

Wyoming High School

FOOTBALL GUIDE

2024

**WILL THE BRONCS BREAK
THE STATE RECORD?**

**Sheridan enters 2024 on a 31-game
winning streak**



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CONTACTS:

Editors
Chris Wood
wood@idahosports.com

Writers
Patrick Schmiedt
pschmiedt@yahoo.com

Sales
Bree Fincham
proapproval@cnsposters.com

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4A Preview



Sheridan Eyes Consecutive Wins Record

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four Questions to Answer

What are you watching for in 4A this year? Two big streaks. Sheridan enters the season with a 31-game winning streak and three consecutive state championships. Four more victories would break the state winning streak.

You said TWO big streaks -- what's the other? This one isn't as positive, but Cheyenne South enters 2024 tied for the state record longest losing streak at 38 games. If the Bison can shake the streak, it would mean a lot to the program and to players who have never known a varsity victory.

Can anyone else catch Sheridan? Absolutely. The Broncos aren't loaded with returning talent -- no all-staters return and just one all-conference player. Many of 4A's other teams find themselves in similar circumstances, as only four players come back with all-state accolades -- two at Thunder Basin, one at Campbell County and one at Cheyenne Central.

Any programs on the rise? Three of the four programs who finished near the bottom of the 4A standings last year have new head coaches. Rock Springs, Kelly Walsh and Laramie welcome Kasey Koepplin, Randy Roden and Jake Chick, respectively.

Four Key Games

Cheyenne East at Sheridan, Sept. 20. If the Broncos can somehow come through unscathed in the first three games, this game represents what could be consecutive win No. 35 --

the one that would set the state record for consecutive victories.

Natrona at Cheyenne East, Sept. 27. 2023's four semifinal teams (East, Sheridan, Thunder Basin, Natrona) all play each other in the first five weeks of the season, capping with this game between the Mustangs and T-Birds in Week 4.

Campbell County at Thunder Basin, Oct. 11. When Thunder Basin opened its doors eight years ago, this is the game everyone knew was possible in Gillette. It took a while to get there, but the Camels' ascension has been astonishing to watch.

Campbell County at Sheridan, Oct. 18. One week after what will likely be a highly emotional cross-town rivalry game, the Camels draw the defending champs, on the road, in a renewal of the Energy Bowl.

Predicted Order of Finish

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

Way-too-early Title Game Score Prediction

Sheridan 38, Campbell County 28. Of all of the seasons in Sheridan's current championship run, this one is the most tenuous. The first few weeks will be telling to a season full of uncertainty.

State Champs

**Sheridan
Broncs**



2023 State Playoffs

4A Championship

Sheridan 31, Cheyenne East 3

Semifinals

Sheridan 62, Thunder Basin 7
Cheyenne East 17, Natrona 10

Quarterfinals

Sheridan 59, Kelly Walsh 0
Thunder Basin 40, Campbell County 12
Cheyenne East 42, Rock Springs 14
Natrona 14, Cheyenne Central 3

Players to Watch

Mason Drube, Campbell County. Drube caught the attention of several college programs before verbally committing to Wyoming this summer. He is 4A's top returning passer, throwing for 2,067 yards last season.

Logan Mendoza and Cort Catlin, Thunder Basin. Mendoza was Thunder Basin's No. 1 tackler last year with 68, while Catlin was close behind with 64. They will lead an experienced defensive group.

Brycen Bailey, Cheyenne Central. The classification's only returning all-stater who plays on the interior, Bailey's presence will be key for Central to stay in the championship conversation.

Trent Rosenau, Campbell County. Rosenau had 1,107 rushing yards last season, including 15 touchdowns, as well as an all-state nod. However, Rosenau won't have to do it all on a team that is multidimensional.

Tucker Sides, Natrona. Sides put up a huge number of tackles, 105 to be exact, to lead a stingy Natrona defense that ranked first in 4A in yards allowed per game last season.

Bridger Peldo, Sheridan. The only full-time starter who's returning for either Sheridan's offense or defense, Peldo is an offensive lineman who will be a key piece of the Broncos' success this fall.



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

Coach: Orah Garst, second year at Campbell County
2023 Record: 6-4, lost to Thunder Basin 40-12 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

QB: Mason Drube, Sr.
WR: Adam Gibson, Sr.
RB: Trent Rosenau, Sr.
WR: Garrett Herther, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
 9-6: at Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
 9-13: vs. Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
 9-20: at Natrona, 7 p.m.
 9-27: at Laramie, 6 p.m.
 10-4: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
 10-11: at Thunder Basin, 7 p.m.
 10-18: at Sheridan, 6 p.m.
 10-25: vs. Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.

Camels Have Experience to Compete

The Campbell County Camels will be a paradox of football strategies this fall.

Under second-year coach Orah Garst, the Camels will be experienced on both sides of the ball, returning nine starters on defense and six on offense.

And where the offense can add complexity and flexibility to what it does, the defense will simplify and help players play fast.

The Camels return five first-team all-conference selections, three more than any other Class 4A team. That group is led by returning all-state pick senior Trent Rosenau and seniors Mason Drube, Adam Gibson, Garrett Herther and Raynor Ranum.

"We've got height, we've got speed, we've got size," Garst said. "... Last year we had like six or seven seniors, and this year we have 19, and they're all (physical) freaks."

Drube is the top returning passer in Class 4A after completing 134 passes for 2,067 yards and 22 touchdowns against just four interceptions last season. This summer, he verbally committed to play for Wyoming.

Rosenau added 151 carries for 1,107 yards and 15 touchdowns.

Gibson was the Camels' top receiver, leading the team in catches (34), receiving yards (575) and receiving touchdowns (eight).

Herther finished third on the team with 20 catches for 247 yards and four touchdowns. Rosenau added 14 catches for 164 yards. In all, Campbell County returns six of its top eight receivers from 2023.

Also in the mix in the passing game is 6-foot-7 sophomore Jack Andela at tight end and 6-foot-5 junior Ethan Masteller at wide receiver; Gibson is also 6-foot-3.

Garst said Drube has given the ability to audible or adjust receivers' routes at the line.

"Now we're not talking about plays, we're talking about adjustments," Garst said. "... We went from the pee-wee version to the college version in one year."

The defense, which returns eight of its top 11 tacklers, will do the opposite.

"We found out what the kids are good at, and on that side of the

ball, we simplified," Garst said.

Ranum leads the Camels' returners on defense after finishing second on the team with 51.5 tackles last season, including tying for the team high with 10 tackles for loss.

Junior Tyler Rambo had 42 tackles, good for third on the team, and tied for the team lead with 3.5 sacks.

Senior Patrick Lynch had 33 tackles, with 10 for loss and 3.5 sacks to tie for the team lead.

Junior Treyton Sukut had 33 tackles, seniors Danny Carsrud and senior Michael Biggs had 26 tackles apiece, senior Cavalli Gibson had 24 and senior Jacob Pelton had 23.

"Every single one of them is a year older, and some of them are 40 pounds heavier," Garst said.

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Central has Numbers on its Side

The switch has flipped for the Cheyenne Central football program.

When seventh-year coach Mike Apodaca started at Central, he knew he needed to see more offseason commitment from his team.

Now, Apodaca is looking for his players to meet a new set of expectations.

"I feel like the program is at a place now where we've got kind of a football mindset," Apodaca said. "That was a work in progress when I got here. But we took 110 players to camp this summer, which are numbers we've never had."

This season, the Indians will have experience, with seven offensive and six defensive starters returning.

"We bring back a lot of people, but we were also really young," Apodaca said. "At the end of last year we started seven sophomores."

Senior Tate Berry, a first-team all-conference choice last year, led the Indians in defensive points and tied for the team lead with 54 tackles. He also had team highs with 10.5 tackles for loss, 3.5 sacks, three blocked kicks and two forced fumbles.

Senior Will Pauley also had 54 tackles, including 2.5 for loss.

Senior Bryson Filbin had 33 tackles, senior Kolby Moon had 31 and senior Aiden Herget had 22.

In total, the defense returns its top two

tacklers but graduated five of its top seven players in defensive points. Apodaca said senior Brycen Bailey, Central's only returning all-state player, Pauley, Berry and junior Jack DiManna at linebacker will have to lead the way early this season.

"It's going to be really important that that group really take ownership in our games early on," he said.

The offense's strength is up front. The line has good experience with Bailey, Moon, juniors Jack Garrett, D.J. Sayers and senior Nate Sack, as well as Berry and DiManna at tight end.

Junior Lane Clement returns at quarterback after completing 67 of 122 passes for 617 yards and five touchdowns.

DiManna and junior James Pillivant tied for No. 3 on the team in both catches (12) and yards (99) and are the Indians' top returning receivers. Of Central's top six receivers, they are the only two to return.

The Indians graduated their top three rushers, and no returner broke triple digits last season.

Apodaca said he likes the balance he sees in his returning group, with both talent and experience spread throughout a variety of positions.

Still, Central will have to rely on several younger players to cultivate success.

"I think we've got some growing pains that we have to get through, but it's a group of kids that has the ability to get through that," Apodaca said. "... They're still young, learning how to take that next step as a varsity player."



Mascot: Indians
Division: Class 4A
Colors: Red and Black

Coach: Mike Apodaca, seventh year at Cheyenne Central

2023 Record: 4-6, lost to Natrona 14-3 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

TE/LB: Tate Berry, Sr.
OL/DL: Brycen Bailey, Sr.
WR/DB: Nate Brenchley, Sr.
RB/LB: Will Pauley, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
9-6: vs. Campbell County, 6 p.m.
9-13: at Laramie, 6 p.m.
9-20: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
9-27: at Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
10-4: vs. Sheridan, 6 p.m.
10-11: at Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
10-18: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
10-25: at Natrona, 6 p.m.

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T-Birds are Knocking on the Door

In 16 of the 18 years Chad Goff has been the head coach at Cheyenne East, the Thunderbirds have reached at least the semifinals of the playoffs.

Each of the past two years, the Thunderbirds have made it to the state title game.

Despite both championship games ending with East on the losing side, Goff said the experiences have made this year's returners eager for another chance.

"To actually be there, it makes you hungry... and it makes you reflect on how you can do better," Goff said. "... They've been there, but they want to be in that end zone, hugging their families, taking every picture you can imagine, and you don't really do that if you don't end with a W."

East graduated eight all-state and 10 first-team all-conference players, though, with senior lineman Jesse Kirkbride the only first-team all-conference player retained from 2023. Moreover, the Thunderbirds graduated their quarterback, top

three rushers, top five receivers and top seven tacklers.

Senior Nolan Horton completed 16 of 22 passes for 213 yards and two touchdowns in spot duty under center. Horton is also the team's leading returning receiver after catching 10 passes for 159 yards and a touchdown last season.

Horton, senior Tanner Stehwein and junior Kaenan Zowada are all in competition for quarterback, Goff said.

Senior Liam Fox, who had 27 carries for 184 yards and two touchdowns, is the top returning rusher. Horton added 27 carries for 127 yards and a score, while senior Jaxon Farella contributed 23 carries for 106 yards.

Senior Wyatt Dean is East's top returning tackler; he had 37 a year ago, good for eighth on the team, and also had three interceptions and two fumble recoveries.

Horton added 35 tackles and led East with four interceptions.

Senior Bobby Mathews (28 tackles), senior Camden Hassler

(23 tackles) and senior Hunter Sallee (20 tackles) also saw extended playing time on defense.

Goff said this year's team will benefit from comfort and familiarity with each other combined with a sense of immediacy.

"They just seem very energetic, very excited to have their chance and their shot at getting on the field and representing this high school," Goff said.

East's consistency starts with administration, Goff said, and works its way through the coaching staff to players.

"I could probably go through the last 18 years and point out what that class brought to that program," he said. "... The younger kids see that and they build upon that to keep things going."

"... We've been really blessed with really good leaders in our junior and senior classes the past few years. You just hope that trickles down, and it has trickled down."



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

Coach: Chad Goff, 19th year at Cheyenne East
2023 Record: 10-2, lost to Sheridan 31-3 in state championship

Key Players

OLB: Wyatt Dean, Sr.
OL: Jesse Kirkbride, Sr.
S: Nolan Horton, Sr.
DB: Camden Hassler, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Laramie, 6 p.m.
9-6: at Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
9-13: vs. Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
9-20: at Sheridan, 6 p.m.
9-27: vs. Natrona, 6 p.m.
10-4: at Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
10-11: vs. Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
10-18: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
10-25: at Campbell County, 6 p.m.



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

Coach: Eli Moody, third year at Cheyenne South
2023 Record: 0-9, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

OL/DL: Jacob Murphy, Sr.
WR/S: Trey Downham, Sr.
TE/LB: Dane Barton, Jr.
WR/CB: Jaden McNeil, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Sheridan, 6 p.m.
 9-6: vs. Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
 9-13: at Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
 9-20: at Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
 9-27: vs. Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
 10-4: at Campbell County, 6 p.m.
 10-11: vs. Laramie, 6 p.m.
 10-18: vs. Natrona, 6 p.m.
 10-25: at Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.

South Look to End Dubious Streak

Cheyenne South's weight room has a countdown clock that can be adjusted for the upcoming opponent.

As soon as the 2023 season was done, Bison coach Eli Moody didn't hesitate.

"We started that countdown at like, 240-some days," he said. "I posted it in the weight room before the schedule was even shared with the public."

South's season starts with a road game at three-time defending Class 4A champion Sheridan, which brings a 31-game winning streak into this season. Meanwhile, Cheyenne South enters 2024 in the opposite direction, with losing streak that has now reached 38 games – tied for the longest in state history – in tow.

But the Bison's reaction to the countdown clock, spurred by a group of returning players who have managed to stay focused on the positives despite four consecutive 0-9 seasons, has Moody optimistic.

"I'd say the kids have done a great job of rallying and saying, 'Hey, let's go prove that we can actually do something,'" he said. "... We have a great group of kids

"Overall, the attitude's positive and excited right now."

~Coach Eli Moody

who want to play football, who want to be out there and do what they're passionate about."

South has several gaps to fill, particularly on offense, but the Bison defense returns six of its top 12 tacklers. However, South does lose its top two tacklers from 2023.

Senior Trey Downham was third on the team last year and leads South's returners with 46 tackles last year. He also led South with two interceptions and three pass break-ups.

Senior Carson Garey added 27 tackles, good for fifth on the team. Four juniors also contributed, with Cameron Trujillo and Daniel Serna notching 18 tackles, Jaden McNeil 16 and Dane Barton 13.

Moody said the Bison will be junior-heavy, but he said being exposed to the varsity level as sophomores has inspired a renewed offseason commitment from that group, he said.

"We're still a super-young

team," Moody said. "The bulk of our guys will be juniors as far as varsity goes. We have a lot of sophomores who got varsity reps (last year).

"... They're probably unfairly put in a situation where they had to get reps before they were ready."

On offense, South graduated its top four rushers, every player who completed a pass last year, as well as two of its top three receivers.

Downham, who was second on the team with 146 receiving yards and tied for second with eight catches, is the top returning receiver. McNeil added eight catches for 98 yards.

Trujillo (six carries, 28 yards) is the top returning rusher.

The offensive line returns two starters, though, in seniors Jacob Murphy and Maddax Haws.

"Overall, the attitude's positive and excited right now," Moody said.

4A

KELLY WALSH TROJANS

Roden Looking to Bring Change

Randy Roden is blunt in his assessment of what needs to change for Kelly Walsh's football team to develop the success he's looking for.

The first-year coach, who's been KW's head boys basketball coach for the past 13 years, sees potential in his team but also sees a small, young group that needs to grow.

"We must use our talent efficiently and differently on both sides of the ball," Roden said. "... Everything will be a huge change for us."

Roden said he was attracted to the position for two reasons – the challenge of bringing victories to a program that has struggled for them and the chance to "try to help the kids

find success."

Kelly Walsh has finished with a winning record just once in the past 14 years and has won four playoff games in the past four decades, so rebuilding will come slowly.

Schematically, Roden said his offense will try to control the clock, while the defense will try to be aggressive up front and put teams in challenging situations.

"I know what we have, who we have and what they are capable of," Roden said. "I have seen limited success in the program for 10 years, and have been able to formulate a plan that tries to alleviate some of the issues KW has in football. But the bottom line is that the past recent years is that our talent is very, very limited."

KW will rely on a group of young but enthusiastic players to help with the transformation process.

Senior Landon Walker and junior Ethan Hague return as first-team all-conference selections.

Walker was KW's top receiver in 2023, catching 47 passes for 414 yards and two scores. He was also No. 2 for the Trojans in rushing last year, carrying 45 times for 247 yards and four touchdowns.

Hague is KW's top returning tackler; he was second on the squad last year with 58 total tackles and tied for the team lead with three pass deflections.

Offensively, junior quarterback Carter Alvar completed 119 passes for 1,251 yards and six touchdowns.

Senior Kaecen Paden was No. 4 for the Trojans in both catches (10) and receiving yards (139).

Junior Jaxsen Terry added 28 carries for 133 yards, good for third on the team.

Junior Aidan Chinn will lead the returning linemen.

The defense returns a host of players who contributed in 2023. Senior Wyatt Humble was third with 51 tackles, Walker tied with senior Mekhi



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

Coach: Randy Roden, first year at Kelly Walsh
2023 Record: 2-8, lost to Sheridan 59-0 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

WR/DE: Landon Walker, Sr.
RB/LB: Ethan Hague, Jr.
QB/S: Carter Alvar, Jr.
OL/DE: Aidan Chinn, Jr.

"We must use our talent efficiently and differently on both sides of the ball."

~Coach Randy Roden

CONTINUED NEXT PAGE-

New Coach Offers a Challenge

In describing what he wanted to see from his team, first-year Laramie head coach Jake Chick consistently repeated one word: "competition."

For Laramie to break its string of 23 consecutive losing seasons, Chick said the Plainsmen will have to inspire internal competition to make Laramie more competitive against external foes.

That starts with position battles, where Chick said he isn't afraid to try players at new spots.

"If anyone penciled in (to a position), it's about as light a pencil mark as you're going to see," said Chick, who has taught and coached throughout the Laramie schools for the past 10 years.

To that end, Chick said he is seeing "a mentality shift right now. We did a three-day install camp two weeks ago that first week of their summer and we had 70 kids show up for that. In all my time as an assistant coach, I don't know if I've ever seen 70 kids on the field, much less for a summer install

camp."

On defense, the Plainsmen return four of their top eight tacklers from 2023. Seniors Fisher Frude and Max Alexander were second and third, respectively, for the Plainsmen in defensive points last year. Frude tied for third on the team with 47 tackles and led Laramie with 25 solo tackles. Alexander had 39 tackles, deflected a team-high four passes and also tied for the team lead with two interceptions.

Senior Noah Kirsch tied with Frude with 47 tackles and leads Laramie's returners with nine tackles for loss last season. Senior Evan Crum added 35 tackles and two interceptions.

Other returners who saw significant defensive playing time last year are juniors Tyler Gale (18 tackles, two pass deflections) and James Vasek (12 tackles) and seniors Will Brinegar (15 tackles), Andres Isidro-Sisneros (14 tackles), and Dealyn Robinson (10 tackles).

On offense, Frude completed

98 of 177 passes for 1,118 yards and six touchdowns last year.

He returns two of his top three receivers from a year ago. Alexander led Laramie with 46 catches for 780 yards and five touchdowns. Junior A.J. Sirdoreus added 10 catches for 124 yards.

The Plainsmen had no rusher top triple-digit yards last season; the leading returning rusher, Alexander, ran 19 times for 47 yards.

Vasek will add depth to the line, while senior transfer Jeremiah Hutcheson has impressed in summer workouts.

Chick said Laramie will also work to build three tiers worth of games – varsity, junior varsity and freshman – something that hasn't happened in his decade in Laramie.

"I always want those younger guys to feel like they have an opportunity to compete for a spot, and we don't win unless we build competition within our own program," Chick said.



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

Coach: Jake Chick, first year at Laramie
2023 Record: 1-8, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players
QB: Fisher Frude, Sr.
DB: Max Alexander, Sr.
LB: Noah Kirsch, Sr.
RB: Evan Crum, Sr.

2024 Schedule
8-30: at Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
9-6: at Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
9-13: vs. Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
9-20: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
9-27: vs. Campbell County, 6 p.m.
10-4: at Natrona, 6 p.m.
10-11: at Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
10-18: vs. Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
10-25: vs. Sheridan, 6 p.m.

KELLY WALSH CONTINUED-

Bovee for fifth with 27 tackles.

Roden said juniors Ben Fetter, Bruce West, William Alt, Joe Humphreys, Micah Stoner and Parker Gilbert will also have important responsibilities this season, though their positions are still to be determined.


KELLY WALSH TROJANS
2024 Schedule

8-30: at Campbell County, 6 p.m.
9-6: vs. Laramie, 6 p.m.
9-13: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
9-20: at Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
9-27: at Sheridan, 6 p.m.
10-4: vs. Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
10-11: vs. Natrona, 6 p.m.
10-18: at Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
10-25: vs. Rock Springs, 6 p.m.



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

Coach: Steve Harshman,
 34th year at Natrona
2023 Record: 7-4, lost to
 Cheyenne East 17-10 in
 state semifinals

Key Players

C: Josh May, Sr.
OL: Tays Turnbull, Sr.
WR/K: Rogan Potter, Sr.
WR: Aiden Youmans, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Thunder Basin, 7 p.m.
 9-6: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.
 9-13: vs. Sheridan, 7 p.m.
 9-20: vs. Campbell County, 7 p.m.
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 10-18: at Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
 10-25: vs. Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.

Mustangs Have Questions to Answer

Right now, the "who" of Natrona's approach is still a question mark.

The "what" will fall into place from there.

Natrona retains just two of its 10 first-team all-conference choices, seniors Rogan Potter and Tucker Sides.

Who will handle most of the other positions, coach Steve Harshman said, is unclear – a problem Harshman said he'd to like to end soon.

"We've been in this deal the last three, four years where we don't really have our quarterback figured out and our offensive line figured out," Harshman said. "Nobody's got anything tattooed on them, a title, everyone has to earn everything. But we've been in this situation in the last few years.

"... We've got some work to do there, and somebody's got to emerge at that quarterback spot. Those are obviously key areas and that'll be a big part we have to get solved."

On the offensive line, the Mustangs return Josh May and Tays Turnbull, seniors who played significant minutes last year.

Potter was Natrona's leading receiver last year, catching 40 passes for 458 yards; he scored three receiving touchdowns. With nine carries for 83 yards, Potter is also Natrona's top

returning rusher.

"We'll get the ball in his hands as much as we can," Harshman said.

Senior Aiden Youmans was second for NC with 18 catches and third with 221 receiving yards last season. Of the Mustangs' top six receivers from 2023, only Potter and Youmans return. The Mustangs also graduated their top three rushers.

As for that quarterback spot? Well, no returning player completed more than one pass last season.

Harshman said three players have emerged as potential starters, and "we'll give them all a chance. They're all working hard this summer, and a few months is a big time in a young man's life."

Sides led Natrona's defense with 105 tackles last season, including team highs in solo (36) and assisted (69) tackles. He also led Natrona with three forced fumbles and recovered one, as well.

"I think he's going to have to



be a key guy for us," Harshman said. He's going to be right in the middle of our defense, kind of the quarterback of our defense, really running things."

However, Sides is the only one of Natrona's top seven tacklers to return.

Senior Jameson Siemens had 30 tackles, including seven for loss, while senior Gus Bertagnole contributed 29 tackles.

Potter added 27 tackles and four pass deflections, and senior Zaven Thomas had 21 tackles and five pass break-ups.

Seniors Payton Maggi, Tyler Palermo, Gage Brooks and Charlie True will also contribute.

"I think we've got some nice returners, particularly all those stand-up positions – running back, receiver, linebacker, defensive back," Harshman said.

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"We've been in this deal the last three, four years where we don't really have our quarterback figured out and our offensive line figured out."

~Coach Steve Harshman



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Broncs Embracing Historic Streak

Sheridan, the three-time defending Class 4A state champion, has won 31 games in a row.

The state record, which has stood for more than 60 years, is 34.

Coach Jeff Mowry said his team has embraced the streak but isn't using it as unnecessary pressure.

"A no-hitter in baseball never gets talked about (in the dugout)," Mowry said. "We've taken the opposite approach, and we've embraced that. Kids can't feel like, 'We can't let them down.' We can't do that. We've just got to go out and play our best football."

To continue its success, the Broncs will need to rely on players who didn't see much varsity time last season. Sheridan graduated all eight of its all-state players and 12 of its 13 first-team all-conference players. Only senior Ty Gilbertson returns from that group.

The defense, despite not returning any starters from last

season's championship game, does return several players who saw significant time.

Junior Keegan Rager led the Broncs with 51 tackles last year, including three for a loss, and recovered two fumbles. Senior Kelten Crow had 33 tackles, Gilbertson added 30 tackles and had two interceptions and senior Garrett Way tallied 29 tackles.

Junior Breck Reed added 25 tackles and four interceptions and also led Sheridan with three defensive touchdowns. Seniors Harvey Fryberger (25 tackles) and Karson Chase (20 tackles) and juniors Beck Haswell (22 tackles), who returns after missing much of last year with a broken hand, and Will Greer (20 tackles) also saw extensive playing time on defense.

Mower said players gained varsity experience through their reserve roles last year, and "we were really, really fortunate last year to have a lot of time to be able to do that."

On offense, the Broncs graduated their top four rushers,

their quarterback and their top two receivers but return two starting offensive linemen in seniors Bridger Peldo and Josh Davis. Davis returns after tearing his ACL last season.

The leading returning rusher is Way, who ran 22 times for 173 yards and three touchdowns. Crow added 21 carries for 140 yards and a pair of touchdowns, while Gilbertson had 22 carries for 136 yards and two touchdowns and Greer had 24 carries for 112 yards.

Reed, whose 78 receiving yards on two catches was good enough for third on the team last season, is Sheridan's top returning receiver.

"More than we've had in the past few years, we're really going to have to grow our kids throughout the season," Mowry said. "We're really going to have to grow and work on building our depth."

Gilbertson made five of six field goals last year, with a long of 45 yards, and made 57 of 61 extra-point attempts.



Mascot: Broncs
Division: Class 4A
Colors: Blue and Yellow

Coach: Jeff Mowry, seventh year at Sheridan
2023 Record: 12-0, beat Cheyenne East 31-3 in state championship

Key Players

OL: Bridger Peldo, Sr.
RB/LB: Kelton Crow, Sr.
QB/DB/K: Ty Gilbertson, Sr.
RB/LB: Garrett Way, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
9-6: at Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
9-13: at Natrona, 7 p.m.
9-20: vs. Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
9-27: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.
10-4: at Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
10-11: vs. Rock Springs, 7 p.m.
10-18: vs. Campbell County, 6 p.m.
10-25: at Laramie, 6 p.m.



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

Coach: Kasey Koepplin,
 first year at Rock Springs
2023 Record: 3-7, lost to
 Cheyenne East 42-14 in
 state quarterfinals

Key Players

RB/LB: Sam Thornhill, Sr.
TE/DE: Sam Eddy, Sr.
K: Michael Rubich, Sr.
OL/DL: William Bybee, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.
 9-6: vs. Natrona, 6 p.m.
 9-13: at Campbell County, 6 p.m.
 9-20: vs. Laramie, 6 p.m.
 9-27: at Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.
 10-4: vs. Thunder Basin, 6 p.m.
 10-11: at Sheridan, 7 p.m.
 10-18: vs. Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.
 10-25: at Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.

New Coach Brings Optimism to Tigers

After a bumpy 2023 season, the Rock Springs Tigers are looking for stability.

In Kasey Koepplin, they may have the coach who can provide it.

Koepplin comes to Rock Springs with lots of experience – 14 years as a coach at the high school and college levels in both Arizona and North Dakota, including the past two years as the head coach at Cibola High School in Yuma, Arizona.

"The transition has been pretty smooth on the football and school side of things," Koepplin said. "... There seems to be a ton of support from anyone who I run into."

Koepplin said he wants to put together a team that will be physical and handle two important aspects – run the ball on offense, and play fast and physical on defense.

"We will work to make everything we do competitive, efficient, and physical to prepare all our student-athletes the best we can," Koepplin said.

Much of last year's coaching staff has been retained, Koepplin

"We will work to make everything we do competitive, efficient, and physical to prepare all our student-athletes the best we can."

~Coach Kasey Koepplin

said. He also said he likes the blend of experience and youth on the roster, and he said he sees several underclassmen who could contribute right away. That will help offset the changes needed in team philosophy, schemes and terminology, which will come with a learning curve. Senior Sam Thornhill, Rock Springs' top returning rusher and tackler, is the only all-conference players to return this year.

Thornhill was Rock Springs' top tackler last year with 68 total tackles, leading the Tigers with 31 solo tackles and tying for the team lead with two fumble recoveries.

On offense, he ran 35 times for 232 yards and a pair of touchdowns last year and added

six catches for 36 yards.

Sophomore Boston James added 35 carries for 148 yards. No other returners topped 25 yards last year on the ground.

Senior Logan Condie, who completed two passes for 13 yards, is the only player back who completed a pass last season.

James, whose 40 receiving yards on six catches ranked him sixth on the team last year, is the top returning receiver. Junior Ben Fowler added 37 receiving yards on a pair of catches.

The Tigers return just three of their top eight tacklers this year but do return several players who saw time on that side of the ball.

CONTINUED PAGE 11-



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'Bolts Backed by Senior Leaders

One of the weirdest oddities in Class 4A is happening at Thunder Basin this fall – and it's a good sign for the 'Bolts.

Thunder Basin returns two all-state players in seniors Cort Catlin and Logan Mendoza; the rest of Class 4A, all nine teams, returns just two combined.

The mathematical advantage ends there, though. The 'Bolts graduated four other all-state and seven other first-team all-conference players, including their quarterback, their top three rushers, three of their top four receivers and seven of their top nine players in defensive points.

Even so, coach Trent Pikula said he sees a lot of strengths in this year's group.

"Although we don't return a lot of starters, we do return a lot of kids with experience," he said. "We played a lot of kids last year at most positions."

The defense, specifically, benefits from the return of its all-state members.

Mendoza led Thunder Basin with 68 tackles last year and also led the team in defensive points. He notched 10 tackles for loss, three sacks, four pass deflections, two fumble recoveries and an interception.

Catlin was second on the team with 64 total tackles and tied for the team lead with two interceptions.

"Cort and Logan both had very good seasons last year, leading our defense as juniors," Pikula said.

"Their role will be to lead this team and continue to do what they started last season."

Several other seniors-to-be saw extensive time on defense. Parker Wagner added 42 tackles and an interception, Riley Bertsch had 26 tackles, Jack Bouzsis had 22 and Cameron Pilcher had 21.

The offense returns four starters. Catlin was second for Thunder Basin with 293 receiving yards and tied for second with 22 catches. Wagner added 14 catches for 166 yards.

Senior Wyatt Black ran 28 times for 140 yards and two touchdowns, good for fourth on the team last year; he's Thunder Basin's top returning rusher.

Junior Hadley Hudson saw spot time at quarterback, completing 11 of 12 passes for 92 yards and a touchdown. He will compete with sophomore Ty Eisenhower for the starting spot.

"They are both great kids who (are) big and physical but neither have varsity experience," Pikula said. "We will wait and see who moves

(themselves) to the front."

Senior Kingston Hansen leads returners on the line.

One other unique challenge Thunder Basin faces is its schedule. The 'Bolts, a semifinal team themselves in the 4A playoffs last year, face the other three semifinal teams from last year – Natrona, Sheridan and Cheyenne East – in the first three weeks.

Pikula said the schedule quirk is not a primary focus.

"We have not talked about our schedule with our kids and we won't," Pikula said.



"Although we don't return a lot of starters, we do return a lot of kids with experience..."

~Coach Trent Pikula



Mascot: 'Bolts

Division: Class 4A

Colors: Blue and Silver

Coach: Trent Pikula, eighth year at Thunder Basin

2023 Record: 7-4, lost to Sheridan 62-7 in state semifinals

Key Players

TE/LB: Cort Catlin, Sr.

TE/LB: Logan Mendoza, Sr.

OL/DL: Kingston Hansen, Sr.

WR/DB: Parker Wagner, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Natrona, 7 p.m.

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

9-13: at Cheyenne East, 6 p.m.

9-20: vs. Kelly Walsh, 6 p.m.

9-27: vs. Cheyenne Central, 6 p.m.

10-4: at Rock Springs, 6 p.m.

10-11: vs. Campbell County, 7 p.m.

10-18: at Laramie, 6 p.m.

10-25: vs. Cheyenne South, 6 p.m.



ROCK SPRINGS CONTINUED-

Senior Sam Eddy added 42 tackles and led Rock Springs

with 10.5 tackles for loss and 2.5 sacks.

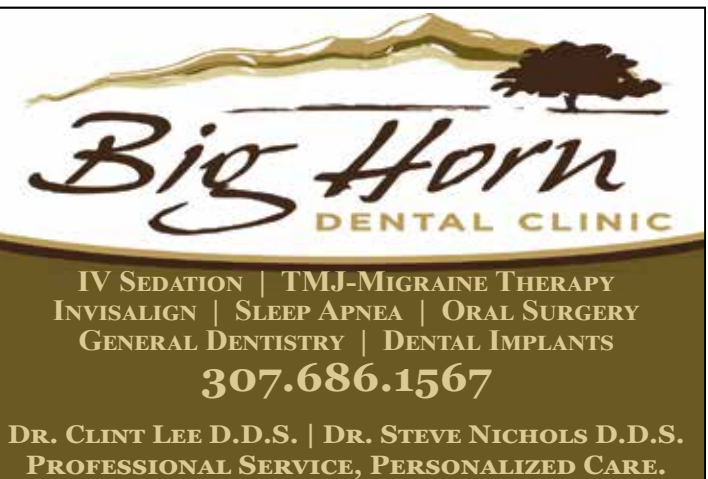
Junior James Moore had 41 tackles and forced two fumbles.

Senior Masen Werkele added 35 tackles, James had 30 and Fowler had 24.

Senior Michael Rubich will handle kicking and punting.

Koeplin said senior Arrington

Purvis and sophomores Jernee Padilla and Kaleb Praytor would also have important roles this season.



State Champs Star Valley Braves

2023 State Playoffs

3A Championship

Star Valley 27, Cody 0

Semifinals

Cody 52, Evanston 14
Star Valley 30, Buffalo 19

Quarterfinals

Star Valley 62, Worland 0
Buffalo 35, Powell 21
Cody 42, Douglas 14
Evanston 28, Riverton 7

Players to Watch

Maddax Ball, Cody. The Broncos' quarterback completed 67.5% of passes, tallying 2,130 passing yards. He threw for 27 touchdowns and ran for another nine -- something opposing defenses also have to account for.

Carter Archuleta, Douglas. He was No. 1 in Class 3A in defensive points per game last season; as a sophomore he ranked third in 3A in the same category; as a freshman, he led Douglas in defensive points and tackles. He's led 3A in total tackles the past two seasons.

Grant Thomson, Star Valley. He led the Braves with 92 tackles last year, but he'll have to help along younger players to fill roles in a defense where eight of the top 10 tacklers have graduated.

Chase Hutch, Cody. Cody's top tackler last year as a junior, Hutch's 110 total tackles were second in Class 3A last season. He had a classification-high 62 solo tackles.

Keona Wisniewski, Powell. He led Powell's defense with 91 tackles, including 18 for loss. He was also key on offense, and his versatility (he could be quarterback or fullback this season) makes him valuable.

Adam McCorkle, Buffalo. New coach Ross Walker said McCorkle was good enough to start at quarterback most seasons last year but had to wait until his senior year for the opportunity. McCorkle also has an ally in returning senior Zayne Huber, the team's top pass-catcher.

3A Preview



Cody, Star Valley Set for Showdown

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four Questions to Qnswer

Star Valley and Cody the favorites? Yep. With the number of all-staters coming back -- Cody with six from its runner-up team, Star Valley with five from its championship team -- this classification looks like more of the same up top.

Any spoilers in the mix? Just one -- Powell. The Panthers return three all-state players, which is significantly better than the rest of 3A, where the other nine teams combine to have three returning all-state players.

Honestly, no one else is a title threat? Not really. Torrington, last year's 2A champion, is now a part of 3A. Douglas and Buffalo are consistently tough. Riverton and Evanston both showed they're on the rise after big seasons under first-year head coaches. Everyone else is unproven.

What else should we watch for in 3A this year? Defensive playmakers. In all, four of the top seven players in defensive points last year in 3A are back, and several other defensive stat-line fillers also return.

Four Key Games

Cody at Powell, Sept. 27. Can the Panthers be the spoilers they hope to be? We'll find out in the West Conference opener for both teams in

Week 4, where Powell has the chance to make a huge statement.

Riverton at Buffalo, Oct. 4. 'Member how Riverton upset Buffalo last year to make a three-way tie atop the East Conference standings, and Buffalo ended up on the road in the first round of the playoffs because of it?

Cody at Star Valley, Oct. 11. This is 3A's best rivalry, and the winner will likely be 3A's team to beat come the postseason.

Torrington at Douglas, Oct. 25. Now that Torrington is back in 3A, this game is big for regional bragging rights but could be even bigger for the playoff race in the East.

Predicted Order of Finish

East Conference: Buffalo, Douglas, Riverton, Torrington, Rawlins, Lander.

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

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

Way-too-early Title Game Score Prediction

Star Valley 30, Cody 24. If it's anyone but these two in Laramie -- again -- it'll be a shock. But it's 3A, and weirder things have happened.

New Head Coach is Familiar Face

“Our kids have done a great job of buying in to the leadership we’ve got going... I’m excited to hopefully keep a lot of the things we’ve done very consistent.”

~Coach Ross Walker

The old cliché says if it isn't broke, don't fix it. New Buffalo head coach Ross Walker is applying that theory directly to the Bison. Buffalo has posted winning records in six of the past seven seasons. As Buffalo's defensive coordinator for the past eight seasons, Walker said he sees his new role as an opportunity to provide continuity to an already successful program.

Walker said he wants to maintain stability in "how we go about our day-to-day operations and really making sure we're keeping things consistent for our kids. Our kids have done a great job of buying in to the leadership we've got going. ... I'm excited to hopefully keep a lot of the things we've done very consistent."

Buffalo will benefit from the return of several key contributors this season, but it will need to find a way to rebuild offensive and defensive lines hit hard by graduation. Senior Hayden Jawors is the only one of Buffalo's five

all-state players to come back this season. Seniors Zayne Huber and Ryan Nicholas were all-conference choices last season. All three were key contributors on defense. Of Buffalo's top eight players in defensive points, five return.

"We're pretty fortunate to have a lot of those returners, a lot of that experience," Walker said. "That gives us a lot more leeway with our kids week to week and try to get them to understand schemes."

Jawors was third for Buffalo with 57 tackles and second in defensive points. His tackle totals included 19.5 tackles for loss and a team-high 4.5 sacks.

Junior Lane Rabel had 55 tackles, fourth-best on the team, while senior Tommy Wonka was right behind with 51 tackles. Huber had 41 tackles and a team-high six interceptions, and Nicholas contributed 38 tackles. Senior Jeron Sutton added 20 tackles and junior James Ilnat had 19 in extended playing time.

Buffalo's offensive strength

CONTINUED PAGE 15-



Mascot: Bison
Division: Class 3A
Conference: East
Colors: Black and Gold

Coach: Ross Walker, first year at Buffalo
2023 Record: 7-3, lost to Star Valley 30-19 in state semifinals

Key Players

WR/CB: Zayne Huber, Sr.
C/DE: Hayden Jawors, Sr.
S: Ryan Nicholas, Sr.
RB/S: Tommy Wonka, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-31: vs. Lovell, 12 p.m.
 (Zero Week)
 9-6: vs. Newcastle, 6 p.m.
 9-13: vs. Jackson, 6 p.m.
 9-20: at Cody, 6 p.m.
 *9-27: at Rawlins, 7 p.m.
 *10-4: vs. Riverton, 6 p.m.
 *10-11: at Torrington, 6 p.m.
 *10-18: vs. Douglas, 6 p.m.
 *10-25: at Lander, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

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

Coach: Drew Hodgs, first year at Douglas
2023 Record: 6-3, lost to Cody 42-14 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

RB/MLB: Carter Archuleta, Sr.
WR/OLB: Cash Tillard, Sr.
OT/DL: Anthony Henson, Sr.
QB: Collin Roberts, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: Open (Zero Week)
 9-6: at Jackson, 6 p.m.
 9-13: vs. Cody, 6 p.m.
 9-20: vs. Powell, 6 p.m.
 *9-27: at Riverton, 6 p.m.
 *10-4: vs. Lander, 6 p.m.
 *10-11: vs. Rawlins, 6 p.m.
 *10-18: at Buffalo, 6 p.m.
 *10-25: vs. Torrington, 6 p.m.
 * **Conference game**

Hodgs Steps Up to Lead Bearcats

It's hard to call Douglas coach Drew Hodgs "new."

While 2024 will be Hodgs' first year as head coach of the Bearcats, as former coach Jay Rhoades moves to the activities director's chair, Hodgs knows the Douglas program about as well as anyone.

He played for the Bearcats in high school, and he has coached for nine years as an assistant on Rhoades' staff.

"There's some deep connections to Bearcat country," Hodgs said.

The "new" coach will have some work to do in his first season at the top spot, though.

Senior Carter Archuleta is Douglas' only all-state returner, and senior Cash Tillard, along with Archuleta, are the only two of the Bearcats' 10 all-conference picks coming back this fall.

"We definitely have some holes to fill," Hodgs said.

Defensively, though, Archuleta and Tillard will help lead the way. The pair ranked first and second, respectively, for the Bearcats in defensive

points last season.

Archuleta, by far, led the Bearcats with 117 total tackles, including a team-high 13 for a loss. He also had two interceptions.

Hodgs said the responsibilities for Archuleta, who already has Douglas' career tackles record with a season to go, will increase as a senior.

"He's going to have a big load on his shoulders this year, because this year he's going to have a lot more reps offensively," Hodgs said. "... He's going to be our guy, no doubt about it. I don't think it's a secret."

Archuleta is Douglas' top returning rusher, notching 33 carries for 104 yards to finish third on the team last year, scoring five rushing touchdowns along the way.

On defense, Tillard added 45 tackles, four interceptions and two fumble recoveries. He is also the top returning receiver after finishing second on the team with 331 receiving yards on 27 catches last year.

Archuleta added 16 catches for 130 yards, but no other returner reached double-digit receiving yards last season. However, Hodgs said juniors Jarrett Jones and Owen Meyer would add depth at wideout.

Hodgs said senior Anthony Henson will lead the offensive line, which Hodgs said lacks depth, while junior Collin Roberts will step in to start at quarterback.

"The competitive edge he has is unmatched," Hodgs said. "He's an even-keeled guy... and he's going to be a great game manager for us."

Five other juniors saw significant defensive time: Brennon Sullivan added 45 tackles, including six for loss; Kash Lenzen had 30 tackles and two interceptions, Jarrett Jones had 27 tackles, Devlyn Cowan added 24 and Kyler Dowse had 20.

Of Douglas' top 14 tacklers last year, more than half – eight – are returning in 2024.

"Our strength's probably going to be our d-line and our linebackers," Hodgs said.

"Our strength's probably going to be our d-line and our linebackers."

~Coach Drew Hodgs

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LANDER TIGERS

Tigers Have Numbers on Their Side

Lander coach Jim Burton has a good problem heading into 2024 – he has to make sure the Tigers' equipment closet is stocked with enough helmets and shoulder pads to go around.

One key problem in Lander's 0-9 finish in 2023 was depth. The Tigers finished with about 35 players

on the roster. Through an emphasis on multi-sport participation and the influx from a big freshman class, this year's Lander roster could start with as many as 50 players.

"We're starting to foster an environment in Lander where multi-sport athletes are more prominent," Burton said. "We had a lot of athletes that were singletons, and I think we've tried to foster (against) that."

Even though depth will still be a question mark for Lander to start the year, Burton said he is pleased with the growth he's seen in his players.

"Both sides of the ball, we'll have a little more experience...Kids will do a little less thinking, a little more playing."

~Coach Jim Burton



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

Coach: Jim Burton, second year at Lander
2023 Record: 0-9, did not qualify for playoffs

CONTINUED PAGE 15-

Outlaws Building on Momentum

When David Hastings took over a struggling Rawlins team two years ago, he saw two immediate needs: the need to get his players stronger and the need to get more players overall.

As Hastings enters his third year, the work is not yet done, but after a 3-6 season a year ago – after the program won just one game in the previous three seasons combined – he sees the program trending in the right direction.

“It was big for us to get a couple wins like we did,”

2024 Schedule

8-31: at Burns, 1 p.m.

(Zero Week)

9-6: vs. Pinedale, 7 p.m.

9-13: at Green River, 7 p.m.

9-20: at Middle Park, Colo., 7 p.m.

*9-27: vs. Buffalo, 7 p.m.

*10-4: vs. Torrington, 7 p.m.

*10-11: at Douglas, 6 p.m.

*10-18: at Lander, 6 p.m.

*10-25: vs. Riverton, 6 p.m.

* Conference game

Hastings said. “I think it just builds to the expectation that we want to take that next step.”

This year’s team, Hastings said, is more athletic and more experienced than in previous seasons, and in total six players who started on offense and eight who started on defense will return. Still, the Outlaws graduated every player who threw or caught a pass last season, as well as their top two rushers and seven of their top 11 tacklers.

Senior Brayden Torstenbo is Rawlins’ lone returning all-conference player from 2023.

Torstenbo led the Outlaws in defensive points and had 42 total tackles, including a team-high 13 for loss and four sacks.

Hastings said Torstenbo will likely have an increased role this season in Rawlins offense in addition to the already clear role he has in leading the defense.

“His leadership ability in the summer has been great, and I think it’ll carry over into the season,” Hastings said.

Two Vialpandos – senior twin brothers Emmanuel and Damien – are Rawlins’ top returning rushers. Emmanuel Vialpando had 14 carries for 75 yards, while Damien Vialpando had 16 carries for 67 yards. Senior Vaughn Grant

added 11 carries for 59 yards.

Grant was also a leader on defense last season with 29 tackles, including nine for loss and three sacks. Senior Jadon Martinez had 20 tackles and senior lineman Lucas Peterson added 17.

Senior Jordan Ridgeway will contribute on the lines.

“We’re going to be more athletic this year,” Hastings said. “We have a lot more experience on the field this year, some who have played a lot, some since they were sophomores.”

Hastings said this year’s team will be larger in number than last year’s, especially with the freshmen and sophomore classes. Hastings attributed the trend to the middle-school coaches and the success that program has had.

That’s translated into some good-to-have problems.

“We’ve had to buy new equipment, new shoulder pads, new helmets, just to accommodate that,” Hastings said.

As for strength? Hastings said solid offseason commitment from returning players has helped Rawlins there, too.

“Our strength is up as a team as a whole,” he said. “We’re a lot stronger than we have been.”



Mascot: Outlaws

Division: Class 3A

Conference: East

Colors: Red and Black

Coach: David Hastings, third year at Rawlins

2023 Record: 3-6, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

FB/LB: Vaughn Grant, Sr.

FB/LB: Brayden Torstenbo, Sr.

C/DL: Lucas Peterson, Sr.

RB/DB: Emmanuel Vialpando, Sr.

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BUFFALO BISON CONTINUED...

BUFFALO CONTINUED-

will be among its backs and receivers.

Huber led the Bison in catches (29), receiving yards (477) and receiving touchdowns (four). However, of the Bison’s top six receivers, Huber is the only returner.

Senior Adam McCorkle saw some spot duty at quarterback, racking up 148 passing yards and 78 rushing yards. Walker said McCorkle is a precision pocket

passer who should be ready to step into the starting spot.

“I think he’s going to handle that really well,” Walker said.

Wonka was third on the team in all major rushing categories – 60 carries, 260 yards, seven touchdowns – and is the Bison’s leading returning ground gainer.

The line will be led by Jawors at center. Walker said the rest of the line is more uncertain heading into this season, as many of last year’s contributors up front were seniors.

LANDER CONTINUED-

“It’s never easy to go o-fer,” he said. “It’s never easy to struggle. It’s never easy to lose games you think you should win.

“... It seemed to take us a long time to collect ourselves and move forward if something didn’t go our way, but once it did, we were pretty good on defense and we moved the ball on offense.”

On offense, the Tigers get back their top two rushers and their quarterback.

Junior Brayden Baker was the top ground-gainer with 82 carries for 408 yards and two TDs; senior Caleb Larvie added 50 carries for 139 yards.

Junior quarterback Paxon Hollingshead completed 47 passes for 557 yards and a pair of touchdowns.

Senior Brayden Johnson-Baker (not the same player as Brayden Baker) was third for Lander with 110 receiving yards on seven catches. He is the only one of the Tigers’ top four receivers to return this year.

Across the line, the defense returns numerous

players who filled important positions last year, but the Tigers also lost their top two tacklers to graduation.

Baker and Larvie are Lander’s top two returning tacklers; they tied for third on the team last year with 37 tackles apiece. Larvie added 11 tackles for loss and two sacks.

Senior Landon Jones added 35 tackles, two fumble recoveries and an interception.

Junior Barrett Moffat added 29 tackles, junior Cody West had 27 tackles, junior Kaleb Hamilton notched 20 tackles and two sacks, and senior Jackson Conder had 18 tackles, two fumble recoveries and an interception.

Burton also said sophomore Finn McFadden and junior Parker Burton are athletic players who can fulfill multiple roles on both sides of the ball and will be counted on to contribute this season.

“Both sides of the ball, we’ll have a little more experience,” coach Burton said. “Kids will do a little less thinking, a little more playing.”

Key Players

OL: Kaleb Hamilton, Jr.

OL: Gavin Romer, Jr.

RB/LB: Caleb Larvie, Sr.

QB: Paxon Hollingshead, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Cody, 6 p.m.

(Zero Week)

9-6: at Green River, 7 p.m.

9-13: at Powell, 6 p.m.

9-20: vs. Evanston, 6 p.m.

*9-27: vs. Torrington, 6 p.m.

*10-4: at Douglas, 6 p.m.

*10-11: at Riverton, 6 p.m.

*10-18: vs. Rawlins, 6 p.m.

*10-25: vs. Buffalo, 6 p.m.

* Conference game

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

Coach: Mark Lenhardt,
 second year at Riverton
2023 Record: 4-6, lost
 to Evanston 28-7 in
 quarterfinals

Key Players

OL/DL: Ryan Cox, Sr.
OL/DL: Kayden Liebrecht, Jr.
WR/DB: Jackson Larsen, Sr.
QB/DB: Blake Gantenbein, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Powell, 6 p.m.
 (Zero Week)
 9-6: at Cody, 6 p.m.
 9-13: vs. Evanston, 6 p.m.
 9-20: vs. Green River, 6 p.m.
 *9-27: vs. Douglas, 6 p.m.
 *10-4: at Buffalo, 6 p.m.
 *10-11: vs. Lander, 6 p.m.
 *10-18: at Torrington, 6 p.m.
 *10-25: at Rawlins, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Wolverines Continuing to Build

The most important thing that Riverton coach Mark Lenhardt learned about his Wolverine team in his first year as head coach was learning how the players would respond when they learned to compete.

After a slow start – the Wolverines started 0-4 – Riverton found its direction in the conference season. In turn, Riverton shared the Class 3A East Conference championship and hosted its first playoff game since 2019.

"We all have a system," Lenhardt said. "We run an offense, we run a defense, but you never know what you have until you have a chance to see your kids compete."

Now in his second year as head coach, Lenhardt said he has continued to try to find ways to challenge his players to compete – something that's easier now that he knows what makes each one of his players motivated to do their best.

Lenhardt said expectations are higher, weight room attendance is improved and three-sport athletes have become more commonplace, all ways in which competitive fires can be stoked prior to the start of fall practice.

Moreover, the players are now in their second year with Lenhardt's system.

"It seems like there's less re-teaching,

like they're picking it up faster, and that's been a real positive," he said. "... Hopefully going into year two, you don't have such a big learning curve."

However, this year's Riverton team will have to rely on some as-yet unproven talent. The Wolverines graduated eight of their 10 all-conference choices, returning only senior Ryan Cox and junior Kayden Liebrecht from that group.

The Wolverines graduated their quarterback, their top three receivers and their top two ground-gainers, as well as five of their top eight tacklers from the defense.

Junior Blake Gantenbein is the top returning passer, rusher and receiver for Riverton's offense. He completed 25 of 44 passes for 272 yards and two touchdowns and ran 58 times for 181 yards and another TD last season. He also caught 13 passes for 119 yards.

Lenhardt said Gantenbein will likely take over at quarterback this year.

Junior Hunter Saltgaver added 28 carries for 103 yards

last season.

Defensively, senior Jackson Larsen is the leading returning tackler; he had 59 total tackles last year to rank second on the team. He will also contribute on offense at wide receiver.

Liebrecht added 34 tackles and two fumble recoveries, and senior Tyree Harris also had 34 tackles.

Gantenbein and Cox had 26 tackles apiece, with Gantenbein notching two fumble recoveries. Senior Hunter Riemann added 17 tackles and senior Jordan May had 15.

Junior Clay Sheets will add depth at wideout and in the defensive backfield, while junior Ayden Sanchez will contribute on the offensive line and at linebacker.



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3A EAST

TORRINGTON TRAILBLAZERS

Trailblazers Return to 3A Battles

Torrington represents the closest thing Wyoming high school football will ever have to soccer-style promotion.

After winning the Class 2A championship last season, the Trailblazers will shift to Class 3A this fall, swapping spots with Worland in the reclassification shuffle.

However, Class 3A is not a new place for Torrington, having spent most of the past 50 years in that classification, making the move to 2A only in 2020.

"(Our) players are excited for new challenges and playing tough teams in 3A," coach Russell Stienmetz said. "Most of the players have older siblings that played in 3A, so they want to play the same teams."

The Trailblazers will have some rebuilding to do, as senior Kaden Romig is the only one of eight all-state players returning to the Trailblazers this season. Stienmetz said Romig's presence, both on the line on offense and as a linebacker on defense, will be key.

"No one ever outworks that kid," Stienmetz said. "He is skilled at getting to the ball and making the tackle due to his preparation. Kaden's motor is great also and he never comes off the field. He is a great leader for us everywhere he goes."

Romig led Torrington's defense in tackles with 81 and was second in defensive points. His totals included eight tackles for loss and two sacks.

In all, the defense returns four of its top nine tacklers from 2023.

Senior Mac Hibben had 51 tackles and three interceptions, while junior Landre

Greiman added 47 tackles and led Torrington with five interceptions.

Senior Nathaniel Stull added 42 tackles and also deflected five passes.

Seniors Andrew Haffner (23 tackles) and Ryan Moorehouse (22 tackles) also saw significant playing time on defense, and senior Jeremiah Haffner – Andrew's twin brother – also figures into the Trailblazers' plans.

On offense, the Trailblazers lost their top three rushers and four of their top five, leaving Greiman (22 carries, 146 yards) as the top returning rusher.

Greiman was also a threat through the air; he was second for the Trailblazers in

receptions (27) and receiving yards (403), scoring three touchdowns via the pass. Stull chipped in 12 catches for 120 yards, and Hibben had 11 catches for 99 yards.

Moorehouse, who went 4-for-6 with 41 passing yards, is the top returning passer and is penciled in to take over at quarterback.

Senior Brayden Hime will be one of the leaders on the line.

Stienmetz said the momentum from last year's championship has carried over to this year's team. He said last year's seniors "wanted to do whatever they could to help the team in any way possible. The upperclassmen saw what it took to accomplish the task and want to keep rolling."



Mascot: Trailblazers
Division: Class 3A
Conference: East
Colors: Maroon and Silver

Coach: Russell Stienmetz,
 sixth year at Torrington
2023 Record: 9-3, beat
 Big Horn 28-26 in state
 championship

Key Players

OL/LB: Kaden Romig, Sr.
WR/DB: Mac Hibben, Sr.
WR/DB: Landre Greiman, Sr.
QB/DB: Ryan Moorehouse, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Gering, Neb., 7 p.m.
 (Zero Week)
 9-6: vs. Wheatland, 7 p.m.
 9-12: vs. Cheyenne Central JV, 6 p.m.
 9-20: at Yuma, Colo., 7 p.m.
 *9-27: at Lander, 6 p.m.
 *10-4: at Rawlins, 7 p.m.
 *10-11: vs. Buffalo, 6 p.m.
 *10-18: vs. Riverton, 6 p.m.
 *10-25: at Douglas, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Good Luck
 Trailblazers!



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Cody Sticks to Winning Formula

In four years, Cody has reached four Class 3A championship games, securing two titles and a combined record of 41-4 along the way.

The Broncos, though, continually stay focused on the process.

"Our program really is about more than football," said coach Matt McFadden, who has helped Cody win four state titles in his 11 years as head coach. "It sounds like cliché, but the more we focus on character (and) leadership the better we are at football. The opposite doesn't always hold true."

After finishing one game short of another championship last season, Cody returns one of 3A's most talented groups. The Broncos return six all-state players, tied with Star Valley for the most in the state at any level.

They're all seniors: Maddax Ball, Wyatt Barton, Chase Hatch, Grady McCarten, Trey Smith and Warren Sorenson.

Ball handled duties under center, completing 67.5% of passes (181 of 268) for 2,130 yards and 27 touchdowns; he also ran 87 times for 421 yards and nine more TDs, finishing second on the team in rushing yards.

Experience will help Cody install base concepts more quickly and allow for more adjustments sooner, McFadden said.

"We are confident putting a lot on (Ball's) shoulders," he said.

McCarten led the rushing game with 1,199 yards on 132 carries, including 16 touchdowns.

Hatch led Cody with 551 receiving yards and nine receiving touchdowns and tied for the team lead with 36 catches last season.

Barton and Sorenson, meanwhile, will help anchor the offensive line, which McFadden said is smaller but has

"athleticism and fight."

"We have some new pieces that are very talented but it may take a few games to get them used to working with each other," he said.

Senior Owen Petersen added 56 carries for 329 yards and three touchdowns. Two others – junior Owen Monfeldt (28 carries, 165 yards) and Smith (14 catches, 105 yards) – broke into triple-digit rushing yards last season.

Smith added 25 catches for 232 yards, fourth on the team last year. McCarten notched 14 catches for 133 yards.

Cody graduated three of its top four tacklers and 11 of its top 16 players in defensive points but will benefit from the return of its top tackler in Hatch, who led Cody's defense with 110 total tackles. He also had 4.5 tackles for loss, three interceptions and eight pass deflections.

Bigger and stronger, adept at both run and pass defense, "he is a difference maker on both sides of the ball and someone that you must game plan around," McFadden said.

McCarten was fifth on the team with 47 tackles, including nine for loss.

Senior Jarom Beardall added 37 tackles, Petersen had 33 and Sorenson had 27.



Mascot: Broncos
Division: Class 3A
Conference: West
Colors: Blue and Gold

Coach: Matt McFadden,
12th year at Cody
2023 Record: 10-2, lost to
Star Valley 27-0 in state
championship

Key Players

QB: Maddax Ball, Sr.
WB/DB: Chase Hatch, Sr.
RB/LB: Grady McCarten, Sr.
WR/DB: Trey Smith, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Lander, 6 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-6: vs. Riverton, 6 p.m.
9-13: at Douglas, 6 p.m.
9-20: vs. Buffalo, 6 p.m.
*9-27: at Powell, 7 p.m.
*10-4: vs. Evanston, 6 p.m.
*10-11: at Star Valley, 5 p.m.
*10-18: vs. Green River, 7 p.m.
*10-25: at Jackson, 5 p.m.
* Conference game



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

Coach: Steve Moore, second year at Evanston
2023 Record: 5-6, lost to Cody 52-14 in state semifinals

Key Players

OL/DL: Tarrin Haws, Sr.
WR/DB/K: Jordan Mendez, Sr.
QB/DB: Braunson Sims, Sr.
OL/DL: Jeran Welling, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Ben Lomond, Utah, 7 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-6: vs. Vista Ridge, CO, 7 p.m.
 9-13: at Riverton, 6 p.m.
 9-20: at Lander, 6 p.m.
 *9-27: vs. Green River, 7 p.m.
 *10-4: at Cody, 6 p.m.
 *10-11: at Jackson, 6 p.m.
 *10-18: vs. Star Valley, 6 p.m.
 *10-25: vs. Powell, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Red Devils Building on Playoff Win

The Evanston Red Devils finally shook the curse of the postseason.

After nine consecutive playoff losses, Evanston won a first-round playoff game for the first time in 17 years in 2023.

Coach Steve Moore, whose players achieved that curse-breaking success in his first year as head coach, said the energy from that postseason success has carried the returning players into the offseason.

"Our numbers are looking good and players are starting to understand what it takes to compete at a high level," he said. "I have noticed great excitement and energy from our athletes this spring.

"... Athletes know the expectations of the program and how we do business. We have set high standards and goals, and we are all on the same page in what needs to be done to achieve them."

The Red Devils graduated four all-state players but return a pair of all-conference choices in seniors Tarrin Haws and Jordan Mendez.

Senior Brecken Rich is the top

returning rusher and was fourth on the team in both carries (17) and rushing yards (52) last year.

Senior Braunson Sims is the only returning player who completed a pass last season; he was 2-of-4 for 16 yards in limited duty. He and junior Brayden Wallace will compete for the starting spot at quarterback.

Senior tight end Clayton Cook was third in receiving yards (240) and fourth in catches (12) for Evanston last year and had a pair of receiving touchdowns. Of the four players who reached triple-digit receiving yards last year, he's the only returner.

Moore, however, said that the lack of varsity experience among the backs and receivers has created a swell of competition.

"We have some guys that I think will fill in nicely and compete at a high level for us," Moore said. "We are going to have some good competition this summer and fall with our skill positions that are going to bring out the best in them."

The defense also lacks varsity experience. Of Evanston's top nine tacklers from 2023, only three return.

Rich is the top returning tackler and an on-field leader; he finished tied for fourth on the team in total tackles with 60. He had six tackles for loss.

Sims seventh with 38 tackles and led Evanston with five fumble recoveries.

Haws had 33 tackles, while seniors Jesse Page and Grady

"Our numbers are looking good and players are starting to understand what it takes to compete at a high level."

~Coach Steve Moore

Ivie had 21 apiece.

Mendez made five field goals last season, including a long of 40 yards, and was 23-of-31 on extra points.

Seniors Jeran Welling and Jordan Welling will add depth to the offensive and defensive lines, while both Wallace and senior wide receiver/defensive back Brooks Searle will be asked to contribute on both sides of the ball, too.

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Wolves Hungry for Winning Season

The community pressure placed on players in Green River to succeed has not wavered, not even as the Wolves have struggled to find consistent on-field success recently.

Green River has won three games in three years, with last year's only victory of a 1-8 season coming by one point against winless Lander.

This year, though, the players are embracing the high expectations bestowed upon them and are, in the opinion of second-year head coach Blaine Christensen, "miles and miles ahead of where we were (last year)."

As for the external expectations? "I think our players feed off that (pressure)," Christensen said. "They're excited. They want to make this community proud. I can really sense that now."

The Wolves will look to several juniors this season but will also rely on a senior class pushing close to 20 deep.

Senior James Herwaldt finished second for the Wolves last season with 47 total tackles.

He had 6.5 tackles for loss, including 2.5 sacks, and had a pair of fumble recoveries.

Herwaldt also ranked second on the team last year with 208 rushing yards on 55 carries and is Green River's top returning rusher.

"He's going to be our guy this year," Christensen said. "We're going to lean on him pretty heavily."

Junior Maddux Hintz completed 85 of 154 passes for 740 yards and three touchdowns; he also ran 94 times for 198 yards and a team-high four rushing touchdowns, as well.

The Wolves graduated their top five receivers, though, with senior Chaz Helmandollar, whose single catch last season totaled 31 yards, the top returning receiver.

Junior Dax Taylor added five catches for 19 yards and Herwaldt had three catches for 16 yards.

Up front, juniors Ethan Morrell and Declan Henderson and seniors Jayce Stewart and Jacob Lloyd will be key.

"I think our line has made the biggest jump from late October last year to now," Christensen said. "... They're doing everything they can to make sure they do their part, as well."

Of the Wolves' top 14 players in defensive points last season, they return six.

Henderson was third on the team with 39.5 tackles, with 7.5 coming for a loss. Taylor contributed 26 tackles and two interceptions. Senior Jayce Stewart had 24 tackles and four tackles for loss.

Morrell tallied 16 tackles and junior JD Walther had 15.

Christensen said the juniors this year took some hard lessons on the field as sophomores, but they emerged as tough, gritty players ready to take on more.

"Our players are familiar with our coaching style and our language... and our scheme," Christensen said. "They know the expectation with the weight room in the offseason now, and we've had a great offseason."



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

Coach: Blaine Christensen, second year at Green River
2023 Record: 1-8, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

QB: Maddux Hintz, Jr.
RB: James Herwaldt, Sr.
LT/DE: Declan Henderson, Jr.
OL/DL: Ethan Morrell, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-31: vs. Mountain View, 11 a.m. (Zero Week)
9-6: vs. Lander, 7 p.m.
9-13: vs. Rawlins, 7 p.m.
9-20: at Riverton, 6 p.m.
*9-27: at Evanston, 7 p.m.
*10-4: vs. Jackson, 6 p.m.
*10-11: vs. Powell, 6 p.m.
*10-18: at Cody, 7 p.m.
*10-25: at Star Valley, 6 p.m.
* Conference game



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

Coach: Keith Johnson, first year at Jackson
2023 Record: 3-6, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

OG/DL: Jack Berezay, Sr.
T: Aidan Kim-Miller, Sr.
RB/MLB: Mattias Wilson, Sr.
TE/DE: Colin Pape, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Glenrock, 6 p.m. (Zero Week, at Riverton)
9-6: vs. Douglas, 6 p.m.
9-13: at Buffalo, 6 p.m.
9-20: vs. Bear Lake, Idaho, 6 p.m.
*9-27: vs. Star Valley, 7 p.m.
*10-4: at Green River, 6 p.m.
*10-11: vs. Evanston, 6 p.m.
*10-18: at Powell, 5 p.m.
*10-25: vs. Cody, 5 p.m.
* Conference game

JACKSON BRONCS

3A WEST

Changes are Working in Jackson

New Jackson head coach Keith Johnson has already installed change.

Simultaneously, he has seen Jackson football have success, and he said understanding the players returning to the Broncos will help smooth the transition between old and new.

"You have to know the kids, and I think for the kids to know me and be comfortable with me and not have that sort of awkward gap has helped the program just continue to move forward," he said. "There were some good things that came out of the last couple years. ... We've doubled down on a lot of those things."

As for the change? Johnson brought in Thomas Lower, a nationally ranked powerlifter, to be the Broncos' strength and conditioning coach. He also brought in former Wyoming quarterback Jake Doss, who's spent more than a decade coaching and as an activities director in Florida.

The changes have sparked a

participation boom, as Jackson jumped from 70 players at the end of last season to more than 100 participating in offseason workouts. For the first time since 2004, Johnson said, Jackson can field full varsity, JV and freshman teams.

"We've grown not just our program but our number of coaches, and with that has come a lot of community support," he said.

Still, Jackson graduated its top three rushers and its top three receivers in addition to every player who completed a pass, while the defense graduated its top three tacklers and nine of its top 10 players in defensive points from 2023.

"We don't have a lot of kids that have seen a lot of varsity reps, so we're going to have some work to do there," Johnson said.

Senior Jack Berezay ranked fourth on the team with 41 tackles and led the Broncos with three fumble recoveries.

Junior Connor Scott had 25

tackles, junior Tyson Kendall added 18 and senior Tate Wiley had 10.

Senior Waylon Cosby, with 13 carries for 24 yards last year, is the top returning rusher; no other ball carrier reached double-digit yards last season.

Kendall had 12 catches and was fourth on the team with 123 receiving yards last year and is Jackson's top returning receiver — the only one of Jackson's top six to come back.

Johnson said senior Aidan Kim-Miller will provide leadership on the line, while senior Mattias Wilson, a world juniors champion skier, will fit in at running back and middle linebacker.

Senior Colin Pape, a former lineman, is slated in at tight end and defensive end, while junior Grant Johnson is penciled in at quarterback and junior Liam Logan will see time at wide receiver.

"We're coming in with a lot of belief that we can compete," Coach Johnson said.



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

Coach: Chase Kistler,
 fourth year at Powell
2023 Record: 7-3, lost
 to Buffalo 35-21 in state
 quarterfinals

Key Players

LB: Keona Wisniewski, Sr.
RB/LB: Trevon Abraham, Sr.
OL/DL: Doug Bettger, Sr.
OL/DL: Zane Graft, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Riverton, 6 p.m.
 (Zero Week)
 9-6: at Worland, 7 p.m.
 9-13: vs. Lander, 6 p.m.
 9-20: at Douglas, 6 p.m.
 *9-27: vs. Cody, 7 p.m.
 *10-4: vs. Star Valley, 5 p.m.
 *10-11: at Green River, 6 p.m.
 *10-18: vs. Jackson, 5 p.m.
 *10-25: at Evanston, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Powell Eyes Postseason Success

Powell has fallen into a frustrating trend the past three seasons.

Solid regular seasons have not translated into playoff success for the Panthers, who are 0-3 the past three seasons in postseason play.

Last year's first-round loss might have been the most frustrating for coach Chase Kistler.

"I think their biggest reminder (from the playoff loss) is once you're in the playoffs, it's a new season," he said. "What you've done up to that point doesn't really matter."

The Panthers have the capability to change that trend this year with a massive, experienced and talented senior class out front. Powell returns three all-state players in seniors Doug Bettger, Dusty Carter and Keona Wisniewski, as well as two all-conference picks in seniors Trevon Abraham and Jacob Eaton.

They're the spear points of a senior class more than 20 players deep.

"This will be the biggest senior class we've had in a long time," Kistler said. "Usually your seniors are your leaders, but with 20-plus, you're going to have solid leadership."

Up front, Bettger, Carter and seniors Zane Graft and Jacob Eaton will lead a physical group of returners where only one starter was lost.

"We are big, experienced, and they communicate really well up front, which is a coach's dream," Kistler said. "... They have their calls down, they know their assignments. It doesn't matter if the defense shifts on them at the

line."

Despite missing several games due to injury, senior Cody Seifert, returning this year, was the team's top rusher last year, carrying 132 times for 819 yards and 12 touchdowns.

Abraham was second for the Panthers in both receptions (24) and receiving yards (376) last year. Senior Evan Whitlock notched 15 catches for 233 yards to finish third on the team, while Wisniewski added 11 catches for 175 yards and junior Caden Nelson had 10 catches for 105 yards. Each had two receiving touchdowns last season.

Kistler said either Wisniewski or Nelson would move to the quarterback position to fill that gap this season.

Powell returns three of its top five tacklers, including its top two, and seven of its top 11.

Wisniewski led the Panthers with 91 tackles, a tally that included 18 tackles for loss and 3.5 sacks. He also had three fumble recoveries to lead the Panthers.

Abraham was second for Powell with 72 tackles; he also had three tackles for loss and two fumble recoveries.

Senior McKale Foley had 39 tackles, Whitlock had 35 and Graft had 27 tackles, 3.5 sacks and three blocked kicks. In addition, Carter had 25 tackles and Seifert 23.

Also returning is senior wide receiver/defensive back Alex Jordan, who missed most of last season with a broken leg.

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Star Valley Sets the Bar Higher

After six championships in nine seasons, Star Valley has had to look beyond one season for program goals.

Like a three-peat.

The Braves have won consecutive championships five times since the 1990s. In that effort, they have yet to win a third consecutive title after winning two in a row, going 0-for-5 in such attempts.

A three-time champion has never happened in the Super Bowl era in the NFL, and it's been nearly 90 years since any NCAA FBS-level program has won three consecutive national championships.

"We had two chances in the last decade, and came up short," coach McKay Young said. "This group is motivated to join that elite fraternity."

Star Valley has a good chance to do so. The Braves return five all-state players, second only to Cody for the most in Class 3A, in seniors Garrett Carlson, Cooper Lawson, Smith McClure, Bryson Nield and Grant Thomson.

Beyond that, Young noted the success of Star Valley's sub-varsity teams – the JV only lost to out-of-state teams, and both the sophomore and freshman teams went undefeated – as a place where the program continues to grow.

"We really pride ourselves in the development of our guys," Young said. "... All of those reps equate to guys that you haven't heard of as juniors because they played JV who have all-state seasons as seniors."

McClure was efficient under center, completing

"We really pride ourselves in the development of our guys..."

~Coach McKay Young

73.2% of his passes (139 of 190) for 1,600 yards and nine touchdowns. He also ran 65 times for 390 yards and six touchdowns, good for second on the team in all categories, and is the Braves' top returning rusher.

Thomson added 19 carries for 127 yards, good for third on the team, and junior Cooper Lancaster contributed 21 carries for 115 yards.

Nield was Star Valley's top receiver last season, leading the Braves in all major receiving categories with 44 catches for 669 yards and five touchdowns.

However, he is the only one of Star Valley's top six receivers to come back. Despite that, Young said he had confidence in his receiving corps, which will include Lancaster, as well.

Lawson, Carlson and junior Ryan Talbot will bring experience to the offensive line; all three started at some point last year.

Thomson, who will be starting for a third consecutive year, led the Braves in tackles with 92, including a team-high 46 solo. However, of Star Valley's top four tacklers from last season, he's the only returner; of Star Valley's top 10 tacklers from 2023, eight have graduated.

Lawson had 47 tackles, including 8.5 for loss and a team-high four sacks.

Senior Riley Erickson had 28 tackles. Carlson and senior Jayden Kunz had 17 tackles apiece and Nield had 14.



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

Coach: McKay Young, ninth year at Star Valley
2023 Record: 11-1, beat Cody 27-0 in state championship

Key Players

OL/DE: Cooper Lawson, Sr.
QB: Jayden Crook, Sr.
RB/LB: Jesse Gibson, Sr.
QR/FS: Grant Thomson, Jr.

2024 Schedule

- 8-30: vs. Shelley, Idaho, 7 p.m. (Zero Week)
- 9-6: vs. Preston, Idaho, 7 p.m.
- 9-13: at Sugar-Salem, Idaho, 7 p.m.
- 9-20: at Teton, Idaho, 8 p.m.
- *9-27: at Jackson, 7 p.m.
- *10-4: at Powell, 5 p.m.
- *10-11: vs. Cody, 5 p.m.
- *10-18: at Evanston, 6 p.m.
- *10-25: vs. Green River, 6 p.m.
- * Conference game

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2023 State Playoffs

2A Championship

Torrington 28, Big Horn 26

Semifinals

Big Horn 34, Lyman 14
Torrington 25, Mountain View 19

Quarterfinals

Big Horn 49, Lovell 28
Lyman 14, Tongue River 13
Mountain View 41, Wheatland 6
Torrington 21, Cokeville 14

Players to Watch

Avon Barney, Big Horn.

Not many quarterbacks who crack the 2,000-yard passing barrier are underclassmen, but that's what Barney did last year as a junior while earning all-state accolades. He threw for 2,016 yards and also contributed 47 tackles.

Davin Crosby, Lovell.

Class 2A's leading passer in terms of yards per game last year (213.9), Crosby was both efficient (56.9% completion) and a long-ball threat (15 yards per completion). He also had 46 tackles.

Eli Gill, Upton-Sundance.

As a sophomore two years ago, he was second in 2A in defensive points per game (25.1); last year, he led 2A (26.0) and tied for the classification lead with nearly 15 tackles per game.

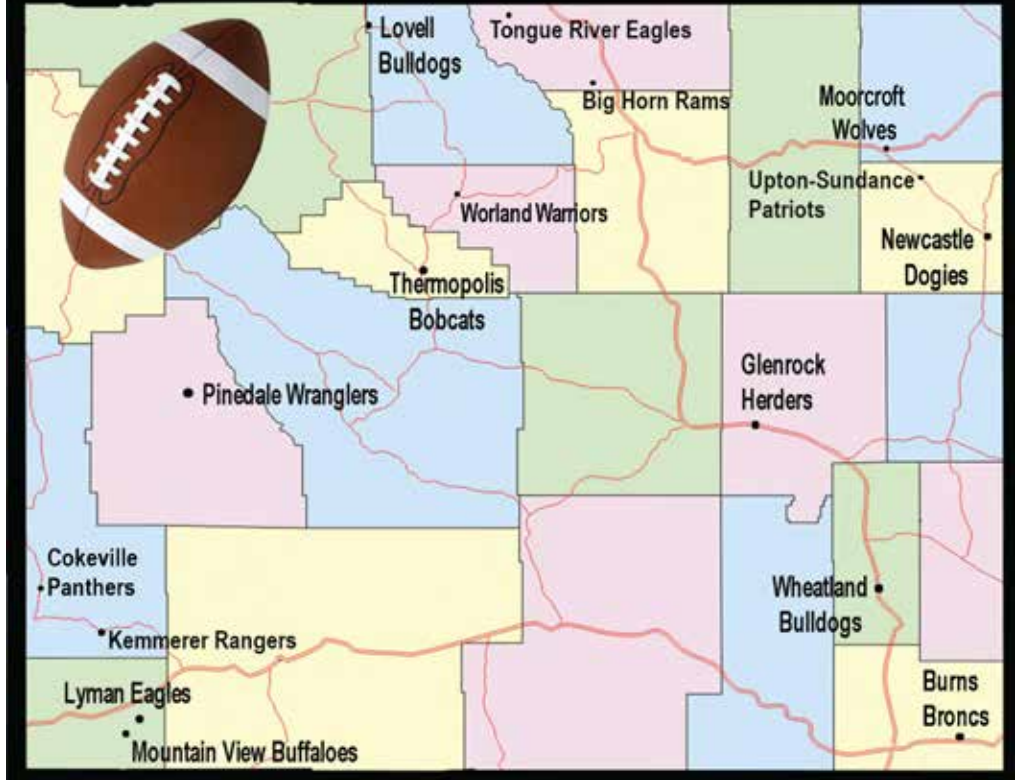
Brody Thiel, Worland.

The Warriors' only returning all-state choice is a throwback fullback/tight end/linebacker who causes a lot of havoc on defense, notching 69 tackles, including 12 for loss, last season.

Max Gregory, Lyman.

One of Class 2A's most efficient defensive players, Gregory has led the Eagles in defensive points each of the past two years and also was effective as a freshman; over three years, he has 270 tackles, including 46 for loss.

2A Preview



Big Horn Leads 2A Favorites

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four Questions to Answer

Is there a clear-cut favorite in Class 2A?
Yes, but it's complicated. Big Horn was the most consistently named program by coaches this summer. That said, several other teams have the potential for deep playoff runs, including but not limited to Mountain View, Lyman, Cokeville, Worland, Wheatland, Upton-Sundance, Lovell and Newcastle.

Why Big Horn? Because of last year. The Rams were East Conference champions and runners-up to Torrington, and then Torrington made the move to Class 3A. Big Horn also returns two all-staters; no other team in 2A has more than one.

Wait... what was that about Worland?
Oh, yeah. After years and years and years of 3A play, the Warriors' student population has fallen far enough for the move to 2A to happen. That will mean an opportunity for a fresh start for a program that's had 14 consecutive losing seasons.

Is the West Conference ahead of the East?
Yep. At least one team that's strong enough to make a deep playoff run won't even make the playoffs; that's how much parity could exist in a traditionally tough conference this season.

Four Key Games

Wheatland at Big Horn, Sept. 13.
Wheatland traditionally has good numbers and has some good athletes returning, so the Rams' early expectations will have a good early test.

Upton-Sundance at Newcastle, Sept. 13.

Both the Patriots and the Dogies figure to be improved teams this fall. When they meet in their East Conference openers, we'll all find out quickly whose hopes are legit.

Worland at Cokeville, Oct. 18. Worland and Cokeville are on different ends of the enrollment spectrum but both figure to be players in the West Conference title chase. This Week 7 game will be the first football game between the schools.

Lyman at Mountain View, Oct. 25. Both the Eagles and the Buffaloes should be among the top teams in the West title chase this year, and the fact that they're only six miles apart is a nice little added cherry on top.

Predicted Order of Finish

East Conference: Big Horn, Newcastle, Wheatland, Upton-Sundance, Tongue River, Burns, Glenrock, Moorcroft.

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

Preseason top five: 1. Big Horn, 2. Mountain View, 3. Worland, 4. Lovell, 5. Cokeville.

Way-too-early Title Game Score Prediction

Big Horn 27, Mountain View 22. This may be the least predictable 2A race in years. At least 10 teams are legitimate threats to be hoisting the championship trophy come November.

Rams Look to Continue Success

"We feel we have a good crew coming back and that we should be sound on defense."

~Coach Kirk McLaughlin

With 15 championship game appearances since 2000, four more than any other program in Wyoming, the Big Horn Rams know how to succeed.

After a Class 2A championship in 2022 and a runner-up finish last year, the Rams enter 2024 as once again one of the 2A favorites.

Coach Kirk McLaughlin said the Rams aren't planning their trip to Laramie just yet, though.

"We work hard in a lot of areas but especially on our culture and our leadership, (and) we take nothing for granted," he said.

"We have a lot of support from our parents and administration too, they help us run this program in a positive direction and without their support we wouldn't have the success that we have."

This season, Big Horn returns two all-state selections – the most

in 2A – in seniors Avon Barney and Kolby Butler, a dynamic aerial combination.

Barney completed 130 of 247 passes for 2,016 yards and 22 touchdowns last year. Butler was the top receiver for the Rams, leading them in catches (34) and yards (497) and tying for the team lead in receiving touchdowns (five).

Sophomore Cruz Hernandez, an all-conference choice last year, led Big Horn with 105 carries for 924 yards and 13 touchdowns. Barney added 368 rushing yards and 10 rushing touchdowns.

Senior Daniel Walker finished second on the team in catches with 24 and fourth on the team with 347 receiving yards; he had four receiving touchdowns. Sophomore Bridger Doke chipped in four catches for 138 yards.

Big Horn also took home all five of the top five places in both the 100- and 200-meter dashes at the state track meet in May, with Hernandez and senior Owen Petty among that group.

"The boys have worked hard in

many areas of their athleticism," McLaughlin said. "We feel like we have some strengths on this team that we can take advantage of with our schemes."

The Rams' defense returns four of its top five tacklers.

Petty, an all-conference choice, was second for Big Horn last season with 99 total tackles, including a team-high four sacks.

Walker was third with 73 tackles and also had a team-high five interceptions.

Butler chipped in 59 tackles, including four tackles for loss, and also had three interceptions.

Several other returners had key roles on defense last season. Senior Jackson Davies had 55 tackles, Barney added 47 tackles, senior Billy McCool had 46, senior Will Taylor had 31, junior Paul Lobdell had 27 and Doke had 26.

"We feel we have a good crew coming back and that we should be sound on defense," McLaughlin said. "We have some good athletes coming up that will try new positions, which should make us a better defense overall."



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

Coach: Kirk McLaughlin, seventh year at Big Horn
2023 Record: 9-2, beat Torrington 28-26 in state championship

Key Players
QB/DB: Avon Barney, Sr.
WR/DB: Kolby Butler, Sr.
RB/LB: Owen Petty, Sr.
OL/DL: Will Taylor, Sr.

2024 Schedule
8-29: vs. Natrona F/SO, 5:30 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-6: at Lovell, 6 p.m.
*9-13: vs. Wheatland, 6 p.m.
*9-20: vs. Newcastle, 6 p.m.
*9-27: at Burns, 6 p.m.
*10-4: vs. Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
*10-11: at Glenrock, 6 p.m.
*10-18: vs. Tongue River, 6 p.m.
*10-25: at Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m. (at Sundance)
* Conference game



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

Coach: Travis Romsa, third year at Burns
2023 Record: 1-8, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

QB/DB: Mason Medley, Sr.
WR/DB: Mason Terry, Sr.
WR/DB: Parker Ochsner, Soph.
OL/DL: Stephen Archer, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-31: vs. Rawlins, 1 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-6: at Lyman, 3 p.m.
*9-13: at Tongue River, 2 p.m.
*9-20: at Glenrock, 7 p.m.
*9-27: vs. Big Horn, 6 p.m.
*10-4: at Wheatland, 7 p.m.
*10-11: vs. Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m.
*10-18: at Newcastle, 7 p.m.
*10-25: vs. Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

BURNS BRONCS

2A EAST

Broncs Gained Valuable Experience

In trying to take a step forward in 2024, the Burns Broncos don't need to look far for inspiration.

Burns' 2023 season was a challenge. Outscored by an average score of 39-8, the Broncos' only victory of 2023 came in overtime against winless Glenrock. In every other game, Burns lost by at least 20 points.

Most of the Broncos are returning from that challenging season, though. The inspiration provided by last year's struggles should translate into growth in 2024, coach Travis Romsa said.

"Last year was tough," he said. "We have had a lot of kids buy in this year and show up to the weight room and summer stuff."

Romsa said the Broncos will still be young, but will still have about seven seniors leading the way on a roster of somewhere between 40 and 45 players. In all, seven starters return on both sides of the ball.

Romsa said the returners are both numerous and athletic, especially on defense. The Burns' defense lost its top two tacklers but returns a host of players with significant experience.

On offense, the Broncos will

rely on a pair of senior Masons – quarterback Mason Medley and wide receiver Mason Terry – to set the pace.

Medley Mason Medley is the only one of Burns' three all-conference picks coming back in 2024. He completed 72 passes for 865 yards and three touchdowns, but was plagued by 15 interceptions.

Terry led Burns with 39 catches for 499 yards and three touchdowns last year.

"Both Masons should be a big asset for us," Romsa said. "I expect them to be leaders and be the best players on the field. To go with them, we have a lot of young talent. Our passing game should improve this year."

Junior Hunter Munson chipped in 13 catches for 118 yards and one touchdown.

Burns lost its top two rushers to graduation, though, leaving

Medley and his 39 rushing yards – and four rushing touchdowns – as the best among the Broncos' returners.

Junior Stephen Archer leads returners on the line.

Senior Cooper Sanchez, who was third for Burns with 49 tackles last year, fronts the defensive returners. Sanchez's totals include four tackles for loss.

Terry added 47 tackles, good for fourth on the team, and led Burns with four pass deflections.

Munson had 31 tackles, sophomore Hagen Cowley had 29 and junior Anthony Acton had 21, giving Burns a solid set of players who know the system and who are ready to take a step up for 2024.

"We will have some new kids starting this year and we are smaller," Romsa said. "With that, though, we are smart and tough. ... We have some great kids to fill those spots."

"...We have a lot of young talent. Our passing game should improve this year."

~Coach Travis Romsa



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

Coach: Zane Perez, second year at Glenrock
2023 Record: 0-8, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

OL/DL: Case Barrett, Sr.
WR/LB: Casey Sarvey, Sr.
TE/DL: Preston Sorensen, Jr.
QB/DB: Brady Dona, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Jackson, 6 p.m.
 (Zero Week, at Riverton)
 9-7: vs. Holyoke, Colo., 1 p.m.
 *9-13: at Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
 *9-20: vs. Burns, 7 p.m.
 *9-27: at Wheatland, 7 p.m.
 *10-4: vs. Newcastle, 6 p.m.
 *10-11: vs. Big Horn, 6 p.m.
 *10-18: at Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m. (at Upton)
 *10-25: at Tongue River, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

With five different head coaches over the past six seasons, Glenrock has been exposed to varying approaches and styles, building a diverse set of knowledge in the process.

However, that also means that Herder football has been perpetually in transition.

This year's Herders, though, enter a new season with the same coach as the previous season, the first time since 2020.

As coach Zane Perez enters his second season leading the Glenrock program, he said he sees some opportunities to grow, and the stability is helpful.

"We want to build this program as fast as we can," Perez said.

"Results of the offseason will likely force us to make decisions that will result in us being young for another season. As a coaching staff, we believe this is in the best interests of Glenrock football long term, and we are excited for the challenge."

Perez said the bounce-back from a winless season (0-8), the program's first since 1992, has generated commitment; Glenrock had good attendance at camp this summer and had good offseason weight room participation.

Perez said the Herders will have some good experience coming back, as Glenrock returns six players who were offensive starters last year and six who started on defense.

Junior Preston Sorensen is the only all-conference player coming back.

Sorensen led the defense in points and tackles (52). He also led the Herders with three fumble recoveries and tied for the team lead with 7.5 tackles for loss.

"We need to control the front and expect him to lead the way," Perez said.

Senior Casey Sarvey was fourth for Glenrock with 34 tackles. Sorensen and Sarvey, though, are the only two out of the Herders' top eight tacklers to come back.

Senior Case Barrett notched 21 tackles, sophomore Brody Allen had 20 and junior Brady Dona had 17.

On offense, Perez said the Herders will need to focus on execution, but on the plus side, "everything won't be brand new" this season.

Junior Easton Low is the top returning rusher with 53 yards on seven carries last season; the Herders' top three rushers have graduated.

Dona returns under center; he

completed 72 passes for 905 yards and four touchdowns but also threw 23 interceptions.

Sarvey was the Herders' top receiver last year; he had 21 catches for 322 yards. However, he's the only one of Glenrock's top three receivers to come back.

"The plan is always to run the ball," Perez said. "An inability to block (and) play in space meant we had to go to the air more than we would have liked last year. This year, we want to dictate when we throw and we need more efficiency when we do."

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Dogies Rely on Junior Class

With a big group of underclassmen leading the way this season, Newcastle coach Matt Conzelman wasn't sure what to expect this season.

After summer camp, he came away excited by what he saw from his returning players.

"This group of guys has potential," Conzelman said. "We've just got to put in the work."

Newcastle will rely on a big junior class to grow into their roles this year, but most of them already have varsity experience.

"Now they're finally at it where it is their team," Conzelman said. "We're going to have a lot of guys on the field with a lot of experience, so that's exciting."

The Dogies return three all-conference players in juniors Cole Erb and Teddy Troftgruben and sophomore Landon Hatheway, who was also Newcastle's only all-state selection last year.

Hatheway led Newcastle's backfield with 142 carries for 741 yards and eight touchdowns. He didn't start the season as the No. 1 running back, but when junior Collin McConkey – who also returns this season – broke his elbow in an early game against Buffalo, Hatheway had to step into

the top running back spot as a freshman.

"I was happy how he finished that year out," Conzelman said. "We talked about it at camp (this summer) a little bit with him that there's no pressure on him. I told him, 'This is probably the year where I've had the most skill position (players). . . . Don't feel like you have to be 'the guy.''"

Troftgruben completed 32 passes for 404 yards and two touchdowns and also ran 80 times for 332 yards and two more scores.

Sophomore Dane Crabtree added 28 carries for 226 yards and three touchdowns. The Dogies retain three of their top four rushers from last year. Conzelman said senior Connor Stolhammer will also contribute in the backfield.

Junior Cort Perino, with three catches for 63 yards – good for second on the team last year – is Newcastle's top returning pass-catcher. Hatheway added five catches for 35 yards.

The line will be led by seniors with center Danye Evenson, tackle Jonathan Anderson and guard Aidan Butler.

At camp, Conzelman said, "I was pleased with how efficient the offense was and how fast they're retaining even some new stuff we're throwing in."

Newcastle's top five tacklers from last year are all back.

Junior Jace Rich led the Dogies' defense last year with 54 tackles. Butler had 48 tackles, including nine for loss, while Erb had 42 tackles, with a team-leading 10 for loss and three sacks.

Troftgruben added 41 tackles and Hatheway had 39.

Other returning defensive contributors are Crabtree (27 tackles, four for loss, and two interceptions); Anderson (20 tackles); Perino (18 tackles); and McConkey (17 tackles).



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

Coach: Matt Conzelman,
 16th year at Newcastle
2023 Record: 2-6, did not
 qualify for playoffs

Key Players
RB/LB: Landon Hatheway, Soph.
TE: Cole Erb, Jr.
QB/S: Teddy Troftgruben, Jr.
RB/LB: Collin McConkey, Jr.

2024 Schedule
 8-30: vs. Thermopolis, 6 p.m.
 (Zero Week, at Buffalo)
 9-6: at Buffalo, 6 p.m.
 *9-13: vs. Upton-Sundance, 7 p.m.
 *9-20: at Big Horn, 6 p.m.
 *9-26: vs. Tongue River, 6 p.m.
 *10-4: at Glenrock, 6 p.m.
 *10-11: vs. Moorcroft, 7 p.m.
 *10-18: vs. Burns, 7 p.m.
 *10-25: at Wheatland, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

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

Coach: Steve Hanson,
 eighth year at Tongue River
2023 Record: 7-3, lost to
 Lyman 14-13 in quarterfinals

Key Players

QB/DB: Carter Maslowski, Sr.
FB/LB: Jack Melger, Sr.
RB/LB: Kaden Hill, Sr.
TE/DL: Caleb Vollmer, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-31: vs. Sheridan JV,
 11 a.m. (Zero Week)
 9-6: at Thermopolis, 6 p.m.
 *9-13: vs. Burns, 2 p.m.
 *9-20: vs. Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
 *9-27: at Newcastle, 6 p.m.
 *10-4: at Upton-Sundance,
 6 p.m. (at Upton)
 *10-11: vs. Wheatland, 6 p.m.
 *10-18: at Big Horn, 6 p.m.
 *10-25: vs. Glenrock, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Eagles Will Grapple With Opponents

Partly by design, partly by necessity, the Tongue River football team will look significantly different in 2024 than it did in 2023.

First, the necessity: Tongue River graduated six of its seven all-conference players, with senior Jack Melger the only one returning from that group.

Second, the design: Coach Steve Hanson saw this coming, and he knew a change in strategy would benefit the roster he has.

Where last year's Eagles benefitted from athleticism, size and confidence, this year's team will benefit from technique, unity and physicality.

Hanson said the Eagles' small stature – no player over 6 feet tall or over 200 pounds – allows some rethinking of what the Eagles do and how they do it.

"We're not a physically imposing team," Hanson said. "We're not going to look great getting off the bus."

On the field, though, the Eagles will rely on being physical and using technique to get the better of opponents. Nine of the Eagles' 11 projected starters are wrestlers, Hanson said, "which I love. Wrestlers tend to bring a different physicality (to football)."

Still, Tongue River returns

just one starter on offense (quarterback Carter Maslowski) and three on defense.

Melger was second on the Eagles' defense with 62 tackles last season and was third in defensive points. His tackle totals included 10.5 tackles for loss and 2.5 sacks.

Junior Cash Vollmer had 35 tackles and senior Caleb Vollmer, his brother, added 31, including 9.5 for loss and three sacks. Senior Kaden Hill had 26 tackles.

On offense, Maslowski completed 101 of 164 passes for 1,474 yards and 16 touchdowns. However, the Eagles' top three receivers graduated, and junior Hagen Walker (two catches for 64 yards) is the top returning receiver in terms of yards.

Hanson said sophomore Kenyonn Snell could have a breakout season at wide receiver.

Hill was third on the team last year with 245 rushing yards on 33 carries, including two touchdowns. Melger added 23 carries for 118 yards.

Seniors Nathan Hesser and Nate

"These guys know that they've got to do it together, and they're actually excited about that team focus this year."

~Coach Steve Hanson

Ridgeway will be counted on to set the pace for others on the line. Cash Vollmer will also contribute at center.

Hanson said size on the line won't be there, but scheme will help the Eagles overcome that, particularly on defense.

"They're not gap control guys, so we can get away with playing 160-pound dudes, even inside, because we teach them to create havoc," he said.

Hanson said the offense will focus more on misdirection, power running and play action.

"They know that there's not a superstar who can overcome a deficiency," Hanson said. "They have to be together. ... These guys know that they've got to do it together, and they're actually excited about that team focus this year."



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Wolves Making Jump to 2A

The word floating around Moorcroft football right now is “change.”

The Wolves have a new coach in Cameron Braden, are in a new classification after moving to Class 2A, and are playing a new style of football in moving from nine-man to 11-man.

“This year will be a good test for us and see how we can compete,” Braden said. “I have faith in these guys that they can step up a level.”

Also new this year is playoff eligibility, something the Wolves didn’t have as a Class 1A nine-man team. Braden, a Moorcroft native who has spent five years coaching with Moorcroft’s football programs at the high school and junior high level, said a playoff opportunity has been a positive for the players.

The Wolves return two all-conference players in seniors Braydnn Terry and Oliver Gorsuch.

Terry was an all-state pick last year for his work on both offense and defense. On offense, Terry led the Wolves’ rushing game, carrying 246 times for 1,382 yards and six touchdowns. Terry also led the Wolves’ defense with 78 total tackles. He had two forced fumbles and three pass deflections to go

with six tackles for loss.

Braden said for as talented as Terry is, he can’t be everywhere all at once. Depth has to grow for Terry to have chances to catch his breath every so often.

The offense will maintain the principles that let Terry have a solid season, though, Braden said.

“I’m going to do my best to have the guys on the field get their chance to shine,” he said.

Every rusher who gained positive yards is back this season, as are the team’s top two quarterbacks.

Senior William Ripley and sophomore Hayden Amende split time under center, with Amende taking over after Ripley was injured. Amende completed 15 passes for 332 yards, while Ripley completed 18 passes for 154 yards. Amende added 56 rushing yards while Ripley had 172.

Braden said Ripley will take the snaps this year and that Amende has the versatility to play many different positions.

Junior Lathan Dewey added four catches for 40 yards.

Gorsuch will lead the returners on the line.

The Wolves’ defense returns its top three tacklers and six of its top 10.

In addition to Terry, senior Trenten Gray added 60 tackles, good for second on the team, and five tackles for loss.

Gorsuch was third on the team with 36 tackles, including seven for loss. Junior Riley DeHaven added 21 tackles, junior Truck Lowery added 20 and sophomore Brady Garoutte had 14.

Braden said his goal this year was to instill a confidence in his players that even if they have less raw talent, “we can out-work our opponents.”



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

Coach: Cameron Braden,
first year at Moorcroft
2023 Record: 2-6, ineligible
for playoffs

Key Players

RB/LB: Bradyann Terry, Sr.
QB/DE: William Ripley, Sr.
RB/LB: Riley DeHaven, Jr.
OL/DL: Oliver Gorsuch, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: Open (Zero Week)
9-5: vs. Kemmerer, 4 p.m.
(at Shoshoni)
*9-13: vs. Glenrock, 6 p.m.
*9-20: at Tongue River, 6 p.m.
*9-27: vs. Upton-Sundance, 7 p.m.
*10-4: at Big Horn, 6 p.m.
*10-11: at Newcastle, 7 p.m.
*10-18: vs. Wheatland, 6 p.m.
*10-25: at Burns, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

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*“I have faith in these
guys that they can step it
up a level.”*

~Coach Cameron Braden

UPTON-SUNDANCE PATRIOTS

2A EAST

Patriots Put Youngsters to Test

On a team that won’t have a ton of depth, at least by Class 2A standards, the Upton-Sundance Patriots not need to look far for leadership.

Senior Eli Gill, Upton-Sundance’s only returning all-state or all-conference player, will be at the forefront of the Patriots’ plans.

It makes sense; Gill is already a two-time all-state selection. Gill led the defense with 117 total tackles, including 42 solo and 10.5 for loss. He also recovered three fumbles and broke up eight passes, both team highs.

On offense, he was second for the Patriots in both rushing and receiving yards last year, tallying 248 receiving yards on a team-high 39 catches and running 60 times for 210 yards. He scored five touchdowns.

“The expectations are high for him to get our young kids bought in to what we’re doing and just kind of lead our team for this season,” coach Andy Garland said.

Garland said he expected about 20-25 players out, with a senior class of about five or six. Garland said he will rely on a lot of ninth-graders to contribute immediately.

“We have a really good younger freshman class coming in,” he said. “They will see a lot of playing time this year, and they’re a pretty good group.”

Offensively, the Patriots will need a new quarterback but do return a couple contributors in addition to Gill. Senior Jayden Keller notched 32 carries for 111 yards, and senior Rhett Watt

chipped in 10 catches for 151 yards and two touchdowns.

Up front, senior Ryan Baker will lead a group that has several players returning from injuries last season. Senior Jackson East and junior Reed Banker will also be counted on for solid line play.

“A big thing for us is just keeping those guys healthy that were banged up last year,” Garland said. “We had three starters, o-line, who were injured for a big part of the year.”

“... It’s just going to be a learning curve week to week. It seems like every year playing 2A, you’ve got to have a significant force up front to compete. ... Hopefully, with those kids getting healthy and another year under their belt, that should help us at least a little bit.”

The defense returns with seven of its top 10 tacklers returning from 2023, with Gill leading the way.

Keller had 48 tackles, including three for loss, while junior Trey Schneider added 46 tackles. East had 31 tackles and senior Ryan Baker had 30.

Sophomore Lyman Halverson had 25 tackles, while senior Jake Schommer had 23 tackles and a team-high three interceptions and Banker had 16 tackles.

“Having that experience come back on defense will be big for us,” Garland said.

Key Players

RB/LB: Eli Gill, Sr.
WR/DB: Rhett Watt, Sr.
RB/LB: Jayden Keller, Sr.
OL/DL/LB: Ryan Baker, Sr.



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

Coach: Andy Garland, 21st
year at Upton-Sundance
2023 Record: 4-4, did not
qualify for playoffs

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Worland, 3 p.m.
(Zero Week)
9-6: Open
*9-13: at Newcastle, 7 p.m.
*9-20: vs. Wheatland, 6 p.m.
(at Sundance)
*9-27: at Moorcroft, 7 p.m.
*10-4: vs. Tongue River,
6 p.m. (at Upton)
*10-11: at Burns, 6 p.m.
*10-18: vs. Glenrock, 6 p.m. (at Upton)
*10-25: vs. Big Horn, 6 p.m.
(at Sundance)
* Conference game



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

Coach: Tony Borton, second year at Wheatland
2023 Record: 4-6, lost to Mountain View 41-6 in quarterfinals

Key Players

QB: Jake Hyche, Sr.
RB/LB: Bode Stone, Sr.
WR/LB: Abad Luna, Sr.
OL/DL: Waylon Milnes, Sr.

Bulldogs Rely on Senior Leadership

Where other coaches might lament losses, Wheatland coach Tony Borton sees opportunities.

His Bulldog team this season will look different from last year's squad, both in approach and in personnel.

The Bulldogs graduated their top four rushers and their quarterback, as well as their top two receivers; they return no players who attempted a pass or accumulated double-digit rushing yards. They also graduated six of their nine top tacklers.

However, entering his second year as head coach, Borton said the Bulldogs have good experience, just not always at the varsity level.

With a group of about a dozen

seniors leading the way for a roster that will start in the mid-40s total, Wheatland will be in position to be competitive.

"We have a pretty good core of guys that are bought in to what we're doing, (and) good leadership," Borton said. "... We have a really good attitude overall."

That starts with the senior class.

Senior Jake Hyche was an all-state choice, and senior Bode Stone was an all-conference selection.

Hyche, a defensive end, led Wheatland in defensive points and tied for the team lead with 60 tackles. His 10.5 tackles for loss and seven sacks led the Bulldogs.

Stone added 47 tackles, fourth-best on the team, and 7.5 tackles for loss, two fumble recoveries and the team's only safety last season.

On offense, Hyche will move under center this season, a role he fulfilled in backup duty last year. Borton, who will also be taking over as offensive coordinator this fall, said the Bulldogs will probably run a scaled-down version of what they ran last year with some new formation wrinkles to boot.

"It's going to be simpler," he said. "My hope is that the guys are just free to get downhill and play hard."

"... I'm going to really focus on execution. You may know what's coming, but we want to run it perfectly."

Senior Waylon Milnes, with 12 catches for 81 yards, is the top returning receiver. He ranked third on the team in both categories last year. Hyche added six catches for 69 yards.

Defensively, Milnes had 31 tackles, two interceptions and six pass deflections, and senior Abad Luna had 26 tackles. However, no other returner reached double-digit tackles last season.

Borton said senior Quincy Palmer will also add depth to the linebacking corps.

One quirk of 2024? Wheatland will mostly have to be a road team. The Bulldogs have their first four games on the road and only have three home games compared with six road games total.

"That's a tough break for (our seniors), but the way it shook out last year, we played better on the road than at home," Borton said.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Mitchell, Neb., 7 p.m.
 9-6: at Torrington, 7 p.m.
 *9-13: at Big Horn, 6 p.m.
 *9-20: at Upton-Sundance, 6 p.m. (at Sundance)
 *9-27: vs. Glenrock, 7 p.m.
 *10-4: vs. Burns, 7 p.m.
 *10-11: at Tongue River, 6 p.m.
 *10-18: at Moorcroft, 6 p.m.
 *10-25: vs. Newcastle, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

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2A WEST

COKEVILLE PANTHERS

Panthers Relying on Tradition

As the smallest Class 2A football school, Cokeville's players now they have to both show up and show out.

That's rarely a problem for a tradition-rich program that's been doing that for decades.

Coach Marty Linford said about 90% of the boys in the school are out for this year's Panther football team – totaling around 33 players – and each one of them has been committed to getting better.

"We've got some good kids coming back and they've been working hard in the offseason," Linford said. "We've had great attendance in our weight room, so that's a positive thing."

The Panthers return four all-conference selections, tied with Big Horn for the most in Class 2A, in seniors Kalob Haderlie, Justin Moyes, Ryder Pope and Kayson Walker. The four all-conference players were anchors on Cokeville's defense last year, all finishing in the top six on the team in tackles.

Kayson Walker had 94 tackles, No. 2 on the team, and had seven tackles

for loss, two fumble recoveries and two interceptions.

Pope was third with 81 tackles, including two sacks, while Haderlie was fourth with 79 and had six tackles for loss.

Moyes, meanwhile, had 60 tackles, three fumble recoveries, two interceptions and four pass deflections.

"We've got a lot of them coming back, and they've been playing football for a long time," Linford said. "They've been starting since they were freshmen and sophomores."

Sophomore Kashton Walker added 31 tackles and senior Brodie Dean, who missed much of last year due to injury, added 25.

Junior Trip Reece and sophomore Flint Linford will add depth at the linebacker position, while senior Brenden Hymer will help anchor the defensive line.

Offensively, Kayson Walker completed 36 of 77 passes for 521 yards and four touchdowns. He's also Cokeville's top returning rusher with

263 yards and two touchdowns on 67 carries last season; the Panthers graduated their top two rushers and no other returner reached even 50 yards last year.

Coach Linford said the senior will likely move to running back this year to solidify the Panthers' run-first offense.

"He's going to touch the ball a lot on offense," coach Linford said.

Kashton Walker will likely move to quarterback, coach Linford said.

Moyes led the Panthers with 14 catches and was second with 180 receiving yards; he had two touchdowns receiving.

Dean will add depth to the backfield. Senior Gavin Weske, who returns after a year away, will play tight end and defensive back.

Last season's narrow loss to eventual state champion Torrington in the quarterfinals has given Cokeville confidence, as well.

"If we had a break or two go our way, that could have been us playing in that state (championship) game," coach Linford said.



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

Coach: Marty Linford, third year at Cokeville
2023 Record: 5-4, lost to Torrington 21-14 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

RB/LB: Kayson Walker, Sr.
C/OLB: Kalob Haderlie, Sr.
RB/CB: Justin Moyes, Sr.
OL/DL: Ryder Pope, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: Cokeville Jamboree, 4:30 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-6: at West Jefferson, ID, 5 p.m.
 *9-13: vs. Lyman, 1 p.m.
 *9-20: at Mountain View, 4 p.m.
 *9-27: vs. Pinedale, 1 p.m.
 *10-4: at Thermopolis, 2 p.m.
 *10-11: at Kemmerer, 6 p.m.
 *10-18: vs. Worland, 3 p.m.
 *10-25: at Lovell, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Rangers Relying on Experience

It would be easy for Kemmerer's opponents this season to be confused by the Rangers; after all, this year's Kemmerer team looks almost identical to last year's.

With nine defensive and eight offensive starters returning, the 2024 squad will look quite a bit like 2023's but will be a year older, a year better and a year more experienced.

That said, Kemmerer's 14th consecutive season without a playoff victory was a challenge; last year's only victory came in the season opener against winless Glenrock.

From that team, though, the Rangers return almost all of their contributors.

Senior linemen Owen Barton and Graison Kelley were all-conference choices last season, and they lead the area in which the Rangers bring back the most experience – the line. Junior Colter Krell also returns as a starter on the offensive line.

"We seem to have some really good continuity there," coach Bart Jernigan said.

The offensive backfield also has good experience, although the key cogs are still young. Sophomores Cole Rogers and Logan Emery were two of the Rangers' top three rushers last season. Rogers ran 79 times for 418 yards and scored three times,

while Emery ran 50 times for 220 yards and a touchdown.

"Starting two freshmen in the backfield is never the ideal, and we had to do that last year," Jernigan said.

Jernigan said the returners there have shown good offseason commitment, and "that will go a long way toward helping us."

Junior Kyle Fox chipped in 44 carries for 143 yards.

Every player who caught a pass for the Rangers last year also returns. Junior Bryson McGill was Kemmerer's top receiver with six catches for 71 yards and the team's only receiving touchdown. Emery and Fox each had four catches for 22 yards and Rogers also had a catch for 15 yards.

Defensively, Kemmerer brings back seven of its top eight tacklers from 2023.

Kelley was second for the Rangers with 69 tackles, leading all returners.

Other returners who saw significant defensive time include senior Owen Barton (55 tackles),

Krell (49), senior Bridger Anderson (48), senior Roany Proffit (42), Rogers (41) and Emery (38).

Kelley led the Rangers with 3.5 tackles for loss, while Rogers and Krell had two fumble recoveries apiece.

McGill added 19 tackles and an interception and also led Kemmerer with three pass deflections, and sophomore Noah Parks had 11 tackles.

Jernigan said he hoped this year's defensive returners would be sound in the Rangers' schemes.

"Now hopefully we can take that next step in season, game planning and that kind of stuff," Jernigan said. "... If we have any problems, it won't be from a lack of understanding about what we need to be doing."



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

Coach: Bart Jernigan, eighth year at Kemmerer
2023 Record: 1-7, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

OL/DL: Graison Kelley, Sr.
OL/DL: Owen Barton, Sr.
OL/DL: Colter Krell, Jr.
WR/DB: Bryson McGill, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-29: at Cokeville, 4:30 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-5: vs. Moorcroft, 4 p.m. (at Shoshoni)
*9-13: vs. Pinedale, 7 p.m.
*9-20: vs. Thermopolis, 7 p.m.
*9-28: at Mountain View, 1 p.m.
*10-3: at Lyman, 4 p.m.
*10-11: vs. Cokeville, 6 p.m.
*10-18: vs. Lovell, 6 p.m.
*10-25: at Worland, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

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Mascot: Bulldogs
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Blue and White

Coach: Nicc Crosby, sixth year at Lovell
2023 Record: 6-3, lost to Big Horn 49-28 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

TE/RB/LB: Braxton Felkins, Sr.
QB/LB/S: Davin Crosby, Sr.
OL/DL: Brody Muller, Jr.
OL/DL: Halen Strom, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-31: at Buffalo, 12 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-6: vs. Big Horn, 6 p.m.
*9-13: vs. Mountain View, 7 p.m.
*9-20: at Lyman, 2 p.m.
*9-27: vs. Thermopolis, 7 p.m.
*10-4: at Worland, 7 p.m.
*10-11: vs. Pinedale, 6 p.m.
*10-18: at Kemmerer, 6 p.m.
*10-25: vs. Cokeville, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

LOVELL BULLDOGS

2A WEST

Strong Junior Class Leads Lovell

In five years as Lovell's head coach, coach Nicc Crosby has yet to experience a losing season.

One of Class 2A's most consistent programs, the Bulldogs were a playoff qualifier again in 2023, something Crosby attributes to players who put in the effort to be multi-sport athletes and who devote extra time in the offseason.

"We've really reaped the benefits of having those type of players," he said.

This year's Lovell team will rely a lot on its junior class, especially on the offensive and defensive lines, but will also have a smattering of seniors who will lead the way at key spots on both offense and defense.

It starts under center, where senior Davin Crosby is Lovell's only returning all-state choice. He completed 128 of 225 passes for 1,925 yards and 18 touchdowns last season. He is also Lovell's top returning rusher with 103 carries for 349 yards and six touchdowns in 2023.

"It's always tricky with the quarterback position, because a lot of the time those are some of your more athletic players and you want them to show their athleticism, but at the same time you're trying to keep them healthy," coach Crosby said. "... Thankfully, he's got a lot of

weapons around him both in the running and passing game, and we'll see if we can take a good, balanced approach and give teams a lot to prepare for to stop us offensively."

Junior Owen Walker led the Bulldogs with 527 receiving yards and was second for Lovell with 34 catches and four receiving touchdowns. Junior Matthew Newman added 16 catches for 279 yards, each good for fourth on the team, and four touchdowns.

Senior Braxton Felkins chipped in 12 catches for

CONTINUED PAGE 31-

Kurt's Cuts

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

Coach: Dale Anderson, 13th year at Lyman
2023 Record: 8-3, lost to Big Horn 34-14 in state semifinals

Key Players

OL/LB: Max Gregory, Sr.
RB/LB: Nate Brady, Sr.
OL/DL: Brix Hooten, Sr.
RB/LB/DL: Ben Bluemel, Sr.

Eagles Look to Continue Success

Over the past four seasons, the Lyman Eagles have been on a historic stretch of success.

For the first time in program history, Lyman reached at least the semifinals of the playoffs for four consecutive seasons.

Coach Dale Anderson has several ideas about what has given the program such stable success, but he always comes back to one idea.

"I really believe that we've had some really good kids that have worked hard and are committed to the cause and want to improve," he said.

This year's team loses six all-conference selections to graduation and has some important roles to fill.

However, the Eagles have proven they can respond in that situation.

"I think we have some kids that'll step up," Anderson said. "I think we have some young kids that are motivated and want to work hard and do the right things, but time will tell on that one."

Senior Max Gregory, an all-state selection, and senior Deavon Schear were the only two players of Lyman's eight all-conference picks who did not graduate.

Gregory led the Eagles with 120 total tackles, including 53 solo. His 24 tackles for loss led the team. He also forced three fumbles and recovered one and had two interceptions.

"He's kind of the one we're asking to take that leadership role," Anderson said. "He's definitely one of the better players, I believe, in the state."

Gregory will join senior Brix Hooten and juniors Everett Lee and Colter Dewitt as leaders on the offensive and defensive fronts.

"Everything we do starts there with our offensive and defensive lines," Anderson said. "... If you can't block anybody, it doesn't matter what you do behind it."

Senior Nate Brady is the top returning rusher, but the Eagles graduated their top four rushers. Brady, with 19 carries for 92 yards and two touchdowns last season, is the only returner with more than 34 rushing yards.

Junior Dallin Smith, with one completion for 11 yards, is the only returner who completed a pass last season. However, Anderson said Smith's role would likely be at tight end and defensive end this season.

Schear, who ranked third on the team last year with 133 receiving yards on nine catches, including three touchdowns, is the only returning player who caught a pass last year.

The Eagles get back just three of their top nine players in defensive points.

Brady finished fourth on the team with 45 tackles and also had five pass deflections. Schear finished eighth with 27 tackles and broke up a team-high 12 passes. Junior Everett Lee added 18 tackles.

Senior Ben Bluemel will add depth at running back and could also play defensive line, defensive end or linebacker.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Malad, Idaho, 4 p.m.
 (Zero Week)
 9-6: vs. Burns, 3 p.m.
 *9-13: at Cokeville, 1 p.m.
 *9-20: vs. Lovell, 2 p.m.
 *9-27: at Worland, 5 p.m.
 *10-3: vs. Kemmerer, 4 p.m.
 *10-11: vs. Thermopolis, 2 p.m.
 *10-18: at Pinedale, 6 p.m.
 *10-25: at Mountain View, 3 p.m.
 * Conference game



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2A WEST

MOUNTAIN VIEW BUFFALOS

Young Buffalos Still Have Talent

Optimism is high in Mountain View this fall.

And why not?

After an undefeated regular season and the return of several key players, coach Brent Walk sees nothing but opportunity for the Buffalos this season.

"I think we're very, very talented," Walk said. "We don't have a lot of seniors... but our junior class and sophomore class are really, really strong."

"We do have some inexperience, but I'm really excited where we're at right now."

That senior class – only four or five players deep – will be important. However, many key roles will be fulfilled by juniors and sophomores this fall.

It starts under center and with junior Justus Platts, Mountain View's only returning all-state pick. Platts ran and threw almost equally as effectively; he completed 61 of 119 passes for 913 yards and 11

touchdowns while running 131 times for 904 yards and 13 more scores.

"He's taken on a huge leadership role," Walk said.

Last year, Mountain View focused more on the running game with the personnel it had, Walk said. This year's team will open it up more, relying on Platts' arm and a group of young but growing receivers.

"I think we're going to be exciting to watch," Walk said.

Senior Landon Solaas had three catches for 90 yards, good for second on the team, and is Mountain View's top returning receiver. Seniors Isac Linford, Rhett Hunt and Brockton Walker and junior Kolby Roitz will add depth at wideout.

From the backfield, junior Jackson Sawyer had 16 carries for 106 yards and two touchdowns.

The defense will need some rebuilding, as the Buffalos lost

six of their top eight players in defensive points to graduation.

Solaas, an all-conference choice, was second on the team with 77 tackles last year and led the team with seven sacks.

However, of Mountain View's top four tacklers from last year, Solaas is the only returner.

Sawyer had 59 tackles and also deflected five passes.

Linford contributed 35 tackles, junior all-conference lineman Seamus Hamilton had 20, Walker had 18 and Platts had 17. Linford also had three interceptions and Platts had two.

While Walk is still on the lookout for players to fill some roles, he said "I think we have just as much talent or maybe even more talent than last year."

Also spurring on the Buffalos' motivation is the knowledge of how close they were to a run at a state title. Last year's undefeated season ended in the 2A semifinals in



Mascot: Buffalos
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Purple and Black

Coach: Brent Walk, 13th year at Mountain View
2023 Record: 10-1, lost to Torrington 25-19 in state semifinals

Key Players

QB: Justus Platts, Jr.
OL/DL: Seamus Hamilton, Jr.
RB/LB: Jackson Sawyer, Jr.
TE/DE: Landon Solaas, Sr.

a 25-19 loss to eventual champion Torrington.

"I think it was a very good learning experience for the kids we have right now," Walk said of the loss. "The kids are extremely motivated, locked in and very coachable."

Lake Moves Up to Lead Wranglers

Despite a 2-7 record last season, the Pinedale Wranglers made important positive strides in 2023.

Under new head coach Jesse Lake, the Wranglers are eager to keep the momentum going.

Lake has been Pinedale's offensive coordinator for the past two seasons. He said knowing the players and the scheme, with no big changes anticipated and support from a consistent and experienced set of assistant coaches, will make the transition smooth.

"I feel lucky that I started my coaching career here at Pinedale when I did, and was able to work

with a young, exciting group of athletes and a great coaching staff," Lake said.

Turning around a program with just one winning season and one playoff berth since 2009 will not come easily, but the Wranglers do return several players who saw significant minutes last season, including six starters on offense and seven on defense. The bulk of the returners are juniors, as Lake said among the 35-40 players he expects to have out, only four or five will be seniors.

Even so, the junior class retains much of the varsity experience, and Lake praised their experience and determination.

Consistency with schemes will also help younger players build on last season's positives, Lake said.

"We plan to continue to build on what we have been doing and get more dialed in," he said.

Junior Cale Dauwen is the only returner among four all-conference choices from 2023. Dauwen led the Wranglers' rushing game with 376 yards, scoring twice on 91 carries. He's also Pinedale's top returning tackler, with 49 tackles in 2023. He also had three sacks and two fumble recoveries, both team

highs.

"Cale is an outstanding, multi-sport athlete with a true passion for the sport of football," Lake said. "Like any young player, he continues to get better each year with more experience. I see him being a leader on both sides of the ball."

Junior Ian Rigo completed 22 of 45 passes for 255 yards and a touchdown in split duty under center last year.

Pinedale's top five receivers are back, as well. Junior Landon Fornstrom led the Wranglers in receiving yards with 165 on eight catches; junior Kolbyn Jaquez added 12 catches for 104 yards; and junior Quincy Mika led the team with 17 catches, tallying 92 yards. Dauwen added seven catches for 70 yards.

The defense returns seven of its top 10 tacklers from last year.

In addition to Dauwen's 49 tackles, junior Wylee Wilson added 43 tackles, including 30 solo, and Mika had 40 tackles.

Junior Boeh Gamble added 29 tackles, senior Branson Simmons had 25 and Fornstrom had 20.

Seniors Cash McCann and Garret Scobey will add depth to both the offensive and defensive lines.



Mascot: Wranglers
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Green and Orange

Coach: Jesse Lake, first year at Pinedale
2023 Record: 2-7, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

DE: Branson Simmons, Sr.
OT/DT: Garret Scobey, Sr.
C/DT: Cash McCann, Sr.
RB: Cale Dauwen, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Big Piney, 7 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-6: at Rawlins, 7 p.m.
*9-13: at Kemmerer, 7 p.m.
*9-20: vs. Worland, 6 p.m.
*9-27: at Cokeville, 1 p.m.
*10-4: vs. Mountain View, 7 p.m.
*10-11: at Lovell, 6 p.m.
*10-18: vs. Lyman, 6 p.m.
*10-25: vs. Thermopolis, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

"...they stayed together well as a team throughout the season working together."

~Coach Jesse Lake

MOUNTAIN VIEW BUFFALOES

2024 Schedule

8-31: at Green River, 11 a.m. (Zero Week)
9-6: vs. Rich County, UT, 3 p.m.
*9-13: at Lovell, 7 p.m.
*9-20: vs. Cokeville, 4 p.m.
*9-28: vs. Kemmerer, 1 p.m.
*10-4: at Pinedale, 7 p.m.
*10-11: vs. Worland, 3 p.m.
*10-18: at Thermopolis, 3 p.m.
*10-25: vs. Lyman, 3 p.m.
* Conference game

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LOVELL CONTINUED-

135 yards.

The offensive line will be loaded with juniors, including Brody Muller, Halen Strom, Kalell Gruell and Kyle Wilson, all of whom saw significant varsity playing time as sophomores.

"It won't be your typical group of juniors without a lot of playing time," coach Crosby said. "These guys have played quite a bit."

The Bulldogs' defense graduated four of its top six players in defensive points but returns its top tackler from a year

ago in Felkins.

Felkins, an all-conference choice, topped the defensive charts with 99 total tackles, including a team-high 33 solo.

"He really was all over the place for us," coach Crosby said.

Gruell added 62 tackles, good for third on the team, and had three tackles for loss. Crosby added 46 tackles and had three pass deflections, Newman had 27 tackles and three break-ups, Strom had 33 tackles and Muller added 24 tackles and led Lovell with 4.5 tackles for loss. Senior Jasper Hatch added 17 tackles.





Mascot: Bobcats
Division: Class 2A
Conference: West
Colors: Purple and Yellow

Coach: Boone Bowker,
 2nd year at Thermopolis
2023 Record: 2-6, did not
 qualify for playoffs

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Newcastle, 6 p.m.
 (Zero Week, at Buffalo)
 9-6: vs. Tongue River, 6 p.m.
 *9-13: vs. Worland, 7 p.m.
 *9-20: at Kemmerer, 7 p.m.
 *9-27: at Lovell, 7 p.m.
 *10-4: vs. Cokeville, 2 p.m.
 *10-11: at Lyman, 2 p.m.
 *10-18: vs. Mountain View, 3 p.m.
 *10-25: at Pinedale, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Bobcats Have Wealth of Experience

In a season where Thermopolis will have a lot of stability carrying over from last season, one big change highlights the first few weeks of the season.

Thermopolis' renewal of its rivalry with Worland, happening in the Class 2A West Conference opener for both teams in Week 2, has put an interesting spin on the first bit of 2024 campaign for the Bobcats.

"I've asked around about who was our rival when I first got here, and the answer was, 'We aren't sure,'" second-year coach Boone Bowker said. "So having an actual rivalry game where there's a little more on the line is going to fun."

The team that takes that field this season for Thermopolis will be an experienced and talented group, with eight starters back on offense and

seven on defense.

The Bobcats return their quarterback, as well as every rusher and pass receiver who reached double-digit yards. On defense, of the 14 players who had at least 20 tackles last year, Thermopolis returns nine.

"What I'm excited for is we started to lay our foundation of what we wanted last year," Bowker said. "Now we get to start framing it. ... We were learning how to compete last year, and now we get the opportunity to compete this year."

Seniors Ryan Arends, Del Dukes and Zane Stam were all-conference choices last year for the Bobcats, who went 2-6 in 2023.

Stam led the rushing game with 137 carries for 550 yards and two touchdowns.

Del Dukes led the receivers in all major categories with 16 catches for 381 yards and three touchdowns.

Junior quarterback Armani Dukes completed 41 passes for 627 yards and six touchdowns; he also ran 113 times for 364 yards and six more TDs.

Stam and Arends went 1-2 for the Bobcat defense last year in tackles, with Stam leading the way with 69 tackles and Arends notching 64. Stam also recovered three fumbles while Arends tied for the team lead with three sacks.

Armani Dukes tied for third on the team with 45 tackles. Del Dukes added 28 tackles, four pass deflections, two fumble recoveries and an interception.

Several other defensive returners give the Bobcats both depth and experience across the board. Hastie added 36 tackles, senior Brody Sorensen had 28, junior Bridger Peil had 25, junior Cruz Mascarro had 24, junior Cody Bomengen had 21 tackles and four pass deflections, and senior Logan Dafoe had 20 tackles, three sacks and three forced fumbles.

The defense has "a lot of guys returning and (they) understand the scheme," Bowker said.

Bowker said this year's returners were dedicated to both track and to the weight room, and that work "will help them and us tremendously."

Key Players

RB/LB: Zane Stam, Jr.
QB/LB: Armani Dukes, Jr.
WR/CB: Del Dukes, Sr.
OL/DL: Brody Sorensen, Sr.

2A WEST

WORLAND WARRIORS

Warriors Could be 2A Bullies

With nine returning starters on both offense and defense and numerous players who saw quality time last year, Worland has the opportunity to improve on last year's 3-6 finish.

Also helping? A move from Class 3A to Class 2A, a move that makes the Warriors the second-largest school in the classification in terms of enrollment.

Class 2A is nothing new to first-year head coach Marty Wrage, who is aware of the challenge that 2A football presents from his time as head coach at nearby Greybull.

"Coming from 2A in the past, I understand the quality of teams, players and coaches in 2A," Wrage said. "We are working hard to get ready for the transition and changes of a new staff. We are really just focusing on what we can control."

With change comes some new looks, Wrage said, as players adapt to new positions. Regardless, the Warriors bring back four all-conference players, tied with Big Horn and Cokeville for the most in 2A, in seniors Brody Thiel, Masen Decker, Daniel Lopez and Fisher Martinez.

The seven players who gained at least one yard rushing all return this season, as do the Warriors'

top five receivers from 2023.

Senior Cale Cheatham led the Warriors in rushing, carrying for 267 yards last season, while Decker was second with 104 yards.

Decker and junior Colt Weber both saw time at quarterback. Weber finished with more yards (344) and touchdowns (five) on his 29 completions, but Decker completed more passes (42) on his way to 285 yards and one touchdown.

In receiver-by-committee, Decker led the way with 12 catches for 169 yards and three touchdowns; senior Will Slagle had 12 catches for 161 yards and three scores; senior Ryan Deniz had seven catches for 123 yards; senior Roman Parra had 25 catches for 122 yards; and Cheatham had 11 catches for 75 yards.

The defense is also stacked, starting with Thiel, an all-state choice who led the Warriors with 69 tackles, 12 tackles for loss and six sacks. In all, three of Worland's top four tacklers are back.

"I would say the

strength of our team at this point is the defense," Wrage said.

Parra had 59 tackles to finish second on the team. Junior Gunner Mascaro had 50 tackles, two fumble recoveries and two blocked kicks. Martinez had 37.5 tackles.

A host of others who saw extended playing time also return. Lopez had 25 tackles, Slagle had 24 tackles and four pass deflections and senior Bronson Newell had 23 tackles. Decker had 22 tackles, led Worland with three interceptions and tied for the team lead with five pass break-ups.

Junior Maddux Cole and sophomore Tell Slagle will add depth to the lines.



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

Coach: Marty Wrage,
 first year at Worland
2023 Record: 3-6, lost to
 Star Valley 62-0 in state
 quarterfinals

Key Players

FB/TE/LB: Brody Thiel, Sr.
OL/DL: Daniel Lopez, Sr.
WR/S: Masen Decker, Sr.
NT: Fisher Martinez, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Upton-Sundance,
 3 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-6: vs. Powell, 7 p.m.
 *9-13: at Thermopolis, 7 p.m.
 *9-20: at Pinedale, 6 p.m.
 *9-27: vs. Lyman, 5 p.m.
 *10-4: vs. Lovell, 7 p.m.
 *10-11: at Mountain View, 3 p.m.
 *10-18: at Cokeville, 3 p.m.
 *10-25: vs. Kemmerer, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

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1A 9-Man Preview



Lingle Has Inside Track to a Title

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four Questions to Answer

Who's the one team coaches are singling out as this year's favorite? Lingle. The Doggers have earned a lot of respect, especially after winning their first nine games last year before falling to eventual champion Big Piney in the semifinals. They also return four all-state players.

Anyone else in the chase? Not really. But there will be tons of teams ready to step in if Lingle stumbles, chief among them Rocky Mountain and Southeast, as well as defending champ Big Piney and always tough Pine Bluffs.

Any favorites out of that group? No, because uncertainty. Most of last year's best teams (except Lingle) had sizable losses to graduation, and most of last year's also-rans return enough players to be improved. That kind of turnover could make for a lot of parity.

What's new? Longtime Southeast coach Mark Bullington retired. Former assistant coach Shawn Burkart is more than capable of helping the Cyclones continue without missing a step, but it will feel weird for a while not having Bullington behind it all.

Four Key Games

Rocky Mountain at Big Piney, Sept. 27. How much did graduation losses hurt the Punchers' repeat chances? Are the Grizzlies really the West's heir apparent? We find out in the first week of West Conference games.

Lingle at Southeast, Oct. 10. It would be easy to overlook the Doggers' Goshen County neighbors this year. However, the Cyclones may represent Lingle's biggest East Conference challenge this season.

Wind River at Big Piney, Oct. 12. It's hard to look away from a state championship rematch, but this game will far from resemble the one that happened in Laramie last November. Both teams had heavy losses due to graduation.

Pine Bluffs at Lingle, Oct. 18. If Pine Bluffs doesn't blow a 24-point lead and doesn't lose in overtime to the Doggers last season, maybe we're talking about the Hornets as this year's frontrunners.

Predicted Order of Finish

East Conference: Lingle, Southeast, Pine Bluffs, Lusk, Wright, Saratoga, Guernsey.

West Conference: Rocky Mountain, Big Piney, Wind River, Greybull, Shoshoni, Wyoming Indian.

Preseason Top Five: 1. Lingle; 2. Rocky Mountain; 3. Southeast; 4. Pine Bluffs; 5. Big Piney.

Way-too-early Title Game Score Prediction

Lingle 38, Rocky Mountain 26. On paper, Lingle has one of the best 1A nine-man teams since the classification restarted in 2020. Games aren't won on paper, though.



State Champs Big Piney Punchers

2023 State Playoffs

1A/9-Man Championship

Big Piney 39, Wind River 14

Semifinals

Wind River 32, Southeast 30

Big Piney 51, Lingle 27

Quarterfinals

Wind River 68, Lusk 6

Southeast 50, Riverside 20

Lingle 21, Rocky Mountain 14

Pig Piney 28, Pine Bluffs 14

Players to Watch

Louden Bremer, Lingle.

Bremer was Class 1A nine-man's offensive MVP last season after leading the Doggers in both rushing and receiving. He had 1,106 rushing yards and 405 receiving yards. He was also Lingle's leading tackler.

Caden Clifford, Big Piney. The number 1,286 -- the number of yards

Clifford had last season -- sticks out like crazy among nine-man's returners. But he is also Big Piney's top returning tackler.

Kaiden Riggs, Lingle. After a one-year stopover in Torrington, where he helped the Trailblazers win a Class 2A championship by running for 1,275 yards and 10 TDs, Riggs is back where it all started for his senior season.

Tucker Jackson, Rocky Mountain. If you had three pick-sixes last year, step forward.... Jackson led Rocky with six interceptions and was also the Grizzlies' top receiver with 23 catches for 452 yards.

Ayden Desmond, Southeast.

An all-state pick a year ago, Desmond threw for 1,097 yards and ran for 714 more and was responsible for 30 touchdowns between the two. He was also a handful on defense.

Carsten Freeburg, Pine Bluffs.

Freeburg was most effective on defense, where had 54 tackles and a couple picks. The junior should be one of the classification's most athletic and exciting players.



Mascot: Vikings
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Black and White

Coach: Neal Hughes, second year at Guernsey-Sunrise
2023 Record: 1-7, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

QB/TBLB: Jayden Wagner-Gross, Jr.
QB/WR/CB: Mason Collar, Jr.
FB/LB: Conner Bristow, Jr.
OT/DE: Joey Lewis, Soph.

Vikings Continue Path to Success

Guernsey-Sunrise's venture into Class 1A nine-man football has been a struggle, but the Vikings are beginning to see progress.

Despite finishing 1-7 last year – one year after going 0-8 – coach Neal Hughes said his players heard time and again from opposing coaches and activities directors about their improvement from 2022 to 2023.

"I think it was a huge encouragement to each one of them to hear we are making improvements," Hughes said. "... They have a process that works and they're very willing to work the process."

This year's Guernsey team will be quite similar to last year's, as the

Vikings only graduated one senior. But they'll still be young. Hughes said he only expected two seniors this year, and neither one of them has played football since junior high.

That means this year's team will be led by lots of juniors and sophomores who have taken their lumps but have learned a lot in the process.

"We were all learning last year, a big learning year for them and for myself," Hughes said. "... We were able to make some really big changes, and it'll be a benefit as we step into this year."

"... This year, now those 11 guys know that program and their part in it, so that will be a big strength."

Junior Mason Collar led the Vikings in both passing and rushing last year. He completed 67.1% of his passes, completing 116 passes on 173 attempts for 824 yards and seven touchdowns. He also ran 69 times for 196 yards.

Junior Conner Bristow added 43 carries for 129 yards and sophomore Jayden Wagner-Gross had 60 carries for 76 yards, as the Vikings return their top three rushers.

Junior Corbin Weinkauff was second for Guernsey last season in receiving yards with 179; he had 20 catches. Wagner-Gross added 26 catches for 125 yards.

Defensively, the Vikings return their top three tacklers in Wagner-Gross, Bristow and junior Gabe Milton. Milton led Guernsey with 73 tackles

and Bristow added 67.

Wagner-Gross had 63 tackles and also added two fumble recoveries, an interception, two pass deflections and three forced fumbles.

Junior Tim Radcliffe added 43 tackles, Collar had 37, senior Philyp Morales added 34 and Weinkauff had 25. Radcliffe led the Vikings with six tackles for loss.

For now, Hughes said the Vikings have to take the small steps that some other programs take for granted.

"This year we took them to their very first football camp," Hughes said. "This group of young men had never been to a football camp. ... I think those were both huge investments in the GS football program, because all of them came away saying, 'Wow, that was amazing.'"

GUERNSEY-SUNRISE VIKINGS

2024 Schedule

8-30: Open (Zero Week)
 9-7: vs. Wyoming Indian, 1 p.m.
 *9-13: vs. Pine Bluffs, 7 p.m.
 *9-20: at Lingle, 7 p.m.
 *9-27: vs. Saratoga, 2 p.m.
 *10-4: at Southeast, 6 p.m.
 *10-11: vs. Wright, 6 p.m.
 *10-18: at Lusk, 6 p.m.
 10-24: at Cheyenne East JV, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

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1A 9-MAN EAST

LINGLE-FORT LARAMIE DOGGERS

Lingle Looks to Take Next Step

Lingle had a taste of success last season.

This year's goal isn't to just taste, though. It's to feast.

The Doggers went undefeated in the regular season last year, but eventual state champion Big Piney rocked the Doggers in Lingle in a 51-27 loss that ended the season.

"Losing in the semifinals gave our kids an idea of what it will take to jump levels and compete for a state title," coach Brandon Gifford said. "We learned a lot about ourselves as football players and the areas where we have to improve if we are going to chase a championship."

The Doggers are in good shape to do just that this year. Despite graduating six seniors, Lingle returns all four of its all-state choices in seniors Loudon Bremer and Cooper Smith and juniors Anthony Arnusch and Colt Brown.

In addition, the Doggers will benefit from the return of senior Kaiden Riggs, an all-state selection with Lingle as a

sophomore who helped Torrington to the Class 2A championship last year. Riggs notched another all-state selection after rushing for 1,275 yards and 10 touchdowns last year with the Trailblazers.

Bremer, the Class 1A nine-man offensive player of the year in 2023, led the Doggers' rushing game with 150 carries for 1,106 yards and 19 touchdowns last season. He was also Lingle's top receiver, catching 28 passes for 405 yards and another five touchdowns.

Brown chipped in 539 rushing yards, good for third on the team, on 86 carries, including seven touchdowns.

Junior Brady Cook completed 71 of 123 passes for 898 yards and 10 touchdowns. He returns his top four receivers from 2023.

Senior Ned Nelson was the Doggers' No. 2 receiver with 27 catches for 293 yards and five touchdowns, while Arnusch added 14 catches for 259 yards and three TDs.

The defense returns its top

four players in defensive points in Bremer, Smith, Brown and Arnusch, and seven of its top nine tacklers.

Bremer led the Doggers with 104 tackles and also had two fumble recoveries, two interceptions and two blocked kicks.

Brown added 97 tackles, while Smith had 89, including team highs in tackles for loss with 22 and sacks with 10.

Arnusch had 29 tackles but led the Doggers with four interceptions and 17 pass deflections.

Junior Colter McFarlin added 31 tackles, Nelson had 27 and junior Brayden Posten had 24.

"I think with the success we had last year it just helped validate to our kids and our coaches that we are on the right track and that we are doing the right things," Gifford said. "We realize that we need to continue to get better, understanding that if we aren't growing, we are dying."



Mascot: Doggers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Blue and Red

Coach: Brandon Gifford, fourth year at Lingle
2023 Record: 9-1, lost to Big Piney 51-27 in state semifinals

RB/LB: Loudon Bremer, Sr.
OL/DL: Cooper Smith, Sr.
WR/DB: Anthony Arnusch, Jr.
RB/LB: Colt Brown, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Pine Bluffs Jamboree, 4 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-6: vs. Wind River, 6 p.m.
 *9-13: at Lusk, 6 p.m.
 *9-20: vs. Guernsey, 7 p.m.
 *9-27: at Wright, 6 p.m.
 10-3: at Cheyenne East sophs, 6 p.m.
 *10-10: at Southeast, 7 p.m.
 *10-18: vs. Pine Bluffs, 7 p.m.
 *10-25: vs. Saratoga, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Tigers have Something to Prove

Lusk's 2023 season looked like one big bell curve – down, up, down.

After an 0-2 start, Lusk won four of its next five games and was looking like a contender for postseason success.

That finish never happened, though. In the final two weeks of the season, blowout losses to Wright (39-0) and Wind River (68-6) ended the Tigers' season. In two weeks, a promising season turned into frustration, then inspiration, coach Chris Skeen said.

"They were embarrassed by the way the season ended last year," Skeen said. "It seems they are more bought in this year. So far we have kids participating in off-season activities and wanting to put in the time."

Lusk is in good position to be improved this fall thanks to a bevy of returners. Lusk returns both of its all-state selections in senior Jackson Smith and sophomore Raynce Brott, and two other all-conference picks in senior Ridge Kupke and junior Nathan Miller.

Smith completed 73 of 122 passes for 1,260 yards and 16 touchdowns last season. Miller was his favorite

target; he caught 34 passes for 757 yards and nine touchdowns to lead the team. However, the Tigers graduated their No. 2 and 3 receivers; no other returner had more than 33 receiving yards last year.

"One of the main goals this year is to be more effective in how we attack defenses," Skeen said. "We need to have a legit threat running the ball and be more balanced than last year. Hopefully (we) use some more play-action and (do) less out of the shotgun."

Kupke was second for the Tigers in rushing last year, running 53 times for 206 yards, and led Lusk with seven rushing touchdowns. Miller had 18 carries for 146 yards.

Skeen said the offensive line will need to come along for the offense to be effective.

The Tigers' top five players in defensive points and top eight tacklers all return.

Brott led the Tigers in defensive points. He was second on the team with 71 tackles but had a team-high

20 tackles for loss as well as four blocked kicks.

Miller led the Tigers with 85 tackles and had a team-high three pass deflections.

Smith added 66 tackles and tied for the team lead with three interceptions. Kupke contributed 52 tackles, sophomore Brady Swisher had 45, senior Quintin Bieri added 40 tackles and junior Cody Himes had 33. Junior Isaac Assman added 17 tackles and sophomore Ryan Youngquist had 10.

"For the most part, I feel like they should be able to hold their own against most teams," Skeen said. "... Building that chemistry and trust is going to be a big part of what we can do."



Mascot: Tigers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Red and White

Coach: Chris Skeen, third year at Lusk
2023 Record: 4-5, lost to Wind River 68-6 in state quarterfinals

Key Players
QB/LB: Jackson Smith, Sr.
RB/DB: Ridge Kupke, Sr.
WR/DB: Nathan Miller, Jr.
TE/DE: Cody Himes, Jr.

2024 Schedule
8-30: Open (Zero Week)
9-6: at Rocky Mountain, 1 p.m.
*9-13: vs. Lingle, 6 p.m.
*9-20: at Saratoga, 6 p.m.
*9-27: vs. Southeast, 6 p.m.
*10-4: at Pine Bluffs, 6 p.m.
10-10: vs. Natrona sophs, 6 p.m.
*10-18: vs. Guernsey, 6 p.m.
*10-25: at Wright, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

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"We have the confidence that we can find the right mix of guys to give us a chance in October and November."
~Coach Will Gray

Mascot: Hornets
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Purple and Yellow
Coach: Will Gray, 14th year at Pine Bluffs
2023 Record: 6-3, lost to Big Piney 28-14 in state quarterfinals

Key Players
WR/LB: Shawn Shmidl, Sr.
QB/TE/LB: Justin Lerwick, Sr.
QB/WR/DB: Carsten Freeburg, Jr.
OL/DL: Ethan Bomberger, Sr.

PINE BLUFFS HORNETS 1A 9-MAN EAST

Hornets Have Returning Talent

A quick start is helpful, but a strong finish is better.

Pine Bluffs' players will enter 2024 with that fresh in their minds.

After starting 6-0 last year, the Hornets faltered down the stretch, losing their final three games to fall out of championship contention.

However, Pine Bluffs returns numerous experienced players, including senior all-state choice Shawn Smidl and classmates Ethan Bomberger, Justin Lerwick

and Ryan Mohren, who were each all-conference honorees.

In all, the Hornets return their top three rushers, their quarterback and four of their top five receivers, as well as their top five tacklers from 2023.

"Depth will be big for us," coach Will Gray said. "A lot of our roster got to be on the field last year."

Mohren led the Hornets with 143 carries for 986 yards and 16 touchdowns in 2023. Junior Cameron Jessen contributed 63

carries for 419 yards and four touchdowns, and senior Jesus Solis ran 25 times for 267 yards and four TDs.

Lerwick completed 106 of 205 passes for 1,485 yards and 12 touchdowns.

Shmidl was the top receiver with 33 catches for 568 yards and four touchdowns. Junior Carsten Freeburg was third with 218 receiving yards and tied for second on the team with 16 catches. He added three

CONTINUED PAGE 37-



Mascot: Panthers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Purple and Yellow

Coach: Jared Mason, first year at Saratoga
2023 Record: 2-5, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

RB/LB: Allyster Ingraham, Sr.
RB/DE: Hazen Williams, Jr.
QB: Jace Westring, Soph.
TE/DE: Burriss Berger, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Pine Bluffs Jamboree, 4 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-5: vs. Cheyenne South JV, 5 p.m.
 9-13: at Wind River, 6 p.m.
 *9-20: vs. Lusk, 6 p.m.
 *9-27: at Guernsey-Sunrise, 2 p.m.
 *10-4: vs. Wright, 1 p.m.
 *10-11: at Pine Bluffs, 6 p.m.
 *10-18: vs. Southeast, 6 p.m.
 *10-25: at Lingle, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

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New Coach Likes What He Sees

When the Saratoga Panthers had their first chance to see how they stacked up against opposing teams this summer, they came away inspired.

A summer camp at Black Hills State showed the team just how much progress they have actually made, incoming coach Jared Mason said.

"It's a step in the right direction," Mason said, "and I hear the comments from the kids, 'Hey we're already as good now as we were six weeks into the season last year.'"

Mason, who has been a longtime wrestling coach and track assistant coach at Saratoga, was the Panthers' offensive coordinator last year.

The Panthers lost one senior to graduation and another player to offseason transfer but return everyone else who was on last year's roster.

Depth is still a concern, though, as the Panthers only listed 14 players on last year's roster, although 15 players went to the BHSU camp and Mason said he expects up to 20 to come out.

"A lot of them saw the field a lot

(last year)," Mason said. "Granted, we're young, but six of those kids played basically every snap of every game last year."

Senior Allyster Ingraham and junior Hazen Williams were the Panthers' all-conference picks.

Williams contributed 73 carries for 325 yards and three scores and also caught 17 passes for 123 yards, good for second on the team. Ingraham ran 42 times for 280 yards and three touchdowns.

Sophomore Jace Westring handled most of the load at quarterback, taking over about halfway through the season. He completed 38 of 63 passes for 407 yards and three touchdowns.

Sophomore Griffin Bartlett added 13 catches for 119 yards and also contributed 46 rushing yards.

Sophomore Easton Mason will lead efforts on the offensive line.

Coach Mason said he wanted to have the Panthers use their power running game, which he installed last year, continue on into this year.

"We found success with that toward the end of the year last year, so if we can be a downhill

"They'll play tough, they play with heart, (and) they'll give you what they've got."

~Coach Jared Mason

team and play action off of that, we should find some success," he said.

Defensively, Williams added 63 tackles, including a team-high 30 solo, the best among Saratoga's returners. He also had a team-high 10 tackles for loss and three sacks.

Ingraham had 57 tackles and led Saratoga with three fumble recoveries.

Sophomore Easton Mason had 49 tackles, while Bartlett had 32 tackles and three interceptions. Junior Burriss Berger added three interceptions, as well, to go along with 32 tackles, while Westring had 26 tackles and two interceptions.

"Our kids, we're not necessarily bigger, faster, (or) stronger, but we are athletic," coach Mason said.

"They'll play tough, they play with heart, (and) they'll give you what they've got."

1A 9-MAN EAST

SOUTHEAST CYCLONES

Familiar Face Takes Over Top Job

Since 1976, the Southeast football program has known just two head coaches, Barry Miller and Mark Bullington.

This year, longtime assistant Shawn Burkart takes over as

"Every time you have a great senior class that's played a lot of years, (good) things happen that fall."

~Coach Shawn Burkart

the Cyclones' head coach, just the program's third in nearly 50 years.

As the Cyclones' defensive coordinator with Bullington for the past 25 years, and as someone who played under Miller's tutelage in high school, he knows the school, the program and the players well enough to keep the momentum strong for a program that has won nine state titles since 1999.

Burkart said Southeast will have "some new wrinkles, certainly, but you're not going to see drastic changes."

Burkart also retains a team just on the cusp of another breakthrough. In last year's 7-3 season, the Cyclones lost three games by a combined five points

– two-point losses to Lusk and in the semifinals to Wind River and a one-point loss to Lingle.

"I think it's motivated the kids," Burkart said. "We've had some great turnouts in the weight

room already, speed and agility workouts."

Southeast retained a pair of all-state selections in senior Ayden Desmond and junior T.J. Moats, as well as all-conference choice senior Emmett Coxbill.

Desmond is a dual-threat quarterback who led the Cyclones in both passing and rushing last season. He completed 83 of 152 passes for 1,097 yards and 13 touchdowns last season and also ran 109 times for 714 yards and 17 more touchdowns.

Moats added 54 carries for 285 yards and five touchdowns, finishing third on the team in rushing yards. Junior Chase Sauer added 43 carries for 160 yards.

The Cyclones graduated their top two receivers but retain

Moats (21 catches, 241 yards, two TDs) and Sauer (11 catches, 123 yards, two touchdowns) from last year's receiving corps.

Coxbill returns to the line, while senior linemen Sebastian Brumley and Alex DeMarce and junior Liam Haas will also be counted on for interior play. Seniors Ayden Shimic and Kannon Tippets and junior Beau Shimic will add depth at wideout.

Defensively, the Cyclones retain two leaders in Moats and Desmond. Desmond led the Cyclones with five interceptions and seven pass deflections and finished third on the team with 70 tackles. Moats, meanwhile, had 67 tackles, including 21 for loss and 10 sacks, and three fumble recoveries.

Sauer added 45 tackles, Coxbill had 39 including three sacks, and senior William Knowlton added 34.

Southeast's defense brings back five of its top 10 tacklers from last season and seven players who started last season. In all, Southeast will rely on seven seniors and four juniors with starting experience.

Traditionally, Burkart said,



Mascot: Cyclones
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Blue and White

Coach: Shawn Burkart, first year at Southeast
2023 Record: 7-3, lost to Wind River 32-30 in state semifinals

Key Players

QB/S: Ayden Desmond, Sr.
TE/DE: T.J. Moats, Jr.
WR/DB: Ayden Shimic, Sr.
OL/DL: Emmett Coxbill, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Pine Bluffs Jamboree, 4 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-6: vs. Big Piney, 1 p.m.
 *9-13: vs. Wright, 6 p.m.
 9-21: at Wind River, 1 p.m.
 *9-27: at Lusk, 6 p.m.
 *10-4: vs. Guernsey-Sunrise, 7 p.m.
 *10-10: vs. Lingle, 7 p.m.
 *10-18: at Saratoga, 6 p.m.
 *10-25: at Pine Bluffs, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

"every time you have a great senior class that's played a lot of years, (good) things happen that fall."

Panthers Look to Keep Momentum

Normally, when a team wins its final three games, it earns a state championship.

Wright won its final three games of 2023, and although the Panthers didn't finish the year with a trophy – or even a playoff berth – coach Larry Yeradi saw a huge change in his team once

they had a bit of success. "We were just a bunch of 'me's at the beginning," Yeradi said, but

seven touchdowns. Thomson, meanwhile, is the only returning starter on the offensive line.

"We were just a bunch of 'me's at the beginning, but with the help of assistants Tim Albin and Chris Ingersoll, we were a bunch of 'we's at the end."

~Coach Larry Yeradi



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with the help of assistants Tim Albin and Chris Ingersoll, "we were a bunch of 'we's at the end."

With that shift, Yeradi said, "we were as good a team as anybody by the end of the year, in my eyes. ... If they can come in (to the season) with that mentality, we're going to be pretty good this year."

Even in finishing 3-5, the Panthers outscored their opponents 201-124. Wright lost all four of its one-possession games in 2023. All of those came in the first five weeks of the season.

This year, Yeradi said, success depends on preserving the positive momentum from building the team-first mentality at the end of last year and "how fast we can gel again, get that climate and culture going again. The sky's the limit for these guys, but it's going to boil down to that."

Wright retained two all-conference players in seniors Owen Thomson and Bridgder Worman.

Worman led the Panthers' rushing game with 73 carries for 445 yards and

"Of the six seniors we graduated... five were on the offensive line," Yeradi said. "So that's going to be a big question mark."

Yeradi said junior Travor Knight and senior Trenten Nordheim will help fill those spots.

Outside the line, the Panthers return experienced players. Junior quarterback Mitchell Strohschein completed 54 passes for 920 yards and seven touchdowns, and three of Wright's top five receivers return with him.

Senior Tobey Swinyer is the top returning pass-catcher; he was second on the team last year with 12 catches for 254 yards and tied for the team lead with two receiving touchdowns.



Mascot: Panthers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: East
Colors: Black and Gold

Coach: Larry Yeradi, 29th year at Wright
2023 Record: 3-5, did not qualify for playoffs

Senior Jaxson Neely added 12 catches for 142 yards and two TDs, while Worman added three catches for 95 yards and two scores.

Defensively, Wright graduated four of its top six players in defensive points. However, Thomson finished with a team-high 38 tackles and was second in defensive points last season. He also had five tackles for loss.

Neely finished third in defensive points, adding 23 tackles to four interceptions and three pass deflections.

Swinyer and junior Jackson Robb had 16 tackles apiece, Worman added 15 tackles and an interception, Nordheim had 15 tackles and senior Layne Strohschein had 10 tackles.

Key Players
QB/LB: Mitchell Strohschein, Jr.
RB/DB/P: Bridgder Worman, Sr.
WR/DB: Jaxson Neely, Sr.
OL/DL: Owen Thomson, Sr.

2024 Schedule
8-30: at Shoshoni, 3 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-6: vs. Greybull, 6 p.m.
*9-13: at Southeast, 6 p.m.
*9-20: vs. Pine Bluffs, 6 p.m.
*9-27: vs. Lingle, 6 p.m.
*10-4: at Saratoga, 1 p.m.
*10-11: at Guernsey-Sunrise, 6 p.m.
10-18: at Wyoming Indian, 3 p.m.
*10-25: vs. Lusk, 6 p.m.
* Conference game



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PINE BLUFFS HORNETS

2024 Schedule
8-30: Pine Bluffs Jamboree, 4 p.m. (Zero Week)
9-6: at Shoshoni, 4 p.m.
*9-13: at Guernsey-Sunrise, 7 p.m.
*9-20: at Wright, 6 p.m.
9-26: vs. Cheyenne South JV, 7 p.m.
*10-4: vs. Lusk, 6 p.m.
*10-11: vs. Saratoga, 6 p.m.
*10-18: at Lingle, 7 p.m.
*10-25: vs. Southeast, 6 p.m.
* Conference game

PINE BLUFFS CONTINUED - touchdowns.

Senior Travis Lerwick added 11 catches for 128 yards, while senior Coalton Bymer had eight catches for 121 yards.

The line lacks experience, Gray said, but Bomberger will lead the charge, seniors Luis Martinez and Grady Buckendorf will be contributors and Jessen could move to the line to add depth.

"We've got to put the puzzle together with some position changes and looking for growth from last year's group of young

kids," Gray said. "... We have confidence that we can find the right mix of guys to give us a chance in October and November."

On defense, the Hornets return their top five tacklers in Shmidl, Jessen, Bomberger, Freeburg and Mohren, and nine of their top 11 overall. Six starters return.

Shmidl led the Hornets in defensive points, notching 88 tackles, seven tackles for loss, four sacks and four pass deflections. Jessen's 94 tackles led the team.

Freeburg added 54 tackles and two interceptions, Bomberger

had 51 tackles and blocked two kicks and Mohren had 50 tackles, including five for loss.

Justin Lerwick had a team-high six interceptions and also had 27 tackles, while Travis Lerwick had 25 tackles, sophomore Cade Fornstrom added 17 and Bymer had 16.

Even with the experience, Gray said he knows the Hornets still have room to improve.

"We need to be better at blocking and tackling," he said. "We forgot how to do those things down the stretch last fall."



Mascot: Punchers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Red and White

Coach: Jeromy Moffat,
 third year at Big Piney
2023 Record: 10-1, beat
 Wind River 39-14 in state
 championship

Key Players

RB/LB: Caden Clifford, Sr.
OL/DL: Zef Zuniga, Jr.
WR/LB: Ben Ferguson, Sr.
WR/LB: Gerardo Galvan, Soph.

Defending Champs Have Some Voids

Big Piney's state championship run last season was keyed by a large, invested and talented senior class.

Now, the Punchers are looking to make sure the momentum a state championship can bring doesn't disappear with graduation.

"The thing that I really tried to emphasize with the kids coming back this year is to have us not be a one-hit wonder," coach Jeromy Moffat said. "... We learned a lot about what it takes to be a state champion, just mental toughness, mental preparation and making plays in big games. ... We're carrying those lessons over to this year's team."

This year's team will be much

younger, as Moffat said he only expected about three or four seniors and only one or two juniors to come out this fall.

Key among those is senior all-state selection Caden Clifford, who led the Punchers with 125 carries for 1,286 yards and 17 touchdowns last season. He is also Big Piney's top returning tackler; he was seventh on the team last season in defensive points and fifth in total tackles with 46, including five for loss.

"He's so knowledgeable about the game of football and he loves the game of football," Moffat said. "He's like a coach on the field, and I think that's going to be one of his biggest responsibilities."

"He's also just one of those kids that can break it any play. We can give it to him on a dive and he can go 90 yards."

Moffat also said junior lineman

Zef Zuniga has stepped into a leadership role this offseason to fill the void left by last year's graduating class, as well as a core group of about a half-dozen sophomores who saw what it took to win a state championship as freshmen.

"So much of what we do with our football team is on-field mental awareness as far as recognition... and I think that's the biggest thing they're trying to get in," Moffat said. "Physically, they're fine. Mentally is really where we want to gain our edge."

The Punchers graduated eight of the 10 players who finished with double-digit tackles last year.

Sophomore Zach Ferguson, who had 28 total tackles to go with a fumble recovery and interception, is the only other returner who saw significant time on defense.

Ferguson also saw limited time at quarterback, completing seven of 13 passes for 151 yards and two touchdowns.

Sophomore Gerardo Galvan had three catches for 103 yards and one touchdown last year and is the top returning receiver. Galvan and Clifford are the only returning players who had more than one catch last year.

Senior wide receiver/linebacker Ben Ferguson and sophomore back Zavier Clifford will also contribute.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Pinedale, 7 p.m.

(Zero Week)

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

*9-14: at Wyoming Indian, 2 p.m.

9-21: vs. Evanston JV, 1 p.m.

*9-27: vs. Rocky Mountain, 1 p.m.

*10-5: at Greybull, 1 p.m.

*10-12: vs. Wind River, 1 p.m.

10-18: at Rich County, Utah, 1 p.m.

*10-26: vs. Shoshoni, 1 p.m.

* Conference game



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Buffaloes are Veteran Group

Few teams in Class 1A nine-man will be as experienced as the Greybull Buffaloes this fall.

With three consecutive seasons without a playoff berth behind them, coach Jeremy Pouska said this year's squad has the potential to do big things this fall.

Pouska said summer camps helped show how the experience will pay off.

"With our returning players, it was like we picked up right where we left off at the end of the season last year," he said.

In all, Pouska said he expects about 44 players out, including six seniors.

The Buffaloes return three all-conference selections in seniors Lucas Bolzer and Wyatt Didrickson and junior Caiden Sorenson. Overall, Greybull returns seven defensive starters and six offensive starters.

Bolzer, Greybull's only all-state choice last year, led the running game with 95 carries for 446 yards and four touchdowns. Didrickson was second with 43 carries for 311 yards and two scores.

With a stacked backfield and a developing line, Pouska said the running game should be one of

Greybull's strengths.

"These two run hard and downhill," Pouska said. "Each are another year older, faster and stronger. They both had a great camp this summer."

The line is still young – mostly juniors, Pouska said – but have also had good summers.

Pouska said junior C.J. Fink will contribute on the offensive and defensive lines.

"They all are committing themselves to lifting out

of season and working on footwork," Pouska said. "They will be a huge part of our success this year. Our main goal is to control the line of scrimmage, and each of these guys on the line has the same goal in mind."

Junior quarterback Caden Hunt also comes back; he completed 39 of 73 passes for 480 yards and seven touchdowns.

The Buffs graduated their top

CONTINUED PAGE 42-



Mascot: Buffaloes
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Blue and Yellow

Coach: Jeremy Pouska, fourth year at Greybull
2023 Record: 3-4, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

RB/LB: Lucas Bolzer, Sr.
RB/DE: Wyatt Didrickson, Sr.
FB/LB: Caiden Sorenson, Jr.
QB/S: Caden Hunt, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-31: Greybull Jamboree, 10 a.m. (Zero Week)
9-6: at Wright, 6 p.m.
9-14: vs. Powell JV, 11 a.m.
9-19: vs. Rocky Mountain, 6 p.m. (Non-Conference)
*9-27: at Shoshoni, 7 p.m.
*10-5: vs. Big Piney, 1 p.m.
*10-11: at Rocky Mountain, 7 p.m.
*10-19: vs. Wind River, 2 p.m.
*10-26: at Wyoming Indian, 2 p.m.
* Conference game

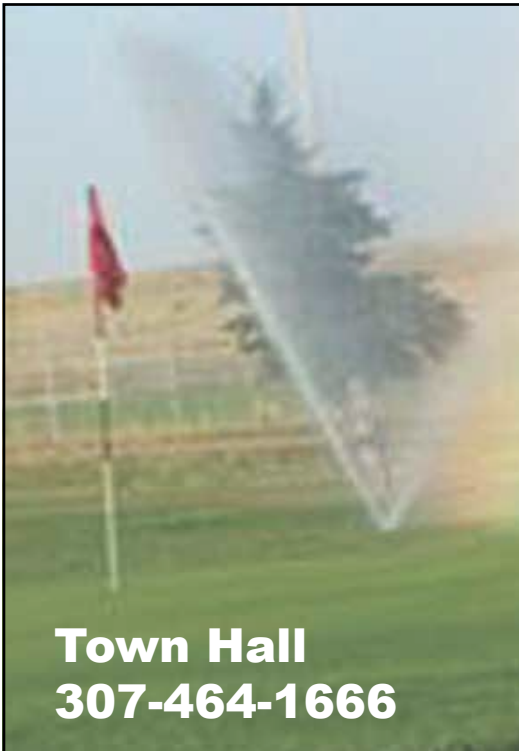


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Mascot: Grizzlies
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Brown and Yellow

Coach: Jessee Wilson, 2nd year at Rocky Mountain
2023 Record: 4-5, lost to Lingle 21-14 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

WR/S: Tucker Jackson, Sr.
OG/DL: Hayden Wambeke, Sr.
HB/MLB: Triffen Jolley, Jr.
OG/DL: Tayt Beall, Jr.

2024 Schedule

9-6: vs. Lusk, 1 p.m.
 9-13: Open
 9-19: at Greybull, 6 p.m. (Nonconference)
 *9-27: at Big Piney, 1 p.m.
 *10-4: vs. Wyoming Indian, 6 p.m.
 *10-11: vs. Greybull, 7 p.m.
 *10-18: at Shoshoni, 6 p.m.
 *10-24: at Wind River, 6 p.m.
 * Conference game

Grizz Have Strong Foundation

For second-year Rocky Mountain coach Jessee Wilson, the 2024 season will be about growth.

Players are physically growing bigger, stronger and faster than they were last year, and they're mentally growing into a system that will allow for more flexibility than last season.

"I think it was really important last year to build that foundation of knowledge for our kids, and now we can open things up a bit more, which I'm really looking forward to," Wilson said. "... They're older and bigger and stronger, so we can be a little bit more creative because we have kids that are capable of doing some of those things."

And how – Rocky Mountain, 4-5 last season, returns five all-conference players, most in the Class 1A nine-man West Conference. They include seniors Lafe Files, Tucker Jackson and Hayden Wambeke and juniors Tayt Beall and Triffen Jolley.

Jackson is the lone returning

all-state pick. He led the Grizzlies with 23 catches for 452 yards and three touchdowns. On defense, Jackson topped the team with six interceptions, including three defensive touchdowns, and was fourth for Rocky with 41 total tackles.

"It's nice to kind of have a cheat code on your team like that," Wilson said.

Under center, Files completed 80 of 170 passes for 989 yards and nine touchdowns. He also ran 68 times for 251 yards and six touchdowns, and is the only Grizzly returner who broke the triple-digit rushing yardage mark last year.

However, Wilson said he wanted to take advantage of his experienced linemen, including Wambeke and Beall, and rely more on the running game this season.

"We're big, tough and physical (up front)," he said.

Junior Clayton Thompson added 10 catches for 119 yards and one touchdown. Aside from Jackson,

no other returner had more than 26 receiving yards.

On the other side of the ball, Jolley and Thompson were by far the Grizzlies' top two tacklers last season. Jolley led the team with 84 tackles, including 54 solo, 16 for loss and five sacks. He also led Rocky with three fumble recoveries.

Thompson added 74 tackles, with 12 for loss, and four sacks.

Total, Rocky Mountain retained eight of the 10 players who had at least 20 tackles last season. Senior Matthew Crosby had 27 tackles, Wambeke had 25, Beall had 23 and senior Hudson May, who is returning from an arm injury that limited his action last season, added 20.

Wilson also said the competitive fire on the practice field is helping spur growth.

"We're building a little bit of depth there," he said. "We've got probably another eight sophomores and we've got another really big freshman class of 12 or 13 kids that are ready to play."

1A 9-MAN WEST

SHOSHONI WRANGLERS

Wranglers Want to Renew Winning Ways

The most deceiving winless team in Wyoming last year may have been Shoshoni.

Despite finishing 0-8 last year – just one year removed from back-to-back state title game appearances and a Class 1A nine-man championship in 2021 – the Wranglers held their own against every opponent they faced.

"We were definitely competitive," coach Tony Truempler said. "We were definitely not overpowered by anybody."

This year's team will be just as competitive, and Truempler said he hopes to see that extra experience pay off for Shoshoni this fall.

"I think for a little bit last year, they just thought it was going to come easy to them," Truempler said. "I think we had to eat a little bit of humble pie. And it's not that they don't work hard, because we do, but we ran into a lot of schools that still had seniors, and we didn't."

Shoshoni graduated just two seniors and returns its top

four rushers, its quarterback, all its receivers and its top seven tacklers this year. The Wranglers return both of their all-conference picks in senior Quinton Clark, who was also named to the all-state team, and junior Carson Kisling.

Kisling fronted the running game with 414 yards on 129 carries; he also had 17 catches for 171 yards and three touchdowns.

Clark led Shoshoni's receivers with 22 catches for 323 yards, notching a pair of touchdowns.

Senior Wiley Philleo added 182 rushing yards and 159 receiving yards, while junior Oakley Hicks – who will join the team late after offseason shoulder surgery – added 10 catches for 105 yards.

Senior quarterback Braxton Mills threw for 741 yards and six touchdowns. However, Truempler said the Wranglers could use as many as three quarterbacks in rotation.

Similarly, the Wranglers' playbook might diversify to take advantage of athletes in open areas.

"With nine-man, sometimes you have to get a little creative in how you use space," Truempler said.

"I think the age and experience will pay off."

~Coach Tony Truempler

Defensively, Kisling led the Wranglers by far with 90 total tackles, including 59 assists and 31 solo.

Philleo added 63 tackles, Clark had 54 and Mills had 40. Senior Landon Kasper and junior Carlos Marrufo had 37 tackles apiece, including two sacks apiece, while Kasper led the team with two fumble recoveries.

Junior Kaden Bridger also contributed significantly on defense with 27 total tackles.

Size up front is a going concern, Truempler said, but he also noted that this year's group has put in the effort to have success. He said senior Bo Fowler will be influential on the line.

"I think the age and experience will pay off," he said. "They've all tasted what it's like to play in Laramie, so they have that to build on. They know what it takes to get there."



Mascot: Wranglers
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Blue and Yellow

Coach: Tony Truempler, 12th year at Shoshoni
2023 Record: 0-8, did not qualify for playoffs

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Wright, 3 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-6: vs. Pine Bluffs, 4 p.m.
 9-12: at Cheyenne East sophs, 4 p.m.
 9-19: at Natrona sophs, 4 p.m.
 *9-27: vs. Greybull, 2 p.m.
 *10-4: at Wind River, 6 p.m.
 10-10: vs. Cody sophs, 5 p.m.
 *10-18: vs. Rocky Mountain, 6 p.m.
 *10-26: at Big Piney, 1 p.m.
 * Conference game



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Cougars Could Contend Again

Wind River coach Rod Frederick won't call 2024 a rebuilding year.

After all, the Cougars return about five seniors who have been with the program for three years. The returners showed their mettle last fall, when Wind River went 8-2, won the 1A nine-man West Conference and finished as state runners-up.

Frederick also said returning players were good about both attending camps and weight room sessions this summer.

And they're not newbies. "One of the things that I really stressed last year, (especially) in the games we were up big in, we wanted to get our JV kids in," Frederick said. "... They got to see varsity action. They weren't starting the game, but at least they got to see the speed and see what it's like."

Even so, the Cougars graduated six of their top nine rushers (and lost another to transfer), every player who completed a pass, all but one player who caught a pass and all but one player who had double-

digit tackles.

Senior Brayden Tatro was the only one of seven all-state and eight all-conference selections not lost to graduation. Tatro was second for the Cougars with 322 rushing yards last season, racking up four touchdowns. He also was third on the team with 182 receiving yards, scoring twice on nine catches. He's the only returner to catch a pass last season.

Defensively, Tatro was third in defensive points and tied for fourth in tackles with 42. He notched four tackles for loss, two sacks, two interceptions and three pass deflections.

Frederick said Tatro, by default, will be one of the Cougars' leaders.

"I'm hoping that this year he steps it up and can take that role on, because he's going to be one of our main weapons either at a running back or a quarterback spot," he said.

Junior center Troy Tidzump is the only other returning starter.

Senior Jacob Hardcastle chipped in eight carries for 75

yards; no other returner had more than 3 yards rushing.

Defensively, the Cougars graduated eight of their top nine tacklers from 2023. Senior Mato Amos, who had nine tackles last season, is second behind Tatro in tackles among the Cougars' returners.

Who will start under center is still a question, but Frederick said Tatro, Amos and senior Remyngton Martinez were all up for the position.

Junior linemen Isaiah Remacle and Holden Yeates will be counted on to fill in up front on both the offensive and defensive lines. Junior Ben Snyder will also contribute from an end's spot on offense and either a defensive end or linebacker on defense.

"They're a little bit smaller, but we're hoping that we get some quickness out of them," Frederick said.



Mascot: Cougars
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Purple and Black

Coach: Rod Frederick, third year at Wind River
2023 Record: 8-2, lost to Big Piney 39-14 in state championship

Key Players
QB/RB/LB: Brayden Tatro, Sr.
RB/DB: Mato Amos, Sr.
WR/DB: Jacob Hardcastle, Sr.
C/DL: Troy Tidzump, Jr.

2024 Schedule
8-31: at Greybull Jamboree, 10 a.m. (Zero Week)
9-6: at Lingle, 6 p.m.
9-13: vs. Saratoga, 6 p.m.
9-21: vs. Southeast, 1 p.m.
*9-26: at Wyoming Indian, 5 p.m.
*10-4: vs. Shoshoni, 6 p.m.
*10-12: at Big Piney, 1 p.m.
*10-19: at Greybull, noon
*10-24: vs. Rocky Mountain, 6 p.m.
* Conference game



Mascot: Eagles
Division: None
Colors: Red and Black

Coach: Matt House, second year at St. Stephens
2023 Record: Did not field a team

Key Players
QB/HB: Tristan Monroe, Jr.
WR: Ethan Fighting Bear, Sr.
OL: Tyson Whiteplume, Jr.
WR: Daniel Black, Sr.

2024 Schedule
9-13: vs. Farson, 1 p.m.
9-20: vs. Casper Christian, 3:30 p.m.
10-19: vs. Ten Sleep, 2 p.m.
10-26: vs. Hanna, 11 a.m.

Games may be added throughout the season.

ST. STEPHENS EAGLES

Eagles Looking For Some Stability

Without question, the team that enters the 2024 season with the most question marks is the St. Stephens Eagles.

The football program has been in a tumble for several years, often due to circumstances beyond the control of players and coaches.

"I can tell you that our players want to play football and football has not been looked at as a priority sport..."

~Coach Matt House

In the four seasons since 2019, the Eagles have only played eight games – five in 2021, three in 2022 – and went 1-7 in those games.

The Eagles did not play last season; that came on the heels of canceling their final five games of the 2022 season. The Eagles also did not field a team in 2020 due to COVID-19 precautions.

This season, St. Stephens will not be competing for a playoff

spot, playing a patchwork schedule of six-man and nine-man games. A full schedule has not yet been set. Despite the setbacks, coach Matt House said one undeniable fact has become apparent to him in his time working with his players.

"I can tell you that our players want to play football," House said, "and football has not been looked at as a priority sport here at St. Stephens."

House said the Eagles, who are technically classified as a Class 1A nine-man school by enrollment, will mostly play a six-man schedule both this year and next year.

"The numbers were not there with the schedule that was put in front of us," he said. "We had to cancel most games because of eligibility and numbers of participants."

"I envision a little bit easier time for eligibility and numbers because we were moved down a level in WHSAA. (Six-man) football should be easier to field a team."

House said he's not sure what the Eagles will do after that, especially if St. Stephens is again

classified in nine-man.

"Moving forward, football may always struggle for numbers, and we will try to do the best we can for those who participate," he said.

House said he will have about a dozen players out, including senior wide receivers Ethan Fighting Bear and Daniel Black. Junior Tristan Monroe will be a key player in the backfield, either at quarterback or at halfback, and junior Tyson Whiteplume will help on the line.

Of the group, Black was the only one who showed up on the stat sheets from the last time the Eagles played organized football in the first half of 2022.

Reico Shakespeare (senior) and Mooney Blackburn (junior) are other upperclassmen who will contribute, House said, as well as sophomore Clifton Monroe. House also said he is expecting a trio of freshmen to be a part of the team in Gabriel Torres, Ashton Monroe and Johnny Roberts.

And it's clear what they want to accomplish this season.

"They want to play," House said.



Mascot: Chiefs
Division: Class 1A nine-man
Conference: West
Colors: Blue and Red

Coach: Nate Reinhardt,
 sixth year at Wyoming Indian
2023 Record: 0-7, ineligible
 for playoffs

Key Players

WR: Darian Augustine, Sr.
WR: Adriano Brown, Jr.
QB/TE: LaDainian Brown, Jr.
OL/DL: Ben Nieto, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-31: at Greybull Jamboree,
 10 a.m. (Zero Week)
 9-7: at Guernsey-Sunrise, 1 p.m.
 *9-14: vs. Big Piney, 2 p.m.
 9-19: at Thermopolis JV, 5 p.m.
 *9-26: vs. Wind River, 5 p.m.
 *10-4: at Rocky Mountain, 6 p.m.
 10-11: at Shoshoni JV, 6 p.m.
 10-18: vs. Wright, 3 p.m.
 *10-26: vs. Greybull, 2 p.m.
 * Conference game

Chiefs Could Be Looking Better

If there's any program in need of a fresh perspective, it's Wyoming Indian.

This year, thanks to a motivated group of players and parents, the Chiefs are in position to shake off several years of disappointment.

Coach Nate Reinhardt said this year's team, led by its seniors and juniors, has put in the work to improve in the offseason, something previous groups have struggled to do.

"They want to do more than just show up in August and play," Reinhardt said. "I have some that want to win. They're starting to correlate that they've got to do something in the offseason, and hopefully that's going to carry over to our younger ones."

The Chiefs finished 0-7 last season, failing to score more than eight points in any game while being outscored 427-42.

For a program with just one playoff berth in program history (1996), Reinhardt said a big part of the Chiefs' offseason motivation has been playoff eligibility. Wyoming Indian is playoff eligible this year after being ineligible the past two.

Reinhardt said, in particular, the junior class has latched on to the possibility of breaking that postseason streak.

"Maybe not this year, but something for their senior year to be building to, is the playoffs," he said. "And they're just so tired of getting their butts kicked."

Reinhardt said year's team will have some athletic players with lots of versatility.

Senior Bradlyn Little Yellowman and junior LaDainian Brown could both take snaps, although Brown also has the ability to play tight end. Senior Darian Augustine and junior Adriano Brown are the most likely pass-catchers.

Junior Ben Nieto will lead the returners on the line, and senior Seth Spoonhunter is a versatile "tweener" that can play most anywhere but will contribute specifically as a linebacker on the defensive side of the ball.

Wyoming Indian did not compile individual statistics last season.

"We looked really good in the seven-on-seven (camp)," Reinhardt said. "The problem will be if we can block for them to do anything."

The mentality shift for Wyoming Indian has come in part from family support. Reinhardt said the ability for the Chiefs to go to camps at Black Hills State and Thermopolis this summer was in large part due to fundraising that families did.

"I've had very active parents and grandparents help me with making sure we get to do fun stuff like that," Reinhardt said. "... It's really good to just see overall family (and) community support for those kids for something that normally (isn't)."

In the process, Reinhardt said his team has drawn numerous compliments from opposing teams at camps, which drove the Chiefs to continue competing.

"They're wanting to change things around," he said.

"Maybe not this year, but something for their senior year to be building to, is the playoffs."

~Coach Nate Reinhardt

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GREYBULL CONTINUED-

three receivers in terms of yards, but Bolzer led the team in catches (12) and had 89 receiving yards last year, tops among returners.

The defense also has several key players back. Of the 10 players who had double-digit tackles last season, six return, including the Buffs' top three.

Didrickson, Sorenson and Bolzer finished 1-2-3 for Greybull last season in both defensive points and tackles. Didrickson led the squad with 54 tackles, including six for loss, and tied for the team lead with two sacks.

Sorenson added 40 tackles and five for loss while forcing a team-high three fumbles, while Bolzer had 38 tackles.

"We're very fortunate to have those guys come back for another year," Pouska said.

Sophomore Larry Longshore contributed 17 tackles and led the team with two fumble recoveries and four pass deflections.

Senior Steele Davis had 22 tackles and Hunt added 20.

Pouska said the defensive backfield will still be young.

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1A/6-man Preview



Burlington is Class of 6-Man Ranks

By Patrick Schmiedt

Four Questions to Answer

Will it be Burlington's title to lose? Yes. The Huskies return four all-state players. Snake River returns two; Riverside, a six-man newcomer, has one. Everyone else, combined, has none. Logic dictates that Burlington's talent surpasses the rest of the classification. But several contenders are lurking.

Like who? Like almost, everyone, but most specifically Snake River. For now, the tiers in six-man are clear -- Burlington and Snake River, then everyone else. That said, several teams have strong senior groups, including Encampment, Casper Christian, Kaycee and Midwest.

You mentioned Riverside? Yeah, watch out for the Rebels. Moving from a playoff berth in Class 1A nine-man to six-man, playoff-eligible, with a strong and sizable group of seniors will make Riverside an automatic contender.

Anything new we should be on the lookout for? How about some new coaches? Both Dubois and Ten Sleep will have new leadership this fall, with former assistant coaches Dan O'Brien taking over the Rams and Corey Rice leading the way for the Pioneers.

Four Key Games

Burlington at Snake River, Sept 7. Neither the Huskies nor the Rattlers expected a state title rematch to come so soon in the season, but here we are. It's a good litmus test for both teams.

Encampment at Casper Christian, Sept. 28. Both the Tigers and Mountaineers have high hopes this season -- Encampment thanks to a deep playoff run last year, Casper Christian thanks to more experience at six-man and nearly a roster full of returners.

Riverside at Burlington, Oct. 18. The Rebels are the big wild card in six-man this year. But if they can't beat their regional rivals, then they'll have to take the long way if they have any hopes of reaching Laramie.

Snake River at Encampment, Oct. 26. In a year with a lot of turnover, this game between the Carbon County rivals is still a critical piece of the state title puzzle.

Predicted Order of Finish

North Conference: Burlington, Riverside, Kaycee, Meeteetse, Midwest, Hulett, Ten Sleep.

South Conference: Snake River, Encampment, Casper Christian, Dubois, Farson, Hanna.

Preseason top five: 1. Burlington; 2. Snake River; 3. Riverside; 4. Encampment; 5. Casper Christian.

Way-too-early Title Game Score Prediction

Burlington 52, Snake River 44. Colliding dynasties is interesting. And what's weird about these two is they both have the potential to be even better teams this year than they were last year.



State Champs
Burlington
Huskies

2023 State Playoffs

1A/6-Man Championship

Burlington 42, Snake River 39

Semifinals

Burlington 80, Encampment 73
Snake River 47, Dubois 22

Quarterfinals

Burlington 64, Farson 20
Encampment 60, Meeteetse 20
Snake River 74, Hulett 20
Dubois 59, Kaycee 32

Players to Watch

Joe Bassett, Burlington.

The Huskies' leading tackler last season plays with physicality and anticipation -- a good combination on defense. His offensive playmaking ability will be more in demand for the defending champs.

Bridger Cozzens, Snake River.

He ran for 1,513 yards (11.5 yards per carry) and led the Rattler defense with 125 tackles and five interceptions. He'll be the target of opposing game plans all season.

Curtis Strohschein, Riverside.

An all-stater at Class 1A nine-man last season, Strohschein was a defensive terror last season. His offensive production will be interesting to watch in six-man, though.

Weston Gotfredson, Burlington.

He was everywhere on defense, notching both tackles and turnovers, and was also Burlington's top yardage receiver and deep threat in the passing game with 500 yards even.

Gage Palmer, Midwest.

Midwest's only returning all-conference player, last year, he led Midwest in tackles on defense; on offense, he ran, passed and caught the ball with equal effectiveness.

Jaciel Giron, Snake River. The senior is back with the Rattlers after missing last year, but in his freshman year -- fourth on an undefeated Rattler team with 48 tackles -- he gave us a peek of what he could do.



Mascot: Huskies
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: North
Colors: Black and Orange

Coach: Trent Aagard, ninth year at Burlington
2023 Record: 10-1, beat Snake River 42-39 in state championship

Key Players

RB/LB: Joe Bassett, Sr.
OL/DL: Weston Goffredson, Sr.
WR/DB: Jordon Casey, Sr.
QB/DL: Rykael Andrew, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Farson Jamboree, 11 a.m. (Zero Week)
 9-7: at Snake River, 2 p.m.
 *9-13: vs. Kaycee, 2 p.m.
 *9-21: at Ten Sleep, 2 p.m.
 *9-28: at Hulett, 3 p.m.
 *10-4: vs. Meeteetse, 2 p.m.
 10-11: Open
 *10-18: vs. Riverside, 2 p.m.
 *10-25: at Midwest, 1 p.m.
 * Conference game

Huskies Loaded to Defend Crown

"After chasing a championship for so long, I'm not sure how to approach a season without trying to catch up to another team."

~Coach Trent Aagard

After winning their first state championship since 1994, the Burlington Huskies are looking for a new challenge.

"After chasing a championship for so long, I'm not sure I know how to approach a season without trying to catch up with another team," said coach Trent Aagard, whose team won its first Class 1A six-man title and its third title in school history while finishing 10-1 last season. "So my hope is we come out with the same desire to improve and get better this year."

Burlington has a great place to start – a huge, talented senior class.

Burlington returns four all-state players, more than the rest of Class 1A six-man combined (which has three), in seniors Rykael Andrew, Joe Bassett, Jordan Casey and Weston

Goffredson.

In addition, seniors Jordan Broederlow and Kyler Winters were all-conference choices.

Total, Aagard said he expects

nine seniors to lead the repeat attempt, and "all of them were contri-

butors last year. We should also have good depth on the team this year."

In all, the Huskies return their top three receivers and several other contributors on offense in addition to five of their top six tacklers on defense.

Bassett led Burlington's defense with 135 tackles, including 84 solo and 13 for a loss.

Goffredson finished third on the team with 48 tackles and also had four fumble recoveries and three interceptions.

Broederlow contributed 42 tackles, three interceptions and five pass deflections. Winters had 39 tackles, four tackles for loss, four pass breakups and three fumble recoveries. Andrew added 37 tackles, with three for a loss.

On offense, Bassett was Burlington's No. 2 rusher last year, carrying 88 times for 528 yards and 13 touchdowns. Casey contributed 24 carries for 233 yards and five touchdowns, while Broederlow had 26

carries for 230 yards and three touchdowns.

Bassett and Andrew also threw the ball, with Bassett finishing second on the team with 324 passing yards and five touchdowns on 16-of-23 passing, while Andrew finished 18 of 38 for 286 yards and three scores.

Goffredson was Burlington's top receiver in yards (500) and tied for the team lead with seven receiving touchdowns, while Bassett had 387 yards and six touchdowns on a team-high 25 catches. Casey added 15 catches for 370 yards and seven scores.

While the Huskies' senior class will lead the way, Aagard he expects only one junior, "so it will be a challenge to bridge that gap and maybe see which of our underclassmen are prepared to contribute."

"I think we might have some kids wanting to participate and work hard so they can be part of the team," he added. "Overall, I think people have been excited about football in Burlington as they ever have."

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1A 6-MAN NORTH

HULETT RED DEVILS

Red Devils Need Boost on Defense

The Hulett Red Devils had a huge conundrum last season.

Their offense could score pretty much at will.

Their defense, though, made opposing offenses feel the same way.

The result? Hulett played in a bunch of high-scoring games but finished 2-7. The Red Devils' average of 44.4 points per game ranked sixth in Class 1A six-man, and the five teams who finished above Hulett all had winning records.

For coach Boz Backen, the challenge this year will be to keep the fun and excitement of the offense going while shoring up the defense.

"Offensively last year I felt we had the best in Hulett in the past few years," he said. "Kids really

bought in and made it really fun last year."

The defense, though, didn't hold up its end. Backen said one of two things happened – either the schemes developed during the week didn't translate to games, or Hulett's lack of depth would come up late in games, and the Red Devils would be in the right spots but sputter late in games.

Backen said at a team meeting this spring, "the guys stressed about becoming a better defense next year and buying into our schemes. Next year we are going to try some new things and get our guys into better positions to make plays and help win more games."

Junior Kyle Smith is the only one of Hulett's three all-

conference players to come back this fall. Backen said Smith, along with fellow juniors Benjamin Harrison and Hudson Reilly, will be the strength of what will be a young team, with only two seniors anticipated on the roster of about 12-13 players.

Backen also noted that senior Justen Foster will also be a key piece of the equation this season.

"Their experience and leadership should help us move forward this year," Backen said. "They have been through two learning experience seasons and I feel they are ready to step up and help us win hopefully more games this year."

Smith will be under center again this year. Backen said his experience helps the offense



Mascot: Red Devils
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: North
Colors: Red and Black

Coach: Boz Backen, tenth year at Hulett

2023 Record: 2-7, lost to Snake River 74-20 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

QB/LB: Kyle Smith, Jr.
RB/LB: Benjamin Harrison, Jr.
RB/DB: Hudson Reilly, Jr.
C/WR/DE: Justen Foster, Sr.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 45-

Buckaroos Relying on Seniors

Almost half of Kaycee's 2024 football roster will be seniors.

So, yeah, the Buckaroos feel some urgency.

With five seniors leading the way for a roster of only about 11 or 12 total players, the Buckaroos will rely heavily on their 12th graders for leadership, intensity and athletic ability, coach Dave Largent said.

"I would look for that on-the-field leadership to really take over, and hopefully from that experience they have that sway with the underclassmen to bring that intensity game to game," Largent said. "... They're going to be the anchor this year."

Seniors Grady Alger and Taylor Cleveland were all-conference choices last season, while classmates Wyatt Ramsbottom and Cade Malson will also be key

to the Buckaroos' chances this season.

"Most of these guys have been playing varsity-level football for all four years," Largent said. "... They know how to work together, they know the program, they know what we expect, (and) they're willing to work hard."

Alger and Cleveland finished second and third, respectively, in rushing for Kaycee last season. Alger ran 100 times for 884 yards and 16 touchdowns, while Cleveland ran 41 times for 396 yards and seven touchdowns.

Largent said Alger will likely move to fullback this season, in part because he's a "hammer" who seeks contact.

"We need somebody that can do that and to demonstrate to the other kids, hey, you can go hit somebody and then get up and do it again," Largent said.

Malson completed 53 of 91 passes for 706 yards and nine touchdowns, and Cleveland added five touchdown passes on 16 completions for 195 yards. Sophomore Chris LeDoux added 10 completions for 132 yards and six scores.

Ramsbottom led the team with 22 catches and six receiving touchdowns last

year and was second on the team with 290 receiving yards; he did so despite missing time due to injury. Alger added 11 catches for 133 yards and Cleveland had nine catches for 102 yards.

Largent said that not everyone will fill the same role they did last year as Kaycee tries to adjust for losing its graduated seniors.

Junior Joe Curuchet also had nine catches, with three going for scores, and 92 total yards.

"We're going to have to move some guys around and figure out where everybody fits," Largent said.

Cleveland and Alger finished second and third, respectively, for Kaycee last year in tackles, with Cleveland notching 92 and Alger 75. Cleveland also led the team with six interceptions and 12 pass deflections.

"He has almost a sixth sense for defense and where the ball is going," Largent said.

Curuchet had 51 tackles, with 8.5 for loss, while Ramsbottom had 47, with 10 coming for loss.

Kaycee General Store
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Mascot: Buckaroos
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: North
Colors: Blue and Red

Coach: Dave Largent, sixth year at Kaycee
2023 Record: 6-4, lost to Dubois 59-32 in state quarterfinals

Key Players
E/DE: Wyatt Ramsbottom, Sr.
HB/LB: Grady Alger, Sr.
HB/CB: Taylor Cleveland, Sr.
QB: Cade Malson, Sr.

2024 Schedule
8-31: at Casper Christian, TBA (Zero Week)
9-6: at Farson, noon
*9-13: at Burlington, 2 p.m.
*9-20: vs. Midwest, 1 p.m.
*9-28: at Riverside, 7 p.m.
10-5: vs. Buffalo JV, noon
*10-11: vs. Meeteetse, 1 p.m.
*10-19: vs. Hulett, 2 p.m.
*10-26: at Ten Sleep, 2 p.m.
* Conference game

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2024 Schedule
8-30: Open (Zero Week)
9-7: vs. Hanna, 11 a.m. (at Midwest)
*9-14: vs. Riverside, 3 p.m.
*9-20: at Meeteetse, 7 p.m.
*9-28: vs. Burlington, 3 p.m.
*10-5: at Midwest, 5 p.m.
*10-12: vs. Ten Sleep, 2 p.m.
*10-19: at Kaycee, 2 p.m.
10-25: Open Week
* Conference game

HULETT CONTINUED-

build continuity and chemistry. "I felt he was more poised in the backfield and was confident in his guys to put the ball where it needed to be," Backen said. "(I'm) hoping that chemistry continues into next year and we can add a few more wrinkles to it to help it become more dynamic."

Backen said Smith and Harrison have also become weight room leaders, and Harrison's growth also drew attention.

"I am excited to see what he does this year," Backen said. "He is a hard worker and is working hard to be better this year."

Hulett did not compile individual statistics in 2023.



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Mascot: Longhorns
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: North
Colors: Red and White

Coach: Zeb Hagen,
 ninth year at Meeteetse
2023 Record: 4-5, lost to
 Encampment 60-20 in state
 quarterfinals

Key Players

TE/DB: Luukas Rhyti, Sr.
HB/LB: Jason Moody, Jr.
HB: Remington Harris, Soph.
QB/LB: Max Potas, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: Open (Zero Week)
 9-5: vs. Cody JV, 7 p.m.
 9-13: at Dubois, 2 p.m.
 *9-20: vs. Hulett, 7 p.m.
 *9-27: vs. Ten Sleep, 7 p.m.
 *10-4: at Burlington, 2 p.m.
 *10-12: at Kaycee, 1 p.m.
 *10-17: vs. Midwest, 7 p.m.
 *10-25: at Riverside, 2 p.m.
 * Conference game

Longhorns Young, But Experienced

This year's Meeteetse Longhorns are an exercise in contradiction.

On one hand, the Longhorns are young – of the 12 or 13 players expected out for Meeteetse this year, only one (but maybe two) are seniors.

On the other hand, the Longhorns already have a lot of varsity experience.

That contradiction is nothing new for Meeteetse, which consistently plays above its numbers and gets contributions from players across multiple grade levels.

This year's team will rely on lots of juniors, a deep class that includes the team's only two returning all-conference players as well as a host of other contributors who have gained that valuable varsity experience across the past two years.

Coach Zeb Hagen said that bunch will be the one he counts on for leadership in 2024.

"I'm hoping this group will continue to grow as a team and step into the leadership roles of the departing senior class of last year," Hagen said.

The Longhorns return a pair of all-conference selections in

"I'm hoping this group will continue to grow as a team and step into the leadership roles of the departing senior class of the last year."

~Coach Zeb Hagen

juniors Jacob Moody and Max Potas.

Moody led the team in carries with 97 last season and was second with 668 rushing yards and seven touchdowns.

Sophomore Remington Harris added 16 carries for 150 yards and three touchdowns, while Potas had 22 carries for 82 yards.

Potas has more experience at quarterback than any other returner; he was second on the team with 42 completions on 65 attempts (64.6% completion) for 362 yards and seven touchdowns. However, Potas is also Meeteetse's leading returning receiver in terms of yards, piling up 298 on 19 catches, including a team-high five receiving touchdowns.

"He is very versatile and can play multiple positions," Hagen said, "but hopefully he can step into more of a permanent (quarterback) role."

Moody led Meeteetse with 20 catches last year and was fourth

on the team with 124 receiving yards; he scored four receiving touchdowns.

Harris leads the defensive returners with 72 tackles last year, good for second on the team, and 8.5 tackles for loss. Potas was third on the team with 61 tackles, with five for loss, and led Meeteetse with four interceptions.

Moody added 34 tackles, junior Johnathan Ogden had 20 and junior Aiden Elliott had 17.

Both sides of the ball will benefit from the return of senior Luukas Rhyti, who missed a good chunk of the 2023 season with an injury. In a year with a thin senior class, Hagen said Rhyti's presence will be valuable.

"I think they will understand the game a lot better as a unit," Hagen said. "I think getting Rhyti back after missing almost all of last season due to injury will be a big boost as he brings great tackling and speed to our defense."

1A 6-MAN NORTH

MIDWEST OILERS

Oilers Face Some Challenges

Small in size and small in number is far from ideal conditions for a football team.

Somehow, some way, Midwest is going to try to make it work this season – they don't have much of a choice.

The Oilers only expect two or three seniors to dot their roster of about a dozen players. None of them are buffet busters, either.

"We're a little small, so it's kind of tough to tackle," coach Joe Campbell said. "We don't have any big men. ... I'm hoping some other kids step up."

What the Oilers lack in size, they make up for in athleticism and urgency, particularly from their two senior leaders, Gage Palmer and Quincy Paris.

"Physically, they're a couple more inches taller and a lot stronger than last year, for sure," Campbell said. "I think the mental side is coming to them, finally, about being a leader."

Paris is the team's top returning rusher and receiver. Paris led Midwest's receivers last year with 26 catches for

413 yards and six touchdowns. Meanwhile, he was second on the team in rushing yards with 366 last year, carrying 47 times for seven touchdowns.

Palmer, Midwest's only all-conference pick last season, split time at quarterback but also filled in all over the offensive spectrum. Palmer completed 30 passes for 408 yards and four touchdowns; he also ran 55 times for 269 yards and five touchdowns; he also had 11 catches for 137 yards and two touchdowns.

This season, Campbell said Palmer will take over at quarterback full-time in part thanks to his accuracy with his passes. Paris, the school record-holder in the high jump, also has the ability to high-point passes as a receiver.

The two also lead what the Oilers want to do on defense.

Palmer led Midwest's defense with 74 total tackles, including 44 solo and eight for loss. He also led Midwest with four interceptions and three blocked

kicks.

Paris was second with 45 total tackles and led the Oilers with eight pass break-ups.

In all, the defense returns its top three tacklers and five of its top six from 2023.

Sophomore Noah Dickerson was third with 30 tackles, senior Draco Del Rio had 19 and junior Travis Mosteller had 18.

Campbell said the returning experience on that side of the ball brings him comfort, particularly what he saw from its youngest member last year.

"Noah came in as a freshman and had to play a lot of minutes," he said. "He took a lot of bumps."

Meanwhile, the seniors still set the pace for how the rest of the season will go. In their last season, Campbell said he's seen good things happening.

"We're way more urgent, honestly," he said.



Mascot: Oilers
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: North
Colors: Maroon and White

Coach: Joe Campbell,
 fifth year at Midwest
2023 Record: 1-6, did not
 qualify for playoffs

Key Players

QB/DE: Gage Palmer, Jr.
RW/WR/CB: Quincy Paris, Sr.
FB/T/DE: Marco Alvarado-O'Brien, Jr.
C/DT: Travis Mosteller, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Hanna, 1 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-6: vs. Casper Christian, TBA
 *9-14: vs. Ten Sleep, 4 p.m.
 *9-20: at Kaycee, 1 p.m.
 9-27: Open
 *10-5: vs. Hulett, 5 p.m.
 *10-12: at Riverside, 7 p.m.
 *10-17: at Meeteetse, 7 p.m.
 *10-25: vs. Burlington, 1 p.m.
 * Conference game



Rebels Adjusting to Six-Man Game

“We’re going to be physical and we’re going to be fast. It’s a good foundation to build off of.”

~Coach Jason Mitchell

As Riverside prepares for a new type of football this season, coach Jason Mitchell knows he can depend on something that works no matter what level of the game.

“We’re going to be physical and we’re going to be fast,” Mitchell said. “It’s a good foundation to build off of.”

The Rebels make the move from Class 1A nine-man to Class 1A six-man this year after a 4-5 season and a loss in the quarterfinals.

This year’s team will be deep by six-man standards, with more than 20 players and as many as eight seniors.

“They haven’t done (six-man) before, but I think you’d rather be making this transition with seniors,” Mitchell said.

Senior Curtis Strohschein was a Class 1A nine-man all-state choice, and seniors Avery Clifford and Reece Whisenant were all-

conference picks last year.

Still, the Rebels will be in a transitional phase, at least to start the season.

“We’ve already figured out that we’re going to struggle with just a lack of experience with a new set of rules,” Mitchell said. “... It goes against all of the instincts you grew up learning. Your quarterback wants to take off and he can’t. Most of the time you’re pitching or handing the ball off before the play’s even started.”

Whisenant is Riverside’s top returning rusher, running 49 times for 245 yards and a pair of touchdowns last year. He’s the only one of the Rebels’ top three rushers to return.

Clifford saw some time at quarterback, completing 16 passes for 245 yards and a touchdown, and will likely fulfill that role this season, Mitchell said.

Senior Ryder Kozisek is the top

returning receiver after finishing third on the team in receiving yards (130) and fourth in catches (seven). Whisenant added eight catches for 59 yards.

The defense lost two of its top three tacklers but retains at least five of its top eight from 2023.

Whisenant had a big season with 59 tackles, including eight for loss, and two fumble recoveries.

Strohschein had 54 tackles, with 5.5 of those coming for a loss, while Kozisek had 53 tackles and led the Rebels with three fumble recoveries.

Senior Wyatt Daly-Patterson had 40 tackles, led the team with seven pass deflections and tied for the team lead with three interceptions. Senior Hyson Hill also had 40 tackles.

Mitchell said the coaching staff’s offseason goal was to put the Rebels in position to adapt to six-man from day one, and that includes some of the basics other six-man teams may take for granted.

“We don’t have our playbook. We don’t have our terminology,” he said. “So we’re starting from ground zero than whatever baseline we might have built up.”



Mascot: Rebels
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: North
Colors: Red and Black

Coach: Jason Mitchell, fourth year at Riverside
2023 Record: 4-5, lost to Southeast 50-20 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

OL: Curtis Strohschein, Sr.
RB/LB/DE: Reece Whisenant, Sr.
TE/LB: Ryder Kozisek, Sr.
QB/DE: Avery Clifford, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: Farson Jamboree, 11 a.m (Zero Week)
9-6: at Encampment, 4 p.m.
*9-14: at Hulett, 3 p.m.
9-20: vs. Snake River, 7 p.m.
*9-28: vs. Kaycee, 7 p.m.
*10-5: at Ten Sleep, 2 p.m.
*10-12: vs. Midwest, 7 p.m.
*10-18: at Burlington, 2 p.m.
*10-25: vs. Meeteetse, 2 p.m.
* Conference game

TEN SLEEP PIONEERS

1A 6-MAN NORTH

Pioneers Looking to Make Gains

After several years of frustration, Ten Sleep football may finally be back.

Although the Pioneers still have much to learn and many challenges to overcome, first-year coach Corey Rice, a 2018 graduate of Ten Sleep, said the energy and excitement for the Pioneers’ resurgence is noticeable.

The challenge this year’s team faces is that the full turnaround might yet be another year, as Ten Sleep enters the 2024 season with the prospect of having zero seniors on the roster.

However, Rice said, the junior class has solid experience and the freshmen coming up were on a team that finished 5-1 last season.

“We’ve got a chance this year with no seniors to start something ... and then next year hopefully things will fall into place,” Rice said.

Ten Sleep has not been a factor in the Class 1A six-man field for several years.

Ten Sleep finished 0-6 last year, with one of the losses coming via forfeit. In 2022, the Pioneers finished 0-7, and they failed to field a team in 2021.

“We’ve got a chance this year with no seniors to start something... and then next year hopefully things will fall into place.”

~Coach Corey Rice

The Pioneers’ last victory came on Sept. 19, 2020, a 57-32 victory against now-defunct NSI Academy.

Rice said one thing he wanted to develop in his players was game sense.

“We’ve got enough athleticism,” he said. “We just need to learn the game. ... High school (football) becomes not just playing. It really becomes a game of breaking things down.”

“... I’ve played the six-man game, all through middle school and high school. I had four different coaches throughout my high school career, and I think having all of those perspectives helped me.”

This year’s team will be led by its juniors, by default. That group includes defensive end and pass-catcher Payton Norman, lineman

Eric Harstad and running back/linebacker Jesse Blazo.

Sophomore Wyatt Turgeon will also be in the middle of things as the Pioneers’ quarterback and middle linebacker.

The Pioneers did not compile individual statistics last season.

Rice said he expected a roster of eight to 10 total players this season. After that, the next two classes – now eighth and seventh grades at Ten Sleep’s middle school – are big enough to keep the positive momentum going.

Rice, who has spent several years working with Ten Sleep’s middle school program, said this year’s group contains players he had in his first year of coaching.

“I think it’s kind of cool to see that full circle,” he said. “The parents are great, the community’s tight-knit, (and) everyone’s there for each other.”

Moreover, the Pioneers are starting clean. Last year, it was new jerseys; in 2025, the Pioneers will have a new football field in close proximity to their new school.

“The excitement’s through the roof,” Rice said.



Mascot: Pioneers
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: North
Colors: Blue and Red

Coach: Corey Rice, first year at Ten Sleep
2023 Record: 0-6, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

TE/DE: Payton Norman, Jr.
C/NT: Eric Harstad, Jr.
RB/OLB: Jesse Blazo, Jr.
QB/MLB: Wyatt Turgeon, Soph.

2024 Schedule

9-7: vs. Dubois, 2 p.m.
*9-14: at Midwest, 4 p.m.
*9-21: vs. Burlington, 2 p.m.
*9-27: at Meeteetse, 7 p.m.
*10-5: vs. Riverside, 2 p.m.
*10-12: at Hulett, 2 p.m.
10-19: at St. Stephens, 2 p.m.
*10-25: vs. Kaycee, 2 p.m.
* Conference game



Mascot: Mountaineers
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: South
Colors: Black and Yellow

Coach: Ryan Harrison, third year at Casper Christian
2023 Record: 4-4, did not qualify for playoffs

Key Players

RB/CB: William Hubert, Sr.
WR/QB/EB: Jay Kull, Sr.
FB/MLB: Gideon Howe, Sr.
C: Titus Vreeman, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-31: vs. Kaycee, TBA (Zero Week)
 9-6: at Midwest, TBA
 9-20: at St. Stephens, 3:30 p.m.
 *9-28: vs. Encampment, 5 p.m.
 *10-5: vs. Hanna, TBD
 *10-12: vs. Farson, TBD
 *10-19: vs. Snake River, noon
 *10-26: at Dubois, 2 p.m.
 * Conference game
 Home games at Natrona County HS

Mountaineers Taking Next Steps

"I think the confidence is going to be there going into this season. I don't think we're going to fear any team."

~Coach Ryan Harrison

One of the hardest things for any new football program to establish is tradition.

It's even harder to do that with small senior classes.

As Casper Christian enters year three of football, and year two of its varsity program, the Mountaineers will finally have an opportunity to build that tradition from player to player as opposed to being driven by coaches alone.

After graduating just two seniors from last year's 4-4 team, coach Ryan Harrison said he's excited to see this year's senior class, which won't be huge but will be bigger than last year's, take on leadership roles that will help develop young players faster.

"The development of the younger guys will be spurred on a bit by those older guys getting that experience they can pour into them," Harrison said.

From there, younger players will probably have the chance

to play more, giving the Mountaineers' top players a chance to rest during games – a lesson the players and

coaches learned too late last year.

"We want to be able to trust those younger guys to get in the football game and make some plays," he said.

That effort will start with seniors William Hubert, Jay Kull and Gideon Howe.

Hubert led the Mountaineers' rushing game with 795 yards on 120 carries, including 14 touchdowns. He also added five catches for 165 yards and two more scores.

Kull led the receivers in all major categories, including receptions (23), yards (412) and touchdowns (six).

And Howe was second for the Mountaineers in both rushing (53 carries, 417 yards, four touchdowns) and receiving (16 catches, 304 yards, four touchdowns).

They also carried a big chunk of the defensive weight last year.

Hubert and Kull finished 1-2

for Casper Christian in defensive points and tackles, with Hubert racking up 69 tackles and Kull 57. They tied for the team lead with 36 solo tackles apiece, and Hubert notched four interceptions, two fumble recoveries and five pass break-ups.

Howe added 35 tackles for the Mountaineers.

"Just getting to teach what they've learned and how they've improved has been a great benefit for us," Harrison said.

Also supporting the cause will be a group of juniors with good experience.

Junior Andrew Avent added 21 carries for 111 yards and three touchdowns. Avent also had 27 tackles, and junior Timothy Howe had 23.

Junior Titus Vreeman will help out at center.

"(Last year) we got reminded that we were making strides, we're becoming a decent football team, we've got talent, but at the same time, we're new to this," Harrison said. "... I think the confidence is going to be there going into this season. I don't think we're going to fear any team."

ENCAMPMENT TIGERS

1A 6-MAN SOUTH

Tigers Should be in Title Hunt

For the fourth consecutive year, Encampment was a threat to win the Class 1A six-man championship.

Although the Tigers came up short – losing to eventual state champion Burlington 80-73 in the semifinals – coach Kegan Willford said he sees the program continuing to build in the right direction.

In big part, Willford said, the success Encampment has built in such a short time is due to the ownership the players feel for the program. The Tigers came back in 2019 after nearly three decades without a team.

"One of the biggest driving forces to sustain success is that this has been a self-built program," Willford said. "It was started by the kids. They take a lot of pride in making sure the football field and equipment is ready each year and week.

"... These things and our continued success during the season has led to this program going in the right direction."

This year's team mirrors other Encampment teams in being

athletic and confident.

"We have several kids returning that have played a lot of football for our program

dating back to their junior high years," Willford said.

Encampment graduated three all-state players but does return two all-conference choices in seniors Tyrel Brown and Gunner Henrie.

Henrie completed 62 of 103 passes for 1,001 yards and 15 touchdowns to lead Encampment. Gilbert added 110 passing yards on six completions, including a pair of touchdowns, and junior Dashaal Baysinger added 108 yards on 11 completions.

Senior Baylin Sifford led the Tigers with 24 catches and 388 receiving yards last year; he scored three touchdowns through the air. However, he's the only one of Encampment's

"One of the biggest driving forces to sustain success is that this has been a self-built program. It was designed by the kids."

~Coach Kegan Willford

top four pass-catchers to return.

Sophomore Kannon Gilbert is the top returning rusher; he had 48 carries for 395 yards and 11 touchdowns last year. No other returning player had more than five carries or more than 20 yards in 2023.

Junior Korbyn Barkhurst led the Tigers in defensive points and is the only one of Encampment's top four tacklers to return this year. His 84 tackles ranked him second on the team, and he led Encampment with four fumble recoveries. He also had nine tackles for loss, two interceptions, four forced fumbles and two blocked kicks.

-CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



Mascot: Tigers
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: South
Colors: Red and Black

Coach: Kegan Willford, sixth year at Encampment
2023 Record: 8-2, lost to Burlington 80-73 in state semifinals

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Rams Will Need to Learn Quickly

Without much hesitation, Dubois coach Dan O'Brien can tell what the biggest challenge will be in his first year as head coach: depth.

The Rams graduated five starters from last year's semifinal playoff team. This year's team will be fortunate to field enough for a scrimmage, with only about 14 players expected. Of those, only two or three will be seniors.

"We're just going to be young and inexperienced, and it's going to come down to how healthy we can stay to see if we can compete at that playoff level," O'Brien said.

The Rams graduated three all-state players and six seniors in total, and senior Siler Hess is the team's lone returning all-conference selection.

This year's team will bear similar resemblance to last year's team in scheme, but not in personnel. O'Brien enters into the program with experience, having been an assistant with the Rams the past two seasons and more than a decade of coaching experience total.

The offense will look slightly different based on the strengths of this year's players, starting with Hess, the lone returning offensive starter.

With a rotating set of quarterbacks, Hess finished with 231 passing yards. Hess is also the team's top returning receiver after notching 115 receiving yards, third on the team last year, on eight catches, including one touchdown.

O'Brien said Hess will probably take full control at quarterback this season and that the Rams will probably pass more this season, "depending on talent and if we can get him throwing the ball well and get kids who can get open and catch."

However, O'Brien said he

doesn't want to alter a system that has worked well in his time as an assistant.

"We're going to try to get a little more creative this year," he said, "but these kids have played in this system so long, since they were in sixth grade, so I don't want to throw a whole new playbook at them right out of the gate.

"... I feel like (the players) understand my style of coaching and my style of football, so I feel like that's a huge positive in the transition."

Sophomore Cooper Kintzler is the top returning rusher after finishing third on the team in carries (33), rushing yards (243) and rushing touchdowns (four) last season. Hess contributed 26 carries for 161 yards.

Hess is the only one of Dubois' top four tacklers to return; he was third for Dubois last year with 117 total tackles, including six for loss, to go with two fumble recoveries, two interceptions and 11 pass deflections.

Kintzler (16 tackles) and senior Thad Hawkes (nine tackles) are the only other likely returning players who had any tackles last season.

"We're going to try to get a little more creative this year..."

~Coach Dan O'Brien



Mascot: Rams

Division: Class 1A six-man

Conference: South

Colors: Blue and Yellow

Coach: Dan O'Brien, first year at Dubois

2023 Record: 6-4, lost to Snake River 47-22 in state semifinals

Key Players

QB/LB: Siler Hess, Sr.

RB/DB: Cooper Kintzler, Soph.

SE/DB: Thad Hawkes, Sr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Farson Jamboree, 11 a.m. (Zero Week)

9-7: at Ten Sleep, 2 p.m.

9-14: vs. Meeteetse, 2 p.m.

9-20: vs. Natrona JV, 3 p.m.

*9-27: at Hanna, 2 p.m.

*10-5: vs. Snake River, 2 p.m.

*10-11: at Encampment, 2 p.m.

*10-19: vs. Farson, 2 p.m.

*10-26: vs. Casper Christian, 2 p.m.

* Conference game

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ENCAMPMENT CONTINUED-

Gilbert had 76 tackles and led the team with three interceptions. Brown notched 67 tackles, including 14 for loss and three sacks, and forced four fumbles.

Henrie contributed 45 tackles, including three sacks, and deflected a team-high four passes. Junior Caleb Koehn had 28 tackles.

Willford said the Tigers gained confidence throughout

the summer with camps. Last season's success also buoyed their confidence.

"Knowing they are capable of competing with the top teams has also motivated them this offseason," Willford said.

2024 Schedule

8-30: at Farson Jamboree, 11 a.m. (Zero Week)

9-6: vs. Riverside, 4 p.m.

9-10: vs. Natrona JV, 4 p.m.

9-20: Open

*9-28: at Casper Christian, 5 p.m.

*10-4: at Farson, 2 p.m.

*10-11: vs. Dubois, 2 p.m.

*10-18: at Hanna, 4 p.m.

*10-26: vs. Snake River, 2 p.m.

* Conference game

Key Players

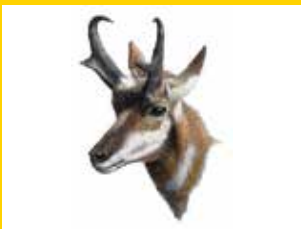
C/DE: Tyrel Brown, Sr.

QB/DE/DB: Gunner Henrie, Sr.

WR/DB: Baylin Sifford, Sr.

C/LB: Korbyn Barkhurst, Sr.

WYOMING SPORTS
WSPG
PREVIEW GUIDE



Mascot: Pronghorns
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: South
Colors: Green and Yellow

Coach: Ryan Lay, third year at Farson

2023 Record: 3-6, lost to Burlington 64-20 in state quarterfinals

Key Players

C: Braydon Long, Jr.
RB: Kole Johnson, Jr.
FB: Jeffrey Goodwin, Soph.
WR/S: Areyu Morrill, Jr.

2024 Schedule

8-30: Farson Jamboree, 10 a.m. (Zero Week)
 9-6: vs. Kaycee, noon
 9-13: at St. Stephens, 1 p.m.
 *9-20: vs. Hanna, 1 p.m.
 *9-28: at Snake River, 2 p.m.
 *10-4: vs. Encampment, 2 p.m.
 *10-11: vs. Casper Christian, noon
 *10-19: at Dubois, 2 p.m.
 10-25: Open
 * Conference game

Farson Will Rely on Youth

There may not be a team, or a coach, in the state that faces the kind of challenge the Farson Pronghorns face this fall.

I'm excited to see what the juniors step and do this year. They are going to have to be our leaders..."

~Coach Ryan Lay

Normally, a team can count on its seniors for leadership. That's exactly what Farson did last year, and it translated to a playoff berth from a rugged Class 1A six-man South Conference.

Heading into 2024, though, the void is clear. The Pronghorns only graduated three seniors from last year's team, but those three represented the Pronghorns' top three rushers, top three passers, two of their top four receivers and their top two players in defensive points.

In their place, the Pronghorns will have to count on younger players. And therein is the unique challenge. Coach Ryan Lay said the Pronghorns might field a team without any seniors this year.

"We will be a very young team," Lay said. "Our returning juniors are going to have to step up and lead the team."

Farson's chances in 2024 go all the way to the team's youngest players.

"We have a handful of freshmen coming in that are going to have to jump into the fire," Lay said.

Despite, or maybe because of, the young nature of the team, Lay said his players are tough and have a good sense of trust with their teammates. Moreover, the juniors that Lay is counting on to emerge this year have all seen plenty of varsity playing time already.

"I'm excited to see what the juniors step up

and do this year," he said. "They are going to have to be our leaders and step up. And that will only help when they become seniors."

Offensively, junior Kole Johnson represents the team's top returning rusher, with 25 carries for 93 yards last year. Close behind him was junior Emmanuel Cruz, who had four touchdowns on just 11 carries, totaling 90 yards.

Junior center Braydon Long, who was second on the team with 140 receiving yards and fourth with 14 catches, is the team's top returning pass-catcher. Sophomore fullback Jeffrey Goodwin led the team with 20 catches and was third with 135 receiving yards; he scored two receiving touchdowns.

Also carrying the load through the passing game were junior Areyu Morrill, who notched six catches for 75 yards, and Johnson, who had five catches for 53 yards.

For now, who will take snaps is an unanswered question, but Lay said the competition has been good this offseason.

"We'll have to wait and see," he said.

Long leads Farson's defensive returners with 47 tackles last year, good for second on the team. Johnson added 41 tackles, including three for loss. Goodwin had 31 tackles; however, no other returners had double-digit tackles last season.

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1A 6-MAN SOUTH HANNA-ELK MOUNTAIN-MEDICINE BOW MINERS

Miners Have Returning Talent

Fortunes could finally be shifting for the Hanna-Elk Mountain-Medicine Bow Miners.

With only five victories over the past four seasons, the Miners have often had their hopes for victory crippled by a lack of experience.

This year, though, HEM returns numerous players who gained significant experience during the 2023 campaign in which they finished 2-6.

The Miners only graduated two players, and although both players started, HEM still returns the bulk of their contributors on both sides of the ball.

"Our experience is a blessing," coach Zack Scott said. "We will definitely be able to open the playbook, and allow our players (and) coaches to be more creative."

"Our team (and) coaches are excited for the upcoming season, (and) with all of the playing time the players have gotten in the past couple seasons, we could be much improved."

Junior Sam Ramirez was Hanna's only all-conference selection. He leads the Miners' returners in the rushing game; he was second on the team last year in all major rushing categories, including yards (567), carries (68) and touchdowns (nine).

Sophomore Noah Scott returns at quarterback after completing 91 of

145 passes for 1,003 yards and 11 touchdowns last season.

Junior Naythen Atencio was the Miners' top receiver last season, catching 25 passes for 373 yards and seven touchdowns. Ramirez added 15 catches for 173 yards and two touchdowns, and sophomore Lance Pelt contributed 25 catches for 173 yards and one touchdown.

Senior Jared Nelsen (nine catches, 131 yards) also broke into triple-digit receiving yards last year, as the Miners return their top four receivers in terms of yards from 2023.

The defense will also rely on its experience to leverage improvement. On that side of the ball, HEM returns six of its top seven tacklers, including its top two.

Atencio led HEM with 88 total tackles, including 10 for loss and

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE-



Mascot: Miners
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: South
Colors: Blue and Orange

Coach: Zack Scott, 12th year at Hanna
2023 Record: 2-6, did not qualify for playoffs

2024 Schedule

8-30: vs. Midwest, 1 p.m. (Zero Week)
 9-7: vs. Hulett, 11 a.m. (at Midwest)
 *9-20: at Farson, 1 p.m.
 *9-27: vs. Dubois, noon
 *10-5: at Casper Christian, TBD
 *10-12: at Snake River, 2 p.m.
 *10-18: vs. Encampment, 4 p.m.
 10-26: at St. Stephens, 11 a.m.
 * Conference game

"Our experience is a blessing. We will definitely be able to open the playbook, and allow our players (and) coaches to be more creative."

~Coach Zack Scott

Rattlers Reload for Another Title Run

What was supposed to be Snake River's crowning moment became its missed opportunity. And its inspiration.

A 42-39 loss to Burlington – one in which the Rattlers' fourth-and-goal play from the 1-yard line was stopped by the Huskies with less than two minutes remaining in the fourth quarter – ended both a multi-year winning streak at 30 games and a championship streak at two.

"It's ate at them since then, and coaches, too," Snake River coach Jack Cobb said. "It was a tough way to end a three-year streak that we had, knowing that it was right there in our grasp."

"... The boys, they've felt it since then, and I'm hoping they're keeping their focus and that hunger to get to that title game and to finish it."

Still, no team in six-man can claim what Snake River has done recently, reaching four of the past five six-man championship games and winning three.

Moreover, the Rattlers get back a pair of all-state picks in seniors Bridger Cozzens and Mason

Jones, as well as all-conference pick Alexander "Jandro" Kunsman, a junior.

Cozzens was second for the Rattlers in rushing, piling up 1,513 yards on 132 carries (good for an 11.5 yards per carry average) and a team-high 31 rushing touchdowns.

Jones completed 52 of 92 passes for 1,109 yards and 23 touchdowns while only throwing two interceptions.

Kunsman was second for Snake River's receiving corps with 14 catches for 270 yards and tied for the team lead with seven receiving touchdowns. Cozzens added six catches for 168 yards and two touchdowns.

Cobb said the Rattlers' depth has grown during the offseason, and they won't have to rely on ironman players.

"It'll be nice to give kids some rest," he said.

The same rings true on defense. Of the nine players who saw consistent defensive playing time last season, six return.

Cozzens led the Rattler defense with 125 tackles last

year, including 18 for loss. He also led Snake River with five interceptions.

Senior Hunter Jones added 54 tackles, four interceptions and 14 pass deflections. Junior Ervey Marquez had 47 tackles, with seven for loss, junior Granit Ready added 37 tackles, sophomore Tymber Cozzens had 26 tackles and junior Deke Latham had 25.

Also back for the Rattlers is senior Jaciel Giron, who missed last season.

The Rattlers don't need to look too deep into the season for inspiration. In an odd coincidence, Burlington and Snake River will face each other in the Week 1 opener in Baggs.

"I think if you ask both teams, I think we both think it's important to set the tone," Cobb said. "It's a long way from a championship game, but it's an important one."

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Mascot: Rattlers
Division: Class 1A six-man
Conference: South
Colors: Purple and Yellow

Coach: Jack Cobb, eighth year at Snake River
2023 Record: 9-1, beat Burlington 42-39 in state championship

Key Players
RB/LB: Bridger Cozzens, Sr.
QB: Mason Jones, Sr.
FB/LB: Deke Latham, Jr.
E/RB/LB: Jaciel Giron, Jr.

2024 Schedule
9-7: vs. Burlington, 2 p.m.
9-13: Open
9-20: at Riverside, 7 p.m.
*9-28: vs. Farson, 2 p.m.
*10-5: at Dubois, 2 p.m.
*10-12: vs. Hanna, 2 p.m.
*10-19: at Casper Christian, noon
*10-26: at Encampment, 2 p.m.
* Conference game

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HANNA-ELK MOUNTAIN CONTINUED-

a team-high four sacks. He also had two fumble recoveries and two interceptions and forced five fumbles.

Ramirez led the Miners in defensive points and was second in total tackles with 87. He tied for the team lead with 10 tackles for loss and led HEM with five fumble recoveries.

Other defensive contributors returning this year include Nelsen

(33 tackles in 2023), Scott (30) and senior Adrian Moreno (23).

Senior tight end/defensive tackle Cody Priest will also contribute this season, coach Scott said.

Coach Scott said numbers are still a concern – the Miners will only have about 12 to 15 players out, including only two or three seniors. Also, coach Scott said, some players may have to adjust to new positions to fit the personnel schemes for this season. However, he said, the players who are back will work hard.

Key Players
FB/LB: Samuel Ramirez, Jr. **QB/DE:** Noah Scott, Soph.
WB/LB: Naythen Atencio, Jr. **C/DE:** Lance Pelt, Soph.



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