many players who will be juniors in 2023.

Second, the unexpected: Some of that depth was built on the backs of injuries, which forced players into different responsibilities in unexpected spots on the field.

Coach Chase Kistler said he hopes the challenges Powell faced in 2022 will pay off in 2023.

"Your base stuff is kind of instilled in their brain... (and) you can change things on the fly and they can pick it up a little bit quicker," Kistler said.

Powell returns all three of its all-conference selections in seniors Jimmy Dees, Jhett Schwahn and Trey Stenerson.

But they're just the start of a team deep with talent.

Senior linemen Wyatt

Blackmore and Seston Shoopman, senior running back Case Bradish and junior running back Cody Seifert are all coming back after injuries – Blackmore and Seifert during the season, Shoopman and Bradish afterward.

Under center, Schwahn completed 125 of 248 passes for 1,612 yards and 14 touchdowns.

Stenerson caught 54 of those passes, tallying 813 yards and 10 touchdowns on his way to all-state recognition.

Juniors Alex Jordan and Evan Whitlock tied for third on the team with 145 receiving yards, Jordan on 10 catches and Whitlock on 12.

Powell also returns its top three rushers, including Bradish, who led the Panthers with 123 carries for 548 yards and three touchdowns.

Seifert, who started last year and carried 22 times for 214 yards – a 9.7 yard-per-carry clip – before his injury, and junior Keona Wisniewski, who had 47 carries for 204 yards, also return.

Powell returns four of its top five players in defensive points in

Wisniewski, Stenerson, Schwahn and junior Trevon Abraham.

Wisniewski led Powell with 67.5 tackles and also had 6.5 tackles for loss, while Abraham was third with 48.5 tackles and had 4.5 tackles for loss and two interceptions.

Schwahn had 39.5 tackles, three pass deflections and two blocked kicks. Stenerson had three interceptions, two fumble recoveries, six pass deflections and 24.5 tackles.

Dees had 28.5 tackles and leads all returners with three sacks.

Junior Zane Graft had 30.5 tackles, Shoopman had 30 tackles and Whitlock chipped in 22.5 tackles and led the team with seven pass break-ups.

Junior lineman Dusty Carter, who had 19.5 tackles, also figures into the Panthers' plans.

Kistler said he wants his defense to limit big plays, a struggle last season.

"This year, we can strive to be more consistent on defense and make offenses earn every first down," he said.



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

Coach: Chase Kistler,
 fourth year at Powell
2022 Record: 4-6, lost
 to Douglas 27-21 in state
 quarterfinals

Key Players

QB/DB: Jhett Schwahn, Sr.
WR/DB: Trey Stenerson, Sr.
OL/DL: Jimmy Dees, Sr.
OL/DL: Wyatt Blackmore, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Riverton, 6 p.m.
 (Zero Week)
 9-1: vs. Worland, 7 p.m.
 9-8: at Lander, 6 p.m.
 9-15: vs. Douglas, 6 p.m.
 *9-22: vs. Green River, 6 p.m.
 *9-29: at Star Valley, 5 p.m.
 *10-6: vs. Evanston, 6 p.m.
 *10-13: at Jackson, 5 p.m.
 *10-20: at Cody, 7 p.m.
 * Conference game

Braves Plan to Stay on Perch

With five Class 3A championships in the past eight years, including a championship last season, Star Valley's continued success seems almost predestined.

But that is exact attitude that coach McKay Young is trying to keep from creeping into his players' psyches.

"I hope that we are not complacent," Young said. "These guys got to watch the dedication and hard work from last year's seniors that culminated in a championship, but I am always concerned about not approaching the offseason with the same hunger because we finished on top last year."

The Braves graduated 11 all-state players but return a trio of them in seniors Jayden Crook, Jesse Gibson and Clay Merritt.

Still, the gaps entering 2023 are evident.

On offense, the Braves graduated two of their top three rushers and their top six receivers in addition to their quarterback, as well as 11 of the top 15 tacklers on defense.

Offensively, two linemen who started last year return in Merritt and Gibson. Young also said juniors Cooper Lawson and Garrett Carlson and sophomore Ryan Talbot will be in competition for spots on the line.

Senior Jesse Leavitt is the Braves' top returning rusher with 31 carries for 171 yards and a touchdown to his credit last year; he was the No. 2 rusher for Star Valley last season.

Crook is the top returning receiver with three catches for 63 yards last season; he also contributed 117 rushing yards and three rushing touchdowns last year.

The quarterback's spot is up for grabs, a key as Star Valley became the top passing offense in the state last year regardless of classification at 296.6 passing yards per

game. Young said the Braves may try to blend their passing attack with a balanced running game, as well.

"We're confident we'll have a very good signal caller, (we're) just not sure who it will be," Young said.

The defense returns a handful of players with experience, as well. Crook ranked third on the team last year with 65.5 tackles and led the team with five interceptions, while Merritt was fifth on the team with 53 tackles.

Junior Grant Thomson eighth with 40 tackles and also notched two sacks and senior Wylie Wilkes was 10th with 34 tackles.

Junior Lane Wiebelhaus (13 tackles), senior Porter Merritt (12) and junior Bryson Nield (10) also cracked double-digit tackles last season.

Overall, Young said he wants his team to "reload, not rebuild" after its championship run.

Star Valley also benefits from bringing up a set of players from junior varsity, sophomore and freshman teams that combined to go 24-0 last season.

"Our younger kids get to play a lot of football, and they've experienced a lot of success," Young said.

"These guys got to watch the dedication and hard work from last year's seniors that culminated in a championship..."

~Coach McKay Young



Mascot: Braves

Division: Class 3A

Conference: West

Colors: Crimson and Yellow

Coach: McKay Young, eighth year at Star Valley
2022 Record: 10-2, beat Cody 14-7 in state championship

Key Players

OL/DE: Clay Merritt, Sr.

RB/SS: Jayden Crook, Sr.

OL/NG: Jesse Gibson, Sr.

LB: Grant Thomson, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Shelley, Idaho, 7 p.m. (Zero Week)

9-1: at Preston, Idaho, 7 p.m.

9-8: vs. Sugar-Salem, Idaho, 7 p.m.

9-15: vs. Riverton, 6 p.m.

*9-22: vs. Evanston, 7 p.m.

*9-29: vs. Powell, 5 p.m.

*10-6: at Cody, 5 p.m.

*10-13: at Green River, 7 p.m.

*10-20: vs. Jackson, 6 p.m.

* Conference game



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State Champs Big Horn Rams

2022 State Playoffs

2A Championship

Big Horn 8, Lovell 7

Semifinals

Big Horn 7, Lyman 0
Lovell 28, Cokeville 7

Quarterfinals

Big Horn 28, Mountain View 26
Lyman 23, Burns 20
Lovell 47, Newcastle 14
Cokeville 17, Tongue River 0

Players to Watch

Colter Hanft, Tongue River.

Not too many players lead their teams in both receiving and tackles, but that's exactly what Hanft did last season. He had 29 catches for 481 yards and exactly 100 tackles, including seven sacks.

Carter Bradshaw, Lyman.

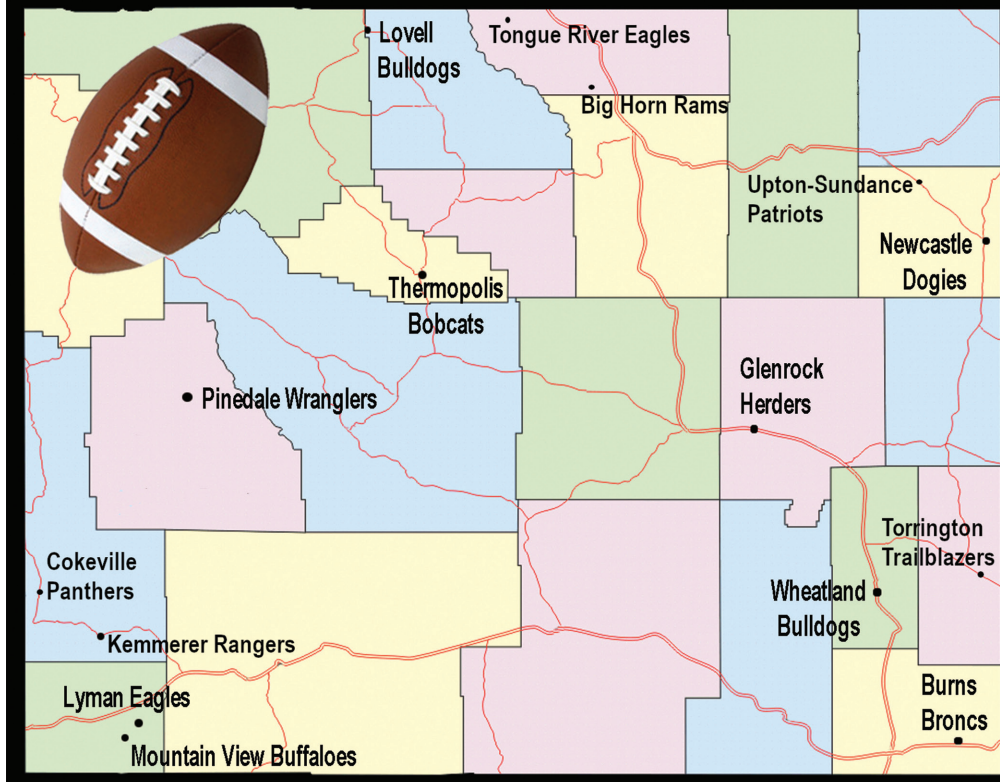
Bradshaw proved to be an effective decision-maker last season. He carried 241 times for 1,013 yards and scored 11 touchdowns and also chipped in 23 pass completions for 248 yards.

Jayce Schultz, Mountain View. Schultz was the Buffalos' top rusher and tackler in 2022, carrying for 901 yards and seven TDs while notching 87 tackles and four sacks on defense.

Kiefer Dunham, Big Horn. The defending state champs have a leader on the line in Dunham. An all-state pick last year, Dunham was a half-tackle shy of 100 last year and had 11.5 tackles for loss..

Ty Bennick, Torrington. Bennick led the team in defensive points last season. He had 72 tackles last year, four of those sacks, and was Torrington's only all-state selection last season

2A Preview



2A Race Has Plenty of Contenders

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four Questions to Answer

Does Class 2A have a clear-cut favorite?

Absolutely not. Class 2A may give us one of the most even title races in recent memory. Several teams are legitimate title contenders, among them Big Horn, Tongue River, Lovell, Lyman, Mountain View, Cokeville, Torrington... the list goes on and on.

So, quit playing, who's it really going to be?

Probably somebody from Uinta or Sheridan counties. Mountain View and Tongue River have the most returning talent from quarterfinal-exit finishes last year, while Lyman and Big Horn have the pedigree from recent championships, Lyman in 2020 and 2021 and Big Horn in 2022.

And what about Lovell? Hmmm. Well, the Bulldogs -- runners-up in 2A each of the past two seasons -- present an interesting conundrum. They clearly know how to develop success, and they have a large senior class. But they also lost five all-stars to graduation, a loss that's going to be difficult to overcome.

Anyone else a threat? No, but it's going to be fun to see how programs develop. Wheatland, Glenrock and Thermopolis all have new head coaches, while coaches in Burns, Pinedale and Cokeville are in their second years. Cokeville and Burns were playoff qualifiers last year.

Key Games

Lovell at Cokeville, Sept. 8. The Bulldogs unceremoniously dumped the Panthers out of the

playoffs last year in the semifinals, and Cokeville -- in the conference opener for both teams -- would love to get their revenge early in the season.

Mountain View at Lyman, Sept. 22. The Bridger Valley rivalry is always important, but in 2023 it could be the game that decides the West Conference in addition to regional bragging rights.

Big Horn at Tongue River, Oct. 13. In a year where the Rams and Eagles could be the best two teams in the East, this rivalry game could be the game that decides it all.

Newcastle at Torrington, Oct. 20. These two bypassed each other in the East Conference standings last year -- Newcastle ascending, Torrington descending. If the rest of the conference comes together in the way that last year did, this one could be critical.

Predicted Order of Finish

East Conference: Tongue River; Big Horn; Torrington; Upton-Sundance; Newcastle; Wheatland; Burns; Glenrock.

West Conference: Lyman; Mountain View; Lovell; Cokeville; Thermopolis; Kemmerer; Pinedale.

Preseason top five: 1. Lyman; 2. Mountain View; 3. Tongue River; 4. Big Horn; 5. Lovell.

Way-too-early Title Game Score Prediction

Lyman 20, Mountain View 14. In 2A this year, any of the top six or seven teams are true contenders. Don't be surprised if other teams emerge by November.

Rams Have Talent to Repeat

On its way to the Class 2A championship last season, Big Horn won three single-possession games in the postseason, winning its three playoff games by a combined 10 points.

That included an 8-7 victory against Lovell – the only team that beat them in 2022, in Week 1 before 10 consecutive Ram victories to close out the season.

The championship was the Rams' eighth in program history and the fifth in the past 10 years.

Coach Kirk McLaughlin said this year's seniors are willing to put forth the kind of leadership needed to continue to build the program.

"Kids are certainly motivated to put the work in," he said. "Success breeds success. The 2023 seniors are already hard at work and wanting the same

success."

Big Horn will be a smaller but faster team in 2023 in its repeat attempt.

The Rams get back a pair of all-state selections in seniors Kiefer Dunham and Drew Heermann. Junior Kolby Butler was an all-conference choice.

Heermann, who had 61 carries for 253 yards and five touchdowns, is Big Horn's top returning rusher. However, of Big Horn's top three rushers last season, Heermann is the only returner.

Butler chipped in 24 carries for 102 yards and three touchdowns.

The Rams will need a new quarterback, as junior Avon Barney is the only player back who completed a pass last year – and Barney only completed one.

Big Horn graduated its top two receivers but returns three other players who had at least 200 receiving yards last season. Senior Gavin Stafford is the Rams' top returner in receiving yards (336 on 19 catches). Heermann added 20 catches for 301 yards and four touchdowns, while senior Caleb Gibson notched 17 catches for 233 yards last year.

"We will have a lot of good skill players coming back," McLaughlin said. "We will try to get them the ball any way we can."

Dunham is the only one of Big Horn's top four players in defensive points to come back this season. He had 99.5 tackles, including a team-high 11.5 for loss.

He also leads the returning unit on the offensive line.

"(Dunham) is relentless in what he does," McLaughlin said. "He expects nothing but the best from himself. We have to ask him to rest and stop working so hard."

Butler added 68 tackles and also had two interceptions and Baker contributed 68 tackles and two interceptions.

Gibson had 36.5 tackles and three interceptions, including two defensive touchdowns, while Heermann had 28.5 tackles and two interceptions. Barney (27.5 tackles), senior Jacob Brown (25.5) and Stafford (22) also had more than 20 tackles last season.

Junior lineman Will Taylor and senior lineman Roanin Irby will also factor into the Rams' plans.



Mascot: Rams

Division: Class 2A

Conference: East

Colors: Maroon and Yellow

Coach: Kirk McLaughlin, sixth year at Big Horn
2022 Record: 10-1, beat Lovell 8-7 in state championship

Key Players

RB/WR/DB: Drew Heermann, Sr.

OL/DL: Kiefer Dunham, Sr.

WR/DB: Caleb Gibson, Sr.

WR/DB: Gavin Stafford, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Natrona sophs, noon (Zero Week)

9-1: at Lovell, 6 p.m.

*9-8: vs. Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m.

*9-15: vs. Glenrock, 6 p.m.

*9-22: at Torrington, 6 p.m.

*9-29: at Wheatland, 6 p.m.

*10-6: vs. Newcastle, 6 p.m.

*10-13: at Tongue River, 6 p.m.

*10-20: vs. Burns, 6 p.m.

* Conference game

"Success breeds success. The 2023 seniors are already hard at work and wanting the same success."

~Coach Kirk McLaughlin



Mascot: Broncos

Division: Class 2A

Conference: East

Colors: Orange and Black

Coach: Travis Romsa, second year at Burns

2022 Record: 4-5, lost to Lyman 23-20 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

RB/LB: Dedrick Nichols, Sr.

QB/S: Mason Medley, Jr.

WR/DB: Mason Terry, Jr.

OL/DL: Tagr Holmes, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Rawlins, 6 p.m. (Zero Week)

9-1: at Yuma, Colo., 7 p.m.

*9-8: at Torrington, 7 p.m.

*9-15: vs. Newcastle, 7 p.m.

*9-22: at Upton-Sundance,

6 p.m. (at Sundance)

*9-29: vs. Glenrock, 7 p.m.

*10-6: at Tongue River, 2 p.m.

*10-13: vs. Wheatland, 7 p.m.

*10-20: at Big Horn, 6 p.m.

* Conference game

BURNS BRONCS

2A EAST

Broncs Need to Gain Experience

Burns will field one of the least experienced teams in Class 2A this fall.

But that doesn't mean the Broncos won't be competitive.

Second-year coach Travis Romsa said this year's returning players are taking the right attitude and approach to improving, and because of that he enters 2023 with a lot of optimism after a 4-5 finish last year.

"Our kids are very coachable and seem like they know the game of football very well," Romsa said. "They've picked up our plays on offense and defense very quick."

But there's no overlooking the fact that the bulk of players who will see the field this year will be mostly new to the varsity level. The Broncos graduated so many players that only one player returns who carried the ball last year, and only one returns who caught a pass... and none return who attempted a pass.

Senior Dedrick Nichols is at the center of the Broncos' approach, though, both offensively and defensively.

He is Burns' top returning rusher with 14 carries for 73 yards last season.

Defensively, Nichols is the only one of Burns' top six players in defensive points to return in 2023; overall, Burns graduated eight of its 12 players who reached double digits in tackles. Nichols had 65 tackles last year, good for third on the team, and also had four tackles for loss.

"I expect him to be the leader of our team, and were probably going to give him the ball a lot," Romsa said.

Junior Mason Medley, who had four catches for 67 yards, is the only returning player who caught a pass last year. Romsa said Medley will likely make the move to quarterback this season, though, and junior Mason Terry will likely be one of the Broncos' top receivers.

On defense, the Broncos return just four players who had double-digit tackles last year.

In addition to Nichols, senior Tagr Holmes added 30 tackles, three sacks and two fumble

"Our kids are very coachable and seem like they know the game of football very well."

~Coach Travis Romsa

recoveries, while Terry had 23 tackles and three pass break-ups. Medley, with 12 tackles, is the only other returner who reached double-digit tackles last season.

"We're going to be a very young team," Romsa said. "... We're going to have to have some guys step up."

To accelerate that process, the Broncos benefitted from nightly summer lifting, where consistently about two-thirds of the expected roster participated, as well as a team camp at Chadron State.

"I could kind of see what kids' skill level was going to be and where they'd fit in the program," Romsa said.

Also, now that Romsa is in his second year as head coach, "I've had a full year to get ready as opposed to a couple months," he said.



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

Coach: Zane Perez, first year at Glenrock
2022 Record: 1-7, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

MLB: J.D. Holman, Sr.
RB/CB: Mason O'Brien, Sr.
TE/LB: Charlie Schowendgert, Sr.
OL/DL: Case Barrett, Jr.

2023 Schedule

9-1: at Kemmerer, 5 p.m.
 *9-8: vs. Tongue River, 6 p.m.
 *9-15: at Big Horn, 6 p.m.
 *9-22: vs. Wheatland, 7 p.m.
 *9-29: at Burns, 7 p.m.
 *10-6: vs. Torrington, 7 p.m.
 *10-13: at Newcastle, 6 p.m.
 *10-20: vs. Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Herders Looking for Consistency

By the end of the season, Glenrock's seniors may have the most diverse set of football knowledge of any group of seniors in the state.

The Herders' 12th-graders are entering their fourth season with their fourth different head coach, each of whom has had a different philosophy.

They've been through this before. So, when first-year head coach Zane Perez says the most exciting part of his team is the attitude they have brought to offseason training, it's not just coachspeak.

Perez said players are "excited to come to work, excited to learn, excited about doing something new."

Perez, who played defensive back at the Colorado School of Mines, said that between high school and college, he's never played on a team with a losing record.

At Glenrock, Perez takes over a team that's had four such seasons in a row, including a 1-7 mark last year. After beating Kemmerer in the

season opener, Glenrock lost seven straight games, scoring just 36 points the rest of the season – equaling the total it put up in its first game.

With nothing to lose, Perez is rebuilding the Herders' approach from scratch, and getting buy-in from his players along the way.

"You'll see everything," he said. "We'll be multi-formational. We'll run many different things. ... Lots of what you see on Saturday and Sunday, you'll see on Friday."

At the same time, this rebuilding effort comes at a time when the Herders are looking for new leaders after graduating a large senior class.

The defense does return its top tackler in senior middle linebacker J.D. Holman, whose 48 total tackles, seven tackles for loss and two fumble recoveries all led Glenrock last year.

"He has the respect of his teammates and he commands that respect," Perez said. " ... That's a guy you want. You

never have to question his effort or attitude. He brings it every time."

However, only one other player among Glenrock's top seven tacklers is back this year. That's senior Adam Johnson, who had 26 tackles and a pair of pass deflections.

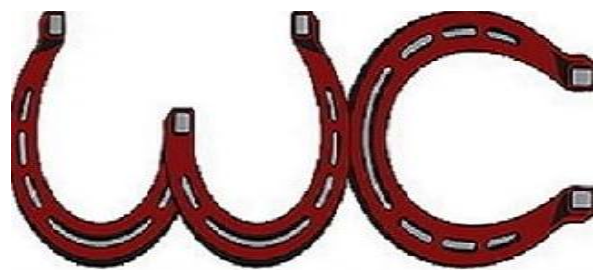
Senior Mason O'Brien added 18 tackles, senior Charlie Schowengert added 15.5 and junior Case Barrett had 9.5.

The Herders' offense, similarly, does not return a player who finished with in double-digit rushing yards or a player who attempted a pass last season.

Junior Casey Sarvey is the only returning player who caught a pass last year; his 29 yards receiving, on two catches, was good enough to lead the Herders last season.

Perez said the core of the offensive philosophy is to try to keep opposing defenses guessing.

"We're just going to do what we do, and we're going to see if people can stop it," he said.



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"When he asked you to the Prom, He didn't settle for second best. Why should you?"

Numbers Are Up for Dogies

The only place Newcastle coach Matt Conzelman had to look to see the change in his program was attendance at summer camp.

Previously, the Dogies took 15 to 20 players to the summer camp at Chadron State College.

This summer, they took 27.

"You can just feel the motivation of people, wanting to get better and wanting to get stronger, and hat's off to those seniors... they've embraced it," Conzelman said. "They've said, 'This is our team,' and (they) get everyone motivated."

Newcastle qualified for the playoffs for the first time since 2017, using a 4-4 record to springboard to the postseason.

The berth came just one year after finishing just three points short of a playoff spot.

"Just to be that close (two years ago) really motivated them, and to be able to punch through... that was huge for this group," Conzelman said.

And although the Dogies lost three all-state players to graduation, they do return three all-conference picks in seniors Thomas Prell and Colton Vanderpool Mobley and junior Connor Stolhammer.

The Dogies lost their top four tacklers to graduation, but Stolhammer leads the returners with 43 tackles a year ago. Prell was right behind with 42, including three tackles for loss, while Vanderpool Mobley added 38 tackles and a team-high three pass deflections.

Sophomore Cole Erb (28.5 tackles), junior Jonathan Anderson (26.5 tackles), sophomore Jace Rich (25.5 tackles) and senior Skyler

Cummings (25 tackles) also saw extended defensive playing time. Rich also had 5.5 tackles for loss and Anderson had 4.5.

The Dogies return seven players who started at some point last season. Even so, Conzelman said seniors will need to continue to provide leadership. He said for the younger players filling key roles, the important responsibility he has is "getting them comfortable, and I think with that (senior) leadership, that'll help with that transition."

Stolhammer is Newcastle's leading returning rusher with 47 carries for 204 yards and three touchdowns, totals that ranked him third on the team last year. He's the only returner who had more than 40 yards last year.

Stolhammer is also Newcastle's top returning receiver after finishing 2022 second on the team in both receptions (10) and yards (110).

Vanderpool Mobley added a team-high 12 catches for 94 yards and a touchdown.

Up front, senior Zach Orsborn and juniors Aidan Butler and Dane Evenson will help lead the way, along with 6-foot-8 senior tight end William Beaström.

"Size-wise, we're probably bigger than we were last year," Conzelman said.

Depth is also growing. With a expected roster of 40 players, the Dogies will have about eight seniors and somewhere in the range of 14 juniors – many of whom made the trip to Chadron for camp.



Mascot: Dogies

Division: Class 2A

Conference: East

Colors: Orange and Black

Coach: Matt Conzelman,
15th year at Newcastle
2022 Record: 4-5, lost
to Lovell 47-14 in state
quarterfinals

Key Players

WR/CB: Colton Vanderpool
Mobley, Sr.

RB/LB: Thomas Prell, Sr.

RB/LB: Connor Stolhammer, Jr.

OL/DL: Zach Orsborn, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Douglas jamboree, TBA

9-1: vs. Buffalo, 6 p.m.

*9-8: vs. Wheatland, 6 p.m.

*9-15: at Burns, 7 p.m.

*9-22: vs. Tongue River, 6 p.m.

*9-29: at Upton-Sundance,
6 p.m. (at Upton)

*10-6: at Big Horn, 6 p.m.

*10-13: vs. Glenrock, 6 p.m.

*10-20: at Torrington, 6 p.m.

* Conference game

"You can just feel the motivation of people, wanting to get better and wanting to get stronger, and hat's off to those seniors... they've embraced it."

~Coach Matt Conzelman



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

Coach: Steve Hanson,
 seventh year at Tongue River
2022 Record: 8-2, lost
 to Cokeville 17-0 in state
 quarterfinals

Key Players

TE/LB: Colter Hanft, Sr.
QB/DB: Connor Cummins, Sr.
WR/FS: Caleb Kilbride, Sr.
RB: Alex Barker, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-26: at Sheridan JV, TBD
 (Zero Week)
 9-1: vs. Thermopolis, 6 p.m.
 *9-8: at Glenrock, 6 p.m.
 *9-16: vs. Upton-Sundance, 2 p.m.
 *9-22: at Newcastle, 6 p.m.
 *9-29: at Torrington, 6 p.m.
 *10-6: vs. Burns, 2 p.m.
 *10-13: vs. Big Horn, 6 p.m.
 *10-20: at Wheatland, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Eagles Have Talent to Compete

Tongue River has three key pieces for success this season: talent, experience and drive.

Put them together on one team, and watch out.

"I don't know if anyone realizes quite how talented we are," Eagles coach Steve Hanson said. "Across the board, we are as loaded as any team we've had in my 15 years in Tongue River."

The talent is there. Seniors Colter Hanft and Caleb Kilbride were all-state selections, while classmates Alex Barker and Connor Cummins joined them on the all-conference team.

"We've just got guys coming in that are really, really talented," Hanson said. "They're ready for the moment."

The experience is there, too. The Eagles expect to have a roster of about 30 to 32 players, and Hanson said 13 of those will be seniors.

"I think this group especially, they expect to win, they expect to do well, and they showed that (last year)," Hanson said.

As for the drive? That was gained in a first-round playoff loss to Cokeville last season. After just one loss in the regular season, Tongue River's title chances ended abruptly.

"They got real hungry after that loss to Cokeville in the playoffs," Hanson said. "That was a tough one, and I think they've come in to the offseason with a fire."

Cummins returns at quarterback after an effective season where he completed 85 passes for 1,635 yards and 17 touchdowns. He had more passing yards last year than any other returning quarterback in Class 2A.

Barker, meanwhile, led all Eagle rushers with 177 carries for 897 yards and 10 touchdowns.

Hanft and Kilbride finished 1-2 in receiving for Tongue River last season, with Hanft catching 29 passes for 481 yards and three touchdowns and Kilbride finishing with 25 catches for 407 yards and eight scores.

The offensive line is also experienced, with seniors

Nixon Rider, Riley Bas and Monty Walter renewing starting spots, senior Cole Kukuchka moving inside to another spot and junior Nathan Hesser growing into a spot.

The defense returns three of its top four players in defensive points in Hanft, Barker and Kilbride.

Hanft led Tongue River with 100 total tackles, eight tackles for loss and seven sacks.

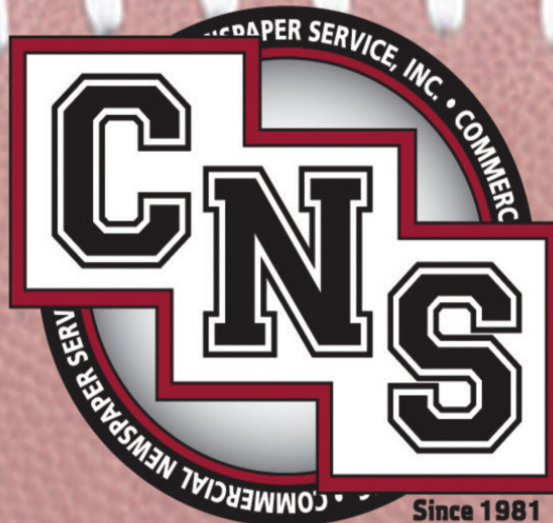
Barker had 55.5 tackles, three fumble recoveries and two interceptions, and Kilbride had 50 tackles and team highs with five interceptions and six pass deflections. Kukuchka added 58 tackles and six sacks.

Senior Noah Maneval (25 tackles), Cummins (17.5), junior Jack Melger (16), junior Kaden Hill (14) and junior Carter Maslowski (13) also finished in double-digit tackles last season.

"They're very ambitious and they kind of know the talent they have this year and how successful they can be," Hanson said.

However, he added, "We haven't proven anything yet."

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Blazers Eye Playoff Return

Philosophically, Torrington coach Russell Stienmetz tries not to have his players look too far into the future.

So, for now, the Trailblazers are focused on Aug. 25 and their season opener – not Oct. 27, the opening Friday of the playoffs.

But it's also safe to say that Torrington wants to be there on Oct. 27. After two deep playoff runs in 2020 and 2021, last year's team missed the postseason entirely.

"I do believe that the players were very unhappy with missing the playoffs last season and do not want that to happen this season," Stienmetz said.

To return to postseason form, the Trailblazers will have to rely on everyone; Stienmetz said he only anticipated about six seniors on a roster of about 30, leaving little depth. Still, the players who do return have the experience and athleticism to improve on last year's 3-6 season.

Seniors Ty Bennick and Bryce Hager were all-conference choices last year, and Bennick was Torrington's lone all-state choice.

Bennick, Hager and senior Brayden Frazier were 1-2-3 in tackles and defensive points for the Trailblazers last year.

Frazier led Torrington with 76 total tackles. Bennick added 72 tackles, including a team-high six tackles for loss and four sacks.

Hager, meanwhile, had 55.5 tackles, including 3.5

"Hopefully, they keep that confidence from last year and remember their jobs from week to week."

~Coach Russell Stienmetz

sacks, and blocked two kicks.

Senior Greysen Shields chipped in 39 tackles and senior Mac Hibben added 36 tackles and tied for the team lead with three interceptions.

Junior Kaden Romig added 32 tackles, senior Jacob Durrant had 26, junior Ryan Moorehouse had 19 and senior Trey Parriott had 16.

"Players want to fly to the ball on defense and were more confident by the end of last season," Stienmetz said. "Hopefully, they keep that confidence from last year and remember their jobs from week to week."

On offense, Torrington will benefit from the return of Hager under center, as he completed 36 of 78 passes for 464 yards and six touchdowns to lead the Trailblazer passing attack.

Hager was also second on the team in rushing yards with 392, but led the Trailblazers with 90 carries and six rushing touchdowns. Durrant added 49 carries for 269 yards and three scores.

Torrington graduated its top two receivers, though, leaving Shields, who had six

catches for 52 yards, as the leading returning receiver.

Junior Mac Hibben will contribute at wide receiver and defensive back. Also, junior transfer Kaiden Riggs, an all-state selection last year at Lingle, will bolster depth.

"We experienced several injuries last year and with that we had young player step up and receive valuable game experiences," Stienmetz said. "These experiences will pay off as we are counting on these players to be starters on both sides of the ball."



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

Coach: Russell Stienmetz, fifth year at Torrington
2022 Record: 3-6, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

OL/DL: Ty Bennick, Sr.
QB/LB: Bryce Hager, Sr.
OL/LB: Brayden Frazier, Sr.
WR/DB: Greysen Shields, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Gering, Neb., 7 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-1: at Mitchell, Neb., 7 p.m.
*9-8: vs. Burns, 7 p.m.
*9-15: at Wheatland, 7 p.m.
*9-22: vs. Big Horn, 6 p.m.
*9-29: vs. Tongue River, 6 p.m.
*10-6: at Glenrock, 7 p.m.
*10-13: at Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m. (at Sundance)
*10-20: vs. Newcastle, 6 p.m.
* Conference game





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

Coach: Andy Garland,
 20th year at Upton-Sundance
2022 Record: 2-5, did not
 qualify for playoffs

Key Players

QB/DB: Keaton Mills, Sr.
RB/ILB: Eli Gill, Jr.
RB/DB: Ryder Downey, Sr.
TE/DB: Chase Mills, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Moorcroft, 6 p.m.,
 scrimmage (Zero Week)
 9-1: vs. Cokeville, 6 p.m.
 (at Shoshoni)
 *9-8: at Big Horn, 6 p.m.
 *9-16: at Tongue River, 2 p.m.
 *9-22: vs. Burns, 6 p.m. (at
 Sundance)
 *9-29: vs. Newcastle, 6 p.m.
 (at Upton)
 *10-6: at Wheatland, 6 p.m.
 *10-13: vs. Torrington,
 6 p.m. (at Sundance)
 *10-20: at Glenrock, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Patriots Need to Fill Holes

For the first time since the Upton-Sundance co-op began in 2012, the Patriots' football team ended a season without a playoff berth.

To rebound from a 2-5 finish, the Patriots will need to rely on backs and receivers to hold up their responsibilities early as the team works to develop linemen to replace those lost to graduation.

Junior Eli Gill was Upton-Sundance's only all-state pick, and two others – seniors (and cousins) Chase and Keaton Mills – were all-conference selections.

"We're going to hang our hat on those guys coming back and being good leaders, and then getting some young guys up to snuff on expectations and being competitive," coach Andy Garland said.

The Patriots' top five players in defensive points all return. Gill, by far, led the Patriots with 116 tackles, six tackles for loss and two fumble recoveries; he also had two interceptions. He was one of only two players in Class 2A to rack up more than 20 defensive points per game, and he averaged 25.1.

Chase Mills was second with 61 tackles and also had three tackles for loss and a team-high three interceptions.

Junior Jayden Keller was third with 52.5 tackles, while Keaton Mills added 39.5 tackles and also had a team-high four pass deflections. Senior Ryder Downey chipped in 37 tackles and also had two interceptions.

Senior Hayes Haiar (31 tackles), junior Jackson East (18.5) and senior Jacob Comer (16) also saw extended defensive time.

The offense returns most of the players who threw, ran and caught, but the

"We're going to hang our hat on those guys coming back and being good leaders, and then getting some young guys up to snuff on expectations and being competitive."

~Coach Andy Garland

offensive line lacks experience.

Keaton Mills completed 31 of 73 passes for 319 yards and three touchdowns and was also second in rushing with 80 carries for 292 yards and five rushing scores.

"Keaton had a good year last year," Garland said. "He got banged up a little bit, but he's healthy now. ... He'll be by far the leader on the team."

"I don't think that we're going to have a whole lot more wrinkles, per se, but the ball will be in Keaton's hands a lot of the time just because he's a good decision maker, a tough runner and he can throw the ball."


Gill led the Patriots' rushing game with 73 carries for 346 yards.

Chase Mills was the top target in the passing game, with his 151 receiving yards leading the team; he scored three touchdowns on just eight catches.

Senior Ryder Downey added 233 rushing yards and 65 receiving yards. In all, the Patriots return their top three rushers.




Garland also said juniors Rhett Watt and Jayden Keller will contribute in the passing game.

Junior Ryan Baker will join East, Haiar and Comer as the most experienced returning players on the offensive line.



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Borton Moves Up to Lead Role

When Tony Borton thought about applying for the head coaching job at Wheatland, he took stock of what really drove him to be a coach.

"You come to care a lot about their success, not only on the field but off the field," he said. "It had as much to do with as helping those guys learn life lessons and become better men, eventually, as it does about football."

With that in mind, Borton – who was previously an assistant coach in Kemmerer as well as at three different schools in Colorado before joining the coaching staff in Wheatland more than a decade ago – enters his first year as Wheatland's head coach this fall.

The Bulldogs' 2022 season represented the first time since 2011 that Wheatland didn't reach the playoffs, "and the kids are fired up about that," Borton said.

Borton said if the Bulldogs can play more aggressively and limit their mistakes, "that's worth a couple games right there."

The Bulldogs return eight players on both offense and defense who started last year. That tally includes senior quarterback Brock Peasley, who had 70 completions for 843 yards and eight touchdowns in 2022. He's also Wheatland's top returning rusher, as the Bulldogs' top two ground gainers from last year graduated; he ran 61 times for 136 yards last season.

Borton said Peasley has put in the work in the offseason to develop the mental aspects of the game and is also more physically ready for the demands of the position.

Senior Cole Goertz, who had 22 carries for 135 yards, is the only other returner to break 50 rushing yards last season.

Senior Tagg Mickelsen was third on the team in both receptions (10) and receiving yards (115) and is Wheatland's top returning receiver. Senior Bryce Stenson added seven catches for 98 yards, the only other returner with more than one catch.

Wheatland graduated its top two tacklers but does return several key contributors on the defensive side.

Goertz, with 43 tackles last year, is Wheatland's top returning tackler. Right behind is junior Jacob Hyché, who had 40 to go with five tackles for loss.

Senior Gabriel Haroldson contributed 32.5 tackles last season and senior Wyatt Kafka had 27.5 tackles, including 5.5 for loss.

Borton said the Bulldogs will run similar approaches to past years on both offense and defense, although the defensive approach will be both more simplified and more aggressive.

He said one of the mantras for the year is "relentless aggression."

"We're going to come after people," he said. "Come what may, we're going to send it."

Senior running back/linebacker Tyler Bohnen and junior lineman Bode Stone should also be impact players this year, Borton said.



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

Coach: Tony Borton, first year at Wheatland
2022 Record: 2-7, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

QB: Brock Peasley, Sr.
RB/LB: Cole Goertz, Sr.
WR/LB: Tagg Mickelsen, Sr.
OL/DL: Wyatt Kafka, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Mitchell, Neb., 7 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-1: at Mountain View, 4 p.m.
*9-8: at Newcastle, 6 p.m.
*9-15: vs. Torrington, 7 p.m.
*9-22: at Glenrock, 7 p.m.
*9-29: vs. Big Horn, 6 p.m.
*10-6: vs. Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m.
*10-13: at Burns, 7 p.m.
*10-20: vs. Tongue River, 6 p.m.
* Conference game



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

Coach: Marty Linford
second year at Cokeville
2022 Record: 7-3, lost to Lovell 28-7 in state semifinals

Key Players

RB/MLB: Micah Petersen, Sr.
RB/ST: Jack Dayton, Sr.
OG/DT: Isaac Halls, Sr.
OT/DE: Jethro Awtrey, Sr

2023 Schedule

8-24: vs. Kemmerer, 4 p.m., scrimmage (Zero Week)
9-1: vs. Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m. (at Shoshoni)
*9-8: vs. Lovell, 1 p.m.
*9-15: at Pinedale, 7 p.m.
*9-22: at Kemmerer, 7 p.m.
*9-29: vs. Mountain View, 1 p.m.
10-6: at Rich County, Utah, 1 p.m.
*10-13: vs. Thermopolis, 2 p.m.
*10-19: at Lyman, 4 p.m.
* Conference game

COKEVILLE PANTHERS

2A WEST

Panthers Have Returning Talent

Few teams that graduated as many key contributors as the Cokeville Panthers did last year can call themselves "experienced."

Yet that's exactly what Cokeville has in 2023.

Despite graduating all four of its all-state players, the Panthers return their other seven starters on both offense and defense, including a trio of all-conference selections in seniors Jack Dayton and Micah Petersen and junior Justin Moyes.

"We're going to be a little more mature this year," coach Marty Linford said. "... We've got some good kids that have played a lot of football the last couple years."

That maturity starts in the backfield.

Dayton was Cokeville's biggest threat in the rushing game last year, carrying for 1,012 yards on 159 carries and scoring 13 touchdowns.

The offensive line play of seniors Isaac Halls and Jethro Awtrey and juniors Kalob Haderlie and Ryder Pope will be key in

taking some of the pressure off Dayton, who will likely be the focal point of opposing defenses.

"If we block well, it won't really matter" if opposing defenses key on Dayton, Linford said.

Petersen was third on the team with 51 carries for 216 yards and a pair of touchdowns, while

Moyes, with 12 catches for 136 yards, was the No. 2 receiver for Cokeville last season and leads all the Panthers' returners in those categories. He also finished fourth with 38 carries for 161 yards and three touchdowns.

Junior Kayson Walker chipped in 96 rushing yards and 83 receiving yards, including two touchdowns, and junior Brodie Dean contributed 90 receiving yards.

The Panthers graduated five of their top seven players in defensive points but return Moyes and Walker, who were third and fourth, respectively, for Cokeville in 2022.

Walker's 72 tackles ranked him third on the team, while Moyes had 56 tackles and a team-high

five interceptions in addition to seven pass break-ups.

Pope had 44.5 tackles, while Dayton added 33 tackles and three interceptions. Haderlie contributed 27.5 tackles and senior Andrew Jackman had 17, the only other returners to break into double-digit tackles last year.

However, Linford said the team has more experience than shows on paper, with a junior varsity schedule that prepared the incoming players to fill key roles.

Also, the Panthers will be deep. Even with an enrollment of just about 70 students – boys and girls – Linford said the Panthers' roster could be as high as 38 players, including up to 16 freshmen. Some of those ninth graders will contribute immediately, Linford said.

"There's going to be probably three or four of them that see significant varsity time," he said. "... They've been playing (conference opponents) Mountain View and Lyman ever since they were in pee-wee football."



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

Coach: Bart Jernigan,
 seventh year at Kemmerer
2022 Record: 2-6, did not
 qualify for playoffs

2023 Schedule

8-24: at Cokeville, scrimmage,
 4 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-1: vs. Glenrock, 5 p.m.
 *9-8: at Thermopolis, 5 p.m.
 9-15: at Rich County, Utah, 4 p.m.
 *9-22: vs. Cokeville, 7 p.m.
 *9-29: vs. Lyman, 6 p.m.
 *10-6: at Pinedale, 6 p.m.
 *10-13: at Lovell, 5:30 p.m.
 *10-20: vs. Mountain View, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Rangers Will be Solid in Trenches

The Kemmerer Rangers' offense has a unique problem entering the 2023 season.

The Rangers lost their top three rushers, top two receivers and quarterback to graduation, but they retained a huge chunk of linemen.

Consequently, some players who wore bigger numbers last year may wear smaller numbers this year as coach Bart Jernigan tries to find the best place to put his team's best athletes.

"We graduated a heck of a lot of our offensive production last year so we need kids to step up in the backfield," he said. "... We've got some kids who could step up and take the reins on that."

Seniors Gabriel Emery and Tanner Schramm, both linemen for the Rangers and both all-conference selections last year, are among those who could see new spots on the field this season.

But nothing is certain, and Jernigan said, "those things are still battles that we're looking to make decisions on."

Also, Emery and Schramm are

among a small group of seniors – Jernigan said he only expects three seniors to come out – so the team will rely a lot on a talented junior group as well as a deep sophomore class and even a freshman group that Jernigan said has high expectations and good numbers.

"We're going to be young," Jernigan said. "The junior class is pretty strong and pretty decently big, but we're going to need them to step up big time."

"... With such a small senior class, we've got to grow our leaders... and put them in position to be maximally effective."

Juniors Owen Barton and Graison Kelley also return on the line, as does sophomore Colter Krell.

Junior Roany Proffit carried 30 times for 77 yards last year and is Kemmerer's top returning rusher, while sophomore Bryson McGill (two catches, 20 yards), by default, is the team's top returning receiver.

The defense is similarly organized, as Emery and Proffit are the only two players returning who

were among Kemmerer's top seven players in defensive points.

Emery tied for second for the Rangers with 67 total tackles and also had four tackles for loss, while Proffit had 56 tackles and four tackles for loss, as well.

Kelley added 33 tackles, senior Jayden Smith had 29 and Barton had 27.

Jernigan said the Rangers have had an inspired offseason so far and see the opportunities that come with the juggling the coaches anticipate.

"We've got plenty of kids that have the aspiration and have put in the offseason work," Jernigan said. "I'm excited to see what it breeds."

"... I'm excited for it and the kids are excited for it too, and they've kind of risen to it in the offseason."

Key Players

OG/LB: Gabe Emery, Sr.
OT/DE: Tanner Schramm, Sr.
OG/DE: Owen Barton, Jr.
OT/DT: Graison Kelley, Jr.

2A WEST

LOVELL BULLDOGS

Bulldogs Look to Get Over Hump

So close, but so far.

Lovell's hopes for a Class 2A championship have been exactly that, two years in a row.

An 8-7 loss to Big Horn in last year's 2A championship – just one year removed from an 8-6 loss to Lyman in the title game – marked the Bulldogs' second consecutive runner-up finish.

While other teams might have a competitive spirit crushed by such losses, Lovell coach Nicc Crosby said the Bulldogs have found solace in playing well at War Memorial Stadium and have renewed their motivation to return, and win.

"They know what it takes to get there," Crosby said. "They know what it's like to play on that stage, and they've really done a pretty good job. Just a couple key plays here and there has been the difference."

While Lovell graduated its fair share of talent – senior Jared Mangus is the only one of six all-state players returning this fall – the momentum of back-to-

back title game appearances has helped.

"We've got a lot of guys coming back with a ton of experience, a ton of success and a bit of a bad taste in their mouth with how it ended," Crosby said.

Mangus carried 130 times for 758 yards last year, both good for second-best on the team, and tied for the team lead with 10 rushing touchdowns.

Junior Davin Crosby completed 77 of 141 passes for 1,191 yards and 11 touchdowns and also chipped in 59 carries for 123 yards and eight more TDs.

He returns an experienced set of receivers, including three of the top four players in receiving yards from 2022.

Senior Adnan Khan, an all-conference pick, led the Bulldogs in receiving yards, tallying 314 yards on 16 catches. Mangus finished third for Lovell with 177 yards on nine catches, while senior Blake Wilson contributed 10 catches for 175 yards.

"That (experience) certainly does make a coach a lot more confident about the upcoming season," coach Crosby said.

The defense graduated its top five tacklers and seven of its top nine, though, with Khan and his 55 tackles leading all returners.

Mangus had 36.5 tackles and a pair of interceptions.

Junior Braxton Felkins also played significant minutes, tallying 35 tackles and two interceptions. Wilson had 24.5 tackles and tied for the team lead with four pass deflections. Senior James Love, with 32.5 tackles, was the only other returner above 20 tackles last year.

"We're going to have to replace some valuable offensive and defensive linemen and linebackers, and just losing a lot of depth there with our graduating seniors," Crosby said. "... It's just going to take some time and patience to figure out who our first 11 are going to be out there."



Mascot: Bulldogs
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Blue and White

Coach: Nicc Crosby,
 fifth year at Lovell
2022 Record: 10-1, lost
 to Big Horn 8-7 in state
 championship

Key Players

OL/DL: James Love, Sr.
OL/DL: Carson Asay, Sr.
RB/DB: Jared Mangus, Sr.
WR/DB: Adnan Khan, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-26: at Buffalo, noon,
 scrimmage (Zero Week)
 9-1: vs. Big Horn, 6 p.m.
 *9-8: at Cokeville, 1 p.m.
 *9-15: vs. Lyman, 7 p.m.
 *9-22: at Pinedale, 7 p.m.
 9-29: vs. Rich County, Utah, 7 p.m.
 *10-6: at Mountain View, 3:30 p.m.
 *10-13: vs. Kemmerer, 5:30 p.m.
 *10-20: vs. Thermopolis, 7 p.m.
 * Conference game

Eagles Look to Regain Top Spot

For many programs, a semifinal appearance that ends with a one-score loss to the eventual state champion would be a successful season.

In Lyman, though, where the Eagles were coming off two consecutive Class 2A championships, last season's finish was short of the goals the program had established.

"Hopefully it's a motivator for them," Eagles coach Dale Anderson said. "If it doesn't, I don't know what will."

At the same time, though, Anderson said last season still gave his team plenty of success, even if it didn't end with a trophy.

"We want to be successful, but we really do talk to our kids a lot about that daily progress and daily process and being the best version of you," he said.

This year's Lyman team will build on that idea, and in doing so, they bring one of 2A's most experienced teams.

The Eagles return a pair of all-state choices in seniors Carter

Bradshaw and Morgan Hatch and two more returning all-conference choices in juniors Max Gregory and Nate Brady.

Lyman's four returning all-conference players is tied with Mountain View and Tongue River for the most in Class 2A.

From the quarterback position, Bradshaw led the Eagles in rushing, carrying 241 times for 1,013 yards and 11 touchdowns. He also completed 23 passes for 248 yards and four touchdowns.

Bradshaw started last season at wide receiver, and Anderson said a summer where Bradshaw could focus solely on playing quarterback should expand Lyman's offensive options this year. While the Eagles likely won't throw it 20 or 30 times a game, Anderson said, "hopefully we'll have the ability to get a little bit of balance out of that."

With that, though, senior Caleb Smith (three catches, 36 yards) is the only returning player who caught a pass last season.

Up front, the Eagles lose only

one senior offensive lineman to graduation and both Hatch and Gregory return, "so we've got a little experience there," Anderson said.

Senior Xander Lyman added 38 carries for 176 yards, while Brady will also contribute in the backfield.

Lyman also returns its top four tacklers from a defense that ranked first in Class 2A in rushing defense and second in total defense.

Gregory led Lyman's defense with 81 tackles, including a team-high 28 solo. He also led Lyman with 16 tackles for loss and two fumble recoveries, and he also had four sacks.

Hatch was second with 52.5 tackles and led Lyman with five sacks.

In addition to Gregory and Hatch, Lyman also sees the return of Smith, who had 45 tackles, and senior Sam Gregory, who had 42.5 tackles and a team-high five pass deflections.

Brady had 36.5 tackles and Lyman had 29, while Bradshaw had 23.



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

Coach: Dale Anderson, 12th year at Lyman
2022 Record: 8-3, lost to Big Horn 7-0 in state semifinals

Key Players

QB/DB: Carter Bradshaw, Sr.
OL/DL: Morgan Hatch, Sr.
RB/DB: Xander Lyman, Sr.
TE/DE: Caleb Smith, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Malad, Idaho, 3 p.m.
9-1: vs. Bear Lake, Idaho, 4 p.m.
*9-8: vs. Pinedale, 4 p.m.
*9-15: at Lovell, 7 p.m.
*9-22: vs. Mountain View, 4 p.m.
*9-29: at Kemmerer, 6 p.m.
*10-6: at Thermopolis, 5 p.m.
10-13: vs. Rich County, Utah, 1 p.m.
*10-19: vs. Cokeville, 4 p.m.
* Conference game



Mascot: Buffalos
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Purple and Black

Coach: Brent Walk, 12th year at Mountain View
2022 Record: 5-4, lost to Big Horn 28-26 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

WR/S: Carson Eardley, Sr.
RB/S: Jayce Schultz, Sr.
OL/DL: Coby Jones, Sr.
OL/DL: Tyler Mair, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Lander, 4 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-1: vs. Wheatland, 4 p.m.
9-8: at Rich County, Utah, 1 p.m.
*9-15: vs. Thermopolis, 4 p.m.
*9-22: at Lyman, 4 p.m.
*9-29: at Cokeville, 1 p.m.
*10-6: vs. Lovell, 3:30 p.m.
*10-13: vs. Pinedale, 3 p.m.
*10-20: at Kemmerer, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

MOUNTAIN VIEW BUFFALOS

2A WEST

Buffalos Should be in Title Picture

With depth comes competition. That reality will be on full display this season in Mountain View.

With only two contributors graduated from last year's 5-4 team, the Buffalos have the potential to be a title contender in 2023 thanks to all the competition on the practice field.

Although Mountain View has nine returning starters on both sides of the ball, no spots are guaranteed.

"(Returning starters) know they've got guys coming after their jobs," Mountain View coach Brent Walk said. "That's a perfect scenario as a coach."

Mountain View returns four all-conference players, tied for the most in Class 2A.

Seniors Carson Eardley, Tyler Mair and Jayce Schultz and sophomore Jackson Sawyer were all-conference selections last year, with Eardley and Schultz earning all-state honors.

They're all part of a group that is senior-heavy, experienced and bought into the team.

"It's a really good nucleus for a

good football team, so we've just got to stay focused," Walk said. "... We're really going to focus on Mountain View not beating Mountain View."

Schultz led Mountain View's ground game, carrying 148 times for 901 yards and seven touchdowns. Eardley was third on the team with 220 yards on 27 carries, including three touchdowns.

Eardley also led Mountain View's receivers in yards with 144 yards on 10 catches, including the team's only two receiving touchdowns of the season. No other returner had more than 20 receiving yards last season.

The quarterback position is up for grabs between junior Isac Linford and sophomore transfer Justus Platts. Linford completed 34 passes for 324 yards last season.

"Offensively, our goal is to be able to run the ball and throw the ball equally effectively," Walk said.

Mair and senior Coby Jones will bring experience to the line.

The Buffalos' defense is stacked, as 12 of the team's top 14 tacklers

from last year are back.

Schultz was Mountain View's top tackler in 2022, registering 87 tackles to go with four tackles for loss.

Sawyer was second with 69 tackles, while senior Gus Roden was third with 64.

Eardley added 56.5 tackles and two interceptions, Mair added 45 tackles, junior Brockton Walker had 36.5 tackles and a team-high four pass deflections, senior Konnor Staley chipped in 34.5 tackles.

Senior Paxton Walker had 26 tackles, senior Bodey Fraughton had 23, Jones had 22 and senior Fletcher Black had 17.

The experience the Buffalos have on defense has Walk's expectations high.

"Kids, unless they know (what to do), they don't play fast," Walk said. "And we always talk about playing fast."

"... We've always hung our hat on being really, really physical and shutting down offenses, and I think we'll have an opportunity to do that again."



Mascot: Wranglers
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Green and Orange

Coach: David Thrash,
 second year at Pinedale
2022 Record: 0-8, did not
 qualify for playoffs

Key Players

QB/RB/LB: Dustin Larsen, Sr.
RB/LB: Jake Hammer, Sr.
QB/LB: Bodie Jensen, Sr.
RB/DE: Cale Dauwen, Soph.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Big Piney, 4 p.m.
 (Zero Week)
 9-1: at Rawlins, 7 p.m.
 *9-8: at Lyman, 4 p.m.
 *9-15: vs. Cokeville, 7 p.m.
 *9-22: vs. Lovell, 7 p.m.
 *9-29: at Thermopolis, 5 p.m.
 *10-6: vs. Kemmerer, 6 p.m.
 *10-13: at Mountain View, 3 p.m.
 10-20: vs. Rich County, Utah, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Wranglers Look to Gain Momentum

Every Pinedale Wrangler wants to win.

That reality has been clear to second-year coach David Thrash for a while now.

Translating those wants into results, though, has been a grind.

The Wranglers finished last year with their second consecutive winless season and enter 2023 on a 22-game losing streak. Last year's team only managed 33 points and gave up 323, an average of 40-4.

But this year's group is motivated, and many players have shown the extra drive in practice and in off-field preparation that will hopefully turn the team's fortunes, Thrash said.

"Through spring ball, the group that's come out, they've accepted the challenge and they want to make a difference... and (they're) taking the steps to turn that around," he said.

Among that group is a trio of seniors who have already shown they are ready for the challenge.

Jake Hammer and Dustin Larsen, both seniors, were all-conference choices last year. Together with classmate Bodie Jensen, they lead both the offensive backfield and the defensive linebacking corps that will be the experienced center of the Wranglers' approach.

Pinedale returns five of its top eight tacklers from last season, including those three linebackers

who were each among Pinedale's top four tacklers last season.

Hammer's 46.5 tackles last year was second-best for Pinedale, and he led the team with five tackles for loss. Jensen added 44 tackles while Larsen had 42.

Thrash said the goal for the experienced linebackers will be, through game-planning and preparation, "putting them in a position for them to be able to capitalize on their skills and abilities, and then lean on them in that leadership role to develop these up-and-comers."

Thrash said he hoped the leadership the seniors bring to the field will allow the Wranglers to avoid a dip in talent once they graduate by helping to prepare the underclassmen.

Other returners with significant defensive experience include sophomore Cale Dauwen (17 tackles), senior Owen McMillan (16), junior Brodie Richey (14) and junior Joey Bain (13).

Offensively, Hammer, Larsen and Jensen will all likely be a part of the offensive attack.

Hammer saw limited time at quarterback but leads all returners with 24 passing yards. However, Thrash said Larsen and Jensen will likely fight it out for the spot under center, but he said no matter what happens, all three players will see time in the offensive backfield.

Also in the mix is Dauwen, who was second for Pinedale last year in rushing yards, compiling 97 on 21 carries, and scored two rushing touchdowns before his season was cut short due to a knee injury. No other returner broke 30 rushing yards last year.

Jensen led Pinedale with 49 receiving yards on seven catches.



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2A WEST

THERMOPOLIS BOBCATS

New Coach Building Foundation

Often, football is a numbers game. In Thermopolis, the Bobcats are trying to win that game first – and then turn that into victories on the field.

New head coach Boone Bowker is drumming up interest in the program, and from a roster of 23 last year, the Bobcats had 49 players at their initial sign-up before summer.

Of those, 33 went to camp, and Bowker said he expects about 35-40 players in total.

"This year will be the year we lay the foundation for our program to build on," Bowker said. "We have a lot of young guys that will have to take the reins on this team and have a lot of growing up to do in order to find success."

At the forefront of that effort is an experienced defense that returns six of

its top seven tacklers from last year.

Junior Chris Arends led the Bobcats with 79.5 tackles last season; his tallies included 6.5 tackles for loss, two sacks and 32 solo tackles.

Sophomore Armani Dukes added 53 tackles to finish third on the team, while senior Jessen Basse, an all-conference choice, added 48 tackles, including four for loss.

Junior Ryan Arends had 42 tackles, senior Mason Reese added 41 and junior Brody Sorensen had 28.

Other defensive contributors returning this year include junior Del Dukes, who notched 20 tackles, and juniors Zane Stam, Ethan Yarrington and Logan Dafoe, who had 18 tackles apiece.

Last year's team had just two seniors and four juniors, forcing younger players into essential defensive roles sooner than usual.

"But the positive to that is the underclassmen get a lot of playing time," Bowker said. "These guys have a ton of experience playing defense, so that should help us out on

that side of the ball."

On offense, Thermopolis returns one of Class 2A's top receivers in all-conference selection Del Dukes, who had 39 catches for 806 yards (20.7 yards per catch) and six touchdowns.

Ryan Arends added 20 catches for 293 yards and a touchdown, good for third on the team in all categories, while Armani Dukes chipped in six catches for 94 yards.

The Bobcats' top two rushers graduated, so Armani Dukes (seven carries for 27 yards) is by default Thermopolis' top returning rusher. Bowker said the Bobcats' offense will have "a complete overhaul."

"Offensively we have the scheme but we are really letting the players take some ownership in it while focusing on their strengths," Bowker said.

Bowker also is intrigued by the potential of the program – something he's seen as an assistant coach the past two years.

"After getting to know the community and kids, I felt there is some potential here in Thermopolis to build something," he said



Mascot: Bobcats
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Purple and Yellow

Coach: Boone Bowker, first
 year at Thermopolis
2022 Record: 2-6, did not
 qualify for playoffs

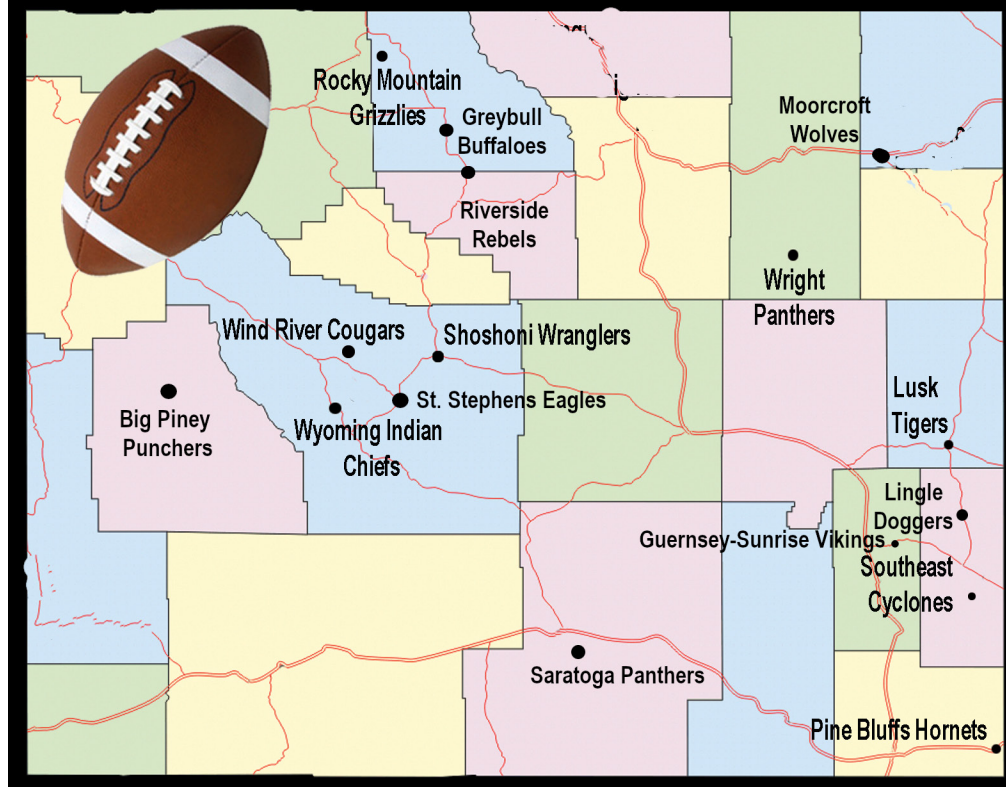
2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Worland, 7 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-1: at Tongue River, 6 p.m.
 *9-8: vs. Kemmerer, 5 p.m.
 *9-15: at Mountain View, 4 p.m.
 9-23: at Rich County, Utah, 4 p.m.
 *9-29: vs. Pinedale, 5 p.m.
 *10-6: vs. Lyman, 5 p.m.
 *10-13: at Cokeville, 2 p.m.
 *10-20: at Lovell, 7 p.m.
 * Conference game

Key Players

WR/DB: Del Dukes, Jr.
QB/RB/LB: Zane Stam, Jr.
OL/DL: Brody Sorensen, Jr.
RB/LB: Jessen Basse, Sr.

1A 9-Man Preview



Pine Bluffs Banking on Winning Tradition

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four Questions to Answer

What's the biggest change to 1A nine-man this year? The lack of deep, experienced and talented senior classes. Last year, 20 all-state players returned across the classification. This year, it's slated to be as few as four.

Who's survived the purge? Big Piney and Wind River. The Punchers were junior-heavy last year but kept up with the West Conference's best. Meanwhile, Wind River graduated a ton but has the benefit of back-to-back big classes.

How different will the East Conference look this year? Quite a bit. Three East Conference programs -- Wright, Saratoga, and Guernsey -- will have new coaches. All three teams missed the playoffs last year.

What about Pine Bluffs? Oh yeah. The defending champion Hornets won't be overrun with talent this year but have a system and a set of expectations in place. And they haven't lost a conference game in two years.

Four Key Games

Big Piney at Wind River, Sept. 21. Big Piney faces the West Conference's other three playoff qualifiers from 2022 all on the road this year, all in a span of five weeks to start conference play.

Shoshoni at Rocky Mountain, Sept. 23.

Even though both teams will bring inexperienced rosters to the field in 2023, so does pretty much everyone else. And the stakes could be as high as usual.

Southeast at Lingle, Oct. 6. Southeast's 36-35 victory last season against its longtime Goshen County rival was the margin by which second and third places were decided in the East.

Pine Bluffs at Southeast, Oct. 20. Chances are good that the Cyclones will be much more competitive than last year, a game Pine Bluffs won 63-6 on its march toward an undefeated state championship.

Predicted Order of Finish

East Conference: Pine Bluffs; Southeast; Lingle; Saratoga; Lusk; Wright; Moorcroft; Guernsey.

West Conference: Big Piney; Wind River; Shoshoni; Riverside; Rocky Mountain; Greybull; Wyoming Indian; St. Stephens.

Preseason top five: 1. Pine Bluffs; 2. Big Piney; 3. Wind River; 4. Southeast; 5. Lingle.

Way-too-early Title Game Score Prediction

Pine Bluffs 30, Big Piney 28. Right now, the Hornets are the team to take down, but the upsides of other programs in the top five are ignored only by the foolhardy.



State Champs
Pine Bluffs
Hornets

2022 State Playoffs

1A/9-Man Championship

Pine Bluffs 33, Shoshoni 27

Semifinals

Pine Bluffs 35, Rocky Mountain 32
Shoshoni 40, Wind River 6

Quarterfinals

Pine Bluffs 45, Big Piney 16
Rocky Mountain 65, Lingle 19
Shoshoni 53, Lusk 12
Wind River 46, Southeast 38

Players to Watch

Cooper Frederick, Wind River. The only two-time all-state selection playing this season at any level above six-man, Frederick had 1,919 rushing yards last season -- and he could be harder to stop this year.

Louden Bremer, Lingle. As a sophomore, Bremer had a huge influence on the Doggers, leading them in receiving (25 catches for 482 yards) and tackles (71) last year.

Karsyn Gurr and Ruben Stoutenberg, Big Piney. Stoutenberg carried for 327 yards and had 184 receiving yards, and he led the Punchers with 72 tackles. Gurr led Big Piney in receiving with 363 yards and six TDs and was also the West's special teams player of the year.

Shawn Shmidl, Pine Bluffs. Only one player who had more than 20 tackles last year is expected back for the Hornets in 2023. Shmidl had 54. He will be a cornerstone around which a young defense can build.

Ty Strohschein, Riverside. His experience running the ball (684 yards, six TDs last year) and, maybe even more so, on defense (77.5 tackles, more than double any other returner for Riverside) will be key.

Brenner Moore, Rocky Mountain. Moore was just about the only underclassmen who cracked the Grizzlies' lineup last year. He put up solid numbers -- 26 tackles, a couple pass deflections, 113 receiving yards -- but will be much more of a leader on both sides.



Mascot: Vikings
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Black and White

Coach: Neal Hughes, first year at Guernsey-Sunrise
2022 Record: 0-8, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

WR/S: Aidan Noggle, Sr.
QB: Mason Collar, Soph.
E/DL: Gabriel Milton, Soph.
WR/RB/LB: Conner Bristow, Soph

2023 Schedule

9-1: at Wyoming Indian, 4 p.m.
 *9-8: at Pine Bluffs, 7 p.m.
 *9-15: vs. Lingle, 7 p.m.
 *9-22: at Saratoga, 6 p.m.
 *9-29: vs. Southeast, 7 p.m.
 *10-6: at Wright, 7 p.m.
 *10-13: vs. Lusk, 7 p.m.
 *10-20: vs. Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Vikings Starting From Ground Zero

Objectively, no team in Wyoming struggled more on the field last year than Guernsey-Sunrise.

In their first year of nine-man football after moving up from six-man due to reclassification, the Vikings were outscored by an average of 66-4 and finished winless for the first time since 1998. All seven conference games finished with running clocks.

This year, the Vikings will start the season with a new coach – alumnus Neal Hughes – who harbors no delusions about the work ahead.

“We’re starting at zero and building back up,” Hughes said.

The Vikings only had 15 players last season; however, only three were seniors and seven were freshmen, boding well for the program’s future. This year, Guernsey will still be mostly freshmen and sophomores, with only two seniors tentatively slated to come out and, again, about 15 players total in uniform.

Hughes, who coached for 12

years in Nebraska and South Dakota, said one of the first goals he has will be to rebuild the mentality of the returning players to remove the stigma a winless, and basically noncompetitive, season. Hughes said he knows building a winning program will take time, but building a team that brings effort each game with the athletes they have should be possible.

Hughes said the Vikings’ players are smart, athletic and willing to learn – “a great recipe for an up-and-coming team,” he said.

Senior Aidan Noggle will be one of the few experienced players returning for the Vikings last year.

Meanwhile, four of Guernsey’s top five tacklers a year ago were freshmen. Now sophomores, Gabriel Milton, Conner Bristow, Korbin Weinkauff and Lukas Rotz all finished with double-digit defensive points in the five games where stats are available.

On offense, sophomore Mason Collar handled quarterbacking duties, completing 30 of 66 passes for 341 yards in the five games

where statistics for the Vikings are available.

Milton finished with eight catches for 139 yards, while Bristow had seven catches for 61 yards.

“We’re going to be quick off the ball and we’ve got a quarterback with a really great arm, so we’re going to take advantage of that,” Hughes said.

Hughes also said he’s going to make a concerted effort to reconnect the town with the team.

Meanwhile, Hughes said he wants to help the Vikings focus on effort and improvement. Through that, he said, the Vikings’ younger players will help build the program for the future and older players can finish their high school careers with no regrets.

“In most situations, we will be facing teams with much more experience, and team rosters of two to three times as many athletes as our club,” Hughes said, “yet we are determined to give our very best during each contest.”

1A 9-MAN EAST

LINGLE-FORT LARAMIE DOGGERS

Doggers Have Balanced Attack

Lingle’s offensive statistics the past two years give a clear indication of the team’s direction.

The rushing yards from 2021 to 2022 were almost identical – from 1,623 two years ago to 1,628 last year.

In the passing game, though, Lingle jumped from only 210 passing yards two years ago to 1,090 last year, good enough to give Lingle the No. 2 passing offense in Class 1A nine-man in yards per game.

Unsurprisingly, Lingle’s record jumped from 3-5 to 6-3.

“With our personnel, we have the ability to get creative on both sides of the ball,” third-year coach Brandon Gifford said. “It will be that creativity that is paramount to us winning football games.”

Lingle gets back two players with all-state credentials: senior Nolan Spears, who was all-state in 2021, and junior Loudon Bremer, an all-state choice last year.

And although the Doggers lost all-stater Kaiden Riggs

to transfer to Torrington and graduated several other important players, they are still in position to compete, and win, this season thanks to an athletic and quick group of returners. Moreover, Lingle has more experience, and more success, against nine-man’s top teams.

“(Last year) we learned how to compete and win and what it is going to take to be one of the best in 1A nine-man football,” Gifford said. “Our younger athletes were able to get some valuable varsity experience, which will help us moving into next fall.”

“... We were able to start playing with more physicality on both sides of the ball. We started tackling better and executing on offense.”

Bremer led the receivers with 25 catches for 482 yards and eight touchdowns. Spears was second on the team in all those categories with 16 catches for 303 yards and six touchdowns.

Sophomore Brady Cook played occasionally at quarterback,

finishing the season 11-of-21 for 168 yards and four touchdowns, and will take over that spot this season.

Senior William Feyereisen and junior Dorian Leo will also be counted on as pass-catchers as well as in the defensive backfield.

Junior Cooper Smith is the only returning starter on the offensive line. Seniors Jaden VanGundy and Caden Ducheneaux and sophomore Colter McFarlin will add depth to that area.

Lingle lost three of its top four tacklers, and six of its top nine, but returns its top tackler in Bremer. He led the Doggers with 71 total tackles, including a team-high 37 solo last year. He also tied for the team lead with two fumble recoveries and four pass deflections.

Smith had 34.5 tackles, including a team-high 4.5 sacks, while Spears had 22 tackles and four pass deflections.

Cook, with 13 tackles, was the only other returning player in double-digit tackles last season.



Mascot: Doggers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Blue and Red

Coach: Brandon Gifford, third year at Lingle
2022 Record: 6-3, lost to Rocky Mountain 65-19 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

RB/LB: Nolan Spears, Sr.
RB/LB: Loudon Bremer, Jr.
QB: Brady Cook, Soph.
OL/DL: Cooper Smith, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Pine Bluffs jamboree, 4 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-1: vs. St. Stephens, 6 p.m.
 *9-8: vs. Lusk, 7 p.m.
 *9-15: at Guernsey-Sunrise, 7 p.m.
 *9-22: vs. Wright, 7 p.m.
 *9-29: at Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
 *10-6: vs. Southeast, 7 p.m.
 *10-13: at Pine Bluffs, 7 p.m.
 *10-20: at Saratoga, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Tigers Rely on Youth Movement

Sophomores and freshmen will be a big part of Lusk's roster this fall.

They won't have a choice. On a team that about 25 players out this fall, 18 of them will be either ninth- or 10th-graders this year, second-year coach Chris Skeen said.

"We're going to be super young again, so just getting them playing time and into the game and meaningful reps instead of just against practice dummies will be key," he said.

Although the Tigers won't boast a ton of older players, the players they do return were all contributors to last year's squad, which reached the Class 1A nine-man playoffs.

Senior David West is the only one of Lusk's five all-conference choices returning this year.

West was Lusk's leading rusher in 2022, carrying 119 times for 629 yards and six touchdowns. He is also is Lusk's top returning receiver

after leading the team in catches (15) and finishing second in yards (173).

Sophomore Nathan Miller contributed 72 carries for 333 yards and four TDs, good for third on the team in all categories.

Junior Quintin Bieri was third for the Tigers with seven catches for 43 yards.

Juniors Jackson Smith and Ridge Kupke shared duties under center last season. Smith completed 33 of 55 passes for 489 yards and seven touchdowns, while Kupke completed 15 of 20 passes for 130 yards.

Skeen said he'd like to see one of the two players seize control of the position. One bonus this season is the offensive players "won't have to do as much install of a whole new offense, a whole new system like we did last year."

The Tigers' defense graduated four of its top six tacklers, but many returning players saw quality minutes. Miller was second for

the Tigers with 55 tackles and led the team with four interceptions, while West added 36 tackles and had two fumble recoveries and two interceptions.

Bieri had 24 tackles, sophomore Isaac Assman had 16 and Smith had 15.

Senior lineman Kort Bannan and sophomore defensive lineman Cody Himes will also be counted on to produce.

Skeen said some players may switch positions to better facilitate what the team can do as a whole.

"We'll get a better feel for what we're going to do with the defense once we see what everyone can do," Skeen said.

Skeen said despite the young roster, most of the returning players played enough to letter last season – a move that will pay off this year with increased depth.

"They got playing time, so they were getting into ballgames," he said. "... We were trying to rotate kids in as much as possible just to get that experience and build that depth."



Mascot: Tigers

Division: Class 1A nine-man

Conference: East

Colors: Red and White

Coach: Chris Skeen,

second year at Lusk

2022 Record: 4-5, lost to

Shoshoni 53-12 in state

quarterfinals

Key Players

RB/CB: David West, Sr.

OL/DL: Kort Bannan, Sr.

RB/DB: Nathan Miller, Soph.

QB/DB: Jackson Smith, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Wright jamboree, 2 p.m. (Zero Week)

8-31: at Big Piney, 5 p.m.

*9-8: at Lingle, 7 p.m.

*9-15: vs. Saratoga, 6 p.m.

*9-22: at Southeast, 1 p.m.

*9-29: vs. Pine Bluffs, 7 p.m.

*10-6: vs. Moorcroft, 6 p.m.

*10-13: at Guernsey-Sunrise, 7 p.m.

*10-20: vs. Wright, 6 p.m.

* **Conference game**

"We're going to be super young again, so getting them playing time and into the game and meaningful reps instead of just practice dummies will be key...."

~Coach Chris Skeen

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Mascot: Wolves
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Green and White

Coach: Clayton McSpadden, second year at Moorcroft
2022 Record: 1-7, ineligible for playoffs

Key Players

WR/DB: Chaz Dewey, Sr.
OL/DL: Oliver Gorsuch, Jr.
RB/LB: Bradynn Terry, Jr.
OL/DL: Spencer Cuthrell, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m., scrimmage (at Sundance, Zero Week)
 9-1: vs. Greybull, 5 p.m.
 *9-9: at Saratoga, 2 p.m.
 *9-15: vs. Southeast, 6 p.m.
 *9-22: at Pine Bluffs, 6 p.m.
 *9-29: vs. Lingle, 6 p.m.
 *10-6: at Lusk, 6 p.m.
 *10-13: vs. Wright, 7 p.m.
 *10-20: at Guernsey-Sunrise, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Wolves on Upward Trajectory

In his first year as head coach at Moorcroft, Clayton McSpadden had some clear goals.

The first two were straightforward: have the players understand football and learn how to play well as a team.

The third? Have fun, too.

"That kept kids out," McFadden said.

It's also going to bring players to this year's team, as McSpadden said the Wolves will be a much deeper team this year while bringing several players into pads who weren't last year. The roster could be up to 40 players deep, with as many as a dozen seniors.

Moreover, McSpadden said, they are players who understand commitment.

"They're ranch kids, and I love ranch kids," he said. "... These kids definitely know how to work, and that's been super cool and that's been one of our strengths."

There is still work to do. Moorcroft's only victory last season came against winless Guernsey; however, that victory broke a 17-game losing streak and allowed the Wolves to end the season with a win.

The Wolves will be ineligible for the playoffs again this year, but program momentum is growing.

"It's been a long time since I've gone home (after practice) and said, 'We've got a lot better,' every single day," McSpadden said.

Senior Chaz Dewey, Moorcroft's only returning all-conference player, was the Wolves' top receiver, catching 20 passes for 478 yards and four touchdowns.

Senior Cade Williams chipped in 15 catches for 110 yards.

Junior Bradynn Terry, who was second for the Wolves with 57 carries for 256 yards and two touchdowns, is Moorcroft's top returning rusher. No other returning player had more than 40 rushing yards last season.

The Wolves lost a quarterback to transfer but McFadden said junior William Ripley could take over at that spot and open up new areas of the passing game.

"I'm pretty excited about having both options," McFadden said.

In all, Moorcroft graduated five of its top eight tacklers.

Junior Oliver Gorsuch is the only one of Moorcroft's top four tacklers to come back. He was second on the team with 54 tackles and also notched five tackles for loss and two sacks.

Terry was fifth on the team with 36 tackles. Dewey added 24 tackles, Ripley had 19 and Williams had 17.

Senior Spencer Cuthrell will add depth to the line.

McSpadden said younger players have done a good job buying into the program's concepts, and the seniors are doing well in promoting good team culture.

"They are becoming very good leaders on and off the field, and that's the key thing for me, on and off the field," he said. "... These kids are really doing their due diligence of buying in, and they're filling those holes."

1A 9-MAN EAST

PINE BLUFFS HORNETS

Defending Champs Have Holes to Fill

After climbing to the top of Class 1A nine-man last year, Pine Bluffs' goal in 2023 is to stay there.

Last year, Pine Bluffs won its third state championship in program history – all won since 2016 – and finished 11-0, the program's fourth undefeated season.

However, the Hornets graduated seven all-state players and will have to rely on unproven, but athletic and hard-working, players to fill that void.

"Winning breeds a lot of good things in kids," said coach Will Gray, entering his 13th year as the Hornets' leader. "We have a group that was a part of several successful teams, but they weren't huge contributors. They are aware of that, and are willing to put in the work to make a name for themselves."

"We don't need them to be exactly like the previous players who have graduated. We need them to be the best versions of themselves."

Pine Bluffs still returns three all-conference players with

seniors Mitchell Birkhofer, David Merryfield and Abe Serrano.

Serrano is the top returning rusher; he was fourth on the team last year with 57 carries for 357 yards and six touchdowns.

Birkhofer, at tight end, and Merryfield will lead efforts on the line. They will be joined by senior Jace Pierantoni and juniors Ethan Bomberger, Coalton Bymer and Luis Martinez.

Junior Shawn Shmidl is Pine Bluffs' top returning receiver with 11 catches for 143 yards and two touchdowns last year, good for fourth on the team in all categories. Of the Hornets' top five receivers last year, he's the only returner.

Quarterback – a critical spot on an offense that's shown a proclivity to throw, a lot, the past few years – is a position that is still up for grabs, Gray said.

The defense will have several inexperienced players in important spots, as five of Pine Bluffs' top six players in defensive points, and nine of the top 10, are not expected to return.

Shmidl, who had 54 tackles, including six for loss, is at the top of the list of the Hornets' returning tacklers.

Beyond that, junior Justin Lerwick (19 tackles), Birkhofer (14.5), junior Ryan Mohren (11) and Serrano (10) are the only other returning players with double-digit tackles last season. Pine Bluffs had 16 such players last year.

Among the others expected to have an impact this year are junior wide receivers Jesus Solis, Jacob Slade and Travis Lerwick and sophomore back Carsten Freeburg.

Despite the lineup being filled with new players, Gray said the momentum established from previous success will help this year's returners.

"The best part of last year's group was their practice habits," he said. "If they taught this year's group anything, we hope it's successful practice and preparation habits."

Bluffs Car Care

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Mascot: Hornets
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Purple and Yellow

Coach: Will Gray, 13th year at Pine Bluffs
2022 Record: 11-0, beat Shoshoni 33-27 in state championship

Key Players

TE/DL: Mitchell Birkhofer, Sr.
OL/DL: David Merryfield, Sr.
WR/LB: Shawn Shmidl, Jr.
QB/RB/LB: Justin Lerwick, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: Pine Bluffs jamboree, 4 p.m. (Zero Week)
 8-31: vs. Shoshoni, 4 p.m.
 *9-8: vs. Guernsey-Sunrise, 7 p.m.
 *9-15: at Wright, 5 p.m.
 *9-22: vs. Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
 *9-29: at Lusk, 7 p.m.
 *10-5: vs. Saratoga, 6 p.m.
 *10-13: vs. Lingle, 7 p.m.
 *10-20: at Southeast, 7 p.m.
 * Conference game

New Coach Looking for Numbers

Saratoga is in the same spot as many other Class 1A nine-man teams.

"Everyone I talk to is fighting numbers, and we're the same," first-year coach Todd Weber said. "... We need 18 to 20 (players), because then we can have scout teams."

Weber had between 14 and 16 players show up to end-of-year meetings but has hopes of reaching that 18 to 20 by season's start.

Weber said many schools face the same constraints, "and they're still ready to go on Friday night, so that's not an excuse on our part."

Assistant coaches are also new, with Chris Williams, who was an assistant with the middle school program with Weber, and Jared Mason, the head wrestling coach at SHS, joining Weber.

"Obviously, it's going to be a learning curve," said Weber, who was previously Saratoga's middle school coach and was previously the head coach at Worland.

Saratoga will benefit from the return of senior Toker Carricato, who missed last season. A world champion in bareback bronc riding at the National High School Finals Rodeo in 2022 and 2023, Carricato ran for 730 yards and

five touchdowns and added 55 tackles as a sophomore.

The defense returns several key contributors, including four of its top six tacklers from a year ago in junior Seth Stephens, sophomore Hazen Williams, junior Allyster Ingraham and senior Douglass Campbell.

Stephens leads Saratoga's returners with 46.5 tackles a year ago, while Ingraham had 45, Campbell 41 and Williams 37. Williams also tied for the team lead with four sacks, while Stephens led Saratoga with two interceptions.

Senior Josiah Stockwell added 35 tackles.

"We know we've got some experienced kids coming back," Weber said. "... We're just going to try to expand on those good things and maybe we can get some more good things, and hopefully it's going to snowball for us. But it does make our job easier (as coaches) to have that experience."

However, no other returning player had more than four tackles last season.

Saratoga had seven players with at least 90 rushing yards last year, but no player had more than Stockwell, who

carried 92 times for 392 yards and four touchdowns.

Four others return from that group. Stephens added 33 carries for 146 yards, Ingraham had 25 carries for 137 yards and sophomore Burris Berger contributed seven carries for 90 yards.

Berger is the only returning player who saw time at quarterback last year. He completed 14 of 33 passes for 129 yards and one touchdown. Meanwhile, Saratoga's top three receivers and four of its top five graduated, leaving Williams, who had four catches for 73 yards, as the only returning player who had double-digit receiving yards in 2022.



Mascot: Panthers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Purple and Yellow

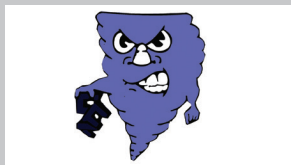
Coach: Todd Weber, first year at Saratoga
2022 Record: 3-5, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

RB/OLB: Toker Carricato, Sr.
RB/LB: Josiah Stockwell, Sr.
OL/DL: Douglass Campbell, Sr.
OL/LB: Allyster Ingraham, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Pine Bluffs jamboree, 4 p.m.
8-31: at Wind River, 6 p.m.
*9-9: vs. Moorcroft, 2 p.m.
*9-15: at Lusk, 6 p.m.
*9-22: vs. Guernsey-Sunrise, 6 p.m.
*9-29: at Wright, 6 p.m.
*10-5: vs. Pine Bluffs, 6 p.m.
*10-13: at Southeast, 6 p.m.
*10-20: vs. Lingle, 6 p.m.
* Conference game



Mascot: Cyclones
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Blue and White

Coach: Mark Bullington, 25th year at Southeast
2022 Record: 6-3, lost to Wind River 46-38 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

QB/S: Ayden Desmond, Jr.
RB/OLB: Matthew Chapman, Sr.
E/CB: Cole Sauer, Sr.
OG/DE: Tiegen Thompson, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Pine Bluffs jamboree, 4 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-1: vs. Riverside, 2 p.m.
*9-8: vs. Wright, 1 p.m.
*9-15: at Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
*9-22: vs. Lusk, 1 p.m.
*9-29: at Guernsey-Sunrise, 7 p.m.
*10-6: at Lingle, 7 p.m.
*10-13: vs. Saratoga, 6 p.m.
*10-20: vs. Pine Bluffs, 7 p.m.
* Conference game

SOUTHEAST CYCLONES

1A 9-MAN EAST

Cyclones Have Experience to Compete

The math has come simply to the Southeast Cyclones.

They've looked around at other teams in Class 1A nine-man, whose math – subtracting the number of seniors they graduated – looks like minus-8, minus-10, minus-12.

In Yoder, the math figured out to minus-3. Consequently, Southeast enters 2023 with one of Class 1A nine-man's most experienced teams.

For a team that went 6-3 and hosted a playoff game last season, that's a good place to be.

Still, coach Mark Bullington said with an anticipated roster of only about 22 players, and only four or five seniors, "we've got to stay healthy. That's our main thing."

Southeast returns a Class 1A nine-man high four all-conference players, tied with Big Piney for those honors. Seniors Matthew Chapman, Cole Sauer and Tiegen Thompson and junior Ayden Desmond were all-conference choices in 2022.

Desmond returns at quarterback after completing 67 of 127 passes

for 1,174 yards and 23 touchdowns, against only three interceptions, last year. Desmond also leads the Cyclone returners in the backfield with 53 carries for 339 yards and a team-high six rushing touchdowns last season.

"He should be one of the better quarterbacks that I've coached in a while," Bullington said. With that, he added, "We're going to throw the ball a lot, I'm sure."

Seniors Cole Sauer and Matthew Chapman return after finishing second and third, respectively, in receiving yards. Sauer had 15 catches for 264 yards and four touchdowns, while Chapman had 11 catches for 236 yards and five scores.

Junior Kannon Tippetts added three catches, but they went for 132 yards (44 yards per catch) and a pair of touchdowns. Bullington also said junior receiver Ayden Shimic and William Knowlton will be a part of the passing game.

Chapman was third on the team with 167 rushing yards on 33 carries.

The line will be led by Thompson and senior Lance York and juniors Emmitt Coxbill, Sebastian Brumley and Alec DeMarce; Brumley is coming back from a knee injury that ended his 2022 season prematurely.

"They're a year older and they'll get better," Bullington said.

Desmond led the Cyclones in defensive points while Thompson led Southeast in tackles. Desmond had 61 tackles, including 41 solo, but also had five interceptions and 16 pass deflections.

Thompson led the way with 84.5 tackles, including a team-high 13 tackles for loss and four sacks.

Chapman added 65 tackles, including seven for loss, while Sauer had 44 tackles and 16 pass deflections. Other key contributors returning on defense include Tippetts (36 tackles), York (32), Coxbill (30) and Brumley (21).

"They're a pretty close-knit group," Bullington said. "They're not a huge bunch like we had in (the championship season of) 2020, but they get along really well."

Panthers Looking for Leadership

When Wright takes the field on opening weekend, one question the Panthers will have is a big one – who will be the on-field leaders bringing up the level of play of their teammates?

“We’ve got good seniors,” said Panthers head coach Larry Yeradi, who returns after a one-year absence. “We’ve got to find good leaders. The capability’s there, it’s just are they going to step up? ... That’s another thing we’ll be looking for early in camp is who our leaders are going to be.”

Yeradi said the Panthers should sport a mix of both seniors and younger players, and while the seniors will be counted on for leadership and motivation, younger players will also probably fulfill critical responsibilities this season.

“When we come into camp in August, one of the things we’re going to rely heavily on is our youth,” Yeradi said. “... We’ve finally got some kids that football is their No. 1 as their sport. They’re working hard, they want

to do the things in the offseason to get better, and I think that’s a strength for us.”

Full 2022 statistics are not available for Wright. However, across the four games where stats were compiled, several players who are seniors this year got their chance to shine, particularly on defense.

Senior Tucker Edwards is the only one of Wright’s top four tacklers to return.

Hernandez and fellow seniors Pace Garrett, Richard Bahan and Kouper Douglas also saw extended time on defense last season.

Yeradi said Bahan and Douglas, as well as junior Owen Thompson, will be called on more on the defensive line to disrupt opposing offenses’ timing with quickness.

Offensively, senior Angel Hernandez is the top returning rusher with 39 carries for 162 yards. He also had three catches last year, tops among Wright’s returners.

Yeradi said Wright’s usual

run-first approach may shift a bit given the players on the roster. Sophomore Mitch Strohschein could help usher in more passing for Wright’s offense, but Yeradi said the Panthers need pass-catchers to complete that equation.

“We’ve got to find our personnel and what fits them,” Yeradi said.

Junior running back/linebacker Bridgger Worman also figures into the Panthers’ approach this season.

Yeradi also returns to the head coaching position after stepping back last year and working as an assistant coach. Former coach Adam Shankle took an administrator’s job in Rock Springs. In the shuffle, Yeradi will also bring on two new assistant coaches this season. However, little will change in terms of schemes or philosophies.

“Even though I was on staff, I missed being the head guy,” Yeradi said. “We’ve got a great group coming in, and I really thing something special can happen with them.”



Mascot: Panthers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Black and Gold

Coach: Larry Yeradi, 28th year at Wright
2022 Record: 2-6, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

OL/DL: Kouper Douglas, Sr.
OL/DL: Richard Bahan, Sr.
RB: Angel Hernandez, Jr.
RB/LB: Bridgger Worman, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: Wright jamboree, 2 p.m.
9-1: vs. Rocky Mountain, 5 p.m.
*9-8: at Southeast, 1 p.m.
*9-15: vs. Pine Bluffs, 5 p.m.
*9-22: at Lingle, 7 p.m.
*9-29: vs. Saratoga, 6 p.m.
*10-6: vs. Guernsey, 7 p.m.
*10-13: at Moorcroft, 7 p.m.
*10-20: at Lusk, 6 p.m.
* Conference game



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Punchers Have Depth, Experience

In Big Piney this season, motivation will be like snow – it won't be in short supply.

Tied for second place in the 1A nine-man West Conference standings last year, Big Piney led the tiebreaker and slotted into the No. 4 seed. Against eventual state champion Pine Bluffs in the playoff quarterfinals, the Punchers could not overcome injuries to four starters, or the Hornets, and their season ended earlier than they thought it might.

"We felt we didn't perform the best we could have," coach Jeromy Moffat said.

Now, with seven starters back on both offense and defense and a deeper roster overall, Big Piney could be one of the classification's best teams.

Already, they're one of the most experienced.

Seniors Karsyn Gurr and Ruben Stoutenberg were all-state choices; only Lingle matches Big

Piney for the number of all-state returners in Class 1A nine-man. The Punchers also have senior lineman Zach Murphy and junior running back Caden Clifford returning as all-conference choices.

Big Piney's four returning all-conference selections is equal to the rest of the West Conference combined.

"As coaches, we really already began to pound into their heads that rankings don't mean anything," Moffat said, using last year's early exit as the driver behind that mentality. "... Use that motivation from what happened last year to fuel your workouts."

Clifford and Stoutenberg were a formidable 1-2 rushing punch last season. Clifford led the team with 547 yards and six touchdowns on the ground on 56 carries, while Stoutenberg added 64 carries for 327 yards. Gurr led the Punchers' receiving corps with 20 catches for 363 yards and six touchdowns. Stoutenberg was third on the team in both catches (eight) and receiving yards (184).

Senior quarterback Champ Snivley completed 46 of 94 passes for 702 yards and seven touchdowns.

The Punchers lack experience on the line, but Moffat said he's seen potential.

"Although we're not big up front, we're very athletic, so we're looking forward to having our big guys on the move," he said.

The Punchers' defense returns five of its top six tacklers in Stoutenberg, Clifford, Murphy, Snivley and senior Dylan Woodward.

Stoutenberg led the defense with 72 total tackles, including 26 solo. Murphy was third with 52.5 tackles, while Clifford added 46 tackles and two fumble recoveries.

Snivley had 40 tackles and Woodward had 39, while Gurr added 32 and senior Roger Young had 30.5. Sophomore Zef Zuniga will also contribute.

A second year in nine-man will keep expectations high, Moffat said.

"We want to build on the experience they had," Moffat said. "... They'll be able to recognize formations through film study and be a little more confident out there on the field this year."



Mascot: Punchers

Division: Class 1A nine-man

Conference: West

Colors: Red and White

Coach: Jeromy Moffat, second year at Big Piney
2022 Record: 6-3, lost to Pine Bluffs 45-16 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

RB/WR/OLB: Ruben Stoutenberg, Sr.

WR/CB/KR: Karsyn Gurr, Sr.

RB/LB: Caden Clifford, Jr.

OL/DL: Zach Murphy, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Pinedale, 4 p.m.

(Zero Week)

8-31: vs. Lusk, 5 p.m.

*9-9: at Rocky Mountain, 2 p.m.

*9-16: vs. Greybull, 2 p.m.

*9-21: at Wind River, 5 p.m.

*9-28: vs. St. Stephens, 4 p.m.

*10-5: at Shoshoni, 4 p.m.

*10-13: vs. Wyoming Indian, 2 p.m.

*10-20: at Riverside, 5 p.m.

* Conference game

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Mascot: Buffaloes

Division: Class 1A nine-man

Conference: West

Colors: Blue and Yellow

Coach: Jeremy Pouska,

third year at Greybull

2022 Record: 3-5, did

not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

WR/DB: Jesus Rodriguez, Sr.

WR/RB/DE: Joel Miller, Sr.

QB/DB: Caden Hunt, Soph.

RB/DE: Wyatt Didrickson, Jr.

1A 9-MAN WEST

GREYBULL BUFFALOES

Future is Now for Buffaloes

After losing a large senior class to graduation, it would be easy for Greybull to build for the future.

For the Buffaloes, though, the mantra seems to be, "Why wait?"

The Buffaloes are eager to grow after finishing last year 3-5 and missing the playoffs.

Moreover, coach Jeremy Pouska said the players who return are selfless, enthusiastic and confident.

"It's been a whole different feel for me as a coach this year to be surrounded by a group of guys like that," he said. "Their confidence alone is making me feel better about the direction of this program. ... They're

really an enjoyable group to coach."

As for the future? Pouska

said he expects a roster of somewhere between 38 and

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Mascot: Rebels

Division: Class 1A nine-man

Conference: West

Colors: Red and Black

Coach: Jason Mitchell,

third year at Riverside

2022 Record: 4-4, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

RB/LB: Ty Strohschein, Sr.

OL/DL: Curtis Strohschein, Jr.

WR/TE: Hayden Paxton, Sr.

QB/WR/DB: Josh Wildman, Sr.

2023 Schedule

9-1: at Southeast, 2 p.m.

*9-8: at Wyoming Indian, 6 p.m.

*9-15: vs. Wind River, 7 p.m.

*9-22: at St. Stephens, 1 p.m.

*9-29: vs. Shoshoni, 7 p.m.

*10-6: vs. Rocky Mountain, 7 p.m.

*10-13: at Greybull, 7 p.m.

*10-20: vs. Big Piney, 5 p.m.

* Conference game

Rebels Have Plenty of Options

As far as Riverside coach Jason Mitchell is concerned, he has one of the best problems a coach can have.

The Rebels will have good athleticism this season, and Mitchell said the biggest challenge he has as the Rebels' coach is finding the best mix of where to put players to best help the team.

That means players who played quarterback in the past could play on the line, and vice versa; former guards could be running backs; defensive linemen could be linebackers... However, the nice part for Mitchell is that the Rebels will have enough experience to adapt quickly.

"Maybe more than anything, our kids are no longer the underclassmen playing against juniors and seniors," he said. "Now we're the school putting juniors and seniors on the field."

Senior Ty Strohschein is the only returning all-conference selection for the Rebels – and his positions on the team are set.

Strohschein was the only Rebel running back to crack the triple-digit yardage barrier last year; he finished with 96 carries for 684 yards and six touchdowns to be Riverside's rushing leader by far.

And at linebacker, he leads all of Riverside's returners with 77.5 total tackles last year, including 5.5 for loss, and tied for the team lead with a pair of interceptions.

Mitchell said he'll be even better this year.

"Physically, he's just a different kid than he was even nine months ago," Mitchell said. "He's now in a college athlete's body. ... He's the type of kid that can cause you not to want to hit him a second time."

Around Strohschein, though, how the pieces will fit is still in question.

Senior Josh Wildman is the only one of Riverside's top three receivers to return. He led Riverside with 15 catches and was second in receiving yards with 204. Strohschein added four catches for 88

yards and senior Hayden Paxton added eight catches for 78 yards.

Defensively, Paxton contributed 32 tackles and was fourth on the team, while Wildman was fifth with 27 tackles. Junior Curtis Strohschein added 22.5 tackles, while junior Reece Whisenant and junior Ryder Kozisek had 21 tackles apiece.

Mitchell also said junior Avery Clifford will have a place on the field, too.

Oddly enough, Riverside didn't play a single close game in conference play in 2022. They lost four games to the four playoff qualifiers (Wind River, Shoshoni, Rocky Mountain and Big Piney) by an average of 39 points per game; however, the Rebels won their other conference games by identical scores of 48-8, plus a forfeit victory against St. Stephens.

"The losses hurt as they were happening, but looking back I don't know that we were ready to beat those teams," Mitchell said.

GREYBULL CONTINUED-

40 players, and up to 16 of those will be freshmen. Only three seniors will be out.

But why wait?

The defense will need the most attention, as only three starters return and younger players will have to fulfill important responsibilities, Pouska said.

The Buffs lost their top two tacklers to graduation. Sophomore Caiden Sorenson had 28.5 tackles last year, including 5.5 for loss, and is Greybull's top returning tackler.

Seniors Jesus Rodriguez and Issak Gaytan and junior Steele Davis added 25 tackles apiece.

Rodriguez also had three pass deflections, while Davis had five tackles for loss.

Junior Wyatt Didrickson (15 tackles), sophomore Yandel Hernandez (15) and

junior Lucas Bolzer (14.5) also finished with double-digit tackles.

Pouska said the inexperience the defense has will eventually be overcome, especially if the players continue to build on the momentum they built during the summer.

"There's definitely going to be a learning curve there," Pouska said. "... (But) I see huge strides from the players they were last season to how they showed up and competed at camp. I think it's a night and day difference, and I think they're welcoming the challenge to play more varsity reps."

On offense, sophomore Caden Hunt and senior Joel Miller shared time under center. Miller completed 25 of 67 passes for 365 yards and four scores, while Hunt was 23-of-50 for 260 yards and three TDs.

"It's been a whole different feel for me as a coach this year to be surrounded by a group of guys like that. Their confidence alone is making me feel better about the direction of this program... they're really an enjoyable group to coach."

~Coach Jeremy Pouska

Pouska said Hunt will likely take the snaps and Miller will see time at either wide receiver or running back.

Gaytan, who had 59 carries for 171 yards and three touchdowns, is Greybull's leading returning rusher.

Rodriguez was third on the team in receiving last year and is Greybull's top returning receiver. He had eight catches for 117 yards and two touchdowns last season.

Bolzer added 92 rushing yards and 41 receiving yards, good for third and fourth on the team, respectively, last

season.

The line is thin, but Pouska said Davis and sophomore Cash Hoflund will set the pace.

2023 Schedule

8-26: at Shoshoni jamboree, 10 a.m. (Zero Week)

9-1: at Moorcroft, 5 p.m.

*9-8: vs. Shoshoni, 7 p.m.

*9-16: at Big Piney, 2 p.m.

*9-22: vs. Wyoming Indian, 7 p.m.

*9-29: at Rocky Mountain, 7 p.m.

*10-5: at Wind River, 6 p.m.

*10-13: vs. Riverside, 7 p.m.

*10-20: vs. St. Stephens, 6 p.m.

* Conference game

Grizzlies Need to Grow Up Fast

From the line of scrimmage to the sidelines, new faces will define Rocky Mountain football this season.

From last year's group of 10 seniors, Rocky Mountain graduated four all-state and eight all-conference players and doesn't return a single player with either of those postseason honors to their name.

On offense, the Grizzlies graduated their quarterback, their top four rushers and six of their top seven receivers; on defense, the Grizzlies graduated 10 of their top 11 tacklers, including their top seven.

But new head coach Jessee Wilson isn't looking at 2023 as a rebuilding year.

"Whenever you've graduated 10 guys, the comments you always get are, 'Oh, might be a tough year,'" Wilson said. "But that's not the mentality we're carrying in at all. We've got great athletes and great kids, and we plan on being a very competitive football team."

Wilson – who took over the

head coaching spot at his alma mater after spending the past seven years as an assistant coach with the Grizzlies – said the biggest challenge entering this season is the inexperience his returning players have.

"I think we'll be a much different team at the end of the year against where we're at when we start the year," he said.

Senior Brenner Moore is the lone returning starter. Defensively, Moore – who had 26 tackles and two pass deflections – is the only returning player who had more than two tackles last year.

On offense, Moore, whose 113 receiving yards on six catches put him fourth on the team, is the top returning receiver.

Wilson said the Grizzlies will benefit from the return of senior running back Will Loyning, who missed most of last year with injuries.

Also in the mix is Lafe Files, a junior who was the Grizzlies' junior-varsity quarterback last season, and junior Hudson May,

whose versatility earned him the title of "Swiss army knife" from Wilson.

Sophomore Triffen Jolley, who had 11 carries for 65 yards last year, is Rocky Mountain's top returning rusher, and leading the linemen is junior Hayden Wambeke.

Wilson said two areas of growth – the weight room and the players' quick adaptation to new schemes – will be critical.

"We have to build confidence in those kids, and to do so they need to be 100% sure of their assignments during the game," he said.

Wilson, who teaches middle school science, said his familiarity with the players will be helpful in making the transition as smooth as can be.

"I know these kids, by the time their seniors, for half their life or better," he said. "Being afforded that opportunity to watch those kids from the time they're little sixth graders to the time they're seniors, I know them well."



Mascot: Grizzlies

Division: Class 1A nine-man

Conference: West

Colors: Brown and Yellow

Coach: Jessee Wilson, first year at Rocky Mountain
2022 Record: 7-3, lost to Pine Bluffs 35-32 in state semifinals

Key Players

TE/DE: Brenner Moore, Sr.

RB/LB/S: Will Loyning, Sr.

WR/CB: Hudson May, Jr.

OG: Hayden Wambeke, Jr.

2023 Schedule

9-1: at Wright, 5 p.m.

*9-9: vs. Big Piney, 2 p.m.

*9-14: at Wyoming Indian, 5 p.m.

*9-23: vs. Shoshoni, 2 p.m.

*9-29: vs. Greybull, 7 p.m.

*10-6: at Riverside, 7 p.m.

*10-12: at St. Stephens, noon

*10-19: vs. Wind River, 5:30 p.m.

* Conference game



Mascot: Wranglers

Division: Class 1A nine-man

Conference: West

Colors: Blue and Yellow

Coach: Tony Truempier, 11th year at Shoshoni

2022 Record: 9-2, lost to Pine Bluffs 33-27 in state championship

Key Players

WR/DB: Quinton Clark, Jr.

RB/LB: Carson Kisling, Soph.

OL/TE/DL: Wyatt Eadus, Sr.

RB/S/K: Ethan Tarango, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Wright jamboree, 2 p.m. (Zero Week)

8-31: at Pine Bluffs, 4 p.m.

*9-8: at Greybull, 7 p.m.

*9-14: vs. Cheyenne East JV, 5 p.m.

*9-23: at Rocky Mountain, 2 p.m.

*9-29: at Riverside, 7 p.m.

*10-5: vs. Big Piney, 4 p.m.

*10-13: vs. Wind River, 5 p.m.

10-19: at Natrona sophs, 5 p.m.

* Conference game

SHOSHONI WRANGLERS

1A 9-MAN WEST

Wranglers Look to Keep Rolling

Shoshoni coach Tony Truempier saw the future of Shoshoni football before he left the locker room after last season's Class 1A nine-man championship game.

As the Wranglers prepared for the trip home after a 33-28 loss to Pine Bluffs in the title – a loss that kept Shoshoni from repeating as state champions – Truempier said he looked around the room and noticed a tone shift from the underclassmen.

He said the 2023 returners had already heard the talk. With 14 seniors, including seven all-state and 10 all-conference selections, leaving with graduation, Shoshoni was destined for a fall.

If the attitude Truempier saw in the locker room, which he said has carried over to offseason training, carries over into the fall, the Wranglers will squash such talk.

"After it was all said and done and we were sitting in the locker room down at Laramie, they realized, 'Hey, it's our time,'" he said. "... They're in the mindset that we want to prove everybody wrong. We do have good athletes, but they had to sit in the shadows and wait their turn. Now they know that it's their turn."

However, Shoshoni still has to replace its top four rushers, its quarterback, its top five receivers and eight of its top nine tacklers.

Junior Quinton Clark, who was fourth on the team with 59.5 tackles and led the team with five pass deflections, is the only returning starter on

either side of the ball.

The offense will be all new.

Junior Wiley Philleo is Shoshoni's leading returner in the run game; he had 10 carries for 72 yards and one touchdown in 2022. Sophomore Carson Kisling (41 yards) and junior Landon Kasper (38 yards) also saw opportunities carrying the ball.

Clark (two catches, 19 yards, one TD) and Kisling (one catch, 1 yard) are the only returners who caught a pass last season, while senior Wyatt Eadus will help lead the linemen.

Clark, the only returning player with double digit tackles last year, and Eadus (6.5 tackles) lead Shoshoni's returning players on defense.

Senior running back/safety Ethan Tarango will bring necessary leadership to an otherwise young team, and sophomore wide receiver/defensive back Oakley Hicks will also see time.

Truempier said new personnel will change the Wranglers' approach.

"We don't have that (size), but we are fast," he said. "Get us in open space, and we're going to be tough to deal with."

Another challenge will be finding leaders to set high expectations.

"I think the big thing that's come with the success the past few years or so is that it's the mentality of that's what is expected of them," Truempier said. "... I think we're going to surprise some people."



Mascot: Eagles

Division: Class 1A nine-man

Conference: West

Colors: Red and Black

Coach: Matt House,
first year at St. Stephens
2022 Record: 0-7, did not
qualify for playoffs

2023 Schedule

9-1: at Lingle, 6 p.m.

*9-8: vs. Wind River, 1 p.m.

9-16: at Shoshoni JV, 11 a.m.

*9-22: vs. Riverside, 1 p.m.

*9-28: at Big Piney, 4 p.m.

*10-7: vs. Wyoming Indian,
noon

*10-12: vs. Rocky Mountain,
noon

*10-20: at Greybull, 6 p.m.

* Conference game

Eagles Looking For a Leader

Since its revival in 2013, the football program at St. Stephens has been struggling to find consistent success.

Unfortunately for the Eagles, their 2022 campaign did not provide the boost they have long wanted.

St. Stephens' 2022 season never got on track. The Eagles lost their first three games by a combined 198-12, then forfeited their final five games. In the middle of all of it, the Eagles went through a coaching transition, with Melvin Blackburn – who was the team's coach in the 2013 and 2014 seasons – taking over in the midst of a lost season.

The Eagles had first attempted to take it week by week, but after forfeit losses to Riverside and Big Piney, the Eagles canceled the rest of their season, tallying two more forfeits and a cancellation before season's end.

When St. Stephens did play, the lack of success was evident, as the Eagles lost 70-0 to Lingle, 76-6 to Wind River and 52-6 to Shoshoni's junior varsity.

The Eagles will start anew in 2023 under new head

coach Matt House, who was hired in late summer. House could not be reached in time for this story.

In taking over at St. Stephens' leader, House will have a team that will likely be young. The Eagles' 2022 roster listed 22 players, including five seniors but also nine freshmen.

In between were classes of four players each, likely representing St. Stephens' core of upperclassmen for the 2023 season.

The seniors-to-be on last year's roster included Jacob Gambler, Aydan Spoonhunter, Jai'Ron Rhodes and Waltor Duran.

Following in their path are four juniors in Daniel Black, Reico Shakespeare, Raincloud SunRhodes and J.J. Lawson.

St. Stephens' struggles have been exacerbated the past two years after a lost season to COVID-19 and a jump from the six-man to the nine-man level. The program's only victory in the past two seasons at the nine-man level came in 2021 when the Eagles beat Fremont County rival Wyoming Indian 38-0 in the second-to-last game of the

2021 season.

The last, and only, time St. Stephens had more than one victory in a season since returning to the gridiron came in 2016, when the Eagles went 2-6. Combined, the Eagles are 5-63, a winning percentage of .074, since resurrecting their football program in 2013.

A large sophomore class could help turn things around, though. Players who were listed as freshmen on last year's roster were Kyle Black, Rylan Day, Quianna Piper, Ariona Arthur, Averille Rhodes, Tyson Whiteplume, Ezekiel Divers, Tristan Monroe and Tristan Friday.

Size could be an advantage. Four of those upcoming sophomores – Averille Rhodes, Whiteplume, Divers and Monroe – were all listed at 200 pounds or more, as was senior Jai'Ron Rhodes.



1A 9-MAN WEST

WIND RIVER COUGARS

Cougars Have Returning Talent

Wind River is in a unique position this season.

The Cougars graduated a large and decorated senior class last spring – and they'll likely do so again next spring.

With this year's big senior class following up last year's big senior class, the Cougars are in the enviable position of maintaining momentum rather than rebuilding it.

"It's just a great group of kids," second-year coach Rod Frederick said of the senior class. "They've

played together here since they were in seventh grade."

Now, the Cougars' goal is to get past the semifinals, where their past two seasons have ended.

"Now we've just got to get over the hump and get to Laramie," Frederick said.

Senior Cooper Frederick was an all-state pick last year; he led Class 1A nine-man in rushing yards per game, piling up 1,919 yards over 10 games on 210 carries. His 23 rushing

touchdowns was second-best in the classification.

However, coach Frederick, Cooper's father, said the goal this year will be to diversify the offense and keep teams from keying on one running back.

"We're going to try to spread it out even more and create running lanes for everybody," he said. "... The kids have all bought into it. They see what works and they're like,

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE -



Mascot: Cougars

Division: Class 1A nine-man

Conference: West

Colors: Purple and Black

Coach: Rod Frederick,
second year at Wind River

2022 Record: 7-3, lost
to Shoshoni 40-6 in state
semifinals

Chiefs Look to Maintain Vibe

One of the best moments of the 2022 season for Wyoming Indian coach Nate Reinhardt came in the Chiefs' season opener.

With a 40-6 road victory against Guernsey, the Chiefs picked up momentum and confidence they hadn't been able to attain in a long, long time.

"To come out (in the) first game and win, they were pretty excited," Reinhardt said. "... We kind of accumulated some injuries after that. But they showed up, worked hard, and went into games (thinking)... we're going to have chances."

The Chiefs picked up three victories last season, beating Rocky Mountain's JV team in addition to Guernsey; the third came via forfeit against St. Stephens.

The 40 points scored in the first game was more than in the past two seasons

combined.

"They were more confident with it," Reinhardt said. "(We) still had some breakdowns, but they stayed together well as a team throughout the season working together."

The victories signified the end of a long losing streak, and the victory against Guernsey was the Chiefs' first on-field victory against another varsity team since the Chiefs played in the six-man football classification in 2013.

Moreover, three victories in a year represented the most for Wyoming Indian since winning four games in 2008.

Reinhardt said offseason preparation has been slow, as most players devoted their time to basketball over the summer.

"That's just the nature of the beast here," he said.

Ineligibility could also limit the number of returners the Chiefs have this fall. Still, Reinhardt finished last year with 24 players and said he

expects to have similar numbers this fall. From that group, about five seniors will lead the way.

"We're just trying to get some of our younger kids out, and building them up for the future," Reinhardt said.

The Chiefs will rely a bunch on their backs and receivers.

Teryn Martel and Ryan Martel, twin brothers and seniors, will have a lot to do with that. Teryn Martel, an all-conference choice last season, was at quarterback last year and may return under center this year, too. (Full statistics are not available for the Chiefs' 2022 season.)

Ryan Martel will contribute from the running back position.

At wide receiver, junior Darrian Augustine leads the pack. Together, the backs and receivers represent what Reinhardt called "our most experienced group."

The line doesn't have that luxury, as the bulk of the players who will be called upon in those spots don't have a ton of experience. Still, senior Jonathan Spoonhunter has shown promise on both the offensive and defensive lines, and by Week 1 he should have help.

"We have some younger linemen who will hopefully be able to keep progressing," Reinhardt said.



Mascot: Chiefs

Division: Class 1A nine-man

Conference: West

Colors: Blue and Red

Coach: Nate Reinhardt, fifth year at Wyoming Indian
2022 Record: 3-5, ineligible for playoffs

Key Players

QB/LB: Teryn Martel, Sr.

RB/DB: Ryan Martel, Sr.

OL/DL: Jonathan Spoonhunter, Sr.

WR/DB: Darrian Augustine, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-26: at Shoshoni jamboree, 10 a.m. (Zero Week)

9-1: vs. Guernsey-Sunrise, 4 p.m.

*9-8: vs. Riverside, 6 p.m.

*9-14: vs. Rocky Mountain, 5 p.m.

*9-22: at Greybull, 7 p.m.

*9-28: vs. Wind River, 6 p.m.

*10-7: at St. Stephens, noon

*10-13: at Big Piney, 2 p.m.

*10-19: vs. Shoshoni JV, 5 p.m.

* Conference game

"...they stayed together well as a team throughout the season working together."

~Coach Nate Reinhardt

WIND RIVER

Key Players

RB/LB/S: Cooper Frederick, Sr.

QB/S: Chris Burk, Sr.

TE/DL: Rowdy Shearer, Sr.

TE/DL: Blake Snyder, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Wright jamboree, 2 p.m. (Zero Week)

8-31: vs. Saratoga, 6 p.m.

*9-8: at St. Stephens, 1 p.m.

*9-15: at Riverside, 7 p.m.

*9-21: vs. Big Piney, 5 p.m.

*9-28: at Wyoming Indian, 6 p.m.

*10-5: vs. Greybull, 6 p.m.

*10-13: at Shoshoni, 5 p.m.

*10-19: at Rocky Mountain, 5:30 p.m.

* Conference game

WIND RIVER CONTINUED

"Yeah, we can do this."

Senior Chris Burk, who carried 34 times for 116 yards and five touchdowns, is the only other returner who reached triple digits rushing last year. Burk is also the leading returning passer and receiver for Wind River; he was second for the Cougars last season with 94 passing yards on five completions and was third among receivers with five catches for 93 yards.

Defensively, Frederick led the Cougars with 96.5 tackles and 47 solo. He also had a team-high with three sacks and tied for the team lead with three interceptions.

However, of Wind

River's top five players in defensive points last season, Frederick is the only returner.

Senior Aiden Ruby had 38 tackles and also intercepted three passes.

Senior Joaquin Stevens also picked off three passes and had 14 tackles, while senior Blake Snyder and junior Brayden Tatrow finished with 19 tackles apiece.

Junior Mato Amos (14.5 tackles) and senior Isaac Gardner (12 tackles) also contributed defensively, and Burk added two interceptions.

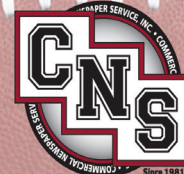
Frederick also said senior Rowdy Shearer, who could play offensive line or tight end, has shown good

promise, as have senior lineman Kyzia Jones and senior defensive end Tucker Hardcastle.

"We're getting a lot of kids to play," coach Frederick said. "... I really see after last year and even the year before, (enthusiasm) was getting better, and last year, it was great.

"I feel the culture's changing quite a bit."

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2022 State Playoffs

1A/6-Man Championship

Snake River 55, Burlington 8

Semifinals

Burlington 77, Dubois 28
Snake River 71, Encampment 8

Quarterfinals

Burlington 56, Farson 6
Dubois 78, Meeteetse 14
Snake River 65, Hulett 6
Encampment 57, Kaycee 0

Players to Watch

Wyatt Trembly, Dubois. Class 1A six-man's co-offensive player of the year in 2022 should be even better as a senior – and that's as much expectation as it is praise. His 2,502 rushing yards set a state six-man record last year.

Quade Jordan, Encampment.

Already a two-time all-state selection, Jordan broke 1,000 yards rushing (1,084) and also had 70 tackles on defense, including 14 for loss, last season.

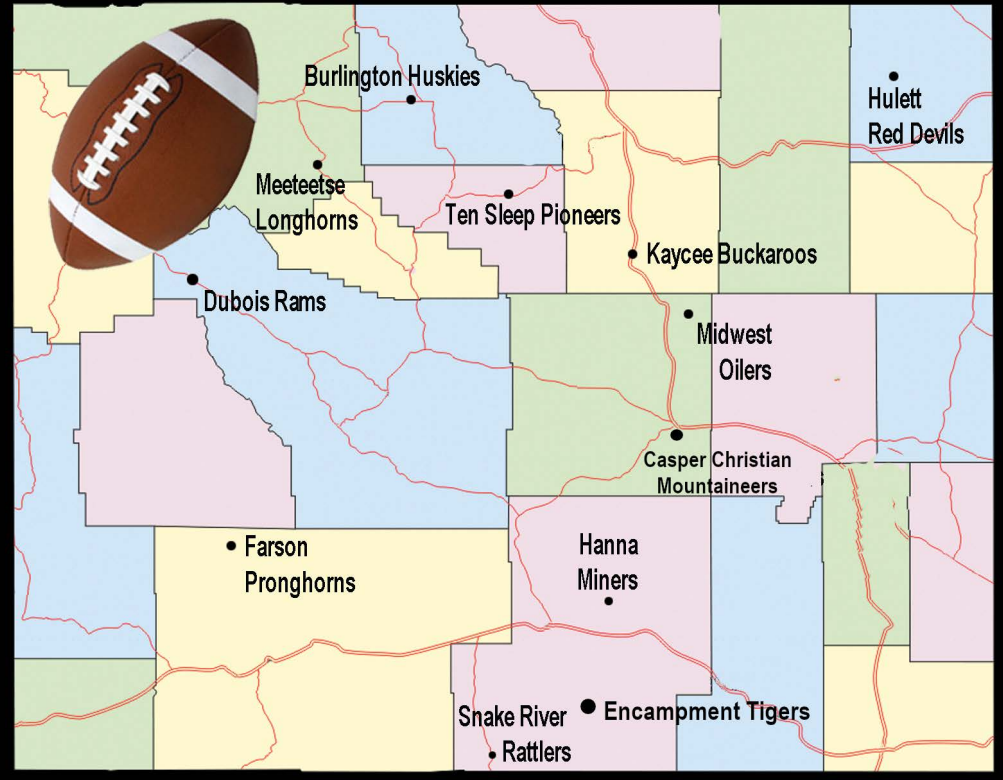
Joseph Pina, Meeteetse. The Longhorns' only returning all-state player did it all last year to earn his second all-state nod. He was a four-digit back, carrying for 1,234 yards, and a triple-digit tackler with 122.

Seth Maxson and Isaiah Skalberg, Snake River. Maxson led the Rattlers in tackles and defensive points, while Skalberg was a solid pass-catcher and one of Snake's best defensive players, as well.

Vaun Pierson, Kaycee. The Buckaroos' lone returning all-state selection, Pierson ran for 991 yards last season -- while averaging 9.6 yards per carry -- and led the Kaycee defense with 109 total tackles, including 15.5 for loss.

Ethan Salzman, Meeteetse. Salzman has done double duty the past couple years, playing a season of golf with Cody's team before joining the Longhorns for the back half of the football season. However, as a senior this year, Salzman is dedicating the fall to football alone.

1A/6-man Preview



Rattlers Could Strike with Third Crown

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four Questions to Answer

Will Snake River ever lose again? Yes, but maybe not this year. The Rattlers enter 2023 on a 21-game winning streak and have had undefeated seasons in three of the past four years. Dubois was the only six-man team to stay within 45 points of Snake River last year.

Can anyone hang with the Rattlers this year? Yep, and Snake River won't need to look outside its conference for some of its biggest competition. Two South Conference rivals, Encampment and Dubois, return the individual firepower to make six-man waves this fall.

So who's coming out of the North then? Burlington, and can we put a pin in the rest of that? The Huskies has the early edge in the North as the team that played in War Memorial Stadium to end last season and as the team that returns the bulk of the experience.

Will six-man's newest team be a contender? Possibly. Casper Christian returns every player from last year's 1-6 team, and they have an added motivation by being playoff-eligible members of the South Conference this fall.

Four Key Games

Hulett at Burlington; Kaycee at Meeteetse, Sept. 8. With an unpredictable North Conference race, the opening

weekend of conference play will be absolutely crucial.

Dubois at Snake River, Sept. 9. The West Conference title eventually has to go through Baggs. And what better way for a Ram team with exceptional talent to make a statement?

Encampment at Snake River, Oct. 7. The Tigers would love to beat their Carbon County rivals – something they did in 2020 but haven't done in four tries since – and help prove that 2023 is their year.

Burlington at Dubois, Oct. 21. Last year's regular-season game was close -- Dubois won 60-52 -- but the Huskies took their revenge and won by 49 in the playoff semifinals two weeks later.

Predicted Order of Finish

North Conference: Burlington; Meeteetse; Kaycee; Midwest; Hulett; Ten Sleep.

South Conference: Snake River; Encampment; Dubois; Farson; Casper Christian; Hanna.

Preseason top five: 1. Snake River; 2. Burlington; 3. Encampment; 4. Dubois; 5. Kaycee.

Way-too-early Title Game Score Prediction

Snake River 49, Burlington 33. With no one team emerging as a direct threat to the Rattlers, the two-time defending champs are the ones to watch for until another team shows otherwise.

Huskies Learned from Title-game Loss

Not many programs have ever produced the kind of turnaround like Burlington did in 2022.

After going 1-6 in 2021, the Huskies rebounded to finish 9-2, win the North Conference championship and reach the Class 1A six-man championship game, losing to Snake River.

"Playing in the championship last year was great for the guys," coach Trent Aagard said. "I feel like, for some of them, it has really inspired them to work harder this offseason. Snake River was very tough and physical. We saw what we need to work towards."

This year, the Huskies will try to replace four all-state players but benefit from the return of four all-conference players, tied with Kaycee for the most in six-man.

Junior Joe Bassett is Burlington's lone returning all-state pick, and seniors Hunter Aagard, Jordan Michaels and Mickey Maroni were all-conference selections.

Coach Aagard said this year's team will rely on some unproven players but still have a good mixture of size and speed.

"I think we have the kids to fill the spots, and hopefully they can sooner than later," he said.

In Burlington's spread-it-around approach, seven players reached triple-digit rushing yards and eight were in triple digits in receiving, with no player breaking 500 yards in either.

Coach Aagard said one of the reasons Burlington could spread the ball around so much last year was because many younger players got opportunities to play, and produce, in lopsided games.

Bassett is Burlington's top returning rusher and receiver. He was third on the team in yards in both categories last year, catching a team-high 23 passes for 290 yards and five touchdowns while also rushing 21 times for 244 yards and nine more scores.

Maroni added 11 catches for 272 yards and four touchdowns, finishing fourth on the team in both catches and yards.

Other key returners are junior Jordan Casey (22 carries, 238 yards); junior Jordan Broederlow (14 carries, 166 yards); Michaels (15 carries, 114 yards); junior Kyler Winters (14 carries, 110 yards); and junior Weston Gotfredson (five catches, 114 yards).

Defensively, Bassett led Burlington with 88.5 total tackles, including 47 solo. He also led the squad with 8.5 tackles for loss.

However, he's the only one of Burlington's top five players in tackles to return this season.

Michaels was sixth for Burlington with 45.5 tackles, while junior Rykael Andrew added 39 and Winters had 33. Maroni (25), Gotfredson (16) and Broederlow (12) also reached double-digit tackles last year. Aagard also noted senior lineman Joseph Stanworth as an important returner.

"The ability is there," he said. "We have some big shoes to fill and we will probably need to look a little different, but I think they are ready for their time."



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Mascot: Huskies

Division: Class 1A six-man

Conference: North

Colors: Black and Orange

Coach: Trent Aagard, eighth year at Burlington
2022 Record: 9-2, lost to Snake River 55-8 in state championship

Key Players

RB/DB: Jordan Michaels, Sr.

OL/DL: Hunter Aagard, Sr.

OL/DL: Mickey Maroni, Sr.

RB/LB: Joe Bassett, Jr

2023 Schedule

8/25: at Dubois Jamboree, noon (Zero Week)

9/2: at Custer, Mont., 2 p.m.

*9/8: vs. Hulett, 2 p.m.

*9/16: at Midwest, 5 p.m.

*9/22: vs. Meeteetse, 2 p.m.

9/30: at Farson, 2 p.m.

*10/6: at Kaycee, 2 p.m.

*10/13: vs. Ten Sleep, 2 p.m.

10/21: at Dubois, 1:30 p.m.

* Conference game



1A 6-MAN NORTH

HULETT RED DEVILS

Red Devils Bring Back Familiar Faces

If the 2023 roster for Hulett looks familiar, that's OK.

The 2023 roster will look a lot like 2022's, in more ways than one.

The roster will be about the same – somewhere in the neighborhood of 12 to 14 players. And it will contain many of the same players, as Hulett graduated its only all-state pick and three total all-conference players.

And, oddly enough, the number of seniors on the roster will remain the same, as the Red Devils bring up three players from the ranks of the junior class to lead the team this season.

"At the end of last year, the freshman, sophomore, and junior boys were making big plays for us and playing confident," coach Boz Backen said, "and were willing to get better week by week. (That) is going to help us rolling into this season, (and we're) pretty excited to see their growth again this year as football players and as leaders."

The Red Devils finished 3-6 last season and qualified for the playoffs. However, Hulett had the misfortune of running into eventual undefeated state champion Snake River in the first round. The 65-6 loss the

Red Devils suffered was Hulett's third consecutive first-round playoff exit. None of Hulett's victories last season, which included one forfeit victory, came against a team that qualified for the playoffs.

Hulett will again have three seniors this year – Christian Reilly, Cash Huven and Karson Amos – and will also return three starters from last year.

Individual statistics are not available for Hulett's 2022 season.

The Red Devils' roster will include a good mix of experience and youth. Backen said last year's underclassmen "got a lot of playing time, so hopefully we can hit the

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Mascot: Red Devils

Division: Class 1A six-man

Conference: North

Colors: Red and Black

Coach: Boz Backen, ninth year at Hulett

2022 Record: 3-6, lost to Snake River 65-6 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

C/DT: Christian Reilly, Sr.

QB/DB: Kyle Smith, Soph.

TE/DE: Justen Foster, Jr.

QB/LB: Cash Huven, Sr.



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Mascot: Buckaroos
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: North
Colors: Blue and Red

Coach: Dave Largent,
 fifth year at Kaycee
2022 Record: 6-4, lost to
 Encampment 57-0 in state
 quarterfinals

Key Players

RB/LB: Vaun Pierson, Sr.
TE/DE: Ruben Cleveland, Sr.
RB/LB: Grady Alger, Jr.
TE/LB: Wyatt Ramsbottom, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: vs. Casper Christian, 2 p.m.
 9-1: vs. Hanna, 2 p.m.
 *9-8: at Meeteetse, 7 p.m.
 *9-15: vs. Ten Sleep, 2 p.m.
 *9-22: at Midwest, 6 p.m.
 9-29: at Encampment, 2 p.m.
 *10-6: vs. Burlington, 2 p.m.
 *10-14: at Hulett, 11 a.m.
 10-21: vs. Farson, 2 p.m.
 * Conference game

Buckaroos Have Wealth of Experience

When a roster is as small as it is in Kaycee, everyone who returns generally has a good chunk of on-field experience.

But, even for Kaycee, this is ridiculous.

Kaycee returns most of last year's 6-4 team with just two players lost to graduation and six players with starting experience on both sides of the ball.

The Buckaroos return four all-conference players, tied for the most in the North Conference. They include seniors Ruben Cleveland and Vaun Pierson and juniors Taylor Cleveland and Wyatt Ramsbottom.

"Most of our key players are returning with a lot of experience in their positions and in the program," coach Dave Largent said. "... If our success at (summer) camp is any indicator, I don't think any team will be (able) to overlook us. If we can remain healthy, I believe that we can give any team a good run."

With a roster of just 11 players last year, the Buckaroos finished second in the North Conference, earning a home playoff game in the first round for the seventh time in the past nine years.

Although that postseason trip ended abruptly with a 57-0 loss to Encampment, almost all of that roster returns this year.

Pierson, Kaycee's lone all-state selection last season, led Kaycee in two important categories — rushing yards and tackles. Offensively, Pierson fronted the offensive attack with 103 carries for 991 yards and 13 touchdowns, averaging 9.6 yards per carry. He was also second for Kaycee in receiving, hauling in 17 passes for 211 yards and four touchdowns.

Defensively, Pierson's 109 tackles, including 49 solo, led the team. He also tied for the team lead with 15.5 tackles for loss.

"He is the team leader by his work ethic and how he produces on the field," Largent said. "He will be asked to play a big role this year, but I don't see that as being anything new for him."

Taylor Cleveland and junior Grady Alger complemented the

rushing game, with Taylor Cleveland adding 242 rushing yards and Alger an even 200.

Ramsbottom led the receiving corps with 33 catches for 313 yards and five touchdowns. Ruben Cleveland chipped in six catches for 64 yards.

Quarterback Cade Malson, a junior, completed an efficient 67 of 110 passes for 565 yards and nine touchdowns.

Taylor Cleveland was a menace in the defensive backfield, intercepting 11 passes and knocking down 12 more. He added 77 total tackles, including 48 solo.

Ramsbottom added 67.5 tackles, including 15.5 for loss, while Alger added 39.5 tackles and sophomore Joe Curuchet had 30.5.

The diversity in experience gives the Buckaroos options, Largent said.

"I believe that will force teams to worry about the other defenders, not just Vaun," Largent said.

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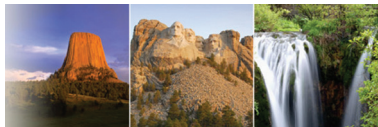
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HULETT CONTINUED-

ground running this year and build on what we had from last year."

Backen said the experience the younger players gained came from more than just garbage time, which he said should help them grow into this season.

Some of the players Backen is counting on this year include sophomore quarterback Kyle Smith and junior end Justen Foster. Sophomores Ben Harrison and Hudson Reilly will also be asked to fill key roles.

"Last year, seniors did a great job of taking the younger kids under their wing and showing them how to do things, from lining up in formations, understanding blocking assignments, and reading their defensive keys," Backen said. "So hopefully those younger kids picked on a few things and can jump into their roles and help push this team."

Backen said a next-player-up mentality has also been helpful in preparing younger



2023 Schedule

9-1: vs. Dubois, 1 p.m.
 (at Ten Sleep)
 *9-8: at Burlington, 2 p.m.
 *9-16: vs. Meeteetse, noon
 *9-23: at Ten Sleep, 2 p.m.
 9-29: vs. Snake River, 6 p.m. (at Midwest)
 *10-7: vs. Midwest, 1 p.m.
 *10-14: vs. Kaycee, 11 a.m.
 10-20: vs. Casper Christian, 3 p.m.
 * Conference game

players for handling important responsibilities.

"Seeing the boys compete in big situations and be able to grow from their experience was great to see," he said.

Longhorns Have Gained Experience

The Meeteetse Longhorns fielded one of the youngest teams in Class 1A six-man last season.

That will still be the case this year – but at least the bulk of the team is one year older.

The Longhorns' roster will be heavy with sophomores this year, but the team retains enough leaders in the higher classes to bring continuity to the program.

"We're still young," coach Zeb Hagen said. "We've got a lot of kids that played a lot as freshmen, but the thing is they're still sophomores."

At the same time, Hagen said, "They've already got the deer-in-the-headlights look out of them. They understand the expectations."

Meeteetse finished 4-6 last year and made the playoffs for the 11th consecutive year, but the Longhorns couldn't make it past the first round of the playoffs.

The Longhorns return three all-conference players in seniors Joseph Pina and Jason Moody and sophomore Max Potas

and lose only two players to graduation.

Pina, already a two-time all-state choice, led the Longhorns in rushing, receiving and tackles.

Offensively, he carried 100 times for 1,234 yards and 19 touchdowns and also caught 13 passes for 256 yards and five more scores, all team-highs. Defensively, he had 122 total tackles, including 27 for loss, six sacks, five fumble recoveries and two blocked kicks, leading Meeteetse in each category. He also notched two defensive touchdowns.

Hagen said Pina has done this despite being the target for opposing teams, all the way back to his freshman year.

"Ever since then, teams have had to game plan for him," Hagen said.

Potas handled most of the quarterbacking duties, completing 41 of 91 passes for 605 yards and 11 touchdowns. Senior Ethan Salzman chipped in 27 completions for 258 yards and seven more touchdowns.

However, Hagen said Salzman –

who played only half the season last year – is in line to take over the spot full-time this fall.

Potas also caught seven passes for 113 yards, while Moody had 11 catches for 98 yards.

Junior Lewis Hesselbacher was second in rushing, carrying 37 times for 183 yards.

Defensively, the Longhorns return their top four tacklers. After Pina, Potas was second on the team in tackles with 74 and also broke up a team-high six passes.

Moody had 63 tackles, including six for loss, while junior Luukas Rhyti added 52 tackles and eight sacks.

Sophomores Jacob Moody and Daniel Pina added 37 and 30 tackles respectively, while senior Jayson Erickson had 22 and Hesselbacher notched 21.

"It's nice to have everybody returning," Hagen said. "We lose one (starter) from last year, so that's going to be really nice. I think we're quick, and we're going to try to use speed as much as we can."



Mascot: Longhorns
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: North
Colors: Red and White

Coach: Zeb Hagen,
eighth year at Meeteetse
2022 Record: 4-6, lost
to Dubois 78-14 in state
quarterfinals

Key Players
TB/OLB: Joseph Pina, Sr.
C/NG: Jason Moody, Sr.
QB: Ethan Salzman, Sr.
RB: Max Potas, Soph.

2023 Schedule
9-1: at Snake River, 2 p.m.
*9-8: vs. Kaycee, 7 p.m.
*9-16: at Hulett, noon
*9-22: at Burlington, 2 p.m.
9-29: vs. Dubois, 2 p.m.
*10-5: vs. Ten Sleep, 7 p.m.
*10-13: at Midwest, 6 p.m.
10-19: vs. Cody JV, TBD
* Conference game

MIDWEST OILERS

1A 6-MAN NORTH

Oilers Adding Offensive Wrinkles

Midwest's formula for success is simple this season: Rely on the players who have proven they can get the job done.

It's a formula borne of both knowledge and necessity – knowledge that they have players who can get it done, necessity in that this year's roster will look quite similar to last year, since no graduating seniors have departed.

"I just hope we stay strong mentally and stay healthy so we can see where we can go with this," coach Joe Campbell said. "I think we can be pretty good."

Although attrition and transfers took their toll in the offseason, most of last year's key contributors are back this year. In particular, Midwest returns all three of its all-conference players in senior Enrique DeLara and juniors Francisco DeLara and Gage Palmer.

With that experience, the Oilers are expanding their playbook and trying to build on last year's 4-5 finish.

"We definitely added a few

wrinkles offensively, and a lot more defensively," Campbell said. "They're taking it really well."

Francisco DeLara led the Oilers in both passing and rushing. He threw for 1,094 yards on 52-of-84 passing, completing 20 touchdowns, and he ran for 662 yards and seven touchdowns on 38 carries.

Enrique DeLara added 50 carries for 593 yards and five touchdowns and caught 15 passes for 357 yards and five more scores – all numbers good for second on the team.

Junior Quincy Paris led the Oilers' receiving corps with 24 catches – including 13 touchdowns – for 616 yards. He also ran for 147 more yards.

Palmer had 224 receiving yards and five touchdowns on 14 catches and also added 111 rushing yards and 297 passing yards.

Defensively, the Oilers return their top four tacklers; perhaps not coincidentally, they are the same four who led offensively, too.

Enrique DeLara led the Oilers with

107 tackles and 13 tackles for loss; he also had four interceptions and led Midwest with three defensive touchdowns.

Palmer added 98 tackles and a team-high six sacks in addition to four interceptions.

Paris had 51 tackles and two defensive touchdowns, while Francisco DeLara added 41 tackles.

As one of just a small number of seniors, Enrique DeLara will be a key leader, Campbell said.

Meanwhile, the trio of juniors – Francisco DeLara, Palmer and Paris – will have equal responsibilities.

Campbell said the Oilers will still be small and won't have a huge roster – topping out somewhere between 12 and 15 – but will carry the right attitude into the season.

"This year, through camp (in June in Billings, Montana), they're more mentally strong, and their confidence is through the roof," Campbell said. "I don't think they're going to be guessing as much. ... It's more natural for them."



Mascot: Oilers
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: North
Colors: Maroon and White

Coach: Joe Campbell,
fourth year at Midwest
2022 Record: 4-5, did not
qualify for playoffs

Key Players
WR/DE: Enrique DeLara, Sr.
QB: Francisco DeLara, Jr.
FB/LB: Gage Palmer, Jr.
WR: Quincy Paris, Jr.

2023 Schedule
9-2: vs. Kelly Walsh sophs, noon
*9-9: at Ten Sleep, 2 p.m.
*9-16: vs. Burlington, 5 p.m.
*9-22: vs. Kaycee, 6 p.m.
9-30: at Hanna, noon
*10-7: at Hulett, 1 p.m.
*10-13: vs. Meeteetse, 6 p.m.
10-20: vs. Encampment, 6 p.m.
* Conference game



Mascot: Pioneers

Division: Class 1A six-man

Conference: North

Colors: Blue and Red

Coach: Dan Cheatham,
second year at Ten Sleep

2022 Record: 0-7, did not
qualify for playoffs

2023 Schedule

*9-9: vs. Midwest, 2 p.m.

*9-15: at Kaycee, 2 p.m.

*9-23: vs. Hulett, 2 p.m.

*10-5: at Meeteetse, 7 p.m.

*10-13: at Burlington, 2 p.m.

10-21: vs. Hanna, 2 p.m.

* Conference game

Future is Cloudy for Pioneers

Without the players, it's hard to field a football team.

No program in the state knows that better than Ten Sleep.

In three out of the past five years, the Pioneers have not had enough interested students to make football a viable option. The Pioneers didn't field a team in either 2018 or 2019 and also did not have a team in 2021.

Coach Dan Cheatham said unless some more interest gets drummed up in Wyoming's smallest six-man school, 2023 could be one of the years added to that list.

Cheatham said last year's team finished with only eight players. Of those, three graduated.

"I don't know that I even have three returners," Cheatham said. "To be honest with you, you try to get a head count before the end of the school year. I have a lot of people that are looking at other sports, and the reality is we may not have football at Ten Sleep this fall."

The Pioneers listed nine players on their online roster; of those, six were freshmen – Christopher Blutt, Jesse Blazo, Eric Harstad, Kendrick Lungren, Payton Norman and Jhett Taylor.

The players gained experience, but they also found it tough to compete against older, more experienced teams, Cheatham said.

"None of my freshmen last year made a touchdown," Cheatham said. "They got some tackles and some yards... but we were pretty limited."

Ten Sleep struggled with such a young team last year, finishing 0-7 while losing every game by at least 45 points, the mercy-rule running clock cutoff point.

In part, that's why the Pioneers are struggling to find enough interested players this fall.

"It's a difficult thing when you're struggling for size, and then you go and play a team and the kids lose by a pretty large margin," Cheatham

said. "And then you ask them to come back the next year, and they're like, 'Why would I do that?' It's been tough to run a program when the successes are pretty small."

If the Pioneers can put together enough players to fill a roster, they will take part in the Class 1A six-man North Conference. The Pioneers' schedule right now includes six conference games and concludes with a nonconference game against Hanna.

Nevertheless, Cheatham said, the players who are committed to the game are not wavering in their commitment; he just needs more of them.

"We've got players that enjoy playing football as a sport," he said. "None of them are thinking that they're going to be a Brett Keisel that goes and plays for the Steelers. ... They just want to go out and play a sport they enjoy playing. It's still up in the air if we can do that."

1A 6-MAN SOUTH CASPER CHRISTIAN MOUNTAINEERS

Mountaineers Had Growing Pains

As the Casper Christian School Mountaineers build their program, coach Ryan Harrison said he has asked his players to take the school's mascot to heart.

As Mountaineers, Harrison said his players should look to climb the highest peaks. And, he told them, it's "not too crazy to say, every single year our Everest should be a state championship victory. ... I told our boys, that's our goal, that's our Everest, that's our peak that we want to visualize ourselves at every season."

Entering its first full year of varsity play, CCS could be one of the most improved teams in the state. It returns every player from last season and is banking on the experienced gained during its first foray into six-man football to pay off this year.

The Mountaineers had some learning to do along the way in its first year of interscholastic sports but grew into the game while finishing 1-6.

The record included losses

to some traditional programs, including Midwest, Burlington, Kaycee and Hulett, and a 1-2 record in games against Natrona County's combined freshman and sophomore teams.

"Last year was a real learning curve year for me and all of our players," Harrison said. "Being in Casper, none of us were used to six-man football."

"... We all got to learn the game last year, and now we can really take it and run this year."

After losing zero players to graduation and gaining a large freshman class, as well as a few others from the remaining classes, this year's roster will be close to 20, double last year's.

Even so, most of those players do not have football experience, and only two of the newcomers have played football before.

"(There) will still be a slight learning curve for us going into the year," Harrison said.

Two seniors, quarterback Timothy Hubert and wide receiver Zane Kaiser, will lead

the Mountaineers this fall. They will also be the team's bookends at the defensive end positions.

Juniors William Hubert and Jay Kull will bring experience to the linebacker positions, and sophomore Andrew Avent, who played a lot of different spots last year, will likely fill the same role this year at wide receiver, running back, linebacker or cornerback.

"They're a year older, bigger, faster, stronger," Harrison said.

Moreover, the Mountaineers finally have a home field this year, as the Mountaineers will play their home games at Natrona's Cheney Alumni Field.

CCS will also be a fully-fledged, playoff-eligible South Conference member, playing league games against Farson, Hanna, Snake River, Encampment and Dubois this year.

"I think now we can finally start looking at our official varsity schedule and saying we want to win these games," Harrison said.



Mascot: Mountaineers

Division: Class 1A six-man

Conference: South

Colors: Black and Yellow

Coach: Ryan Harrison,
second year at Casper
Christian

2022 Record: 1-6, ineligible
for playoffs

Key Players

QB/DE: Timothy Hubert, Sr.

WR/DE: Zane Kaiser, Sr.

RB/LB: William Hubert, Jr.

WR/LB: Jay Kull, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8/25: at Kaycee, 2 p.m.

9/2: vs. Burlington JV, 1 p.m.

*9/9: at Hanna, 10 a.m.

*9/16: vs. Farson, noon

*9/23: at Snake River, 1 p.m.

*10/7: vs. Dubois, noon

*10/13: at Encampment, 3 p.m.

10/20: at Hulett, 3 p.m.

* Conference game

Rams Playing for Higher Purpose

Regardless of the outcome, this will be a memorable 2023 season for the Dubois Rams.

The Rams will start 2023 with a group of five to seven seniors leading a roster of about 16. And they'll be playing with a sense of urgency that goes well beyond the typical last-year push that seniors provide.

Coach David Trembly, who has been undergoing cancer treatments the past few years, will retire from both teaching and coaching at the end of the school year. And one of the seniors on his team is his son Wyatt, six-man's co-offensive player of the year in 2022.

"They know this is my hoo-rah," he said. "I even told the players in the spring... I hope I have 11 games left, because 11 games gets you to Laramie."

That's not to say they won't have challenges in that plan.

Dubois returns two all-conference players in Wyatt Trembly and senior Jonah Oard, but four others graduated.

Trembly set an all-time Class 1A six-man record with 2,502 rushing yards last season, compiling the total on 218 carries. Altogether, he had 3,149 all-purpose yards and 48 touchdowns.

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He is also a leader on defense, where he's the only one of Dubois' top four tacklers from last year to return. He was second on the team with 156 tackles and led the Rams with 15 tackles for loss. He also produced four fumble recoveries and blocked three kicks.

"He's a great leader, and of course his physical talents are huge, but I think one of his biggest assets is his mental tools," coach Trembly said. "(He's)

smart, competitive, not willing to give up, will fight to the end, and he's got some buddies who will fight right alongside him."

In total, the Rams return their top three rushers but graduated their quarterback and three of their top four receivers.

Oard was second in the rushing department with 71 carries for 432 yards and 11 touchdowns, while senior Kaleb Gleim added 33 carries for 303 yards and three scores. Oard also had 10 catches for 105 yards.

"We've got seven guys that have good hands, so we can throw it to anybody," coach Trembly said. "Obviously, they just have to get open, but that's another weapon we have."

Gleim was fourth on the team with 87 tackles, while Oard was right behind with 81. However, junior Siler Hess, with 12 tackles, is the only returning player who had double-digit tackles last season.

Two other seniors, lineman Hayden Howard and running back/defensive back Saven Smith, will also contribute.

"These guys have been playing together since they were in sixth grade, so they know each other pretty well inside and out," coach Trembly said.



Mascot: Rams

Division: Class 1A six-man

Conference: South

Colors: Blue and Yellow

Coach: David Trembly,

26th year at Dubois

2022 Record: 8-2, lost to Burlington 77-28 in state semifinals

Key Players

RB/LB: Wyatt Trembly, Sr.

RB/DE: Jonah Oard, Sr.

QB/DE: Siler Hess, Jr.

RB/DB: Kaleb Gleim, Sr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: Dubois Jamboree, noon (Zero Week)

9-1: vs. Hulett, 1 p.m.

(at Ten Sleep)

*9-9: at Snake River, 2 p.m.

*9-16: vs. Encampment, 2 p.m.

*9-22: at Farson, 1 p.m.

9-29: at Meeteetse, 2 p.m.

*10-7: at Casper Christian, noon

*10-14: vs. Hanna, noon

10-21: vs. Burlington, 1:30 p.m.

* Conference game

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ENCAMPMENT TIGERS

1A 6-MAN SOUTH

Tigers Have Talent to Compete

Encampment will barely have enough players to scrimmage this season.

But that won't stop the Tigers from potentially being one of the best teams in the Class 1A six-man classification.

Encampment reached the six-man semifinals for the third consecutive year in 2022, finishing 6-3 in its fourth consecutive winning season in its four years returned to the Wyoming football landscape.

From that team, the Tigers

return four starters on offense and five on defense, including three seniors ready to shoulder leadership responsibilities.

"It's huge to have that experience we have coming back," coach Kegan Willford said. "Our upperclassmen we have coming back have all had a lot of playing time in various positions, and it is up to the coaching staff to put these players in the positions we believe will make us as successful as we can be."

Both seniors Quade Jordan

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Mascot: Tigers

Division: Class 1A six-man

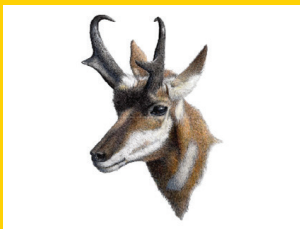
Conference: South

Colors: Red and Black

Coach: Kegan Willford,

fifth year at Encampment

2022 Record: 6-3, lost to Snake River 71-8 in state semifinals



Mascot: Pronghorns
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: South
Colors: Green and Yellow

Coach: Ryan Lay,
 second year at Farson
2022 Record: 2-5, lost to
 Burlington 56-6 in state
 quarterfinals

Key Players

E/LB: Ory Johnson, Sr.
RB/LB: Kole Johnson,
 Soph.
QB/S: Kresten Mines, Sr.
OL/DL: Randal Reddon, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Dubois Jamboree,
 noon (Zero Week)
 9-1: at Shoshoni JV, 2:30
 p.m. (nine-man)
 *9-9: at Encampment, 2 p.m.
 *9-16: at Casper Christian, noon
 *9-22: vs. Dubois, 1 p.m.
 9-30: vs. Burlington, 2 p.m.
 *10-6: at Hanna, 2 p.m.
 *10-13: vs. Snake River, 3 p.m.
 10-20: at Kaycee, 2 p.m.
 * Conference game

Pronghorns Look to Regain Footing

Part by design, part not, Farson finished 2022 playing as little football as any team in Wyoming.

First, the design – Farson had byes in two of the first three weeks of the season.

Second, the unexpected – The Pronghorns finished their final six games in running-clock situations. Two came in victories, four in losses, including a quarterfinal playoff loss to Burlington.

“Hopefully our kids learned that they can play Pronghorn football at a high level, but it is not always going to be easy,” second-year coach Ryan Lay said. “When it’s not going to be easy, hopefully they find they can rise to the challenge.”

The Pronghorns finished 2-5, but the playoff berth did represent Farson’s return the postseason after a year away and two years after an undefeated championship season.

Lay said one of this year’s focus areas was consistency: hitting a high level with each play of each game. That success will depend this year on some new blood, as Farson’s only all-state and both all-conference players were among the four players Farson lost to graduation.

The defense remains intact in several spots. That continuity includes senior linebacker Ory Johnson, who was Farson’s top tackler last year with 68.5 total tackles.

He also had eight catches for 92 yards and is the top returner among the receiving corps.

“Ory is our leader on both sides of the ball,” Lay said. “Especially on defense, he has a knack for sticking his nose in finding the ball. Hopefully we can keep building on that and have a few other players step up to help out.”

Two of Farson’s top three tacklers graduated, but experience returns in numerous spots on defense.

Junior Randal Reddon added 29 tackles, sophomore Kole Johnson had 25 and senior Cash Jones added 15.5. Reddon and Kole Johnson also blocked three kicks apiece.

On offense, the Pronghorns graduated three of their top four rushers and their top three receivers.

Kole Johnson, who was third on the team with 29 carries for 251 yards and three touchdowns, is the only returner to crack triple-digit rushing yards.

Both Jones and senior Kresten Mines saw time at quarterback, with Mines completing 27 of 63 passes for 317 yards and Jones completing 20 of 32 for 232 yards.

Lay said the Pronghorns’ future looks strong. He added that his first year with the program, as limited as it was, provided new opportunities.

“I believe the players are understanding of what I want to do with the program,” Lay said. “They have known from day one that expectations are high, and always will be. Some fine tuning on my end and their end of things will help reach those expectations.”

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ENCAMPMENT CONTINUED-

and Kaben Pickett were all-state selections last year; with two returning all-state players, Encampment is tied with Snake River for the most in six-man.

Senior Ryon Miller was also an all-conference selection. Together, they represent the only three seniors the Tigers are likely to have this fall.

“The expectation is for our seniors to step up and lead the team,” Willford said, “whether it is by example or more vocally. Our three seniors love the game and have already been stepping up during the offseason to set expectations.”

Jordan led the ground attack

last year with 108 carries for 1,084 yards and 23 touchdowns. Pickett added 45 carries for 577 yards to finish second.

Pickett was second for the Tigers in catches (11) and receiving yards (209) and is Encampment’s top returning receiver. Jordan added 10 catches for 157 yards, while junior Baylin Sifford had seven catches for 99 yards.

Junior quarterback Gunner Henrie completed 35 of 58 passes for 579 yards and eight touchdowns, all without an interception.

Somehow, the returning talent on defense is even more impressive, as Encampment returns its top two tacklers and 10 of its top 11.

Miller led the team with 114

total tackles, while Pickett led the Tigers in defensive points by piling up 91 total tackles, 16 tackles for loss, three sacks, a fumble recovery and an interception.

Jordan added 70 tackles, including 14 for loss.

Sifford had 39 tackles, junior Tyrel Brown had 35 and sophomore Korbyn Barkhurst had 32. Barkhurst also tied Pickett for the team lead with three sacks.

Willford noted the physicality and experience of the returning players as a strength of the team this year. He said the defensive players should play faster in their scheme this year, although the plans “could change depending on the team and scheme we face from week to week.”

ENCAMPMENT

Key Players

RB/LB: Quade Jordan, Sr.
RB/LB: Kaben Pickett, Sr.
WR/LB: Ryon Miller, Sr.
C/DL: Tyrel Brown, Jr.

2023 Schedule

8-25: at Dubois Jamboree,
 noon (Zero Week)
 *9-9: vs. Farson, 2 p.m.
 *9-16: at Dubois, 2 p.m.
 *9-23: vs. Hanna, 2 p.m.
 9-29: vs. Kaycee, 2 p.m.
 *10-7: at Snake River, 2 p.m.
 *10-14: vs. Casper Christian, 3 p.m.
 10-20: at Midwest, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Miners Look to Keep Momentum

The Hanna-Elk Mountain-Medicine Bow Miners saw their future most clearly in its final game of the season.

The Miners finished the 2022 season on a positive note, beating Ten Sleep 67-13 in the season finale to break a 16-game losing streak.

Coach Zack Scott said the victory was huge for a young team trying to build momentum.

"Winning our last game last year was huge, for the program and for our athletes going forward," Scott said. "It showed them they are improving and their hard work every day in practice is worth it."

Although the Miners graduated their only all-conference selection and five players in total, HEM still returns three of its top four rushers, its top passer and its top receiver on offense and four of its top six tacklers on defense.

"We are young for the most part, but all of our young guys have and will continue to get a lot of experience on the field,"

Scott said. "We have some new incoming freshmen that will contribute this year as well."

Senior Hayden Atencio is the leading returning rusher; he was second on the team last year with 481 rushing yards on 71 carries and led the Miners with nine rushing touchdowns.

Sophomore Slevyn Pelt chipped in 43 carries for 223 yards.

Sophomore Naythan Atencio split time under center but still led the Miners in passing yards (263), completions and attempts (21 of 44). Pelt led the Miners' receivers with 205 receiving yards and three touchdowns and was second on the team with seven total catches.

Defensively, the Miners return three of their top four players in defensive points in the Atencio brothers and sophomore Samuel Ramirez. Ramirez and Naythan Atencio tied for second on the team with 56 tackles apiece, while Hayden Atencio added 42 more tackles and Pelt had 39.

Sophomore Royal Olsen (17 tackles) and senior Anthony Solaas (10) also reached double-digit tackles last season, and Scott said junior Cody Priest will also contribute.

"It is a major luxury to have so many experienced and football-savvy kids on our defense," Scott said. "The boys became an aggressive, cohesive defensive unit and were able to compete at a high level."

In all, the Miners will have about 15 or 16 players out this year, but only two or three will be seniors – another opportunity to focus on the growth of a program that continues to show its potential.

"I believe we did take a huge leap forward last year," Scott said. We have a good team culture and are gaining the experience needed to be competitive with next-level competition. The team continues to come together (and) push themselves and each other to be better."



Mascot: Miners
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: South
Colors: Blue and Orange

Coach: Zack Scott, 11th year at Hanna
2022 Record: 1-7, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

FB/C/LB: Samuel Ramirez, Soph.
RB/LB: Hayden Atencio, Sr.
RB/QB/LB: Naythan Atencio, Soph.
RB/TE/LB: Slevyn Pelt, Soph.

2023 Schedule

9-1: at Kaycee, 2 p.m.
*9-9: vs. Casper Christian, 10 a.m.
*9-16: vs. Snake River, noon
*9-23: at Encampment, 2 p.m.
9-30: vs. Midwest, noon
*10-6: vs. Farson, 2 p.m.
*10-14: at Dubois, noon
10-21: at Ten Sleep, 2 p.m.
* Conference game



Mascot: Rattlers
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: South
Colors: Purple and Yellow

Coach: Jack Cobb, seventh year at Snake River
2022 Record: 11-0, beat Burlington 55-8 in state championship

Key Players

TB/TE/LB: Seth Maxson, Sr.
C/D/E: Isaiah Skalberg, Sr.
TB/LB: Bridger Cozzens, Jr.
QB/S: Mason Jones, Jr.

2023 Schedule

9-1: vs. Meeteetse, 2 p.m.
*9-9: vs. Dubois, 2 p.m.
*9-16: at Hanna, noon
*9-23: vs. Casper Christian, 1 p.m.
9-29: vs. Hulett, 6 p.m. (at Midwest)
*10-7: vs. Encampment, 2 p.m.
*10-13: at Farson, 3 p.m.
10-19: vs. Rock Springs JV, 4 p.m.
* Conference game

SNAKE RIVER RATTLERS

1A 6-MAN SOUTH

Rattlers Not Resting on Laurels

With two state championships and 21 consecutive victories entering this season, Snake River is an obvious target for other Class 1A six-man teams.

And the Rattlers know it.

Coach Jack Cobb said the Rattlers will be challenged by offseason losses but still have the talent and experience to continue their run of excellence, with three returning starters on offense, two on defense and a pair of all-state selections coming back.

"Coming off two straight championship seasons is nice, but it's also hard," Cobb said. "... We have a lot of possibilities moving forward, but team chemistry will be a key, and to find leaders for this year's team will be huge."

Seniors Seth Maxson and Isaiah Skalberg were all-state choices, while junior Bridger Cozzens added an all-conference nod last year.

Cobb said he's excited by what he's seen so far from his leaders, including four seniors who will lead a roster of about 20 total players.

"I feel our boys are willing to

put the time in and not take it for granted that we can reach another championship game," Cobb said. "I feel our leaders won't let that happen. They know what is at stake and will lead us."

Skalberg, whose five catches for 99 yards put him third on the team in both receptions and yards, is the top returning receiver. Senior Tanner Duncan added four catches for 84 yards; three of those four, though, went for touchdowns.

The Rattlers lost their top three rushers to graduation. Junior Hunter Jones is the top returning rusher, with 27 carries for 130 yards last year. Cozzens added 11 carries for 100 yards and two touchdowns.

Junior Mason Jones will take over at quarterback.

On defense, three of Snake River's top five tacklers return from last year.

Maxson led Snake River's defense with 93 total tackles, he had a team-high 18 tackles for loss to go with three fumble recoveries, four interceptions and three defensive touchdowns.

Cozzens was third on the team in defensive points with 127 and had 70 total tackles, while Skalberg added 48 tackles, including 13 for loss.

Junior Ervey Marquez added 29 tackles, senior Jaden Thomas chipped in 24 and sophomore Hayden Davis had 21.

Junior running back/safety Jaziel Giron will also see time.

"We had a great team camp and began to fill a lot of positions that we had to fill because of graduation and an unexpected tragedy," Cobb said.

The tragedy Cobb referred to hit the community hard. The team will play without Zane Matheson, an all-state player as a junior who died in May. The death "totally shocked the entire community, and we are starting to move forward the best we can," Cobb said.

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