

2020 SOLLENBERGER'S AZ FOOTBALL PREP MAGAZINE



BRANDON BUCKNER
6A CHANDLER



STEVIE ROCKER
4A CANYON DEL ORO



HUNTER OGLE
2A SANTA CRUZ VALLEY



TY THOMPSON
MESQUITE



BRAM WALDEN
5A SAGUARO



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3A BLUE RIDGE



ADAM NAVARRETTE
1A SUPERIOR

COMPLETE ARIZONA FOOTBALL PREVIEW

- PREPARING TO PLAY DURING A PANDEMIC • REALIGNMENT BREAKDOWN • 2010s ALL-DECADE TEAM •
- 1970 TUCSON BADGERS ... BEST EVER TEAM IN AZ? • 1A-6A RANKINGS ... AND MUCH MORE!!!

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Top Story: Navigating COVID-19 Safely	6
New AIA Realignment Seeks Competitive Balance	8
2010-19 All-Decade Team	12
Football Rule Changes for 2020	13
Returning Statistical Leaders from 2019	14
Sollenberger: A Look Back at the 1970 Tucson Badgers	15
6A Conference	
Preseason Rankings	16
Team-By-Team Preview	18
Chandler's Brandon Buckner	19
Desert Ridge's Dante Smith	21
2020 Queen Creek Bulldogs	23
5A Conference	
Preseason Rankings	28
Team-By-Team Preview	30
Ironwood's Will Haskell	33
Desert Edge's Steven Ortiz Jr.	36
4A Conference	
Preseason Rankings	38
Team-By-Team Preview	40
Canyon del Oro's Stevie Rocker	41
Arcadia's Trey Brown	43
Flagstaff's Luis Jaramillo	44
Poston Butte's Zion Burns	47
Special Feature: Mesquite's Ty Thompson	50
3A Conference	
Preseason Rankings	52
Team-By-Team Preview	54
Sabino's A.J. Skaggs	55
Blue Ridge's P.J. London	58
AZ College Prep's Joel Diaz	61
2A Conference	
Preseason Rankings	64
Team-By-Team Preview	66
Santa Cruz Valley's Hunter Ogle	68
1A Conference	
Preseason Rankings	72
Team-By-Team Preview	74
Superior's Adam Navarrette	76

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OCT. 23

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OCT. 30

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vs. Centennial

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vs. Pinnacle

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Proceed with caution: Navigating COVID-19 safely a top priority



Defending 6A champion Liberty has been implementing all safety guidelines since the first day of practice. (Steve Paynter photo/Paynter's Pics)

By Les Willsey
azpreps365.com

It's a truce for prep football in Arizona in its bout with COVID-19 now that the first week of October is on the horizon.

Football games are set to begin six weeks after their original start date. A troublesome metric was adjusted (cases per 100,000) Sept. 17 allowing first games to be played next week (Oct. 1 and Oct. 2).

It can be said every Arizona school has battled this common opponent through spring, summer and now into fall. Schools - many, not all - were finally allowed to begin practice, and acclimatization six weeks later than usual (Sept. 7 instead of July 27) after several delays issued by the Arizona Interscholastic Association due to COVID-19 concerns.

And still not every school district has approved the start of practice let alone the buckling of a chin strap for Game 1. Most, if not all, reservation schools in the state bowed out from football and all fall sports before July after taking a vicious hit from the virus in May and June.

The AIA has constantly huddled with the Sports Medicine Advisory Committee (SMAC) and has combed through guidelines put out by the Center for Disease Control and Arizona Department of Health. The 2020 season will be unique with many safety protocols inserted into games (see link to football modifications among other fall sports on the following page).

Most school districts have set policy for home games in the wake of games starting, allowing fans to attend mostly in smaller than stadium capacity percentage. The OK to play games came Sept. 17 with an adjustment from the original 10 cases per metric to 75 cases per 100,000 came after AIA staff gathered additional data from some 20 states that successfully started their football seasons in August and September.

Some did so with higher case numbers than Arizona has at present.

"Seeing the positive results in other states was a big help to reach this conclusion," AIA Executive Director David Hines said. "It's a testament to those associations for putting proper rules in place so football can happen. We have similar numbers and similar safety recommendations as compared to those states."

Utah, for example, has been quite successful.

The state was able to start on time and is well into the second half of its season with only a handful of game postponements due to COVID-19 issues.

"There will be continuing dialogue with SMAC and health officials," Hines said. "Schools have done a great job in helping make this happen. They must continue to do that with protocols that are in place."

Hines was confident daily practices would be conducted in accordance with guidelines both before they were officially allowed Sept. 7 and after teams hit the field. It's what happens outside the realm of workouts where anxiety rises.

"What happens with the kids once they leave practice," Hines noted. "To a degree the kids suffer from things they can't control, the populace outside of them. Everyone has to be on board with the basic things, masking up, social distancing, if we're going to have football and continue sports that have already begun."

SMAC, comprised of 28 members including doctors, athletic trainers, surgeons, specialists and medical personnel associated with the four professional sports and Arizona's universities, was steadfast in its recommendations. At the same time, open to data the AIA brought as well.

SMAC is currently chaired by Dr. Kristina Wilson, a pediatric primary care sports medicine physician at Phoenix Children's Hospital since 2010. The key metrics guiding return to school and opening of athletics were 3-5 percent or less positivity in a district or county, five percent or less hospitalizations due to COVID-like illnesses, and 10 cases or less per 100,000.

As mid-September dawned, Wilson was acutely aware of what consumes athletes, parents and schools keenly interested in playing football games.

"It was the question of every week," Wilson said. "The cases per 100,000.

"Meeting the last one was hard and it took an adjustment. Our communication with the AIA are recommendations. In the end they have the say as to whether football games will be played or not."

Wilson still has data she points to that needs to be watched carefully as football and other sports continue to unfold.

"The numbers we've seen that have remained high for the last few weeks are number of cases in Arizona in the under-19 age group," Wilson continued. "Arizona's numbers are the highest in the U.S."

Numbers for age 19-and under in Arizona as of Sept. 3 was 1,380 cases per 100,000, compared to 680 cases per 100,000 national average for the age group.

Another area of concern SMAC raised is the aftermath from patients diagnosed and recovered from COVID-19, even mild cases. The aftermath is not limited to any one age group. The concern mostly centers on myocarditis - inflammation of the heart.

An example is a Sept. 11 article in *The New Republic* presenting results of a preliminary study from Europe showing nearly 50 percent of Covid-19 patients discharged from the hospital had heart dysfunction six weeks later. Another study of 100 people in Germany found that 78 percent of recovered Covid-19 patients had heart issues two to three months later, and most—60 percent—of those issues involved myocardial inflammation.

Most troubling, these conditions weren't related to the severity of the respiratory illness or pre-existing conditions. Wilson has also seen preliminary studies of college athletes, who of course are not far removed from high school and need to be minded.

One of the first indications of how widespread coronavirus-related heart issues may be came from such athletes, whose health is monitored even when there isn't a pandemic. The preliminary results of one study revealed that nearly 15 percent of college athletes who recovered from Covid-19 had myocarditis—nearly all of them had mild or no symptoms. That news is surprising not just because athletes tend to be very physically active. It could signal that many people—even healthy young people with no pre-existing conditions—are vulnerable to coronavirus-induced heart issues, and they may not even know they have had it.

All this information in tow, it's a cautious full speed ahead for football. No pedal to the metal.

Hopefully this ride will be a smooth one.



Dr. Kristina Wilson
Sports Medicine Advisory Committee Chair



David Hines
Arizona Interscholastic Association Executive Director

IMPORTANT RESOURCES

clickable links

- Recommended Guidelines for Return to Athletic Activity •
- Sport Specific Modifications •

New AIA realignment changes seek to enhance competitive balance



The new football realignment formula should give programs such as Holbrook a better chance to make the postseason. (Darin Sicurello photo/MaxPreps)

By Les Willsey
azpreps365.com

Realignment comes every two years for Arizona Interscholastic Association member schools in all sports.

For the football-frenzied fan, the sport gets unique treatment this time around that should be interesting to follow. Football will be the only sport that has its own alignment.

The look for the 2020-22 block took into account enrollment, but also how well schools performed over the past three seasons in terms of record and playoff qualifying. That weighed heavily in movement up or down a conference for a handful of top-notch programs.

The formula ended up affecting 26 schools. Thirteen moved up a conference and 13 down a conference.

New regions were established in each conference. All of it signals, hopefully, better competition across the entire sport.

"One of the main goals of reclassification was to bring about opportunity for better competition for everyone," AIA Executive Director David Hines said. "We will have a lot of great games. Closer games. More competitive games throughout the way the regions have been laid out."

The 13 schools moving up have done plenty of winning and likely will continue to do so.

Three of the schools moving up (Williams Field, ALA-Queen Creek and Round Valley) won state championships last year, and four were runners-up (Saguaro, Desert Edge, Benjamin Franklin

and Phoenix Christian). Nine of the 13 have been in existence at least 15 years and qualified for postseason play at least 60 percent of the time over that period.

Three of the four newcomers to athletic competition (schools that opened in the last decade - ALA-Queen Creek, Williams Field and Casteel) have already won a state title or two.

The 13 schools moving down have struggled, some mightily, for more than a fistful of seasons. Of those schools only Empire, Dysart, Holbrook and Kingman Academy have made the playoffs in the last decade - a combined six postseason trips.

Tempe Prep's enrollment has dropped the school to a 1A level. The program won just two games the last two years after being a perennial playoff contender the seven years prior in 2A.

Much of the need for reclassification has come from a reality the playing field has tilted so much that it's impossible to be level again. The continued use of open enrollment, rise of school shopping and transfers more often than not takes from schools struggling to compete while perpetuating the stability/rise of schools that are established winners.

The newly formed 6A regions are a good example of trying to mend the playing field. The Desert Valley, Premier and Fiesta Regions all feature winning programs from last year and in the years that preceded this decade or longer.

The Desert Valley Region has Brophy (8-3 in 2019), Centennial (9-2), Chaparral (8-3), Liberty (10-4) and Pinnacle (8-3). The Premier Region is home to Chandler (13-0), Hamilton (9-3), Highland (8-4), Higley (8-4) and Perry (7-5).

SCHOOLS MOVING UP ONE CONFERENCE

5A to 6A - Centennial, Williams Field, Higley, Casteel
4A to 5A - Saguaro, Desert Edge, Salpointe Catholic
3A to 4A - American Leadership-Queen Creek, Benjamin Franklin, Northwest Christian
2A to 3A - Round Valley, Thatcher, Phoenix Christian

SCHOOLS MOVING DOWN ONE CONFERENCE

6A to 5A - Kofa, Alhambra, Maryvale
5A to 4A - Empire, Carl Hayden, Sierra Linda
4A to 3A - Cortez, Dysart
3A to 2A - Holbrook, Catalina, Kingman Academy, Tanque Verde
2A to 1A - Tempe Prep

NEW TO VARSITY COMPETITION

5A - Canyon View, West Point
3A - Eastmark
2A - San Tan Charter, Sequoia Charter, Sequoia Pathway, St. John Paul II
1A - Cicero Prep, Desert Heights Prep, Lincoln Prep

And the Fiesta Region boasts Casteel (9-4), Desert Ridge (7-5), Queen Creek (9-4), Red Mountain (12-2) and Williams Field (12-2). Before the season was shortened, the non-region schedules for those schools were mostly against opponents with better than .500 records.

Conversely, there is potential for better opportunity for schools who have struggled to reach .500 or better of late.

For example, 6A's East Valley Region houses Corona del Sol (4-7 in 2019), Dobson (3-7), Mesa (6-4), Skyline (2-8), Tucson (4-6) and Westwood (2-8).

Westwood has struggled to post winning or .500 records most of the past decade. The Warriors will likely play some of their sister schools in freedom games.

The two they don't have to compete against for region supremacy - Red Mountain and Mountain View - are now in regions commensurate to their previous region rivals. Westwood coach Kyle Ide likes how the new regions were set up.

"We haven't had much success against them for a long time," Ide said. "But I think it's good for tradition to continue playing them. At the same time our new region gives us a goal we can shoot for, like winning the region."

In the Chandler Unified School District, Casteel was moved up, joining sister district schools Hamilton, Chandler, Perry and Basha in 6A for the first time.

In recent years Chandler, Hamilton, Perry and Basha have competed in the same region so they faced each other each year. That goes away this year with Basha heading to the Central Region. The Bears now compete with Cesar Chavez, Desert Vista, Mountain Pointe and Mesa Mountain View.

Casteel's first 6A region foray also will be against non-Chandler District schools. Basha will play Perry this season, the only Chandler school it has defeated in varsity football since it became a 6A school.

Reclassification brought Brophy Prep an entire new set of region opponents. Rather than facing Chandler, Hamilton, Perry and Basha, the Broncos are more geographically placed.

They've lost little in regard to the competitive level of region play now facing Centennial, Chaparral, Liberty and Pinnacle.

"We're still going to play in a very tough region," Brophy coach Jason Jewell said. "I think it makes more sense since the teams we are playing are closer to us. It will be fun for our kids, and exciting. It's the region I wanted."

Jewell also likes the makeup of other regions in 6A as well.

"The regions seem to have balance to them," Jewell said. "If kids know they have a reasonable chance of competing pretty much every week, it's likely going to lead to keeping kids coming out to play. It's hard to motivate kids to play when they feel they have zero chance to win and are getting beat 63-0 with a running clock."

AZPreps365 Writers Pick the Open Division

picks listed alphabetically

Les Willsey
Centennial
Chandler
Desert Edge
Desert Ridge
Hamilton
Red Mountain
Saguaro
Williams Field

Andy Morales
Canyon del Oro
Centennial
Chandler
Hamilton
Higley
Mesquite
Pinnacle
Saguaro

Jose Garcia
Centennial
Chandler
Desert Ridge
Desert Vista
Hamilton
Queen Creek
Red Mountain
Saguaro

2020-22 FOOTBALL ALIGNMENTS

Schools in bold moved up a conference. Schools in italic moved down a conference.

6A CONFERENCE

REGION 1- Brophy, **Centennial**, Chaparral, Liberty, Pinnacle ... REGION 2 - Chandler, Hamilton, Highland, **Higley**, Perry. ... REGION 3 - **Casteel**, Desert Ridge, Queen Creek, Red Mountain, **Williams Field**. ... REGION 4 - Corona del Sol, Dobson, Mesa, Skyline, Tucson, Westwood. ... REGION 5 - Basha, Cesar Chavez, Desert Vista, Mountain Pointe, Mesa Mountain View. ... REGION 6 - Cibola, Copper Canyon, North, Tolleson, Trevor Browne, Westview. ... REGION 7 - Boulder Creek, La Joya Community, Mountain Ridge, Sandra Day O'Connor, Shadow Ridge, Valley Vista.

5A CONFERENCE

EAST REGION - Campo Verde, Gilbert, Horizon, Maricopa, Notre Dame Prep, **Saguaro**. ... WEST I REGION - Betty Fairfax, **Desert Edge**, Ironwood, Millennium, Sunrise Mountain, Verrado. ... WEST II REGION - Agua Fria, Canyon View, Independence, *Kofa*, Raymond Kellis, West Point, Willow Canyon. ... NORTH REGION - Goldwater, Cactus Shadows, Desert Mountain, McClintock, Paradise Valley, South Mountain, Sunnyslope. ... CENTRAL REGION - *Alhambra*, Apollo, Camelback, Central, *Maryvale*, North Canyon. ... SONORAN I REGION - Buena, Cholla, Desert View, Flowing Wells, Marana Mountain View, **Salpointe Catholic**. ... SONORAN II REGION - Cienega, Ironwood Ridge, Marana, Nogales, Rincon/University, Sunnyside.

4A CONFERENCE

DESERT SKY REGION - **ALA-Queen Creek**, **Benjamin Franklin**, Marcos de Niza, Mesquite, Seton Catholic. ... WEST VALLEY REGION - Cactus, Gila Ridge, Greerway, **Northwest Christian**, Peoria. ... KINO REGION - Canyon del Oro, Casa Grande, Micah Mountain, Pueblo, Sahuaro, Walden Grove. ... BLACK CANYON REGION - Apache Junction, Arcadia, Combs, Poston Butte, Tempe. ... SKYLINE REGION - Glendale, Moon Valley, Shadow Mountain, St. Mary's, Thunderbird. ... GILA REGION - Amphitheater, Catalina Foothills, Douglas, *Empire*, Palo Verde, Rio Rico. ... GRAND CANYON REGION - Bradshaw Mountain, Coconino, Flagstaff, Lee Williams, Mingus, Mohave, Prescott. ... SOUTHWEST REGION - Buckeye, Deer Valley, Estrella Foothills, Lake Havasu, Youngker. ... COPPER SKY REGION - *Carl Hayden*, *Sierra Linda*, Vista Grande, Washington, Yuma.

3A CONFERENCE

NORTH REGION - Chinle, Ganado, Monument Valley, Page, Tuba City, Window Rock. ... SOUTH REGION - Pusch Ridge, Sabino, Safford, Sahuarita, **Thatcher**. ... CENTRAL REGION - American Leadership- Ironwood, Coolidge, Eastmark, Florence, San Tan Foothills. ... METRO EAST - Az College Prep, American Leadership-Gilbert North, Coronado, Fountain Hills, Gilbert Christian, Valley Christian. ... METRO WEST - Bourgade Catholic, Odysseus Institute, Paradise Honors, **Phoenix Christian**, Yuma Catholic. EAST REGION - Blue Ridge, Payson, **Round Valley**, Show Low, Snowflake, Winslow. ... WEST REGION - Chino Valley, *Cortez*, *Dysart*, Kingman, River Valley, Wickenburg.

2A CONFERENCE

SAN JUAN REGION - Greyhills Academy, Hopi, Pinon, Red Mesa, Rock Point. ... LITTLE COLORADO REGION - Alchesay, *Holbrook*, Many Farms, St. Johns, Valley (Sanders). SALT REGION - Arete Prep, Globe, Miami, San Carlos, San Tan Charter, Sequoia Charter. ... SAN PEDRO REGION - Benson, Bisbee, Morenci, Pima, Tombstone, Willcox. ... VERDE REGION - Camp Verde, North Pointe Prep, Scottsdale Christian, Scottsdale Prep, Valley Lutheran. ... RILLITO REGION - Antelope, *Catalina*, Santa Cruz Valley, Santa Rita, Sequoia Parkway, *Tanque Verde*. ... GILA REGION - Arizona Lutheran, Chandler Prep, Heritage Academy Laveen, NFL Yet, Veritas Prep. ... AGUA FRIA REGION - Glendale Prep, *Kingman Academy*, Parker, St. John Paul II, Tonopah Valley, Trivium Prep.

1A CONFERENCE

SOUTH REGION - Baboquivari, Cibecue, Duncan, Fort Thomas, St. David, Valley Union. ... EAST REGION - Cicero Prep, Hayden, Lincoln Prep, Ray, San Manuel, Superior, *Tempe Prep*. ... NORTH REGION - El Capitan, Fredonia, Joseph City, Mayer, Mogollon, Williams. WEST REGION - Anthem Prep, Bagdad, Desert Heights Prep, Mohave Accelerated, Phoenix Day School for the Deaf, Salome, San Pasqual.



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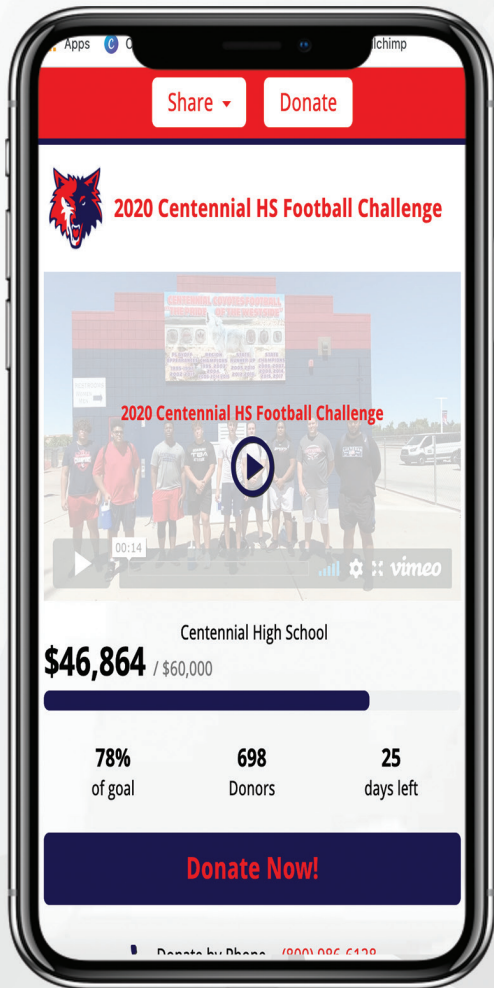


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AZPreps365's All-Decade Team from 2010-19

OFFENSE

QB: Spencer Rattler, Pinnacle (class of 2019). The state's career leading passer.

RB: Ka'Deem Carey, Canyon del Oro (2011). Rushed for 5,701 HS career yards, University of Arizona's career leading rusher, Chicago Bears 4th round pick in 2014 and current member of Calgary Stampeders.

RB: Bijan Robinson, Salpointe (2020). Rushing totals from sophomore to senior season: 2,023, 2,400, 2,235.

OL: Austin Jackson, North Canyon (2017). The Miami Dolphins drafted the USC product 18th overall in 2020.

OL: Andrus Peat, Corona del Sol (2012). A two-time Pro Bowl selection for the Saints, who drafted him in the 1st round in 2015.

C: Cyrus Hobbi, Saguaro (2011). The former USC Trojan was the highest rated center to play in AZ in the past decade.

OL: Tosh Baker, Pinnacle (2020). One of the nation's top-ranked tackles in his class. Currently a freshman left tackle for University of Notre Dame.

OL: Christian Westerman, Hamilton (2011). A fifth round draft pick by the Cincinnati Bengals in 2016, Westerman was an Under Armour All-American and played for the University of Auburn and Arizona State.

TE: Mark Andrews, Scottsdale Desert Mountain (2014). Represented the Baltimore Ravens in the 2019 Pro Bowl. Led the state in receiving yards in 2012.

WR: N'Keal Harry, Chandler (2016). First round pick of the New England Patriots in 2019.

WR: Christian Kirk, Saguaro (2015). The former 2015 SEC Freshman of the Year is in his third season with the Arizona Cardinals.

DEFENSE

DL: Alex Barrett, Mesa Desert Ridge (2012). The former San Diego State captain became the school's first defensive lineman to earn multiple All-Mountain West honors.

DL: Brett Johnson, Desert Vista (2019). Last year, Pro Football Focus named the Cal DT to its Freshman All-American Thurd Team.

DL: Hamilcar Rashed Jr., Chandler (2016). Led the nation in 2019 with 22.5 tackles for loss for Oregon State, a school record.

DL: Garrett Rand, Hamilton (2016). The University of Wisconsin player was a 2016 U.S. Army All-American Bowl participant.

LB: Blake Martinez, Oro Valley Canyon del Oro (2012). Currently with the Giants, he led the NFL in tackles in 2017 when he was with the Green Bay Packers. Also led the Packers in tackles in 2018 and 2019.

LB: Wesley Payne, Mountain Pointe (2014). Led state in tackles with 170 in 2012 as a Jr.

LB: Dedrick Young, Peoria Centennial (2015). He is the only player in University of Nebraska history to collect 60-plus tackles in each of his four seasons as a starter.

DB: Byron Murphy, Saguaro (2016). The 2018 Pac-12 Football Championship game MVP was the 33rd overall pick in the 2019 NFL Draft by the Arizona Cardinals.

DB: Isaiah Pola-Mao, Mountain Pointe (2017). The current starting free safety for USC, Pola-Mao tallied 100 tackles his senior season and 21 career interceptions at Mt. Pointe.

DB: Kelee Ringo, Saguaro (2020). Enrolled at the University of Georgia as the top-rated corner in his senior national class.

SS: Zach Hoffpauir, Centennial (2012). One of the more inspirational prep leaders to play in Arizona.

SPECIAL TEAMS

ATH: D.J. Foster, Saguaro (2012). An NFL player since 2016, he holds the state record in rushing touchdowns (54), rushing TDs in a game (10) and points in a game (60).

Kicker: Brandon Ruiz, Gilbert Williams Field (2017). The current Arizona State kicker and U.S. Army All-American booted a 58-yarder while at Williams Field.

Long snapper: Slater Zellers, Notre Dame (2018). The Cal player was the top-rated long snapper in his senior class and the best ever high school long snapper Kohl's Professional Camps had evaluated up to that point.

Punter: Parker Lewis, Saguaro (2020). The USC freshman was a First-Team All American by maxpreps, Rivals and USA Today as a place kicker.

Return specialist: Jake Smith, Notre Dame (2019). The 2018 National FB Gatorade Player of the Year was the starting punt returner last year for the University of Texas, when he scored the second-most touchdowns ever by a Texas freshman.

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Photos below courtesy of Jim Willittes, Darin Sicurello and Mark Jones/MaxPreps

COACHES/PLAYERS OF THE DECADE

Big School (4-6A) Player of the Decade: Spencer Rattler, Pinnacle (2019). In the conversation for the best quarterback to attend an Arizona High School.

Big School Coach of the Decade: Jason Mohns, Saguaro. Went 97-12 overall and 6-1 in title games.

Small School (2-3A) Player of the Decade: Gage Reese (2020), Yuma Catholic. The 3A state record holder in TD passes in a game (9, tied with three others), TD passes in a season (all-conference high 64), career TD passes (133), passing yards in a game (609), passing yards in a season (4,661), and career passing yards (10,621).

Small School Coach of the Decade: Dave Inness, Northwest Christian. Won three state titles, two state runner-ups, reached eight semifinals and had a 109-21 record.

8-man Player of the Decade: Israel Loveall (2018), Bagdad. Set the 8-man national record with 167 career touchdown passes and career passing yards (9,289). He also holds the 1A state record for TD passes (59) and passing yards (3,479) in a season.

8-man Coach of the Decade: Dalton Mills, Bagdad. Went 72-13, won two titles, one runner-up and reached six semifinals in eight seasons.



Pinnacle QB Spencer Rattler



Yuma Catholic QB Gage Reese



Bagdad QB Israel Loveall



Saguaro Head Coach Jason Mohns



NW Christian Head Coach Dave Inness



Bagdad Head Coach Dalton Mills

New football rule changes for 2020 season

By Tyler Cerimeli
AIA Officials and Tournament Coordinator

It has been an up-and-down offseason, but the 2020 Football season is almost upon us.

Officials have been working tirelessly in order to prepare for competition. Every week for the last two months has been full of Zoom training meetings, seminars, video study, and rulebook study.

This year features some significant rule changes that officials must prepare for. The first rule change of note is an adjustment to how the play clock is administered.

Last year the National Federation of State High School Associations implemented the 40-second play clock. This rule change led to more consistent pacing and game time.

This season, there have been some clarifications to this rule in order to prevent a team from gaining a timing advantage in certain situations.

Starting this season the play clock will be set to 40 seconds following a legal kick and an injury or equipment timeout that is taken solely for a defensive player. A 40 second play clock on a defensive injury prevents the defense from feigning an injury to have the play clock reduced to 25 seconds.

Other than this specific example, the play clock goes to 25 seconds on all stoppages by officials. The second rule change from the NFHS Football Rules Committee is an expansion to the rule on how a team is legally able to spike the football in order to stop the clock.

In the past, the offense was required to spike the ball while taking a snap from under center. This season the offense may spike the ball legally from the shotgun formation, provided this action is done immediately after the player received the ball (Without the ball hitting the ground or being bobbled).

The final major rule change is a reduction to the disconcerting acts penalty. Previously, it was a 15-yard unsportsmanlike conduct penalty for the defense to use acts or words to get the offense to commit a false start.

This included the defense stomping in toward an offensive player, mimicking the cadence, or making an abrupt movement to get the offense to flinch. This season the foul for a disconcerting act has been reduced to a 5-yard foul, bringing it in line with what the penalty is at other levels.

Those watching high school football this year will also see some modifications to make the playing environment as safe as possible for players, coaches and officials. Some of these modifications include the wearing of masks by sideline personnel, regular sanitization of game equipment, and the expansion of the team box to allow for more social distancing.



Tyler Cerimeli is an Arizona Interscholastic Association official and tournament coordinator and serves on the NFHS Rules Committee. He graduated from Saguaro in 2008 and earned a degree in biological science from Arizona State. Cerimeli also serves as a replay official for the NFL.

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Returning Statistical Leaders From 2019



Lake Havasu's Cole Fuller (Chris Stanley photo/MaxPreps)



Casa Grande's Angel Flores (Vasco Dixon photo/MaxPreps)

Source: MaxPreps

PASSING

Gr.	Name, School	Yards/Yds-G	TDs/INT
Sr.	Ty Thompson, Mesquite	4,074/313.4	45/14
Jr.	Adryan Lara, Desert Edge	4,016/286.9	41/14
Sr.	Dane Christensen, Casteel	3,118/239.8	30/6
Sr.	Austin Kolb, Desert Ridge	2,890/248.3	22/11
Sr.	Ryan Powell, Miami	2,911/264.6	32/10
Sr.	Mikey Kenne, Chandler	2,835/218.1	23/5
Sr.	Cole Fuller, Lake Havasu	2,669/266.9	19/11
Sr.	A.J. Skaggs, Sabino	2,495/207.9	25/12
Jr.	Matthew McClelland, Arete Prep	2,413/241.3	23/7
Sr.	Kai Millner, Higley	2,390/199.2	31/6

SCORING

Gr.	Pos.	Name, School	Points	Pts/G	TDs
Jr.	RB	Aziya Jamison, ALA-Queen Creek	186	15.5	31
Sr.	RB	Davin Parker, Alchesay	170	15.5	26
Sr.	RB	Hunter Ogle, Santa Cruz	160	12.3	24
Sr.	ATH	Adam Navarrette, Superior	152	16.9	22
Sr.	RB	Jared Williams, Chaparral	150	13.6	25
Sr.	RB	Earnest Greenwood, Goldwater	142	14.2	23
Sr.	RB	Zach Bennett, Coconino	142	12.9	23
Sr.	RB	Zion Burns, Poston Butte	138	15.3	20
Sr.	RB	Christian Johnson, Greenway	138	12.5	23
Sr.	RB	Caden Calloway, Campo Verde	138	10.6	23

RUSHING

Gr.	Name/School	Yards/Yds-G	Yds-C	TDs
Sr.	Davin Parker, Alchesay	2,030/184.5	10.0	26
Sr.	Hunter Ogle, Santa Cruz	1,844/141.8	7.7	23
Jr.	Aziya Jamison, ALA-Queen Creek	1,761/146.8	9.8	26
Sr.	Earnest Greenwood, Goldwater	1,761/176.1	7.7	23
Sr.	Zach Bennett, Coconino	1,753/159.4	7.0	22
Sr.	Caden Calloway, Campo Verde	1,739/133.8	6.5	22
Sr.	Christian Johnson, Greenway	1,693/153.9	6.7	21
Sr.	Richard Williams, AZ College Prep	1,688/153.5	6.0	17
Jr.	Brayan Mendoza, North Pointe Prep	1,550/155.0	8.6	8
Sr.	Zion Burns, Poston Butte	1,542/171.3	9.8	20

RECEIVING

Gr.	Name, School	Yards Yds-G	Yds-R	TDs
Jr.	Gabe Escobedo, Miami	1,627/162.7	23.9	17
Sr.	Myles Taylor, Williams Field	1,342/95.9	22.4	16
Sr.	Andrew Patterson, Desert Edge	1,165/83.2	22.0	11
Sr.	Eric Lira, Central	962/106.9	16.3	8
Sr.	Daijon Safford, Coronado	937/93.7	17.4	8
Sr.	Cade Berger, Perry	909/90.9	25.3	8
Jr.	Kyion Grayes, Chandler	883/67.9	18.4	6
Sr.	Dominic Digian, Casteel	877/67.5	15.9	8
Sr.	Bryan Dyson, AZ College Prep	856/85.6	24.5	11
Sr.	Ryan Gastelum, North	844/84.4	18.3	8

TOTAL YARDS

Gr.	Pos.	Name, School	Total Yds	Yds-G
Sr.	QB	Ty Thompson, Mesquite	4,636	356.6
Sr.	QB	Adryan Lara, Desert Edge	4,170	297.9
Jr.	QB	Matthew McClelland, Arete Prep	3,613	361.3
Sr.	QB	Dane Christensen, Casteel	3,497	269.0
Sr.	QB	Ryan Powell, Miami	3,496	317.8
Sr.	QB/WR	Rocco Bruney, Glendale	3,227	293.4
Jr.	QB/ATH	Angel Flores, Casa Grande	3,226	268.8
Jr.	QB	Gage Lentz, Veritas Prep	3,131	284.6
Sr.	QB/ATH	PJ London, Blue Ridge	3,045	253.8
Sr.	QB	Nico Vasko, Westview	3,022	302.2

TACKLES

Gr.	Pos.	Name, School	Total tackles	Tackles-G
Sr.	LB	Seth Brown, Tuba City	178	17.8
Sr.	MLB	Terren Green, Snowflake	159	12.2
Sr.	LB	Trey Reynolds, Queen Creek	159	12.2
Sr.	OLB	Carson Speer, Williams Field	146	10.4
Jr.	LB	Hershall Gregg, Blue Ridge	143	13.0
Sr.	LB	Daniel Fulton, Gilbert	140	12.7
Sr.	OLB	Collin Knight, Chino Valley	132	12.0
Sr.	MLB	Sebastian Adamski, Walden Grove	130	11.8
Sr.	LB	Kellen Gibson, AZ College Prep	129	11.7
Sr.	MLB	Xavier Carrillo, Antelope	127	11.5

SACKS

Gr.	Pos.	Name, School	Total Sacks	Sacks-G
Sr.	DE	Brandon Buckner, Chandler	16	1.8
Sr.	DE	DJ Gleash, Centennial	14.5	1.5
Sr.	DL	Caleb Dickson, Window Rock	13.0	1.3
Sr.	DE	Aaron Gerle, Greenway	13.0	1.2
Sr.	DE	Micah Ferrin, ALA-Queen Creek	13.0	.9
Sr.	DE	Trey Brown, Arcadia	12.0	1.2
Sr.	DE	Zion Magalei, Chandler	11.5	.9
Jr.	DE	Tristan Monday, Saguaro	11.0	.9
Sr.	DE	Schofar Hill, Marcos de Niza	10.5	1.3
Jr.	DE	Alvaro Chaparro, Desert View	10.0	1.1

INTERCEPTIONS

Gr.	Pos.	Name, School	Total INTs
Jr.	DB	Matthew McClelland, Arete Prep	9
Sr.	ATH	Bryson Alder, Wickenburg	7
Sr.	S	Jodee Lee, Tempe	6
Sr.	CB	Amaro Contreras, River Valley	6
Jr.	OLB	Devin Bowling, Benson	6
Sr.	QB/ATH	PJ London, Blue Ridge	6
Sr.	DB	Ashton Yurkiw, Sunnyslope	5
Sr.	DB	Marcus McWilliams, Gilbert Christian	5
Sr.	DB	William Whitley, Antelope Union	5
Jr.	CB	Boden Davidson, Fountain Hills	5

1970 Tucson High School: One of AZ's biggest, fastest teams ever

By Barry Sollenberger

They were the best ever.

The biggest and fastest high school team in Arizona history.

They were better than the 1930 Phoenix Union Coyotes, 1944 Tucson Badgers, 1953 North Phoenix Mustangs, 1960 Mesa Jackrabbits, and 1962 Arcadia Titans.

They were better than any Tucson team before them, or since. Which is saying a lot, since the school has won more than 500 football games. They were the Tucson Badgers of 1970, and they were awesome.

In the Grand Canyon State, no team before or since has produced such speed, size and talent. And put it all together.

Coached by Ollie Mayfield, the Big Red Machine went 12-0, crushed outmanned Sunnyslope 54-16 in the state finals, averaged 39.6 points a clip, rushed for 4,280 yards, passed for 1,038 yards, sent 28 players to the college ranks and produced six high school All-Americans.

Linebacker Marvin Lewis and tackle Mike Dawson were Parade Magazine All-Americans, the first and only time two players from the same Arizona team won such honors. At the end of the season, the National Sports News Service, the first such organization to rank high school teams, rated Mayfield's Big Red Machine No. 3 in the land, behind Washington High of Massillon, Ohio and Austin Regan, Texas.

Prior to the semifinals, an electrifying 39-34 win over Mesa Westwood in Tucson, Westwood coach Dave Gates said, "They may be the best high school I've seen since I've been here, and that includes the California teams we faced at Mesa. They're so quick as a team. They have six or seven real fine backs, and all of them can move."

Bill Buck, Sunnyslope's head coach, saw it coming before his team took the field in the finals.

"They are a team the state of Arizona can be proud of," he said before the 54-16 trashing.

"In the years to come, when people talk of Arizona's greatest high school teams, this Tucson team will be high on the list," added Sam Payne of The Phoenix Gazette.

Darrell Davis, Allistaire Hartfield and Mark Simon each rushed for more than 1,000 yards. That had never happened before. Davis, one of the five finalists for the National High School Athlete of the Year, was the fastest 180-yard low hurdler in Arizona history. Quarterback Anastacie Martinez, who attended Stanford on an academic scholarship, somehow managed to pass for 1,000 yards in the Badgers' famed T-formation offense. Tackle Mike Dawson (6-4, 240), who later played for the St. Louis Cardinals, anchored a line that included Mike Bailey (6-1, 205), Gilbert Ramos (6-2, 220), Al Lopez (6-2, 205), Jinx Johnson (6-4, 205) and Lonnie Williams (6-2, 180). All six played major college football or baseball.

Lewis, a 6-3, 230-pound linebacker who signed with USC, was considered one of the best at that position in Tucson's proud history. Outside linebacker Eddie Williams later became a 7-foot high jumper at University of Alabama and threw the javelin 257-feet. Defensive back Frank Castro was one of the state's premier pitchers in the spring, while safety Mike Odum was later drafted by the Houston Astros.

And Kelly Langford, who rushed for 1,575 yards one year later, was the state high hurdle champion despite being blind in one eye. "John McKay coached at Southern Cal then, and he told us we had one of the best teams they'd seen in the country that year," said Mayfield after the season. "They were recruiting some of our kids." Ken Stites, a former coach at Maryvale and the Arizona junior college ranks, might have said it best.

"There was a period for several years when Tucson High had the football teams that could play with anybody, anywhere. They may have been the best," Stites said.



Tucson's Mark Simon rushed for over 1,000 yards in 1970 and signed with the University of Wisconsin. (AIA photo)

1970 Tucson Badgers (12-0) season results

Tucson def. Catralina, 41-0
Tucson def. Sunnyside, 43-6
Tucson def. Pueblo, 32-6
Tucson def. Salpointe Catholic, 40-6
Tucson def. Rincon, 28-6
Tucson def. Douglas, 33-13
Tucson def. Amphitheater, 49-25
Tucson def. Palo Verde, 28-20
Tucson def., Sahuaro, 47-6
Tucson def. Salpointe Catholic, 41-20 (*quarterfinals*)
Tucson def. Westwood, 39-34 (*semifinals*)
Tucson def. Sunnyslope, 54-16 (*state championship*)

Sollenberger's story on Tucson's 1970 team was originally published in the 2000 Phoenix Metro preseason magazine, which Sollenberger started in 1970. The Sollenberger's AZ Football Prep Magazine is named after Sollenberger, a beloved Arizona high school sports and Arizona Interscholastic Association historian. Sollenberger's magazine was relaunched by AZPreps365.com in 2014.



6A Conference Football Preseason Rankings



The Chandler Wolves, the defending inaugural Open Division champions, begin as the favorites in the state's biggest conference. But 6A is loaded this year after realignment. (Mark Jones photo/MaxPreps)

By Les Willsey
azpreps365.com

1. CHANDLER: Hard to find any reason not to christen Chandler top of the heap. Rick Garretsen's first-year as head coach couldn't have been better. The Wolves were 13-0 and won the state's inaugural Open Division championship. Chandler enters the season with a 26-game winning streak dating back to Week 1 of 2018. The inexperienced varsity quarterback last year - Mikey Keene - stepped in and didn't miss a beat directing the offense. When it came down to passing the now senior threw for 2,835 yards and 23 touchdowns. Getting the shot at the No. 1 running back in 2020 is Eli Sanders, who mustered 643 yards rushing and 10 TDs in eight games. Both the offense and defense are nearly intact starter-wise from last year. Defense has run stoppers, pass rushers and the intangibles to forge a championship. Chandler's schedule is as challenging as it comes.

2. HAMILTON: Hamilton got itself untracked in 2018 after a losing season and missing the playoffs for the first time. But last year, the Huskies nearly knocked off Chandler in the regular-season finale and lost by four to Saguaro in the Open, proving they were on their way back. There were some key holes to fill in the offseason, but suffice it to say those are covered. An infusion of top players transferred from Colorado and Tucson, solving openings or at worst added depth at running back, receiver and defense. The quarterback is junior Nicco Marchiol, who arrived in spring from Regis Jesuit High and is one of the top prospects at the position in the country. As a freshman and sophomore

there he passed for 4,203 yards and 43 TDs. Also transferring in from Colorado is safety Jack Howell, who competed at Valor Christian. June made way for running back Noah Schmidt, who rushed for 1,815 yards and 16 TDs last season for Grandview High. The Tucson transplant is tight end Michael Masunas, a junior who played at Sabino last season. Masunas played well as a defensive lineman in a two-way role last year. Coach Mike Zdebski already had an experienced defense from last year, particularly at linebacker and secondary. Hamilton's schedule is on par with Chandler.

3. RED MOUNTAIN: Red Mountain has taken a step closer to a title each of coach Mike Peterson's seasons as head coach - quarters in 2017, semis in 2018 and title game in 2019. Red Mountain will feature an experienced defense as its calling card for 2020. The unit has seven returning starters and has strength at each of the three levels. Linebacker is top level, led by junior Parker McClure (117 tackles). Safety play is in the capable hands of seniors George Ramirez and Ethan Peterson. Returning starters on offense are in short supply, but there should be a healthy battle at starting quarterback and talent waiting to burst at running back and receiver. The Mountain Lions' schedule is favorable for wins in its freedom games. That leaves its new region, tougher top to bottom than the old East Valley, to navigate. It includes 6A newcomers Williams Field and Casteel and familiar foe Desert Ridge.

4. QUEEN CREEK: The potential is there for coach Joe Germaine and staff to bid for a region crown and beyond if the strides made by a fairly young team last year continue. Junior quarterback Devin Brown, a USC commit, is primed for a breakout year. Brown got in eight games last year after transferring, three of them in postseason. A veteran offensive line is in front of him. Skill position players returning didn't get a lot of time last year, but the upcoming seniors and juniors should fill the running back and receiver spots. Germaine is convinced playmakers will emerge. The Bulldogs have trotted out a 1,000-yard rusher three of the last four years. The depth at running back is there to share the load. Defense is anchored by the most veteran squad member, Trey Reynolds, younger brother Porter and safety Hunter Barth. The non-region slate features Liberty, Highland, Perry and Mtn. Pointe. The Bulldogs are familiar with three of their four new region opponents, perennial playoff teams Desert Ridge, Red Mountain and Williams Field.

5. WILLIAMS FIELD: The defending 5A champs begin play in their third conference in coach Steve Campbell's 13-year tenure as the Black Hawks' only head coach. Williams Field played in two 4A title games and won a pair of 5A title matchups. A salty defense with plenty of experience will help in its 6A debut. Nine full-time or part-time starters are back led by linebackers Carson Speer (146 tackles) and Braxton Anderson (59 tackles). Depth at the position is the most in the unit. The secondary boasts strong safety Logan Hall and free safety Donovan Guyton. The Black Hawks' top rusher, Kaden Cloud (1,277 rushing yards, 16 TDs), and top receiver, Myles Taylor (1,342 receiving yards, 16 TDs), will cause problems. And they added ALA Queen Creek transfer RB Aziya Jamison (1,761 rushing yards, 26 TDs). They'll be surrounded by a new quarterback and line that will take time to get seasoned.

6. CENTENNIAL: Centennial was one-and-done in postseason last year for the first time since 2002. That loss occurred in the opening round of the Open Division playoffs. Centennial has always loaded up its non-region schedule with top competition. That hasn't changed this year. The region it now resides in, however, is much tougher than the past. The Coyotes' pedigree is winning and coach Richard Taylor will make sure his team is up to the challenge every week in 2020. Centennial has more starting spots to fill than usual including quarterback. The lines on both sides of the ball are a strength. The Coyotes face Hamilton, much-improved Mountain Pointe, Williams Field and Chandler in non-region play. Their region games are four of the final five weeks against Pinnacle, Brophy, Chaparral and Liberty in what can be considered the toughest schedule in the state this season.

7. DESERT RIDGE: It might be easy to forget Desert Ridge won its region last year, finishing 7-5. The Jaguars finished strong, winning five consecutive games and knocking off the top teams in the region to close the regular season. Their season ended with a quarterfinal loss to 6A runner-up Red Mountain. The Jaguars will be fine on offense with experience at quarterback and other skill positions. The defense is anchored up front by lineman Dante Smith with 57 tackles and four sacks. Linebackers Kendall Falaniko and Avantae Barrett recorded triple-digit numbers in tackles. Desert Ridge begins the season with Highland before region play kicks in a few weeks later vs. Casteel, Queen Creek, Red Mountain and Williams Field.

8. HIGHLAND: Highland made it three-for-three in earning a playoff berth under coach Brock Farrel. The Hawks got a preview of quality play at quarterback for better than half the season from Gage Dayley. The now junior had last season cut short by a shoulder injury, but threw for 1,250 yards and 13 TDs in six games. The offensive line has more experience returning than not and a third-year running back in Max Davis. How good Cooper Brown is coming back from injury at defensive line would be a huge lift. Highland, which was 8-4 last year, has the schedule to make it to the playoffs, even the Open Division. Highland's biggest tests come in back-to-back games in late October with new region foes Chandler and Hamilton.

9. CASTEEL: Casteel was solid in its two-year stay in 5A with playoff berths each year, a semifinal finish last year and records of 9-3 and 9-4, respectively. The Colts have some pieces to make noise in their 6A debut. Senior quarterback Dane Christensen had a prolific first year as a starter accounting for 3,119 passing yards and 30 TDs. He added nine rushing scores. Two of Christensen's top receivers return -- Dominic Digian and UCLA-commit Isaiah Newcombe. They combined for better than 1,600 yards receiving and 15 TDs, so the aerial game is in good hands. Experience up front on offense is bountiful led by Washington State commit Brock Dieu. Defense will need to improve with a handful of starters back. The Colts surrendered 75 points in their semifinal loss to eventual 5A champ Williams Field last year.

10. PINNACLE: Pinnacle will need to mature quickly on both sides of the ball with few returners, but they've answered the postseason bell 13 seasons in a row. The Pioneers were forced to use freshman quarterback Devon Dampier the last four games of 2019 after D-I-bound senior quarterback JD Johnson had his career curtailed via medical issue (heart). Pinnacle lost in the first round of the Open Division to Salpointe. Dampier got a baptism by fire and did well, all things considered. Veteran coach Dana Zupke has a trio of starters back on the offensive line and is confident some unheralded skill players will prompt notice. The skill player to watch is sophomore receiver Duce Robinson, a coveted multi-sport athlete. Pinnacle's freedom schedule is loaded with Hamilton, Salpointe Catholic, Horizon and Perry.

6A Conference Team-By-Team Preview



Ranked 11th in 6A following the 2019 regular season, Liberty was seeded seventh heading in the 6A playoffs. The Lions met up with top-seeded Red Mountain in the title game, where a pass breakup in the end zone in overtime secured a 34-28 victory and the school's first-ever football title. (Mark Jones photo/MaxPreps)

By Les Willsey
azpreps365.com

6A DESERT VALLEY REGION

Brophy Prep

Head coach: Jason Jewell.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year, 8-3.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Mark Trusiak (5-10, 235); Sr. WR Andy Salome (6-1, 190), 201 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Jr. WR Taj Hughes (5-8, 185), 465 receiving yards, 5 TDs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. CB Ben Morrison (5-11, 165), 42 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. LB Damarcus Dennard (5-11, 210), 37 tackles, 2 INT; Jr. DL Zac Swanson (6-4-240), 15 tackles; Sr. DL Will Bastman (6-0, 200), 14 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. K Marcus Lye (6-1, 190); Jr. TE Tyler Powell (6-7, 210); Jr. QB Elijah Warner (5-11, 180); Sr. LB Alex Yoza (5-10, 215).

Strengths of offense: Passing game and experienced WR and QB group.

Strengths of defense: Secondary and defensive line.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Graduated four starting OL and three starting LB. Depth.

2020 expectations: Win a playoff game and compete in a very tough region.

Centennial

Head coach: Richard Taylor.

Years as school's head coach: 30th year, record 305-110-6.

2019 record: 9-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Oscar Abundis (6-6, 320); Sr. OL Caiden Miles (6-5, 290); Sr. WR Rashon Adams (6-2, 184), 85 yards receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. RB Daxon Lindholm (5-10, 168), 454 rushing yards, 5 TDs, 162 receiving yards; Sr. RB Tage Rigby (6-2, 218), 286 rushing yards, 3 TDs; Jr. RB James Scott (5-10, 195) 524 rushing yards, 4 TDs; Sr. OL/DL TJ McRae (6-3, 287).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DE DJ Gleash (6-3, 213), 31 tackles, 14.5 sacks; Sr. CB Rashon Adams (6-2, 184), 34 tackles; Sr. LB Tage Rigby (6-2, 218); Sr. LB Bryson Thomas (6-1, 210), 62 tackles; Sr. CB Diablo Williams (6-1, 183); Jr. DE Chris Tasby (6-0, 215), 18 tackles, 2 sacks; Sr. S/LB Devin Sanchez (5-10, 185), 48 tackles, 2 INT.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. CB Don Brister (5-11, 167); Sr. OL Filipo Teofilo (6-3, 325); Sr. OL Layden Ennis (6-2, 315); Sr. WR/DB Seth Jelovic (5-10, 165); Sr. OL/DL Molina's Esene (6-1, 255).

Strengths of offense: Offensive line and speed.

Strengths of defense: Defensive line and speed.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Quarterback, new starters at several positions and back-ups.

2020 expectations: Our seniors set our team goals.

Chaparral

Head coach: Brent Barnes.

Years as school's head coach: 3rd year, record 13-9.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Jared Williams (5-11, 205), 1,034 rushing yards, 21 TDs, 314 receiving yards, 4 TDs; Sr. WR Max Minor (6-4, 185), 534 receiving yards, 5 TDs; Sr. WR Capri Hamilton (5-9, 170), 398 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Sr. OL Mason Osborn (6-4, 290); Sr. OL Sardar Azeez (6-2, 305); Sr. OL TJ Ritter (6-3, 305).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Jack Whitten (6-1, 175), 54 tackles; Sr. DB Cole Nordman (6-1, 155) 12 tackles; Sr. DB Jackson Knight (6-1, 170) 14 tackles; Sr. LB Joey Balducci (5-11, 210), 31 tackles; 2 sacks; Sr. DL Cameron Desouza (6-3, 235); Sr. DL Ryan MacMillen (6-2, 230); Jr. DL Anthony Lucas (6-5, 290), 29 tackles; 6 sacks; Jr. DB Jacob Franze (5-10, 170), 49 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. QB Brayten Silbor (6-3 190), 1,129 passing yards, 11 TDs, 2 INT; Jr. TE Lucas Garvey (6-3, 225); Sr. WR Jackson Holmes (6-0, 175); Sr. DL Meyer Shinsky (6-3, 235); Jr. LB CJ Eastwood (5-10, 200).

Strengths of offense: Experienced OL with good size. One of top QB's in state in Brayten Silbor. Versatile, explosive back in Jared Williams. Great depth at wide receiver. Third year in the same system.

Strengths of defense: Anthony Lucas anchoring strong DL. Great experience at DB. Strong LB play. Continuity with staff and system.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Depth on offensive and defensive lines.

2020 expectations: Complete week in and week out with extremely difficult schedule. Compete for region championship. Win in the playoffs.

Liberty

Head coach: Colin Thomas.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 10-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. LT Kyle Sfarcioc (6-3, 290); So. RB Zacches Cooper (5-11, 200), 669 rushing yards, 4 TDs; Sr. WR Cail Knapp (6-0, 180), 221 rushing yards, 132 receiving yards, 1 TD.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. S Jax Stam (6-0, 190), 105 tackles, 3 sacks; Sr. S Shane Pitts (5-10, 190), 68 tackles, 4 INT; Sr. CB Zay Johnson (6-1, 175).

Also keep an eye on: Jr. DL Braden Croteau (6-0, 250); Jr. LB Gavin Dodge (6-1, 195); Sr. TE Sam Wolfer (6-2, 205); Sr. QB Brock Mast (5-11, 180).

Strengths of offense: Experience in backfield. Quickness at wide receiver.

Strengths of defense: Secondary and team speed.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Experience.

2020 expectations: Compete at a high level. Great tradition and looking to continue to build on it.

Chandler's Buckner locked in for 2020

By Les Willsey
azpreps365.com

If you're Chandler High's Brandon Buckner, what's not to like about the coming, hopefully played 2020 season.

The senior defensive end/outside linebacker has a college commitment to Oregon. He is the state's lone first-teamer on USA Today's preseason All-American team announced in mid-August.

And he's a member of the defending state Open Division champions, who are ranked in the top 10 nationally of two polls - Max Preps and USA Today.

What do these items do for his psyche?

"All that stuff is humbling and much appreciated," Buckner said. "You have a mindset to work hard and it makes you want to work harder. But while you work you have to block out all the outside stuff."

Buckner, 6-foot-2 and 240 pounds as August wound down, opened his career as a freshman at Chandler playing cornerback. He recalls his height and weight then as 5-10 1/2, 185.

"Oh, yeah he's grown out of that," Chandler coach Rick Garretson said. "He's always been advanced for his age. The athleticism has always been there. Now even better. There are so many things we can do with him as a pass rushing end/outside linebacker. He is really good and knows the details of hand-to-hand combat, and that makes him an exceptional pass rusher. Opponents have to account for him when they game plan. What makes him even more special is he's a high-level practice player."

"One of his best games, and it was a big one at the time, was against Brophy. He had five sacks and his Pops got to see that game. I told him after he needed to get his Pops to more games."

Certainly part of that can be attributed to Buckner's father, Brentson.

Brentson played defensive tackle in the NFL for 12 seasons with four teams and is currently the defensive line coach for the Arizona Cardinals.

"My dad's taught me an awful lot," Buckner said. "Because of him and the help my position coaches give me I've learned to focus on preparing for each Friday night. To take care of my body, and be ready to be my best."

Buckner's varsity career began in 2018 with a nice showing at his current position.

He registered 33 tackles and 5 1/2 sacks in 10 games. His 2019 season didn't start until the fifth week, as an injury put him on the sideline the first four games.

In the nine games Buckner played in the Wolves' 13-0 season, which included playoff wins over Chaparral, Salpointe and Saguaro, he finished with 53 tackles and 16 sacks.

"Missing those four games was hard," Buckner said. "I had to sit and do nothing for awhile. Finally I was able to gradually build back into shape."



Brandon Buckner anchored a Wolves defense that won Arizona's first Open Division championship. He had 1.5 sacks in the state title game, along with an interception returned for a touchdown. (Photo by Mark Jones/MaxPreps)

With the pandemic limiting work in the spring and summer, Buckner turned his choice of college to the forefront. He put a commitment behind him announcing in late May for Oregon.

Arizona, ASU, Michigan State and Washington State were others he considered.

"Oregon was always my dream school," Buckner said. "They are building something special with coach (Mario) Cristobal. They won the Pac-12 championship and the Rose Bowl last year. It's exciting that four Arizona players (including Mesquite's Ty Thompson, Saguaro's Bram Walden, Sahuaro's Jonah Miller) are commitments for next year."

As for the 2020 prep season, Buckner has goals.

Another state championship for the Wolves, preferably Open Division. Gatorade Player of the Year and a Chandler High performance record or two.

"I want to break the school record for sacks which is 17.5 in a season," Buckner said. "To do that I know I have to be consistent. You can't rest on having a good game one week, feeling great about it and come back being sloppy the next. You have to play like every game is your last."

Chandler - 6A Premier Region

Head coach: Rick Garretson.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 13-0.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Mikey Keene (5-11, 180); 2,835 passing yards, 23 TDs; RB Eli Sanders (6-0, 195); 643 rushing yards, 10 TDs; Sr. OL Tevi Neher (6-0, 280); Sr. OL Sione Hingano (6-5, 285); Sr. OL Mason Winkelman (5-11, 265); Sr. TE Eli Swope (6-2, 225), 207 receiving yards; Jr. WR Kyion Grayes (6-1, 180), 883 receiving yards, 6 TDs; Jr. WR Jalen Richmond (6-0, 185), 725 receiving yards, 9 TDs; Jr. TE Nason Coleman (6-3, 230), 126 receiving yards; Jr. WR Quaron Adams (5-7, 165); Sr. RB Nick Nesbitt (5-8, 190).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Kyler Orr (6-2, 225) 84 tackles; Sr. LB Hank Pepper (6-1, 200) 44 tackles; Sr. DE-OLB Brandon Buckner (6-1, 245), 53 tackles, 16 sacks; Sr. DE-OLB Zion Magalei (6-3, 230), 51 tackles, 11 sacks; Sr. DE-LB Jeremiah Tyler (6-2, 245) 65 tackles, 7.5 sacks; Sr. SS Kentrell Williams

(5-11, 190), 55 tackles; Sr. DL Anthony Hanger (6-2, 260) 21 tackles, 5 sacks; Sr. FS Franky Gomez (5-9, 175); Sr. OLB Tony Brewer (6-4, 205); Sr. DL Joseph Hoyt (6-3, 250), 5 sacks.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. DB Travis Roberts (5-10, 170); So. ATH Jr. Andereya Nsubuga (6-1, 190); Jr. DB Alfred Smith (5-10, 170); Jr. DL Isaiah Johnson (6-1, 250); Jr. SS Devin Dunn (5-11, 185).

Strengths of offense: Experience. Ten-plus starters. Speed. Playmakers. Solid line.

Strengths of defense: Experience up front. Nine-plus starters. Speed. Dominant pass rushers. Depth.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Creating depth.

2020 expectations: Win the Open Division 2020 title.

Pinnacle

Head coach: Dana Zupke.

Years as school's head coach: 18th year, record 129-67.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Gavin Guarino (6-5, 250); Sr. OL Jake Leblanc (6-0, 260); Sr. OL Alec Bernardo (6-0, 255); So. TE Duce Robinson (6-6, 220); Sr. WR Nate Hull (6-0, 200).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DL Anthony Franklin (6-4, 255), 47 tackles, 9 sacks; Sr. DB Dante Haynesworth (6-0, 170), 24 tackles; Sr. DB John Brooks (5-11, 165), 13 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. RB Anthony Ament (6-0, 200); Jr. DE Zone Wierenga (6-2, 215); Jr. DB/WR Ryan Meloche (6-0, 170); Jr. LB/RB Bobby Weaver (6-1, 180); So. QB Devon Dampier (5-11, 175).

Strengths of offense: Experience on OL. Dynamic skill position potential.

Strengths of defense: Experience on DL. Athleticism at LB and DB.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Experience at LB and secondary. Experience at WR. Depth of OL and DL.

2020 expectations: Grow up fast. Get better each week.

6A PREMIER REGION

Hamilton

Head coach: Mike Zdebski.

Years as school's head coach: 3rd year at Hamilton, 12-10 record.

2019 record: 9-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: (transfer) Jr. QB Nicco Marchiol (6-3, 215); Sr. C Christian McCook (5-10, 250); Sr. G Caiden Cummings (6-1, 245); Sr. WR Brady Shough (6-2, 200) 431 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Jr. WR Christian Anaya (6-0, 165) 316 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Jr. TE Michael Masunas (6-4, 240).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: So. CB Cole Martin (5-9, 174) 38 tackles; Sr. CB Zach Lewis (5-10, 180) 49 tackles, 3 INT; (transfer) Sr. S Jack Howell (6-0, 190); Sr. LB Victor Zayes (6-2, 215) 106 tackles, 3 sacks; Sr. LB Mo Sarnowski (6-2, 225) 47 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. LB Chris Trojan (6-1, 185); Sr. OT Connor DePrez (6-3, 250); Sr. LB Austen Ruddie (6-1, 205); Sr. DL Shawn Lindaman (5-8, 241); Sr. DL Alex Witt (6-1, 220); (transfer) Sr. RB Noah Schmidt RB (5-11, 185).

Strengths of offense: Skill positions and one of best quarterbacks in the country.

Strengths of defense: Linebackers and secondary.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Offensive line, defensive line.

2020 expectations: Seeing how fast we can get up to speed.

Highland

Head coach: Brock Farrel.

Years as school's head coach: 4th year, 27-10 record.

2019 record: 8-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Gage Dayley (5-9, 160), 1,250 passing yards, 13 TDs, 197 rushing yards; Sr. RB/LB Max Davis (5-11, 195), 585 rushing yards, 7 TDs, 103 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Sr. OL Noah Boone (6-2, 265); So. OL Makua Pule (6-3, 270); Jr. OL Cooper Stevens (6-3, 250); Sr. P/K Jackson Ray (5-11, 155).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DL Cooper Brown (6-1, 220); Sr. DB-WR Ammon Allen (6-2, 200) 73 tackles, 4 INT; Sr. ILB Kam Cullimore (5-9, 195), 84 tackles; Jr. ILB Carson Allen (6-1, 205), 25 tackles; Sr. DB/QB/TE Taylor Siren (6-2, 190); Sr. DB-WR Jackson Delisi (5-11, 175) 34 tackles; Sr. LB Tyson Lomu (6-0, 200) 25 tackles; Jr. DB Cole Rood (5-11, 160).

Also keep an eye on: Sr. WR Logan Kingsford (6-0, 155); Jr. DL Fisher Camac (6-5, 180); Sr. LB/DB Cannon Booker (5-11, 165); Sr. DL Charlie Ho-Ching (6-1, 180); Sr. LB Josh Allen (5-9, 190).

Strengths of offense: Quarterback Gage Dayley. Intelligent and team leader.

Running back Max Davis, third year varsity. Three returning on OL. Kicking game with Jackson Ray.

Strengths of defense: Returning DL Cooper Brown from injury. Strong linebacking corps led by Cullimore. Secondary returns all starters. Long snapper Tate Singleton.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Replacing pair of standout LB. Open competition at center. Rebuilding WR corps.

2020 expectations: We are always in the hunt for the Open Division playoffs. Have the schedule to get us in. Need to show up and perform each and every week.

Higley

Head coach: Eddy Zubey.

Years as school's head coach: 10th year, 64-40 record.

2019 record: 8-4.

Returning starters on offense and 2019 stats: Sr. QB Kai Millner (6-2, 190), 2,390 passing yards, 31 TDs, 325 rushing yards, 7 TDs; WR Branson Heywood (5-10, 175), 637 receiving yards, 6 TDs; Sr. WR Truitt Robinson (5-11, 175), 248 receiving yards, 4 TDs; Sr. OL Mason Hulme (5-11, 215); Sr. OL Blake Oman (5-11, 275).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Kayden Sutter (5-11, 215), 92 tackles; Sr. DB Britt Fleming (6-0, 180), 71 tackles; Sr. DL Hunter Dzugas (6-2, 285), 14 tackles; Sr. DB Nick Reick (5-10, 185), 20 tackles; Sr. LB Isaiah Chaidez (5-11, 215), 27 tackles; Sr. DL Handrick Kupu (5-10, 250), 23 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. DL Stephen Louis (6-2, 260); Sr. OL-LB Kenny Loung (5-11, 225); Sr. DL Markiy Grasty (6-0, 245); Jr. WR Aiden Garcia (6-1, 185); Jr.

DL Colin Kraemer (6-2, 265); Jr. DB/RB Colton Allen (5-10, 175); Jr. OL Armoni Williamson (6-2, 240); So. WR Carter Hancock (5-11, 170); So. OL Jacob Danielson (6-5, 250); So. LB Roman Kupu (6-1, 205).

Strengths of offense: Experienced, quality quarterback in Kai Milner who makes us go.

Strengths of defense: Some returners from last year who have experience that is much needed.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Offensive line and defensive backs.

2020 expectations: Win the Open Division.

Perry

Head coach: Preston Jones.

Years as school's head coach: Starting 14th year.

2019 record: 7-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR Cade Berger (5-11, 175) 909 receiving yards, 8 TDs; Sr. OL Andrew Mason (6-5, 275); Sr. RB Payton Day (6-1, 205), 235 rushing yards, 3 TDs; Sr. RB Nathaniel Miles (5-11, 175), 377 rushing yards, 3 TDs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DE Blake Porter (6-4, 235); Jr. DE Steven Kennedy (6-2, 230) 36 tackles, 4 sacks; Jr. SS Cade Lacy (5-10, 180) 45 tackles; Sr. FS Alex Forceskie (6-0, 175).

Also keep an eye on: Jr. OL Trevor Swan (6-4, 280); Jr. LB Sy Hatch (6-2, 185); Sr. WR Zach Extinie (6-2, 185); Sr. QB Dane White (5-10, 190); So. LB Owen Woodford (6-2, 200).

Strengths of offense: Depth at RB. Line size and strength. QB's knowledge, accuracy toughness and leadership. Speed at WR.

Strengths of defense: Defensive ends. Depth and potential at LB. Effort and attitude.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Secondary. Tight end position. How we handle adversity.

6A FIESTA REGION

Casteel

Head coach: Bobby Newcombe.

Years as school's head coach: 3rd year, 18-7 record.

2019 record: 9-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Dane Christensen (6-3, 185), 3,119 passing yards, 30 TDs, 379 rushing yards, 9 TDs; Sr. WR Isaiah Newcombe (6-1, 175), 661 receiving yards, 7 TDs; Sr. WR Dominic Digian (6-0, 200), 877 receiving yards, 8 TDs; Sr. K Jeffrey Crowder (6-1, 180); Jr. OG Carson Gazeley (6-1, 250); Sr. OT Brock Dieu (6-2, 285); Sr. OC Mason Phillips (6-2, 230); Sr. OT Justin Thomas (6-3, 290).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. SS Connor Clinton (6-0, 180), 63 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. DE Ethan Hunt (6-3, 260); Sr. DB Caleb Parker (5-10, 150), 37 tackles; Sr. OLB Kyle Pointer (6-3, 210), 78 tackles; Jr. LB Ronan Bowers (6-2, 210), 41 tackles, 3 sacks.

Also keep an eye on: Same as above.

Strengths of offense: Experience with several returning starters. Excitement for football.

Strengths of defense: Style of play. Our players play hard. Excitement for football.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Defensive personnel. What positions will everyone play.

2020 expectations: To be a champion. First year in 6A, we expect to be competitive in every game.

Red Mountain

Head coach: Mike Peterson.

Years as school's head coach: 4th year, 31-8 record.

2019 record: 12-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. TE Gage Skidmore (6-2, 220) 98 receiving yards, 1 TD; (transfer) Jr. TE-WR Jordan Morris (6-3, 215).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. SS George Ramirez (5-11, 195), 70 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. FS Ethan Peterson (6-2, 190), 59 tackles; Sr. DL Josh Campos (5-11, 210), 24 tackles; Sr. CB Andrew Bonham (5-11, 175), 2 INT; Sr. DL-LB Kohl Loria (5-11, 185), 42 tackles, 3 sacks; Jr. LB Skylar Edmonds (6-1, 200), 49 tackles, 2 sacks; Jr. LB Parker McClure (6-0, 225), 117 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. QB Evan Svoboda (6-4, 207); Sr. RB-DB Ah'Naz Bryant (5-11, 180); Sr. LB Jared Butler (5-10, 175); Sr. WR Drake Boren (5-11, 175); Sr. OL Aidan Peavler (6-0, 215); Sr. WR Daniel Butler (5-7, 165); Jr. RB Josiah Villanueva (5-10, 180); Jr. FB-OL Tyler Brown (5-8, 166); Sr. LS Christian Krager (5-10, 225).

Strengths of offense: Plenty of up-and-coming juniors and seniors with lots of playing experience. They just weren't starters. Size and strength of OL. Talented running backs. Great competition among talented QBs. Tall, lengthy and fast receivers.

Strengths of defense: Seven returning starters and many other up-and-coming players with a lot of experience and playing time. Experience on defense will allow us to have an even more complicated scheme from coordinator Kyle Enders that gives many teams headaches.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Limited experience and a new coordinator in Josh Barge.

2020 expectations: Expect to do very well early, gain much needed experience and then make a hard run at our "new region" title. We expect to be seeded either bracket of the playoffs and make a run at the title again.

Once the pads came on, Desert Ridge's Smith began to wreak havoc

By Les Willsey
azpreps365.com

Desert Ridge's Dante Smith's motor is always running. He is persistent. It's a trait that has served him well and likely will continue to do so.

The Gilbert district allowed limited workouts beginning June 1. Four days a week Smith had those to contend with before school started and a job that intervened on those days as well.

Not terribly uncommon, he finished an 11-hour summer shift at his job before being able to return a reporter's call during a weekend. Seems there is no rest for him at work or so called play, if football can be termed that.

Smith, a senior two-way lineman, is on the final leg of his high school career. If he and the rest of the state and country can navigate COVID-19 this fall, his landing spot for the next level portends to be a lofty one.

Desert Ridge coach Jeremy Hathcock refers positively to Smith as a "freak." His ability was not on display until his freshman year in high school when his family first allowed him to play tackle football.

"He's always been an athlete," Hathcock said of the 6-2 1/2, 295-pound gem. "He's run the 40 in 4.81, and I've never had a kid his size do that. There's a lot of things we can do with him beyond playing up front. We could put him at running back, and I guarantee you he could make people miss. He's a specimen."

Versatile enough to play tackle or guard on the offensive line in high school, defense is where Smith could make a special mark at the next level.

He's risen to being one of the state's top linemen over the last two seasons with the real breakout coming last year. He contributed 57 tackles, nine of them for loss and four sacks.

"I'm confident he could play defense at the highest level in college and be good enough to go to the highest level," Hathcock said.

Smith is just happy that he's been unleashed by his family to play football the past three years. His expectations were jolted some from his pre-tackle football days.

"I was out doing seven-on-seven and playing wide receiver," Smith said. "I guess that was just for fun. Then all of a sudden when practices started I was playing line."

Hathcock said Smith is on track to being as good as anyone he's had play for him up front.

The sky's the limit.

"I've always wanted to play," Smith said. "It doesn't matter to me much what position I'd play in college. I could be satisfied with either. Our coaches like me on defense the most I think. I'm just glad I'm playing."

Desert Ridge defensive line coach Angelo Paffumi is just getting a chance to work closely with Smith this offseason.

It's been hard with COVID-19 limiting contact work, but Paffumi thinks intangibles work in Smith's favor.

"The kid (Dante) has great feet, size, strength and speed," Paffumi said. "Except for the couple inches he lacks in height, I hope colleges get over that. He has real long arms. I think for him that makes up for the difference between 6-2 and 6-4 or 6-5. What I'd like to see is a little more meanness. He plays with a lot of stamina going both ways for us. Better than most kids that play two ways. If he was just playing defense, it would be scary."

The top defensive player Paffumi mentored while head coach at Skyline was Kolo Uasike.

Uasike has played on the defensive line the past three seasons at UNLV.



Dante Smith, the one-man battering ram of Desert Ridge, is a perfect fit for his Mesa program. (Darin Sicurello photo/MaxPreps)

"Dante reminds me of Kolo," Paffumi said. "Kolo was as good as there was in the state. He didn't have the height. He was 6 feet, 6-1. He had that meanness, nasty in him. He ended up wrestling and becoming a state champion."

A further illustration of Smith's athletic prowess is how he's performed taking up wrestling for the first time when he entered high school.

It wasn't his choice to wrestle. It was an idea pushed hard by Hathcock and defensive coordinator-wrestling coach Travis Jackson.

"I don't really like wrestling," Smith said. "But coaches told me to do it because it would make me a better football player. That's why I'm doing it."

Smith qualified for state as a sophomore, wrestling heavyweight. He was eliminated in two matches. The 2020 season was much different, as Smith finished D-I state runner-up.

There is a tinge of excitement in his voice about wrestling his senior year if that opportunity presents itself.

"Hopefully, I can take it (championship)," Smith said.

As of late June, Smith had offers from at least eight schools including North Dakota, South Dakota State, Abilene Christian, New Mexico State, New Mexico and NAU and some others in the Big Sky.

Smith takes nothing for granted. He's hoping the senior season will be a full one to give schools a decent chance to see him play another year older.

"I'll keep an open mind," Smith said. "I know our coaches think bigger offers will come. It's too early now. After another season, I'll know where things stand."

Desert Ridge - 6A Fiesta Region

Head coach: Jeremy Hathcock.

Years as school's head coach: 15th year, 116-56 record.

2019 record: 7-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Austin Kolb (6-5, 220), 2,980 passing yards, 22 TDs; Sr. RB-WR Avantae Barrett (5-11, 210), 425 rushing yards, 9 TDs; Jr. WR Keiyon Turner (6-1, 165), 564 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Sr. RB Austin Thomas (6-0, 170), 182 rushing yards, 2 TDs; Sr. OT-OG Dante Smith (6-2, 290); Sr. OC Nate Meza (5-11, 265); Jr. RB Jordan Wilson (5-9, 175), 413 rushing yards, 4 TDs; Sr. RB-DB Josiah Kidd (6-0, 171), 217 rushing yards, 3 TDs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Avantae Barrett (5-11, 210), 110 tackles; Sr. SS Jared Nichols (6-2, 170), 51 tackles; Sr. DT Dante Smith (6-2, 290), 57 tackles; 4 sacks; Sr. FS Diamonte Bright (6-2, 170), 57 tackles; Sr. LB Kendall Falaniko (5-11, 215), 120 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: So. QB Robert White (6-0, 185); Sr. SB-WR Jordan Forbes (6-0, 185); Jr. DB KJ Miniefield (5-9, 160).

Strengths of offense: Big up front. Biggest we've ever been. May be our most complete offense. Length at receiver and lots of speed.

Strengths of defense: Solid across the board. Good depth.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Lot of two-way players as usual. Staying healthy, especially in COVID-19 days.

2020 expectations: Potentially as good a team as we've had, but staying healthy at the right times with tough schedule is critical. Playoffs and beyond.

Williams Field

Head coach: Steve Campbell.

Years as school's head coach: 13th year, 128-25 record.

2019 record: 12-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. RB Kaden Cloud (5-11, 180), 1,277 rushing yards, 16 TDs, 100 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. WR Myles Taylor (6-1, 170), 1,342 receiving yards, 16 TDs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Carson Speer (5-7, 175), 146 tackles, 4 sacks; Jr. FS Donovan Guyton (6-0, 190), 33 tackles; Sr. LB Taber Thomas (5-7, 178), 59 tackles; So. DB LaSjawn Hunter (5-9, 168), 29 tackles; Sr. SS-LB Logan Hall (5-11, 200), 86 tackles; Sr. LB Braxton Anderson (5-8, 180), 53 tackles; Sr. LB Allyn Tuey (5-11, 189), 49 tackles; Sr. DL Dalton Brown (6-4, 290), 50 tackles, 4 sacks; Sr. DL Aaron Wolfcale-Holsten (6-2, 285), 38 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: So. WR Kyler Kasper (6-4,180). Sr. DE Jonah Suesue (6-2, 210). Division I recruit RB (transfer) Jr. RB Aziya Jamison (6-1, 200).

Strengths of offense: Skill positions led by top returning receiver and running back in Taylor and Cloud.

Strengths of defense: Returning experience in most positions.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Retooling offensive line that graduated four D-I players.

2020 expectations: Know more later this summer.

6A EAST VALLEY REGION

Corona del Sol

Head coach: Jon Becktold.

Years as school's head coach: 4th year, 7-24 record.

2019 record: 4-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Quade Swearingen (5-10, 190) 2,101 passing yards, 14 TDs, 181 rushing yards, 3 TDs; Jr. RB Anyale Velazquez (5-10, 180) 720 rushing yards, 5 TDs, 209 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. WR Bryce Douglass (5-11, 180) 338 yards, 2 TDs; Sr. WR Jake Schmitt (6-2, 210) 391 receiving yards, 5 TDs; Sr. OL Luke Bashford (6-4, 220); Jr. OL Theren White (5-11, 240).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. S Alex Rafalski (6-0, 165) 71 tackles, 4 INT; Sr. DB Scott Musgrave (5-9, 190) 36 tackles, 3 INT; Sr. LB Jake Schmitt (6-2, 210) 94 tackles, 2.5 sacks; Sr. LB Tudor Georgescu (5-11, 185), 39 tackles, 3 sacks; Jr. DL Theren White (5-11, 240).

Strengths of offense: Swearingen at quarterback, Velazquez at running back and Schmitt at tight end after strong seasons as underclassmen.

Strengths of defense: Bigger and stronger in offseason led by linebacker Schmitt.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Offensive and defensive lines.

2020 expectations: Play hard every night, every game.

Dobson

Head coach: Bill Godsil.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Damyian Duarte (6-0, 170) 670 passing yards, 7 TDs, 702 rushing yards, 7 TDs; Sr. WR Xavier Jimenez (5-8, 140), 467 receiving yards, 4 TDs; Sr. OL Jesus Ruelas (6-4, 265); Sr. WR Jacob Estrela (6-0, 145); Sr. WR Kaleb Coleman (6-0, 145); Sr. WR Gus Owens (6-1, 140), 111 rushing yards; Jr. OL Tyler Dutton (5-10, 200); Sr. OL Rodney Romolor (6-0, 225).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Noah Williams (5-11, 185), 54 tackles; Sr. DL Jaylon Pechuli (6-2, 285); Sr. DB Avery Wilson (5-11, 165), 25 tackles; Sr. DB Xavier Jimenez (5-8, 140), 31 tackles; Sr. DB Gus Owens (6-1, 140), 13 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. DL Rodney Romolor (6-0, 225).

Also keep an eye on: Sr. RB Aamani Anderson (5-8, 155); Jr. TE Andre Palmer 6-2, 185); So. ATH JaShawn Kinney (5-11, 155).

Strengths of offense: Athleticism at quarterback. Good speed at skill positions. Athletic line.

Strengths of defense: Speed at skill positions. Strength of line.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Can new additions mesh well with returners.

Did we improve enough in offseason to improve win total. Can our young OL hold up.

2020 expectations: A winning season. Make playoffs. Continue to establish a positive culture.

Mesa

Head coach: Chad DeGrenier.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 6-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB John Mendoza (5-10, 169), 1,398 passing yards, 16 TDs, 110 rushing yards, 1 TD; Sr. OL Sam Flores (6-2, 265); Sr. WR KVon Sutton (6-1), 456 receiving yards, 8 TDs; Sr. OL Matt Overman (5-10, 205); Sr. OL Joshua Guevara (5-10,227); Sr. RB Daniel Allshouse (6-1, 190); Sr. RB Andy Nastal (6-0, 215); Sr. RB Ale'a Ynigues (6-1, 235); Sr. TE Isaac Montero (6-3, 232); Jr. OL Kaiden Cisneros (5-10, 185); Jr. RB Craig Montgomery (5-5, 155), 752 rushing yards, 5 TDs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Ale'a Ynigues (6-1, 235), 51 tackles, 2 sacks; Sr. LB Andy Nastal (6-0, 215), 82 tackles, 4 sacks; Sr. DB Kyle Whitlock (6-0, 170), 24 tackles; Sr. DL Collin Ensing, 11 tackles, 2 sacks; Jr. DL Zacharia Tei (6-0, 196), 22 tackles, 7 sacks; Jr. LB Mason Ennen (6-1, 197); Jr. DB Thomas Snell (5-8, 135), 20 tackles; Jr. DB Chris Figueroa, 34 tackles.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Not sure where we are at with no spring ball.

2020 expectations: Making the playoffs and another winning season.

Skyline

Head coach: George Hawthorne.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Zeke Branham (6-2, 205), 238 rushing yards, 3 TDs; 110 receiving yards; Sr. QB Jack Nelson (6-4, 195), 188 rushing yards, 1 TD; 187 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. G-T-C, CJ Despain (6-2, 340); Sr. T Brandon Shirley (6-0, 260); Sr. C Javarion Eaton (5-7, 245); Sr. G Kyller Fitzpatrick (5-9, 235); Sr. WR Greyson Cook (5-10 160), 196 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Jr. TE Logan Chavez (6-1, 230).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. SS-OLB Zeke Branham (6-2, 205), 51 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. FS Tyler Speece (5-10, 165), 30 tackles; Sr. CB Andre Ahlman (5-9, 175), 21 tackles; Sr. OLB Alex Sanchez (6-1, 190), 63 tackles; Sr. LB Zak Ferguson (6-1, 225), 71 tackles; Sr. DT Kyller Fitzpatrick (5-9, 240); Jr. DE Logan Chavez (6-1, 230), 42 tackles, 2 sacks.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. WR-S Dylan Pemberton (6-1, 170); Jr. WR-QB Kade Steen (6-0, 165); Sr. LS-RB Bryant Karnes (5-9, 180); Jr. G-C Raymond Fritz (5-8, 245); Jr. T-G-C Ethan Aguilar (6-0, 280).

Strengths of offense: Strong run game with most of OL returning. With so many returning seniors we will be disciplined on offense. A strong passing game filled with talented receivers and running backs.

Strengths of defense: Being fundamentally sound. Leadership with over six returning starters. Swarming to the ball and trapping the ball. Communication is the key to our defense. We will have a selfless defense. We over me, us over I type of a team.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Who emerges as leaders on both sides of ball. Will we develop never quite mentality. Are we doing everything it takes to successful on and off the field.

2020 expectations: Prepare for every game as if it's a championship. Give our best at every practice. Be obedient to instruction. Display great citizenship and sportsmanship. Be the most aggressive in every contest.

Tucson

Head coach: Justin Argraves.

Years as school's head coach: 9th year, 52-42 record.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Ayden Ortiz (5-10, 160), 839 passing yards, 6 TDs, 172 rushing yards, 5 TDs; Sr. WR Daniel Becerra (6-2, 200); Sr. RB Devin Bracamonte (5-10, 175); Sr. WR Elias Johnson (6-0, 180); Sr. OL Michael Tibbitts (5-10, 265); Sr. OL Ronnie Reece (6-1, 230).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Daniel Becerra (6-2, 200), 10 tackles; Sr. DB Devin Bracamonte (5-10, 175), 17 tackles; Sr. DB Elias Johnson (6-0, 180,) 34 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. DL Ronnie Reece (6-1, 230); Sr. LB Martin Barreras (6-0, 200, 27 tackles); Jr. DL Andres Gonzalez (5-10, 165), 22 tackles, 6 sacks.

Also keep an eye on: So. RB-DB Amier Austin (5-8, 155); Sr. OL-DL Andrey Valenzuela (5-11, 215); Jr. WR-DB Brendan Dawson (6-0, 160); So. WR-DB Christian Bayliss (6-1, 155); Sr. OL-DL Roman Trujillo (6-0 215); Sr RB-DB Jacob Vega (5-9, 160).

Strengths of offense: Returning quarterback with knowledge of the offense. Strong corps of receivers.

Strengths of defense: Returning most of our secondary from last season.

Team's biggest question mark(s): We will depend on a handful of sophomores to make an impact on both sides of the ball. Another concern in overall strength and team bonding due to three months of not practicing together due to COVID.

2020 expectations: We have high expectations and returning to playoffs is one of them. The first part of the season will be a good indicator before heading into region play.

Westwood

Head coach: Kyle Ide.

Years as school's head coach: 4th year, 11-19 record.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Gavin Letourneau (6-1, 180), 1,560 passing yards, 14 TDs; Jr. WR-DB Korwyn Brantley-ellis (5-8, 150), 121 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. OL Nick Delio-Thompson (6-3, 195); Sr. OL Kendale Deshine (6-1, 295); Sr. OL Brian Jones (5-11, 190); Sr. OL Robert Lucero (5-8, 250); Sr. WR-DB Jeremiah Reed (6-1, 180), 119 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. TE Don Stanciel (6-1, 190), 139 receiving yards, 2 TDs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. WR-DB Korwyn Brantley-ellis (5-9, 150), 45 tackles; Sr. WR-DB Jeremiah Reed (6-1, 180), 43 tackles, 2 INT; Jr. DL Owan Calderon (6-3, 220); Sr. DL Cain Courtney (6-3, 240), 36 tackles, 3 sacks; Sr. LB Angel Gloria (5-7, 180); Jr. LB Austin Layton (5-11, 165), 49 tackles; Jr. DB-WR German Ledezma (5-9, 140); Sr. LB Jerron Smallcanyon (6-0, 195) 43 tackles; Jr. DB Jolani Turner (5-10, 140), 30 tackles; Jr. LB Ryan Willis (5-8, 160), 52 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. WR-DB Daunte Palma (6-2, 180); Jr. OL-DL Dreden Filoteo-Chatman (6-4, 290); Jr. DL Seth Godfrey (6-1, 260); Sr. LB Carlos Hernandez Gastelum (5-9, 150); Sr. DL Luis Nunez (6-2, 215).

Strengths of offense: Returning eight starters. QB Gavin Letourneau has embraced his leadership role. Strong group of wide receivers. Entire line returns.

Strengths of defense: Returning 10 starters. Players have worked hard in the weight room. Strong, experienced back seven.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Staying in shape during COVID-19. We have a strong returning group, but not a lot of depth. Will some of our JV players step up?

2020 expectations: We played a lot of young, inexperienced players last year. Because of that we expect to be much improved.

Feeling bullish: There's a lot to like about the 2020 Queen Creek team

By Les Willsey
azpreps365.com

Queen Creek's lengthy football success has gone relatively unnoticed since the turn of the century. Although the Bulldogs have won only one championship in that time, they have missed the playoffs just once in that span (2002 with a 6-3 record) and endured just one losing season (5-6 in 2009).

What is quite remarkable still over the past 20 years is the way Queen Creek football has transitioned to a new conference four times - 2A to 3A in 2001, 3A to 4A in 2005, 4A to 5A in 2015 and 5A to 6A in 2018. Not many schools run the classification gamut as the Bulldogs have in their history.

Queen Creek's first varsity football season was in 2A in 1987. So fast-forward to 2020.

Head coach Joe Germaine, who has alternated with assistant and once-upon-a-time Mesa Mountain View teammate Travis Schureman as Bulldogs' top mentor since 2010, is eager to see how the coming season unfolds.

It's arguably Queen Creek's largest mountain to scale opening a new decade, but it'll do so with possibly its best team to date.

"We really like our team," Germaine, a 1997 Rose Bowl MVP for Ohio State with his QB play over Arizona State and who garnered a Super Bowl XXXIV ring with the St. Louis Rams as backup quarterback to Kurt Warner, said. "I think we have as much talent as we've ever had."

Germaine is in his second year back as head coach and fifth overall. Schureman piloted the team from 2013-2018. Both have been on staff the entire past decade in one capacity or another.

Germaine finished his first stint as head coach in 2012, a perfect 14-0 championship in 4A. Queen Creek's record from 2010-19 is 100 wins and 27 losses, and the Bulldogs were 72-40 from 2000-09.

Personnel-wise there is reason for Germaine's anticipation when play begins. It starts with 12 returning starters.

A handful of them are D-I college commits or have several offers. Senior linebacker Trey Reynolds (6-foot-3, 235 pounds) is the leader and set for his third varsity season.

He's excelled at linebacker and played running back and quarterback when needed. He is a Utah commit.

"We are lucky to have Trey," Germaine said. "He is special. A freak athlete really. He played linebacker and quarterback for half the season last year. There aren't many players like that in 6A. He is heady, smart and assignment grounded. He can run with everybody on the team. Our defense is designed to put him in position to make plays and he does." Germaine expects a big year from junior quarterback Devin Brown (6-3, 195), who managed to start eight games under center after transferring from Casteel last year.

"The experience he got last year will benefit him," Germaine said. "It's not easy for a sophomore to play and excel in 6A. He's a great leader with a couple offers already. He'll be playing D-I somewhere on Saturdays."

Senior strong safety Hunter Barth (6-3, 220) gives Queen Creek a tall, physical presence in the secondary.

Barth also competed last year in eight games after transferring from Casteel. He is a Cal commit. His mate in the back is senior free safety Krew Jackson, 6-5, 195, who led last year's secondary in tackles and committed to Kansas State in late August.

"We are as strong as we can be with them in the back and the experience they have," Germaine said.

There is also another Reynolds to contend with on defense.

Sophomore Porter Reynolds (6-0, 225), Trey's brother, was a first for Germaine in his coaching tenure at Queen Creek.



Whether he looks to his left or right, Queen Creek's Trey Reynolds is surrounded by top Dogs in purple and gold. (Jim Willittes photo/MaxPreps)

"He is the only freshman to start on varsity since I've been here," Germaine said. "He helped us at defensive tackle last year. Led us in sacks. He'll play linebacker this year. He already has three offers."

In addition there are two returning starters on the offensive line - senior left tackle Isaia Glass (6-5, 260, Arizona State signee) and senior right tackle Derrick Brown (6-5, 285).

The Bulldogs also were set to welcome a third returning lineman in junior right guard Hunter Vindiola (6-4, 250). But Vindiola died in a side-by-side 4-wheel accident while the family vacationed in the White Mountains in early July.

"There is nothing formal we've done in remembrance of Hunter," Germaine said. "Putting a sticker on helmets or putting a sign up. I think better than that is we know how much he loved the game. The best tribute we can have for him is how we play the game."

"When I first heard he'd passed and got over the initial shock, the thing that came to mind was his smile. He always had a smile on his face. The kids remember that, too, and we talked about it."

Skill positions were mostly depleted by graduation, but Germaine believes a corps of mostly juniors and sophomores can fill the vacancies.

Running backs to watch are senior Casey Shull and juniors Payton Barlow and Larry Royal. Receivers to look for are senior Colby Garvin, junior Kirice Blakely and sophomores Davey Morales and David Hicks.

Germaine remarked in June, before the season was pushed back, that the original full schedule set for Queen Creek would have been its toughest ever. Not much has changed with the late start to playing games, just a few less.

"I'm sure that the games we end up with will still be as rugged," Germaine said.

Queen Creek - 6A Fiesta Region

Head coach: Joe Germaine.

Years as school's head coach: 5th year, 43-9 record.

2019 record: 9-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Isaia Glass (6-5, 260); Sr. OL Derrick Brown (6-5, 285); Sr. WR Colby Garvin (6-5, 215), 87 receiving yards, 4 TDs; Jr. QB Devin Brown (6-3, 195), 1,319 passing yards, 10 TDs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. FS Krew Jackson (6-5, 195), 72 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. SS Hunter Barth (6-3, 220), 51 tackles; Sr. DB Cavan Riggs (5-11, 190), 54 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. LB Trey Reynolds (6-3, 235), 159 tackles; Sr. LB Colby Littleton (6-1, 200), 124 tackles; So. LB Porter Reynolds (6-0, 225), 53 tackles, 5 sacks; Sr. DL Aidan Wizner (6-3, 215), 23 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. RB Casey Shull (5-9, 190); Jr. RB Payton Barlow (5-11, 185); Jr. RB Larry Royal (6-0, 185); So. WR Davey Morales (5-10, 180); So. WR David Hicks (5-11, 180); Jr. WR Kirice Blakely (6-0, 190).

Strengths of offense: Good experience from last season. Further development of Devin Brown. Three RBs have an opportunity for great impact.

Strengths of defense: Returning impact players on all levels of our defense.

Looking forward to year two in our experience and understanding of our schemes implemented last year.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Looking forward to seeing which of our skill players take the next step and be play makers for us offensively and defensively.

2020 expectations: Excited and humbled at challenge we have to play the schedule given to us. It will be a great challenge week in and week out for us.

6A CENTRAL REGION

Basha

Head coach: Chris McDonald.

Years as school's head coach: 3rd year, 10-12 record.

2019 record: 4-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: So. OL James Durand (6-4, 250); Sr. ATH Andrell Barney (5-11, 185), 214 rushing yards, 1 TD; Sr. RB Caleb Jones (5-9, 190), 280 rushing yards, 2 TDs; Sr. WR Trent Pennington (6-3, 185), 116 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. WR Cayden Camacho (6-1, 165); Sr. WR Carson Bachmann (5-9, 160), 145 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Jr. OL Tanner Thornton (5-10, 275).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Andrell Barney (5-11, 185), 37 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. LB Caleb Jones (5-9, 190), 56 tackles, 2.5 sacks; Sr. DB Cayden Camacho (6-1, 165), 81 tackles; Sr. DL Ricky Halva (6-3, 205), 17 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: So. RB-OLB Wyatt Milkovic (6-1, 230); Sr. DB Lil-Mike Neasman (6-2, 180); Sr. TE-DE Christian Earls (6-6, 235); Sr. ILB Malachi Burgess (5-10, 205).

2020 expectations: Win region and qualify for playoffs.

Cesar Chavez

Head coach: Manny Alcantar.

Years as school's head coach: 4th year, 22-11 record.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Linwood Crawford (5-10, 225), 723 rushing yards, 9 TDs; Sr. OL Breon Hopkins (6-3, 310); Jr. WR Tavian Dennis (5-11, 180), 213 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Sr. WR Henry DeLeon (5-11, 165), 77 receiving yards, 1 TD; Jr. OL Bruce Crawford (6-1, 268); So. OL Lashawn Ealim (6-3, 345).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. S Jovoni Ervin (5-11, 175), 69 tackles; Sr. LB Linwood Crawford (5-10, 225), 40 tackles; Jr. S Tavian Dennis (5-11, 180), 58 tackles; Jr. DT Jacob Holmes (6-2, 270) 68 tackles; Jr. LB Frankie Viera (5-10, 175), 35 tackles; Sr. DB Henry DeLeon (5-11, 165), 20 tackles; Jr. DT Daniel Serpa (6-1, 220), 43 tackles, 2 sacks; So. LB John Butler (6-1, 225) 48 tackles, 3 sacks; Jr. DB Breshaun Brown (5-11, 165), 20 tackles, 3 INT.

Also keep an eye on: So. RB Jaylen Scott (5-9, 185); So. OL Jayson Holloway (6-1, 280); Jr. QB Xavier Castillo (6-3, 175); So. WR Jose Rivera (5-11, 155); Jr. QB Alex Rivera (5-9, 170).

Strengths of offense: Biggest OL in a long time. Majority are honor students. Speed. Lost some great WR, but more speed and fastest skill positions in three years.

Strengths of defense: Return majority of defense. Many started as sophomores last year and gained tons of experience. A bigger and more athletic DL this year.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Who takes over at quarterback and how will young offense adapt.

2020 expectations: Build off last year's eight-win season. Young but expect to compete.

Desert Vista

Head coach: Dan Hinds.

Years as school's head coach: 19th year, 145-78 record.

2019 record: 9-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. RB/DB Devon Grubbs (6-0 190), 499 rushing yards, 6 TDs; Sr. RB/DB Taron Thomas (5-11 181) 106 rushing yards, 1 TD; Sr. WR/DB Troy Allen (5-9 167); Sr. OL/DL Kekamalei Huakau (5-9, 220); Jr. OL Jai Rodriguez (6-6 280).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. RB/DB Devon Grubbs (6-0 190), 32 tackles; Sr. RB/DB Taron Thomas (5-11 181) 80 tackles, 3 INT; Sr. WR/DB Troy Allen (5-9 167) 31 tackles, 4 INT; Sr. OL/DL Kekamalei Huakau (5-9, 220), 17 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. PK Marlon Hauck (6-1 175); Jr. QB Landen Powell (6-3 205).

Strengths of offense: Speed. We have a few kids coming back that can run.

Strengths of defense: New concepts. Athletic up front.

Team's biggest question mark(s): With pandemic, will team be bonded.

2020 expectations: Early goals to know assignments and play hard to get caught up.

Mountain Pointe

Head coach: Eric Lauer.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 1-9.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR Kevin Sawitzke (6-5, 215), 159 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Sr. RB Sherome Weatherspoon (5-8, 175); Sr. OL Anthony Ortiz (6-3, 265); Sr. OL La'Trell Baker (6-5, 265); Sr. OL Zereoue Williams (6-8, 255); Jr. OL Jack Plote (6-2, 225).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Zac Hay (6-1, 210) 81 tackles; Jr. SS Devon Sparks (5-11, 180).

Also keep an eye on: Sr. DB Dezmin Hayes (6-0, 180); Jr. QB Amier Boyd (6-1, 180); So. QB Chris Arviso (6-0, 165); So. RB Robert Moore 5-9, 185); So. RB Jaylan Beverly-Rushing (5-9, 200); Jr. LB Ja'Juan Kennedy (5-11, 190); (transfer) Sr. QB Jaden Chico Crockett (6-0, 170).

Strengths of offense: WR position should be strong.

Strengths of defense: A fast unit that runs to the ball and the LB corp.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Quarterback play and how long it takes for the Pride to come together.

2020 expectations: Expecting to get the program to a respectable place again.

Mesa Mountain View

Head coach: Mike Fell.

Years as school's head coach: 5th year, 23-21 record.

2019 record: 6-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR Nico Remus (6-0, 160), 613 receiving yards, 5 TDs; Sr. WR Tanner Johnson (5-11-155), 304 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Sr. RG Spencer Duren (5-10-225); Sr. RT Caden Bingham 6-0, 210); Sr. LG Kevin Diaz (5-9-210).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Sam Kirk (5-9-165) 28 tackles; Sr. DB Ethan Caldwell (5-10-155) 17 tackles; Sr. LB Mason Parker (5-10, 175) 60 tackles, 3 sacks; Sr. DT Tallen Pasifikitonga (5-10, 265) 14 tackles; Jr. DE Malaki Ta'ase (6-2, 225) 74 tackles, 8 sacks; Jr. FS Matt Clark (5-11, 155) 22 tackles, 2 INT. **Also keep an eye on:** Jr. QB Willy Roberts (5-10, 190); Jr. RB Reese Marziale (5-9, 170); Sr. WR Nathan Dismuke (5-11, 170); Jr. LB Isaac Farnsworth 5-11, 190); Jr. FS Matt Clark 5-11, 155).

Strengths of offense: Talented WR, QB and RB. Solid offensive line. Good kicking game. Explosive attack.

Strengths of defense: Lot of experience. Malaki Ta'ase. Solid linebackers. Second year running defense will be improved

Team's biggest question mark(s): Strength. Four months of players own work-outs. QB battle between Willy Roberts an Zach Majorczak.

2020 expectations: Beat all the Mesa schools. Win our region. Make playoffs.

6A DESERT SOUTHWEST REGION

Cibola

Head coach: Steven Fritz

Years as head coach: 2nd year

2019 record: 6-4

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB John Beltran (5-8, 170), 840 yards rushing, 204 receiving yards, 6 total TDs; Sr. TE Liam Hoffmeyer (6-4, 230), 426 receiving yards, 4 TDs; Sr. RB Marco Angulo (5-6, 150); Sr. OL Jackson Dusek (5-11, 230)

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB John Beltran (5-8 170), 17 tackles, 1 int; Sr. DL Victor Canal-Estevez (6-2, 230) 17 tackles, 1 sacks; Sr. DL Nicasio Noblett (5-10, 210); Sr. DL Gavin Jester (6-0, 240) 23 tackles, 2.5 sacks; Sr. DB Joseph Baker (5-8 150) 7 tackles, 2 ints;

Strengths of offense: Balance

Strengths of defense: Attacking mentality

Team's biggest question mark(s): How quickly will our talented young skill players grow.

2020 expectations: Be successful everyday in the classroom and on the field.

Tolleeson

Head coach: Roy Lopez.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year, career record three schools 102-32.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB/ATH James Mcelhenny (6-2, 190), 996 passing yards, 6 TDs, 219 rushing yards, 3 TDs; Sr. FS/WR Jahaun Jones (6-2 180); Sr. RB/LB Gabriel Trigg (5-9, 190); Sr. LB/RB Jonathon Carranza 5-10, 190); Sr. DE/TE Jerold Arreola (6-3, 237); Sr. DT/OG Elias Aragon (5-11, 250); Sr. DT/OG Anthony Royba (5-10, 257); Sr. SS/RB Donavan Bojorquez (5-9, 178); Jr. RB/LB Javier Narvaez (5-10, 187), 193 rushing yards, 1 TD; Jr. DB/WR Jesus Guerrero (6-3, 177); Jr. WR/DB Miguel Guerrero (6-3, 179).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DE Jerold Areola (6-3, 237), 9 sacks; Sr. FS Jauhaun Jones, (6-2, 180); Sr. LB Jonathan Carranza (5-10, 190); Sr. SS Donavan Bojorquez (5-9, 178), 42 tackles; Jr. LB Nick Sheila, (5-5, 145); Jr. FS-LB Jorge Delgado.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. OT-DT Arturo Osornio (6-3, 272); Jr. OT-TE Nathaniel Baughman Jr. C-DT Sr. James Bodden (6-3, 277); Sr. WR-DB Xavier Saucedo (5-5, 140); Jr. RB-DB Frankie Craighead.

Strengths of offense: Leadership from QB James Mcelhenny. Hard-nosed RB Gabriel Trigg. WR Miguel Guerrero good size and athletic. Running back Javier Narvaez. Big strong young line.

Strengths of defense: Good returning line. Quickness of linebackers.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Being consistent on a weekly basis. Youth up front. Tighten up our secondary.

2020 expectations: Our goals are always set high - win our region, make state playoffs and win a state championship.

Trevor Browne

Head coach: Francisco Rangel.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 5-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr QB-DB Angel Lydon (5-11, 160); Sr. LB-TE Luis Felix (6-2, 215); Sr. OL/DL Fernando Macias (6-0, 270); Sr. OL-DL Cristian Amaya (5-11, 240); Sr. OL-DL Isaiah Bustamante (5-8, 210).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB-TE Luis Felix (6-2, 215), 16 tackles; Sr. DL-FB Anthony Valente (5-7, 200), 25 tackles; Sr OL-DL Isaiah Bustamante (5-8, 210); Sr QB-DB Angel Lydon (5-11, 160), 31 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: So RB-DB Marzhaun Arnold (6-0, 160); Sr. LB-WR Javier Munoz (5-7, 160); Sr. LB-RB Carlos Aguilar (5-10, 190); So. DB-WR Johnny Correa (5-6, 140); Jr. LB/RB Geovani Carvajal (5-8, 175).

Strengths of offense: Returning 4 of 5 starters on the offensive line. Returning QB who is ready to run the show. Talented sophomore class that will fill a lot of the positions vacated due to graduation.

Strengths of defense: Experienced front 7 with good mix of juniors and seniors. Talented defensive backfield. Strong linebacker unit.

Team's biggest question mark(s): How we adjust to new culture and scheme. Who will emerge as our top skill players. How does our team compete in the new regions alignment.

2020 expectations: Continue to build off the success these student athletes have started to build. Compete and be in every game to the end. Continue to improve our academic expectation and standards.

Westview

Head coach: Nick Gehrts.

Years as school's head coach: Fifth year, 26-18 record.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Nico Vasko (5-10, 195), 1,976 passing yards, 22 TDs, 1,04 rushing yards, 13 TDs; Sr. WR Jonathan Chacon (5-9, 160), 177 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Sr. WR D'Hayven Valentine (5-10, 170), 177 rushing yards, 3 TDs, 212 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Sr. RB/WR Domonick Fuentes (5-6, 150); Sr. OL Sebastian Alvarez (6-3, 260); Johnathan Hernandez (6-3, 270); Jr. WR Christian Echeverry (6-2, 180); Jr. OL Edgar Mendoza (5-10, 260); Jr. OL Miguel Gonzales (6-1, 255).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB D'Hayven Valentine (5-10, 170), 48 tackles, 5 INT; Sr. DL Toby Hernandez (6-0, 230), 25 tackles; Sr. DB Elijah Hall (5-11, 165), 37 tackles; Sr. FS Robert Espinoza (5-11, 170), 69 tackles; Sr. NB Michael Gray (5-8, 150); Sr. DL Winston Stonewall (6-0, 190), 44 tackles, 4.5 sacks; Sr. SS Eric Vega (6-0, 175), 37 tackles; Sr. MLB Cam'Ron Granado (5-8, 200), 60 tackles; Sr. OLB Alejandro Barba (5-9, 170), 70 tackles, 3 sacks; Sr. DL Jacob Flores (6-3, 280), 35 tackles; Jr. OLB Gabriel Gonzales (5-8, 165), 25 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. MLB Terence McGary (5-10, 215), 56 tackles; So. OL Gaven Hicks (6-5, 280); So. RB CJ Banda (5-10, 165); So. DL Ralph Bernard (6-3, 225).

Strengths of offense: Return a lot of starters from last year. QB Nico Vasko will be going into his 3rd year as a starter. He rushed for over a 1,000 yards and threw for over 1,000 yards. Mature group of linemen.

Strengths of defense: Return every starter from last year. A senior heavy group that should be able to do a lot more this year.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Besides Vasko someone has to establish themselves as a playmaker.

2020 expectations: Get stronger and faster. Team bonding.

REGION NOTES: Copper Canyon introduces a new coach in Chad Talley. Copper Canyon was 1-9 in 2019. The Aztecs haven't posted a winning record in a full season since starting with a varsity schedule in 2006.

6A SOUTHWEST REGION

La Joya Community

Head coach: Devin Dourisseau.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB-WR De An'dre Robinson (5-9, 155), 122 rushing yards, 1 TD, 316 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Sr. OL Angel Cordova Reed (6-3, 225); Jr. RB-WR Dwight Williams (5-8, 145), 160 rushing yards, 3 TDs; Sr. WR-QB Israel Yturralde (6-0, 170), 746 receiving yards, 13 TDs; Sr. OL Bryan Toribio (5-9, 185).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. SS-DB De An'dre Robinson (5-9, 155), 32 tackles 3 INT; Sr. LB-SS Ethan Marks (6-0, 185), 29 tackles, 5 sacks; Jr. DB-FS Dwight Williams (5-8, 145), 46 tackles, 4 INT.

Strengths of offense: Running game.

Strengths of defense: Speed.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Quarterback position.

2020 expectations: Make the playoffs.

Sandra Day O'Connor

Head coach: Steve Casey.

Years as school's head coach: 4th year, 10-20 record.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Logan Cluff-Amperse (6-8, 315); Jr. OL Izzy Guevara (6-0, 330); Sr. WR JD Groff III (6-2, 175), 424 receiving yards, 6 TDs; Sr. WR Daymian Stewart (6-4, 170), 166 receiving yards, 4 TDs; Sr. RB Donavin Fontaine (5-6, 160).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DE Gabe Monaco (6-1, 185), 48 tackles, 4.5 sacks; Jr. DL Owen Faulkner (6-0, 230); Jr. DL Austin Molesky (6-2, 200); Jr. LB Brevin Czosnyka (6-2, 185), 51 tackles; Jr. LB Brandon Craddock (5-11, 200), 90 tackles, 3.5 sacks; Sr. DB Joseph MacDonald (5-11, 190), 49 tackles; Jr. DB Brian Dominguez-Perez (5-11, 175, 11 tackles).

Also keep an eye on: Sr. QB Seth Felts (6-3, 175); Sr. QB Tanner Conaway (6-3, 185); Jr. QB-ATH Dallas Kuenzi (6-2, 190); Jr. FS Jake Douglass (6-0, 165); So. LB-RB Blake Ware (5-7, 195).

Strengths of offense: Getting Fontaine back from injury. Competition at quarterback. Balanced attack.

Strengths of defense: Several key starters coming back. Competition at many positions. Should be physical.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Starting quarterback. New defensive scheme.

2020 expectations: Make the playoffs.

Shadow Ridge

Head coach: Sean Hegarty.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 6-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR-CB Zachary Sutton (6-1, 175), 333 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Sr. RB Jacob Thurman (5-10, 185), 464 rushing yards, 4 TDs; Sr. QB-LB Jordan Derby (6-3, 170); Sr. T Jack Chappelle (6-5, 285); Sr. G Chris Stoica (6-3, 265); Sr. T Justin Hernandez (6-4, 285); Jr. WR-CB Isaac Yates (6-1, 175), 227 receiving yards, 1 TD.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. OLB-FS Huston Mitton (6-0, 185), 52 tackles; Sr. LB Brennen Statham (5-9, 195); Sr. CB Robert Fahey (6-0, 185); Sr. LB Luis Ochoa (6-0, 210), 17 tackles; Sr. DT Dylan Jones (6-0, 245, 30 tackles; Sr. C-NG Carson McNutt (6-1, 275), 45 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. LB Mafileo Paleleo (6-1, 215); Jr. QB Seth Gallardo (5-8, 155); Jr. G Torrey Oltman (6-0, 255); So. C Logan Getejanc (6-0, 230).

Strengths of offense: Strong, veteran offensive line. A great receiving corps of returning starters

Strengths of defense: A number of returning defensive starters on the line, line-backer and secondary. Veteran leadership.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Who will be the starting quarterback. Learning new systems on both sides of the ball.

2020 expectations: Being a physical, disciplined team that attacks in all three phases of the game.

Valley Vista

Head coach: Josh Sekoch.

Years as school's head coach: 9th year, record 48-33.

2019 record: 7-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR-FS Liam Kelleher (6-4, 200), 623 receiving yards, 4 TDs; Sr. QB Burton Delay III (6-1 180), 1,847 passing yards, 16 TDs, 394 rushing yards, 5 TDs; Jr. Center Jaden Lay (6-0 240); Sr. OG Garrett Sutcliffe (6-1 230); Sr. OG Gibson Yazzie (6-2, 240); Jr. OT Reif Peterson (6-4 250); Sr. WR Tyson Givens (6-1 170); Sr. TE Carson Allcock (6-3 180).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DE Jaelin McCullen (6-4 230), 18 tackles, 2.5 sacks; Sr. DB Vincent Thompson (6-2 190); Sr. DE Andrew Sullivan (6-1 210), 21 tackles; Sr. DB Trenton Givens (6-1 170), 25 tackles; Sr. OLB Jeremiah Ruiz (5-10, 160), 43 tackles; Sr. OLB Vernon Thompson (5-10 170), 24 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. LB Rocky Daoud; Sr. FB Jeremiah Flowers; Sr. DB Kaiden Stewart; Jr. LB Preston Tucker; Jr. LB-DE Andrew Zacek.

Strengths of offense: Four of five starters return on line. Three-year starting quarterback. Three-year returning top wide receiver.

Strengths of defense: Competition for playing time at linebacker. Three returning defensive backs. Two returning pass rushers.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Replacing senior running backs. Competition in secondary.

2020 expectations: Win Dysart district. Win our region. Win a playoff game. Win 6A title.

REGION NOTES: Boulder Creek reached the playoffs for the third season in a row with a 4-7 record for the third straight season. There is firepower to be excited about on offense with returning senior running back Jacob Cisneros and senior quarterback Bear Milacek. Cisneros piled up nearly 2,000 yards rushing and receiving with 15 TDs. Milacek passed for 2,379 yards and 14 TDs. ... Mountain Ridge broke through with its first playoff berth since 2010 under first-year coach Doug Madoski, finishing with a 5-6 record. The Mountain Lions have holes to fill on offense, but good experience on the defensive side should be the strength heading into the season.



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5A Conference Football Preseason Rankings



Despite a rare loss in a title game, expect the Saguaro Sabercats to contend again for the Open Division championship. (Mark Jones photo/MaxPreps)

By Les Willsey
azpreps365.com

1. SAGUARO: Saguaro failed to win a championship last year for the first time since 2012. Not that the Sabercats didn't give it a go. One of two 4A schools to crack the Open Division playoff bracket, they finished runner-up to Chandler. In the early moments it looked like they would be blown out. They rallied and made Chandler sweat down the stretch. Coach Jason Mohns has racked up a 97-12 record in eight seasons. Saguaro makes the jump from 4A to 5A and most expect business as usual. Performing as the Sabercats did last year shows they are worthy. Saguaro has a number of D-I prospects led by receiver-cornerback Denzel Burke (Ohio State commit) and offensive lineman Bram Walden (Oregon commit). Saguaro graduated a standout two-year starter at quarterback, but Mohns is confident the competition for the open spot is solid. There is plenty of experience returning on both lines, wide receiver and secondary. Saguaro will compete in arguably the top region in 5A with Horizon, Notre Dame Prep, Campo Verde, Gilbert and Maricopa. The Sabercats face Hamilton, Chaparral and Brophy in its three freedom games.

2. DESERT EDGE: Desert Edge was one of the favorites to reach the 4A title game last year, especially after conference foes Saguaro and Salpointe qualified for the Open Division. Desert Edge nearly pulled it off, but Mesquite had other plans by edging the Scorpions, 28-23. Desert Edge has new leadership this season with brothers Marcus and Mark Carter shifting from South Mountain to be co-mentors. The Carters have much to work with from last season. Top talent is junior quarterback Adryan Lara, who passed for 4,016 yards and 41 TDs, junior running back

Jeryll McIntosh (1,325 yards rushing and 12 TDs) and senior wide receiver Andrew Patterson with 1,165 yards receiving and 11 TDs. The defense is stacked with returners as well. Top players are defensive back Steven Ortiz Jr. and linebacker Myles Hobbs, among others.

3. NOTRE DAME PREP: A bid for a third consecutive appearance in the 5A championship game didn't materialize, but the Saints had another strong year under coach George Prelock. Prelock begins his fourth season with an impressive 37-4 record to date. Centennial, its nemesis in two title game losses in 2017 and 2018, qualified for the Open Division. San Tan Region's Campo Verde edged Notre Dame, 20-17, in the semis. Notre Dame has more work to do this season as a new member in the San Tan with Higley and Williams Field moving up to 6A. The Saints can rely on senior running back-defensive end JD Roberts to be a cog on both sides of the ball. Roberts was his region's breakout player of the year in 2018. On defense he racked up 77 tackles and recorded 9.5 sacks. He was the closer in short-yardage situations, posting 20 TDs among his 341 yards rushing. Quality fill-ins must emerge at quarterback, offensive line and linebacker. The Saints lost four linemen to graduation and all their starting linebackers. Notre Dame's schedule is its toughest yet in the Prelock-era with its new region alignment. The Saints also face Brophy Prep in their opener. The first time the parochial schools have met in the sport.

4. HORIZON: One had to feel for a couple teams that qualified for the Open Division last year as they competed without their standout quarterbacks. Pinnacle was one and Horizon the other. The Huskies senior signal-caller, Jake Martinelli, was sidelined with a knee injury with two weeks left in the regular season. He was the 5A Northeast Region Player of the Year. Horizon posted its best record under coach Ty Wisdom - 9-2. Wisdom is 28-15 in four seasons thus far. All are winning seasons and three have resulted in playoff appearances. Wisdom welcomes back more experience on the defensive side of the ball. The offensive line will be the biggest in his tenure, led by seniors Erich Berg (6-4, 255), Jackson Sebastiani (6-4, 290) and OL Nathan Cender (6-2, 290). Horizon's move to the San Tan Region will be a step up from most of its former Northeast Valley Region foes. The Huskies open with 6A Pinnacle but lost a freedom game with Desert Edge.

5. SUNRISE MOUNTAIN: Sunrise Mountain qualified for the playoffs for the sixth straight year in 2019, four of those under current coach Steve Decker. The Mustangs have won five playoff games in that time with their best recent finish 11-2 in 2017. Decker and company have had little trouble scoring points in his tenure. This year defense is the strength on paper with seven returning starters - three each at linebacker and in the secondary. A pair of first-team all-region players head the list - defensive lineman Will Howland and linebacker Owen Thomas. Senior wide out Zeke Marshall has the best numbers of any returning skill position player - 556 yards receiving and 8 TDs. Sunrise Mountain is inexperienced at quarterback, receiver and the defensive front. Its top competition in a somewhat new region will come from Desert Edge and Millennium. The non-region slate has two 4A schools and a 6A school - Mesquite and Cactus the former, and Liberty the latter.

6. CAMPO VERDE: Campo Verde enjoyed the best finish in school history reaching the 5A title game and winning a school-record 10 games in the process. The Coyotes hope to maintain the momentum garnered from 2019, but must do so with a new head coach. The school's only coach until the 2020 season was Max Ragsdale, who has gravitated to the school's athletic director. One of his right-hand men - defensive coordinator Ryan Freeman - is the coach on the spot. Freeman has been on staff with Ragsdale for 15 years at two stops. Campo Verde knows what it's like to compete in a top-flight region and that doesn't change this year. With a decent amount of returning players - more on defense - Campo should be up to the task the region demands. The running game has excelled in the school's decade-long history and will be led by senior Caden Calloway, who rushed for 1,739 yards and 22 touchdowns. Three offensive linemen who started are back. The question comes at quarterback and in the receiving corps. All three of its top receivers graduated. The passing game was inconsistent, but featured the home-run ball enough to be effective. Defense returns six players with the linebacking and secondary quite seasoned. Campo Verde's season opener was to be with Desert Edge, but is now with familiar foe Williams Field. Campo and Williams Field faced off in last year's 5A final.

***7. CIENAGA:** Look for Cienega to be the favorite to win the Sonoran II with more experience returning than any team in its region. That is, if the Bobcats and most of their southern Arizona brethren get the go-ahead to play. The Bobcats were 9-3 last year, reaching the playoffs for the fourth year in a row under veteran coach Pat Nugent. Cienega has seven veteran starters on offense with a trio of those first-team, all-region selections last year - linemen Andrew Husfelt and Hunter Schlagel and running back Gabe Levy. Schlagel doubled on defense and earned Region Player of the Year on that side of the ball as a noseguard. Senior quarterback Ryan Swoger has good speed and is a dual threat. The defense has all returning linebackers and three of five players from the secondary. Along with Schlagel up front, senior linebacker Dillon Silva is the leading tackler back with 83.

8. SALPOINTE CATHOLIC: Salpointe reached a primary goal of qualifying for the Open Division playoffs last year. The Lancers couldn't quite give coach Dennis Bene the going-away present most wanted. The Lancers dropped a 24-16 decision to eventual champ Chandler in the semifinals. Taking the reins at Salpointe is longtime assistant Eric Rogers, who has been part of the staff off and on as an assistant for the better part of a decade. Salpointe was heavily senior-oriented last year and led by University of Texas-bound Bijan Robinson. Robinson rushed for 7,036 yards in his career with 103 touchdowns. He was named the state player of the year. The Lancers return junior quarterback Treyson Bourguet, who settled in for seven games as starter after transferring from Marana. Rogers says to pay attention to some seniors and juniors likely to excel - senior linebacker Breyton DePoint, senior defensive lineman Brees McCraren, senior wideout-defensive back Parker Pelletier, junior linebacker Jace Springer (6-2, 220), junior running back Anthony Wilhite, senior defensive back Julian Robles, and junior receiver-defensive back Kamden Gambrell.

9. GILBERT: There's no escaping competition for Gilbert when it comes to region opponents. The Tigers have hovered at or just below .500 in recent years, but have also qualified for the playoffs the past two seasons thanks to the caliber of folks they face. Gilbert possesses more experience than most years on both sides of the ball. Improvement on defense, however, is paramount to reaching the postseason and if there making any kind of run. The Tigers gave up 421 points, far and away the most in the region. Coach Derek Zellner will employ a new defensive scheme to generate improvement. The key returning first-team all-region performer is senior linebacker Daniel Fulton, who amassed 140 tackles. Linebacker mates Wyatt Zellner and Angel Hernandez form a nice trio. Zellner has competition going at quarterback after five seasons of Plummers (Jack and Will). How well the new defense is picked up and the hope of ensuing improvement drives the Tigers' destiny this season.

10. SUNNYSLOPE: Sunnyslope works in new coach Sam Jacobs, a veteran with several stops as an assistant mostly in the West Valley. The Vikings need to replace several offensive skill spots, including quarterback and receiving corps. Jacobs believes the running game will be the team's forte with several veteran linemen back. Defense is deep in the secondary and good experience returns up front. Sunnyslope qualified for the playoffs last year, finishing 6-5 and losing in the opening round to Cienega by three. A new set of region opponents are in store for the Vikings - Desert Mountain, McClintock, Cactus Shadows, Paradise Valley and Barry Goldwater.

** - Waiting approval to play games as of Sept. 21.*

5A Conference Team-By-Team Preview



Verrado's Logan Gingg rushed for 1,412 yards and 20 touchdowns last year. (Kevin French photo/MaxPreps)

By Les Willsey
azpreps365.com

5A EAST REGION

Campo Verde

Head Coach: Ryan Freeman.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 10-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Caden Calloway (5-9, 170), 1,739 rushing yards, 22 TDs, 137 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. OG-NG Jake Leighty (6-0, 230); Sr. T Hayden Preston (6-2, 240); Sr. TE Jagar Hieger (5-10, 200); Jr. G Hunter Seelye (6-2, 240).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DE Freddie Goodson (6-2, 185), 41 tackles, 3 sacks, 2 INT; Sr. OLB Marc Liano (5-11, 180), 79 tackles, 7 sacks; Sr. DB Chris Villalobos (5-8, 160), 43 tackles, 4 INT; Sr. DT Riley Crump (5-8, 195), 25 tackles, 2.5 sacks; Jr. DB Noah Borchard (6-1, 175), 43 tackles; Jr. LB Connor Calloway (6-0, 195).

Also keep an eye on: Jr. RB-LB Matthew Reising (6-0, 190); So. TE-DL Majel Inzunza Morones (6-2, 215); Jr. WR Jersey Blassingame (5-7, 150); Jr. WR Boston Williamson (5-7, 150).

Strengths of offense: Returning all-region RB Caden Calloway. Three returning starters on the line. Returning HB-FB Jagar Hieger. Depth at running back.

Strengths of defense: Returning experience in the secondary and linebackers spots. Players with playoff experience.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Experience at wide receiver and quarterback. Replacing three-year starter at MLB. Let down after last year's success. Getting new guys up to speed with the limited interaction time.

2020 expectations: Build off last year's success. Build team unity and trust. Improve our passing efficiency. Improve third down efficiency on defense. Start season strong and build on momentum.

Gilbert

Head Coach: Derek Zellner.

Years as school's head coach: 6th year, 18-34 record.

2019 record: 4-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB-DB Jayloni Pizarro (5-11, 175), 426 rushing yards, 1 TD, 267 receiving yards; Sr. LB-RB Daniel Fulton (5-11, 195); Sr. LB-TE Wyatt Zellner (6-0, 200), 181 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Sr. OL-DL Garrett Budge (5-11, 255); Sr. QB Gavin Goulette (6-3, 195); Sr. DB-WR Anthony Yanez (5-8, 160), 179 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. OL-DL Jayden Gilbert (6-3, 220); Sr. OL-DL Roman Honaker (6-1, 200); Sr. P-K Ilya Uvaydov (5-8, 155); Jr. WR-DB/QB Evan Smith (5-10, 170), 147 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. OL-DL Anthony Taylor (6-3, 220).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB-DB Jayloni Pizarro (5-11, 175), 43 tackles; Sr. LB-RB Daniel Fulton (5-11, 195), 140 tackles; Sr. LB-TE Wyatt Zellner (6-0, 200), 111 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. LB-DE Angel Hernandez (6-1, 215), 41 tackles; Sr. OL-DL Garrett Budge (5-11, 255), 36 tackles, 2 sacks; Sr. DB-WR Anthony Yanez (5-8, 160), 40 tackles; Sr. WR-DB/QB Evan Smith (5-10, 170), 18 tackles; Sr. OL-DL Anthony Taylor (6-3, 220); Sr. DB-SS Caden Timmick (5-10, 175) 50 tackles; So. DB Noah Narain (5-9, 170); So. LB-SS-RB Cooper Zellner (5-10, 165).

Also keep an eye on: So. RB-LB-DB Carter Dickie (5-8, 150); So. DB-WR Tylon Thompson (5-11, 160); So. QB Sean Fogel (6-1, 175); So. DE-OLB Josh Hansen (6-1, 175); Jr. OL Kaden Martinelli (6-2, 265).

Strengths of offense: Returning experienced skill players familiar with the system. Returning linemen with varsity game experience. Good mix of depth. Improved coaching staff by positional groups.

Strengths of defense: Improved coaching staff by positional groups. New scheme. Returning linebacker corps. Good number of returning starters and experience. Good young talent that can contribute from the start.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Who takes control at quarterback. Build run game to match passing game. How quickly pick up new defense. Defense must improve.

2020 expectations: Play better defense. Improve running game. Make playoffs and win playoff game(s). Play with passion.

Horizon

Head Coach: Ty Wisdom.

Years as school's head coach: 5th year, 28-15 record.

2019 record: 9-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR Avery Lambert (5-9, 185), 434 receiving yards, 8 TDs; Sr. OL Erich Berg (6-4, 255); Sr. OL Jackson Sebastiani (6-4, 290); Jr. RB Bryan Bogardus (5-10, 190), 604 rushing yards, 10 TDs; Sr. OL Nathan Cender (6-2, 290).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB, Landon Mumford (6-1, 190), 58 tackles; Sr. DB Ryan Peplinski (5-10, 160), 25 tackles; Sr. DL Elijah Mursalat (6-2, 255), 17 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: So. TE-DE Mathew Klopfenstein (6-4, 235); Jr. DB-WR Chase Jung (6-1, 180); Jr. K Grady Gross (5-10, 180); Sr. OL JD Klever (6-4, 330); Jr. DE Quentin Bouise-Hamilton (6-3, 245).

Strengths of offense: Biggest OL we've had in five years. Both RB returning.

Strengths of defense: Depth on line and in secondary.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Leadership. Lost a great senior class.

2020 expectations: Open division qualifier. 5A state championship. 3.3 Team GPA.

Maricopa

Head Coach: Brandon Harris.

Years as school's head coach: 3rd year, 8-13 record.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL/DL Quintone Green (6-0, 240); Sr. OL-DL Hunter Taylor (6-6, 260); Sr. OL-DL Zach Owen (6-3, 270); Jr. OL-DL Lincoln Mlejnek (6-3, 260); Jr. OL-DL DaShawn McDaniel (6-3, 250); Sr. RB Mister Chavis (5-10, 180), 779 rushing yards, 5 TDs, 149 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Sr. WR-DB Tylek Mooney (5-9, 175), 110 rushing yards, 3 TDs, 135 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. WR-DB Steven Forrester (5-8, 170); Sr. TE-DE Merhauti Xepera (6-5, 220), 173 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. WR-DB Zion Morgan (5-11, 180), 100 receiving yards.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Racellus Johnson (5-11, 210), 53 tackles; Sr. SS Patrick Garcia (5-11, 180), 82 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. OL-DL Quintone Green (6-0, 240), 18 tackles, 2 sacks; Sr. OL-DL Hunter Taylor (6-6, 260); Sr. WR-DB Tylek Mooney (5-9, 175), 53 tackles 2 INT; Sr. TE-DE Merhauti Xepera (6-5, 220), 16 tackles; Jr. LB-RB TySean Mooney (5-10, 180).

Also keep an eye on: Sr. WR Jacob Hammans (6-0, 170); Jr. WR Jayvien Beaten Harrison (5-8, 160); Sr. WR Michael Moore (5-9, 155).

Strengths of offense: Experience, speed and athleticism.

Strengths of defense: Athleticism, High football IQ and physical.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Quarterback and depth. Will there be a season?

2020 expectations: Give ourselves a chance to win late.

Notre Dame Prep

Head Coach: George Prelock.

Years as school's head coach: 4th year, 37-4 record.

2019 record: 11-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB JD Roberts (6-2, 230), 340 rushing yards, 20 TDs; Sr. WR Damien Owens (6-1, 180), 604 receiving yards; 7 TDs; Sr. OT Max LaVoy (6-3, 275); Sr. WR Sean Lehman (5-10, 180); Jr. WR Gavin Smith (5-10, 175), 320 receiving yards, 3 TDs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DE JD Roberts (6-2, 230), 77 tackles, 9.5 sacks; Sr. SS James Jaquint (6-1, 190), 69 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. WR Sean Lehman (5-10, 180), 13 tackles; Sr. CB Jake Jazwin (6-0, 180); Sr. DE Brady Blessing (6-0, 200), 28 tackles, 2 sacks.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. RB Ian Williamson (5-8, 170); Jr. WR/DB John Ruvo (5-10, 170); Jr. LB Brock Naverson (6-0, 210); Sr. QB Tyler Schweigert (6-1, 185).

Strengths of offense: Depth at running back and wide receiver.

Strengths of defense: Both cornerbacks return along with strong safety. 5A Breakout POY JD Roberts is back.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Four offensive linemen graduated as well as all our starting linebackers.

2020 expectations: Play one game at a time and focus on the task at hand.

Saguaro

Head Coach: Jason Mohns.

Years as school's head coach: 9th year, 97-12 record.

2019 record: 11-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR Denzel Burke (6-1, 180), 313 receiving yards, 4 TDs; Sr. OT Bram Walden (6-4, 285); Jr. OG Parker Brailsford (6-3, 285); Sr. ATH-QB-TE Xander Werner (6-3, 230), 284 receiving yards, 4 TDs; Sr. C Isaac Pimbert (6-0, 205).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DE Quintin Somerville (6-4, 240), 68 tackles, 7.5 sacks; Jr. OLB Tristan Monday (6-4, 230), 58 tackles, 11 sacks; Sr. DT Alani Maafu (6-2, 265), 53 tackles, 3 sacks; Sr. DT Darriion Dalton (6-3, 285), 60 tackles, 5.5 sacks; Sr. DB Denzel Burke (6-1, 180), 2 INT; Jr. S Javen Jacobs (6-0, 185), 29 tackles, 2 INT; Jr. S Jordan Ginnis (5-10, 185), 14 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. DT-OT Micah Lutu (6-2, 265); Jr. OG Leo Tuituu (6-3, 285); Jr. OT Raul Aguilar (6-5, 305); Sr. RB Josh Baxter (5-10, 200); Jr. QB Ridge Docekal (6-3, 200) (transfer) Sr. DB Anthony Gonzales (6-0, 177).

Strengths of offense: Line, strength of wide receiver corps and talent at quarterback.

Strengths of defense: Line, secondary, toughness and football IQ.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Replacing two-year starting quarterback, leading rusher and starting linebacker.

2020 expectations: Get back on the field and compete for Open Division championship.

SA WEST I REGION

Betty Fairfax

Head Coach: Brandon Johnson.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 6-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Flavio Beltran (5-10, 200), 529 passing yards, 7 TDs; Sr. OL Deven Bryson (6-2, 250); Sr. WR James Mackey IV (5-6, 155); Jr. TE Quincy Mingo (6-0, 210), 207 receiving yards; Sr. OL Demetrius White (6-0, 220).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. LB Isidro Coronado (5-11, 200), 44 tackles; Sr. DB Darion Stevenson (5-6, 160), 10 tackles; Sr. DB Tyree Owens (5-6, 155), 16 tackles; Jr. FS Sam Boson (6-3, 170); Sr. DE Matthew Ranger (6-1, 200), 4 sacks; Sr. DE Zeke Hodo (6-2, 215), 14 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. LB-RB Preston Gaitlin (6-0, 180).

Strengths of offense: Experienced quarterback.

Strengths of defense: Experienced linebackers and secondary.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Will there be enough time to be prepared.

2020 expectations: Win all home games. Win region. Go to the playoffs.

IRONWOOD

Coach: Chris Rizzo.

2019 record: 6-5

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. Mekhi Mannino-Faison (6-3, 205) 174 receiving yards, 5 TDs; Sr. Sebastian Fiery-hardimon (5-8, 165) 300 receiving yards 2 TDs; Sr. QB Will Haskell (6-4, 205) 60 percent completion, 1,401 passing yards, 20 TDs; 965 rushing yards and 14 TDs, 2,366 total yards; Sr. Elijah Sanders (5-9, 155) 504 receiving yards, 8 TDs; Junior Shima (5-9, 165) 213 rushing yards, 2 TDs.

Millennium

Head Coach: Lamar Early.

Years as school's head coach: 4th year, 22-12 record.

2019 record: 9-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL-DL Mikaele Fuamatu (6-4, 290); Sr. OL-DL Michael Stephens (6-5 275); Sr. RB-DB Jaylen Hawkins (6-1, 185), 107 rushing yards, 1 TD; Sr. WR-DB Elijah Lewis (6-1, 175), 196 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Sr. WR-LB Talmadge Tanks (6-2, 190), 84 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Sr. OL-DL Spencer Reid (6-1 225); Sr. OL-DL Albert Figueroa (6-2, 240); Sr. OL-LS Cade Marszalek (5-10, 265); Jr. TE-DE Sean Farney (6-2, 205).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL-DL Mikaele Fuamatu (6-4, 290, 23 tackles); Sr. OL-DL Michael Stephens (6-5, 275), 47 tackles; Sr. RB-DB Jaylen Hawkins (6-1, 185), 36 tackles; Sr. OL-DL Spencer Reid (6-1, 225), 37 tackles, 3 sacks; Jr. TE-DE Sean Farney (6-2, 205).

Also keep an eye on: So. WR-LB, Billy Bolick (5-9, 170); So. RB-DB, Shahid Wilson (5-9, 165); So. WR Kyan Fields (5-10, 160); So. TE-DE, Kyan Roseland (5-10, 165); So. OL-DL Dylan Thomas (5-10, 255).

Strengths of offense: Line. Willing to learn and get better. Love to compete.

Strengths of defense: Have some speed. Have returners that played in 2019.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Youth and depth. Where will leadership come after graduating 35 seniors.

2020 expectations: Get bigger, stronger and faster. Find leadership.

Sunrise Mountain

Head Coach: Steve Decker.

Years as school's head coach: 5th year, 37-11 record.

2019 record: 8-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR-KR Zeke Marshall (5-9, 165), 556 receiving yards, 8 TDs; Sr. C Robbie Maple (6-2, 270); Sr. OL Mason Tamayo (5-10, 235); Sr. OL Cameron Hughes (6-3, 285); Sr. WR Bryce Cord (5-10, 170), 113 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Jr. TE John Hart (6-3, 220).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB EJ Anderson (6-2, 175), 32 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. LB Owen Thomas (6-1, 190), 51 tackles, 3 sacks; Sr. LB-S Micah Scott (6-3, 195), 34 tackles; 3 sacks; Sr. DB Steven Hoffman (6-0, 170), 31 tackles 3 INT; Sr. LB Tommy Arnold (5-11, 205), 69 tackles, 4 sacks; Sr. DL Will Howland (6-1, 215), 29 tackles; Sr. S Brandon Bogard (5-11, 180), 48 tackles, 3 INT.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. WR Chase Birdsong (5-9, 160); Jr. WR Jae Jae Washington (5-9, 160); Jr. OL Matthew Hapner (6-0, 265); So. QB Adam Damante (6-0, 160); Jr. P-K Easton Black (6-2, 170).

Strengths of offense: Three returning linemen. Two returning running backs.

Strengths of defense: Three returning starters in at linebacker and in secondary.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Inexperience at quarterback. Finding replacements at wide receiver and line

2020 expectations: Compete every week. See continued improvement. Make playoffs.

Verrado

Head Coach: Shawn Copeland.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 5-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Logan Gingg (5-10, 195), 1,412 rushing yards, 20 TDs; Sr. OL Jager Stigsell (6-3, 265); Sr. WR Isaiah Negron (5-11, 165), 337 receiving, 2 TDs; Sr. WR Jacob Cerna (6-0, 175).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DL Will Carpenter (5-11, 235), 15 tackles; Jr. DL Nicolas Rodriguez (5-10, 240), 13 tackles; Sr. LB Justice Sosnicki (6-0, 225), 72 tackles; Sr. LB Austin Bilski (5-9, 180), 74 tackles; Sr. DB Jayden Harrington (5-11, 180), 38 tackles, 3 INT; So. DB Colin Tibbs (5-10, 170), 46 tackles; Jr. S Cameron Coronado (5-8, 160), 65 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. QB Cutter Briscoe (5-11, 175).

Strengths of offense: Running backs and wide receiver.

Strengths of defense: Lots of experience. Solid secondary.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Offensive line.

2020 expectations: Continue to grow as a team. Players holding each other accountable. Continue growing as a family.

REGION NOTES: Ironwood could make some noise in its new region. It is one of two teams in the region with a returning, standout quarterback. Coach Chris Rizzo has managed back-to-back winning seasons leading the Eagles. They made the playoffs last year and have a solid quarterback in senior Will Haskell, who accounted for 2,364 yards and 34 TDs (passing and rushing) plus senior receiver Elijah Sanders.

5A WEST REGION II

Agua Fria

Head Coach: George Martinez.

Years as school's head coach: 3rd year, 11-9 record.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB-DB Tristen Sanchez Clark (6-0, 180), 270 passing yards, 2 TDs, 181 rushing yards, 2 TDs; Sr. WR Dylan Griffith (6-1, 185), 59 receiving yards; Sr. OL Jahliel Flores (6-4, 250); Sr. OL Herman Carranza (6-0, 260); Jr. RB-WR Javonte Trimble (5-7, 150), 102 rushing yards, 1 TD.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB-TE-K-P Camden Weeg (6-3, 225), 106 tackles, 3.5 sacks; Sr. DL A.J. Auau (5-11, 320), 58 tackles; Sr. DE-OLB Rodney Young Jr. (5-9, 185), 78 tackles, 8 sacks; Sr. LB-FB Angel Martinez (5-8, 175) 89 tackles; Jr. DE Keyonne Charleston (6-1, 225), 22 tackles, 4 sacks; Sr. DL Alejandro Ramirez (6-2, 275); Sr. DB Matt Rivas (5-9, 150); Jr. LB Luis Lomeli (5-7, 155), 12 tackles, 2 INT.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. CB-WR Jayden Green (5-9, 170); Sr. CB Durnell Trimble (6-0, 180); Jr. RB Brian Fullwood (5-7, 170); Sr. RB Abdur Abdul-malik (5-7, 165); Jr. LB Angel Oliva (5-8, 180).

Strengths of offense: Quarterback started the last 4 games in 2019. Receiving corps - Griffith and Weeg top receivers. Line that got a lot of playing time in 2019.

Strengths of defense: Linebackers. All return led by Weeg, Martinez, Lomeli and Oliva. Line. All return -- Young, Auau, Charleston and Ramirez.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Replacing all graduated starters in secondary.

2020 expectations: Win region championship and make playoffs.

Canyon View

Head Coach: Michael VanKirk.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: No varsity schedule.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Ryan Finch (5-11, 190); Jr. RB Syles Le (5-11, 195); Jr. RB Matthew Flores (5-9, 185); Jr. WR Anthony Munoz (5-10, 170); Jr. TE Ethan Jewell (6-1, 190); Jr. WR Walker Foster (5-10, 180); Jr. LT Bleu Uphold (6-2, 285); Jr. LG Kanoa Blackhair (6-2, 235); Jr. C Tyler Anderson (5-10, 185); Jr. RG James Martinez (5-11, 215); Jr. RT Marcus Morin (6-5, 240).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DB Josh Cobos (6-1, 165); Jr. DE Ethan Jewell (6-1, 190); Jr. DB Deonne McClelland (5-9, 160); So. FS Ashton Zacher (5-10, 170); Jr. SS Jeffrey Hoelzel (5-8, 175); Jr. LB Walker Foster (5-10, 180); Jr. LB Daniel Cordova (5-11, 190); Jr. LB Isaiah Fimbres (5-9, 180); Jr. DE Casey Heidcamp (6-1, 195); Jr. DT Lucas Stewart (5-11, 230).

Also keep an eye on: So. OL Keleb Hefner (6-0, 205); So. LB Keegan Landis (5-11, 185); So. WR Casey Moore (5-9, 170).

Strengths of offense: Great leader at quarterback. Depth at running back.

Strengths of defense: Depth at linebacker. Speed and coverability in secondary.

Team's biggest question mark(s): How will we react being first year varsity with just juniors and sophomores. Can we stay focused on task of winning and learning

2020 expectations: Get our first varsity win in school history. Be competitive in every game. Finish season no worse than 5-5.

Raymond S. Kellis

Head Coach: Stephen Hogg.

Years as school's head coach: 3rd year, 1-19 record.

2019 record: 1-9.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB-QB Andrew Palacio (6-2, 175), 261 rushing yards, 1 TD; Sr. RB Alex Medina (5-8, 165); Jr. OL Ezekiel Pacheco (6-4, 280); Jr. OL Sergio Mazon (5-10, 240); Sr. WR Pedro Soto (5-10, 180).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. FS Andrew Palacio (6-2, 175), 70 tackles; Sr. DE-OLB Brendon Nord (6-0, 185), 33 tackles; Sr. LB Pedro Soto (5-10, 180), 52 tackles; Jr. NG Sergio Mazon (5-10, 240); Jr. MLB Tristian Felix (6-1, 215); Sr. OLB Aiden Kirkwood (5-9, 165), 21 tackles; Sr. CB Vince Espinoza (5-7, 140).

Also keep an eye on: Jr. DL Ezekiel Pacheco (6-4 280); Jr. QB Issac Matthews (5-7, 135).

Strengths of offense: Best playmaker returning in Palacio. Two young linemen returning with some experience

Strengths of defense: Returners at each position group. Familiarity with defense and coaches.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Wide receiver and depth.

2020 expectations: With a more favorable schedule this season, we expect to be able to compete with every team we play.

Willow Canyon

Head Coach: Justin Stangler.

Years as school's head coach: 3rd year, 7-13 record.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. OL Joseph Hill OL (6-1-275); Jr. OL Santino Servant (6-4, 305).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DL Josiah Gardner (6-1, 280), 23 tackles; Sr. DL Dylan Belnavis (6-0, 245), 24 tackles; Sr. DL Joseph Semien (6-0, 190), 30 tackles, 3.5 sacks.

Strengths of offense: A lot of sophomores got varsity game experience.

Strengths of defense: A lot of sophomores and juniors got varsity game experience.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Who is going to step up and earn a starting position.

2020 expectations: Be competitive every week regardless of who we play and win our region.

REGION NOTES: Independence hasn't won a region game since 2017 and perhaps a few new opponents can open the door for improvement. The Patriots were 1-9 last season and have not posted a winning season since 2009. ... Kofa hired its most recent coach -- Dave Bartlett - in May. Bartlett is the Kings' fifth head coach in the past decade. Kofa settles into 5A from 6A and hasn't won a game since 2017. ... West Point is the Tolleson district's newest school. With its first junior class this year, the Dragons jump into varsity competition.

5A NORTH REGION

Barry Goldwater

Head Coach: Frank Lautt.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 6-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. Earnest Greenwood RB (5-5, 150), 1,761 rushing yards, 23 TDs; Jr. TE Alomar Armenta (6-3, 215); Sr. OG Eduardo Reyes (5-11, 240); Sr. OC Colin Applegate (6-2, 200); Sr. OG Nathan Rodriguez (5-11, 210); Sr. WR Brody Beckman (6-2, 180), 236 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Sr. WR David Racicot (5-9, 155); Jr. QB Jesse Martinez (5-10, 145), 191 passing yards, 2 TDs; Jr. QB CJ Erickson (5-9, 155).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. LB Joe Vakameilalo (6-0, 180), 87 tackles; Sr. LB Nathan Rodriguez (5-11, 210), 53 tackles; Sr. DT Jaylan Conley (6-3, 275), 36 tackles; Jr. DE Alomar Armenta (6-3, 215), 29 tackles, 2 sacks; Sr. DB Noah Mejia (5-9, 155), 14 tackles; Sr. DB David Racicot (5-9, 155), 17 tackles; Jr. DB Yandell Wynn (5-9, 150), 69 tackles; Sr. SS-DB Tyler Grijalva (5-6, 145), 86 tackles, 2 sacks; Sr. Earnest Greenwood DB (5-5, 150), 28 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. K Amar Mujanovic (6-5, 180); Jr. TE-DE Seth Marshall (6-4, 215); Sr. LB-FB Andrew Walterscheid (6-0, 205); Sr. RB-DB Josh Caldwell (5-5, 145); Sr. T Dominic Rosas (5-11, 260).

Strengths of defense: Lots of experience. Toughness and speed.

Team's biggest question mark(s): How fast we blend as a team.

2020 expectations: Build on what we started last year and improve in each phase of the game.

QB1: Ironwood's Haskell comfortable in his own skin, pocket

By Leo Tocherman
azpreps365.com

Will Haskell Jr. is doing quite fine following his blockers and heart.

The Ironwood senior won't conform to the standards of others who want him to change positions. Utilizing his athletic gifts from the pocket or on the run is what Haskell prefers.

The dual threat quarterback is charting his own course, and you're either riding with him or not.

"That lit a fire in me," he said about his non-quarterback believers. "I just have to prove them wrong. I'm a 6-4, 200-pound Black kid who can run a 4.5 and jump out of the gym. But I'm not going to give up being a quarterback to please everybody else."

In his college commitment video, Haskell reiterated that he isn't a running back, wide receiver or defensive back before revealing San Diego State as his next stop.

He's a quarterback, something San Diego State, unlike other schools, wants Haskell to play. This might also come as a surprise to others, but Haskell is also a darn good volleyball player.

One of Haskell's mentors, Marcy Robb, Ironwood's recently retired long-time volleyball coach, encouraged Haskell to play the sport. Track and field is often the spring sports choice for football players, but Haskell—always plotting his own path—picked volleyball.

In the process, he found a new passion as well as an advocate.

"I call her Momma Rob," said Haskell of his former volleyball coach. "She will do anything for my success. She's someone close to my heart and would do anything to protect her."

Robb taught AP biology and human physiology at Ironwood.

"I pushed my team academically," Robb said. "They also knew that if you played on my team you were part of my family. That gives me, I told them, the right to veto anything. We don't play with education. It comes first. That's where you find your future."

Under Robb's disciplined, motherly approach, Haskell evolved into a first-team All-Region volleyball player and helped his team upset the No. 1 seed in the first round of the 5A 2019 state tournament.

There's another person in Haskell's corner, his dad Will Sr., that's guiding him. Will Sr. played football at Washington State.

"He (Will Sr.) always pushes me every single day to be the hardest worker," said the three-star quarterback, who was also recruited by Duke. "To be level headed and stay humble. Don't let the noise get to your head."

He heard from the haters this offseason when a video of him making some acrobatic throws went viral.

Some criticized him for showing off his jumping ability while throwing the ball.

"People are always going to hate," Haskell said. "But how are you going to take it? It doesn't affect me. I'm a normal 17 year old playing football trying to make it to the next level, perfecting my craft and having some fun with it."

"I work so hard on and off the field, and when there are no cameras I'm in the garage lifting."

Pound for pound, Haskell is one of the strongest players on Ironwood's football team.

He's also one of the most grounded kids on the team.



Ironwood quarterback Will Haskell hears the whispers about changing positions but politely dismisses the notion. (Kevin French photo/Max-Preps)

"He is soft spoken," said Ironwood coach Christopher Rizzo of his quarterback. "He plays with such a swagger and command. But he's reserved by nature. In the film room he's a yes, sir no, sir guy. You don't have to manage his personality." Haskell started his high school career at Deer Valley before transferring to Ironwood, a program that hasn't won at least 7 games since 2011.

He could have transferred to an established Arizona power. But Ironwood's past didn't matter to Haskell.

He's his own man.

"I know where I stand," Haskell said. "I wanted to play for a smaller school and leading my guys Friday night and showing them why Ironwood High should get the pub just like any other school because we put in the work."

Cactus Shadows

Head Coach: Mike Hudnutt.

Years as school's head coach: 7th year, 31-32 record.

2019 record: 5-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Jayden White (6-2, 200), 1,163 passing yards, 12 TDs; Sr. OL-DL Noah Oliver (6-2, 350); Sr. WR-QB Tyler Reynolds (6-0, 185); Sr. RB-S Dylan Bernaud (5-10, 190), 236 rushing yards, 5 TDs; Sr. TE-DE Dylan Brown (6-2, 205); Sr. TE-DE David Lutz (6-2, 210); Sr. C-LB Ryan Wintermeyer (6-0, 200); Jr. RB Mason Benvenuto (5-9, 175); Sr. WR-S Bruin Smith (6-0, 175).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. S-LB Aiden Beardsley (6-1, 200), 14 tackles; Sr. S-WR Tanner Dimond (5-9, 175), 38 tackles; Sr. LB Hafeez Ahmed-Momoh (6-1, 225); Sr. LB Jaxon Gomez (6-0, 190), 11 tackles; Sr. S Jack McKernan (5-10, 180), 14 tackles; Jr. CB Michael Macdonald (5-9, 160).

Also keep an eye on: So. WR Logan Foster (6-0, 160); Jr. P Brayden Hasher (5-10, 160); So. RB Jaivon Swecker (5-7, 155); Jr. WR Gavyn Ramirez (5-10, 165).

Strengths of offense: Returning quarterback. Depth at receiver, running back and quarterback. Improved passing game.

Strengths of defense: Six returnees. Experienced line and secondary.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Rebuilding of offensive line. Work done during the pandemic.

2020 expectations: Win 8 to 10 games. Qualify for playoffs. Win state.

McClintock

Head Coach: Corbin Smith.

Years as school's head coach: 4th year, 17-14 record.

2019 record: 7-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Jaden Mason (5-10, 182), 994 rushing yards, 15 TDs; Jr. OL Noah Sanchez (5-10, 235); Sr. OL Carlos Pena; Sr. OL Khash Saxton (6-4, 285); Sr. OL Jesus Longoria (6-2, 242); Sr. WR Ben Roberts (5-10, 167), 105 receiving yards; Jr. RB Gabe Brittain (5-7, 167); Sr. WR Jacob Torres (5-8, 160).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Ben Roberts (5-10, 167), 82 tackles, 3 INT; Sr. DT Khash Saxton (6-4, 285), 41 tackles, 4 sacks; Jr. NG Noah Sanchez (5-10, 235), 29 tackles; Jr. LB Gabe Brittain (5-7, 167), 43 tackles; Sr. DT Scott Jones (6-1, 220), 47 tackles, 5 sacks; Sr. LB Dominic Radick (5-11, 189), 70 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. RB Prince Conte (6-0, 180).

Strengths of offense: Line and running backs.

Strengths of defense: Depth and line.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Quarterback and secondary.

2020 expectations: Consistency.

Paradise Valley

Head Coach: Greg Davis.

Years as school's head coach: 7th year, 40-26 record.

2019 record: 5-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. OL Chris Rayas (5-11, 230); Jr. OL Armondo Neves (6-6, 305); Sr. RB- Mike Fitch (5-10, 165), 276 rushing yards; 275 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. OL-LS Ben Lisk (5-9, 230).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Braden Weissman (5-11, 185), 71 tackles; Sr. DL Andrew Vescova (5-10, 230), 32 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Lisk. nationally ranked long snapper.

Strengths of offense: Line with decent size and experience. Hard runners in backfield.

Strengths of defense: Very smart players that understand the scheme. Coach Darin Robidoux, defensive coordinator for me in the state runner-up game 2015, is back to call the defense.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Lack of experience having graduated 26 seniors. Quarterback will be won by first-year QB.

2020 expectations: Make sure that our knowledge of the game helps close the gap with the lack of experience. Get more players to come out. Give our community something to get excited about.

South Mountain

Head Coach: Byron Evans.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 7-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Amier Boyd (5-11, 160), 1,835 passing yards, 25 TDs, 362 rushing yards, 3 TDs; Jr. RB-WR Jaylen Huckaby, 432 rushing yards, 4 TDs; 112 receiving yards, 6 TDs; So. RB Jerry Vaughn III, 101 rushing yards, 3 TDs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. SS Jeremiah Price (5-6, 150), 44 tackles, Jr. MLB Casey David (5-7, 135), 25 tackles; Jr. LB Ja'Juan Kennedy, 29 tackles; So. LB Sergio Mendoza, 31 tackles; Sr. SS Evonte Suddeth (5-9, 155), 2 INT.

Sunnyslope

Head Coach: Sam Jacobs.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 6-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR Spencer Hochstein (6-3, 185), 164 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Jr. RB Xander Georgoulis (5-11, 170), 403 rushing yards; Sr. WR Ashton Yurkiw (5-11, 180), 286 receiving yards, 1 TD; Sr. WR David Sing (6-1, 185), 177 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Sr. OL Dylan Shillington (6-2 230); Sr. OL Richard Kwete (6-3, 240); Jr. OL Eddie Hicks (6-1, 240); Sr. OL Michael Lehner. (5-10, 247).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. CB Spencer Hochstein (6-3, 185), 33 tackles; Sr. S Ashton Yurkiw (5-11, 180), 42 tackles, 5 INT; Sr. OLB David Sing (6-1 185), 71 tackles; Sr. OL Dylan Shillington (6-2 230), 33 tackles; Sr. DL Richard Kwete (6-3, 240), 13 tackles; Sr. CB Marlon Whitfield (5-10, 155), 18 tackles; Jr. S Sam Woznicki (5-10, 165), 31 tackles; Sr. DL Angel Rameriz (5-11, 230), 32 tackles.

Strengths of offense: Four returning OL and starting running back. Run game should be our strength.

Strengths of defense: Six returners in the secondary with starting experience. All smart players. Three returning DL with starting experience.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Replacing three-year starter at quarterback and two wide receivers.

2020 expectations: Making playoffs always our goal.

REGION NOTES: Desert Mountain begins its second year under coach Conrad Hamilton. As a member of a new region, several of its foes were region rivals the past two years. The Wolves look to improve on a 3-7 record. ... South Mountain made strides the past two seasons, including its best record of the decade (7-3) last year. It didn't net the Jaguars a playoff berth, but bodes well for the future. Alum Byron Evans, who played at UofA and with the Philadelphia Eagles, tries to keep South moving forward.

5A CENTRAL REGION

Alhambra

Head Coach: Chris Crockett.

Years as school's head coach: 3rd year, 3-17 record.

2019 record: 1-9.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR Evan Maldonado (5-8, 160), 172 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Sr. OT Thomas Corniea (5-10, 250); Sr. C Amarey Reid (5-10, 180); Sr. WR Trey Vaughn (5-9, 155); Sr. OL Josue Rodriguez (5-11, 260); Jr. OL Marcos Cabata (5-10 250); Sr. OL Logan LeBarrio (5-9, 250); Jr. WR Moses Difuti (5-9, 150); Sr. WR Angel Corrales (5-8, 150).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Evan Maldonado (5-8, 160); Sr. DL Thomas Corniea (5-10, 250); Sr. LB Trey Vaughn (5-9, 155); Sr. DL Josue Rodriguez (5-11, 260); Jr. OLB Moses Difuti (5-9, 150); Sr. OLB Angel Corrales (5-8, 150); Sr. DB Reggie Dobbs (6-0, 150); Sr. DB Gabriel Melchor (5-10, 150).

Strengths of offense: Four returning starting linemen.

Strengths of defense: Two returning starters in secondary.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Depth and sophomores transitioning to varsity.

2020 expectations: Win first game and finish with winning record.

Apollo

Head Coach: Aaron Walls.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. FB-DL Elias Guerrero III (6-2, 255); Sr. TE Johvany Gomez (6-4, 230), 178 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Sr. TE-LB Abel Gashwazra (6-2, 220); Jr. OL-DL Alexis Sanchez (6-3, 300); Jr. OL Adam Delk (5-10, 280); Jr. OL Daniel Hernandez (6-3, 245); Sr. WR Eric Garcia (5-10, 145), 82 receiving yards.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DL Elias Guerrero III (6-2, 255), 43 tackles, 2 sacks; Sr. LB Abel Gashwazra (6-2, 220), 49 tackles; Jr. DL Alexis Sanchez (6-3, 300).

Strengths of offense: Multiple linemen returning.

Strengths of defense: A handful of leaders returning and familiar with a new defense introduced last year.

Team's biggest question mark(s): We will lose some pieces to transfers.

2020 expectations: Compete in our new region.

Camelback

Head Coach: Brandon McNutt.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. WR Anthony Williams (6-1, 170), 410 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Sr. WR Gillie Manriquez (5-9, 140); Sr. TE Cayden Ballard (6-1, 210); Sr. WR Montez Brown (5-10, 150); Sr. WR Estivan Lopez (5-8, 140); Sr. RB Isaiah Gamboa (5-8, 180), 252 rushing yards, 2 TDs; Jr. RB Edward Kentel (5-10, 200), 219 rushing yards, 3 TDs; Sr. OL Emilio Bernal (6-3, 300); Sr. OL Jahson Bernal (6-2, 250); Sr. OL Saul Corona (6-2, 320); Sr. OL Kaleb Crawley (6-7, 330).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DB Anthony Williams (6-1, 170); Sr. WR Gillie Manriquez (5-9, 140); Sr. LB Cayden Ballard (6-1, 210), 36 tackles 3 sacks; Sr. DB Montez Brown (5-10, 150); Sr. DB Estivan Lopez (5-8, 140), 14 tackles; Sr. LB Isaiah Gamboa (5-8, 180); Jr. DE Edward Kentel (5-10, 200), 31 tackles; 3.5 sacks; Sr. DT Emilio Bernal (6-3, 300), 16 tackles; Sr. DE Jahson Bernal (6-2, 250); Sr. DT Kaleb Crawley (6-7, 330), 17 tackles, 3 sacks; Jr. DB Dejon Packard (6-0, 180); Sr. DB John Duarte (5-8, 150).

Also keep an eye on: Jr. QB, Joe Martinez (6-0, 170); Sr. WR-DB, Zamir Pierce (6-1, 160); So. RB-DB Exzayvious West (5-6, 135); So. RB-LB Adrian Perez (5-6, 160); Sr. TE-LB Justin Ippolito (6-1, 190).

Strengths of offense: Return four starting linemen. Return both running backs. Loaded at wide receiver.

Strengths of defense: Return all four starting linemen. Loaded in the secondary. Unit had 12 interceptions last year.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Breaking in new quarterback, who was last year's backup.

2020 expectations: A winning record. Win the region. Qualify for playoffs.

Central

Head Coach: Chandler Hovik.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR Zion Holliman (5-11, 165), 131 rushing yards, 1 TD; 126 receiving yards; Sr. OL Marcus Chavez (6-1, 250); Sr. WR Chauncey Smith (5-8, 145); Jr. WR Carter Allen (5-11, 180), 435 receiving yards, 5 TDs; Jr. OL Fred Fowlkes (6-2, 225); Jr. RB Isaac Duarte (5-10, 190), 205 rushing yards.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Corvel Simmons (6-2, 180), 62 tackles; Sr. DB Javon Keene (5-8, 150), 22 tackles, 4 INT; Sr. DB-LB Dru Smith (5-10, 160), 31 tackles; Sr. D Zion Holliman (5-11, 165), 20 tackles; Jr. DB Carter Allen (5-11, 180), 29 tackles; Jr. DL Isaac Moya (6-2, 275) 16 tackles, 2 sacks; Jr. LB Darius Pavatea (5-9, 170), 34 tackles; Jr. LB Isaac Duarte (5-10, 190), 35 tackles.

Strengths of offense: Receiver led by Allen.

Strengths of defense: Experience and speed.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Lack of size and experience at quarterback. Loss of standout two-way transfer.

2020 expectations: Play like every play is your last and for the player next to you.

Maryvale

Head Coach: Justin Watson.

Years as school's head coach: 3rd year, 1-19 record.

2019 record: 0-10.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. TE Diego Villalpando (6-1, 185); Sr. RB Saul Arias (5-8, 155), 224 rushing yards; Jr. RB Gabriel Aldana (5-5, 130), 122 receiving yards.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. MLB Diego Villalpando (6-1, 185), 49 tackles; Sr. S Saul Arias (5-8, 155); Jr. ATH Gabriel Aldana (5-5, 130).

Strengths of offense: Running game.

Strengths of defense: Aggressiveness.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Commitment.

2020 expectations: Staying healthy.

North Canyon

Head Coach: Adam Beene.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 1-9.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB/WR Caleb Wilkins (6-2, 210) 288 passing yards, 173 rushing yards, 100 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Sr. WR/RB Brandon Jackson (6-1, 170) 98 receiving yards, 271 rushing yards, 3 TDs. Sr. WR/RB Jayelin McMillan (5-10, 180) 107 rushing yards, 142 receiving yards; Jr. OL Raef Wilkins (6-2, 260); Sr. C Aaron Gonzales (6-0, 240); Sr. OT Karim Carvajal (6-4, 230); Sr. OL Aaron Ciesielski (6-0, 280).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DT Marcus Hubbard (6-4, 270) 43 tackles; Sr. CB Brandon Jackson (6-1, 170) 5 INT,, 23 tackles; Sr. LB Victor Amaro (6-0, 190) 29 tackles; Jr. CB/S Izzy Durgin (5-9, 160), 25 tackles, 1.5 sacks; Sr. S Desmon Bohannon (5-6, 130), 31 tackles; Sr. DL Taveo Harris (6-2, 260), 24 tackles; Jr. DL Raef Wilkins Raef Wilkins (6-2, 260) 13 tackles; Sr. S Daniel Campos (5-9, 160) 10 tackles; Sr. LB Clay LaCour (5-11, 180), 12 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. RB/S Brock Biley (5-9, 160); Sr. OL/DL Jack Hanes (6-4, 340); Sr. RB/S Drew Garcia (5-9, 160).

Strengths of offense: Experienced OL. Return 4/5 starters from 2019. More depth at skill positions than last year.

Strengths of defense: Returning a lot of experience. Should have a quality secondary. An elite defensive lineman

Team's biggest question mark(s): Will we learn what it takes to win and treat each snap like it has a life of its own.

2020 expectations: Winning record.

5A SONORAN I REGION

Marana Mountain View

Head Coach: Matt Johnson.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 6-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL-DL Misael Serrano (6-3, 285); Sr. RB-DB Kollins Opoku-Appoh (5-11, 195), 314 rushing yards, 2 TDs, 208 receiving yards, 4 TDs; Sr. RB-FB-LB Kobe Howell (6-3, 215); Sr. Hayden Parson WR-LB (6-4, 215), 235 rushing yards, 5 TDs, 169 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Sr. QB-DB Giovanni Ciaccio (6-2, 180), 678 passing yards, 10 TDs; Sr. FB-LB Teddy Walton (6-2, 220).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. FB-LB Daylin Smith (6-3, 220), 62 tackles, 6 sacks; Sr. RB-DB Kollins Opoku-Appoh (5-11, 195), 21 tackles, 2 INT; Sr. QB-DB Giovanni Ciaccio (6-2, 180).

Also keep an eye on: Jr. WR-DB Dillion Arvayo (5-11, 180); Jr. RB-LB Reid Ryan (6-2, 195); Jr. OL-DL Sam Hala'ufia (6-3, 225).

Strengths of offense: Ciaccio could be a great threat at quarterback.

Strengths of defense: Daylin Smith could be a great linebacker and lead our defense.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Depth on defense and experience on offensive line.

2020 expectations: Compete every week and for a playoff spot.

Salpointe Catholic

Head Coach: Eric Rogers.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 10-1.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB David Cordero (6-0, 180), 531 rushing yards, 9 TDs, 97 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Sr. WR Julian Robles (6-0, 180); Sr. OL Gabe Siqueiros (6-2, 275); Jr. QB Treyson Bourguet (6-2, 190), 805 passing yards, 13 TDs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Julian Robles (6-0, 180), 19 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. LB Breyton DePoint (6-0, 215); Sr. DL Brees McCraren (6-2, 250); Sr. WR-DB Parker Pelletier (6-0, 180); Jr. LB Jace Springer (6-2, 220); Jr. RB-LB, Anthony Wilhite (5-9, 175); Jr. WR-DB Kamden Gambrell (5-9 170).

Strengths of offense: We have a strong senior class with great leadership and chemistry. Return our starting quarterback and explosive back-wide receiver.

Strengths of defense: Speed and versatility.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Lack of varsity game experience and depth.

2020 expectations: Win our region and win a 5A or state championship.

REGION NOTES: Buena looks to post a fourth consecutive break-even or better season as coach Joe Thomas enters his sixth season at the helm. The Colts were 8-3 last year making the playoffs for the first time since 2012. Top rusher Tory Walters and top receiver Keyon Taylor are key returning players. ... Cholla managed to add an extra win last year and finished 2-8. The Chargers have a new head coach in Virgil Henderson and will mix it up with two new region opponents - playoff teams Buena and Salpointe - so the schedule isn't light. ... Desert View made strides last year notching six wins, doubling 2017 and 2018 win totals. A pair of 1,000-yard rushers last season, juniors Carlos Alvarez and Serge Gbowei-ah, accounted for 2,482 yards and 27 TDs as marquee players to watch. ... Flowing Wells has been the proverbial yo-yo of late in terms of wins and losses. The Caballeros finished 2-8 last year in Scott Cortese's first year, were 8-3 and made the playoffs in 2018, were 3-7 in 2017 and 6-5 and playoff-bound in 2016.

Desert Edge's Ortiz ready to attack new conference with same gritty attitude

By Leo Tocherman
azpreps365.com

Desert Edge senior cornerback Steven Ortiz Jr. describes his play style and persona on the field as "grimy."

"Physical, tough, a dog out on the field," Ortiz further explained. In that case, we recommend to Desert Edge opponents not to get any grime on themselves.

That gritty attitude helped propel Ortiz to the top of Arizona's defensive back rankings in the 2021 senior football class. It also caught the attention of college coaches.

After a junior season with 83 tackles, several Division I colleges rewarded Ortiz with scholarship offers, before ultimately signing with the University of Minnesota. Ortiz picked the Golden Gophers in part because of advice his late grandmother gave him at the beginning of his recruiting process.

"She always told me to go to the school that's best for you and has the best communication with you," he said. "My thinking process throughout the recruiting process was that communication was key, and Minnesota's communication was the best of all the schools that offered me."

Ortiz also chose Minnesota because he felt a strong connection and appreciation of his talent by the Golden Gophers coaching staff.

"Coach (P.J.) Fleck would bring the energy in the morning when I would wake up," he said. "He'd FaceTime me before school, after school and during lunch. I loved the school, the culture, the education and the cities."

COVID-19 made a traditional tour of the campus nearly impossible, leaving Ortiz to tour the Minnesota campus in a unique way.

"I was actually the first guy to do a virtual tour, and then all of the other colleges started hopping on the trend," Ortiz said. "It was so awesome, as if I was there. They had the coaching staff FaceTime me and walk around campus, seeing facilities."

Before heading to the Twin Cities, Ortiz wants to finish his high school career in style with a talented Desert Edge squad that received an enormous energy boost from co-head coaches and twin brothers Mark and Marcus Carter.

Ortiz quickly grew to love the dynamic the Carters brought from South Mountain High.

"I love this new coaching staff," Ortiz said. "Me and the boys always talk about in the group chat how much we love these guys. They are like our brothers slash our dads. They just bring so much energy and so much hype. They are so trustworthy, so the whole team loves them."

The appreciation is mutual.

"His (Ortiz) energy is just contagious and infectious," Marcus said. "He has everything set up for him to be great. I love him on film, but I love him even more off the film because he's such an amazing guy." Marcus noticed quickly Ortiz's ability to galvanize his teammates with his intense passion for the game of football.



Steven Ortiz Jr. looks clean, but Desert Edge's highly-touted defensive back and his crew are ready to get dirty in the 5A. (Mark Jones photo/MaxPreps)

"He's the first one there," Marcus said. "He leads by example, which is what I love about him the most. He's always cheering on his teammates. It's not about effort with him. He's always gonna do his best and he's always gonna try hard and always have guys around him gravitate towards him."

The Scorpions will step up in competition this season, making the jump from 4A to 5A.

The Carter twins coached in 5A at South Mountain last year, so they won't be surprised by their opponents.

"We're familiar with those teams in terms of the speed and the size," Marcus said. "You just gotta play who's in front of you."

This season, however, the team will look for a different result than its 28-23 loss to Mesquite in the 4A title game in 2019, a game Ortiz said he already flushed from his memory.

"I don't care who I play," Ortiz said. "All I know is me and my guys are gonna compete and come out as dogs. We were 5A our freshman year, and we're not scared to be 5A again. We're gonna come out grimy I promise you."

We warned you.

Desert Edge - 5A West I Region

Head Coach: Marcus and Mark Carter.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 10-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR Andrew Patterson (5-10, 170), 1,165 receiving yards, 11 TDs; 96 rushing yards, 2 TDs; Sr. OL Ethan Saldana (6-1, 265); Sr. OL Logan Corfield (6-5, 235); Jr. QB Adryan Lara (6-2, 190), 4,016 passing yards, 41 TDs; Jr. RB Jeryll McIntosh (5-11, 197), 1,325 rushing yards 12 TDs; Jr. OL Gavin Broschious (6-5, 290); Jr. WR Richard Kulik (5-11, 180), 305 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Jr. WR Fabian Lopez (5-9, 170).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Steven Ortiz Jr. (5-11, 180), 83 tackles; Sr. DB Mikey Ortiz (5-8, 165), 41 tackles, 4 INT; Sr. DB Marques Miller (6-0, 170), 21 tackles; Sr. LB Myles Hobbs (5-8, 175), 103 tackles; Sr. DL Roderick RJ

Roberts (6-2, 290), 56 tackles, 2.5 sacks; Sr. DB Cliffonte McDowell (5-9, 160), 70 tackles, 4 INT; Sr. DL-OL Maximus Garcia (6-0, 250), 32 tackles, 2.5 sacks; Sr. DL-LB Cris Contreras (6-1, 215), 46 tackles, 3.5 sacks; Sr. DL Jacorie Stokes (6-0, 240), 36 tackles, 2 sacks.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. DL Zachary Blackwood (6-4, 270); Sr. OL Jayden Ahboah (6-5, 300); So. LB Filemoni Lauina (5-11, 210); Jr. DB Camren Foster (5-11, 160); So. WR Gavin Parks (6-0, 165).

Strengths of offense: Quarterback, line and skill.

Strengths of defense: Secondary and line.

Team's biggest question mark(s): New coaching staff and potential late start.

2020 expectations: Stay healthy. Win our region. Play for a championship.

5A SONORAN REGION II

Cienega

Head Coach: Pat Nugent.

Years as school's head coach: 6th year, 47-13 record.

2019 record: 9-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Hunter Schlagel (6-2, 180); Sr. OL Andrew Husfelt (6-3, 270); Sr. TE Isaiah Webb (5-11, 220); Sr. QB Ryan Swoger (6-3, 190) 484 passing yards, 3 TDs, 514 rushing yards, 7 TDs; Sr. RB Gabe Levy (5-10, 185), 982 rushing yards, 7 TDs; Sr. WR Sebastian Felix (6-0, 185), 226 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Sr. FB Dillon Silva (5-11, 200), 159 rushing yards, 2 TDs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. NG Hunter Schlagel (6-2, 180), 43 tackles, 3 sacks; Sr. LB Isaiah Webb (5-11, 220), 32 tackles; Sr. S Sebastian Felix (6-0, 185), 55 tackles, 4 INT; Sr. CB Trey Denetso (5-11, 165), 45 tackles; Sr. LB Dillon Silva (5-11, 200), 83 tackles; Sr. S Christian Dicochea (5-11, 170), 38 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. RB-S CJ Flores (5-10, 180); Sr. WR-S Sonny Hamm (5-11, 170); Sr. WR Caleb Kidney (6-2, 180); Sr. OL-DE Caleb Clarke (6-2, 250); Sr. LB-FB Josiah Flores (5-9, 200).

Strengths of offense: Seven returners. Depth at most positions. Top running back in Levy. Speed at quarterback in Swoger.

Strengths of defense: Linebackers all returners. Secondary three of five returners. Schlagel a four-year starter.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Replacing three offensive linemen. Finding more team speed at receiver.

2020 expectations: Never changes - win a state title.

Ironwood Ridge

Head Coach: James Hardy.

Years as school's head coach: 2nd year.

2019 record: 5-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Chase Cassell (5-11, 160), 428 passing yards, 3 TDs; Sr. WR Thomas Smith (6-1, 173), 369 receiving yards, 3 TDs; Sr. WR Tyus Williams (5-9, 175).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Dylan Cook (6-3, 200), 47 tackles; Sr. DB Tyus Williams (5-9, 175), 29 tackles; Sr. DB Damien Salese (5-10, 178), 26 tackles; Jr. LB Ethan Morrison (5-11, 195), 56 tackles, 2.5 sacks; Sr. DL Scott French (5-10, 260), 35 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. OL Sam Benjamin (6-3, 225); Sr. QB-ATH Peyton Pelletier (6-1, 175); Jr. QB-ATH Tyler Haynie (6-0, 160); Sr. LB Cesar Cordova (5-11, 225); Jr. Ben Thompson (6-0, 255); Jr. WR Hudson Thompson (6-2, 177).

Strengths of offense: Depth in skill positions. Second year running the spread should see improvements.

Strengths of defense: Front six should be solid again with returning starters and key fill players from last season. Secondary should be better.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Senior leadership and team culture. Which quarterback will assert himself during the summer. Depth at offensive line. Defensive depth..

2020 expectations: Goals are to compete for a region title and make the playoffs. Our five freedom games will be a good test for us.

Nogales

Head Coach: Jake Teyechea.

Years as school's head coach: 3rd year, 6-14 record.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Pedro Rodriguez (6-3, 220), 1,028 passing yards, 9 TDs, 215 rushing yards, 3 TDs Sr. DB-WR Richard Hanlan (5-11, 175); Sr. DB-WR Heriberto Barnett (5-6, 160); Sr. WR Nadir Del Cid (5-11, 175); Sr. WR Fernando Guzman (6-1, 170); Sr. FB-LB Rene Urias (5-8, 185).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB-WR Richard Hanlan (5-11, 175), 25 tackles; Sr. DL Miguel Hernandez (6-2, 185), 36 tackles, 5 sacks; Sr. DB-WR Heriberto Barnett (5-6, 160), 44 tackles; Sr. FB-LB Rene Urias (5-8, 185), 15 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. RB-LB Gabriel Badilla (5-10, 170); So. RB-DB Benjamin Ley (5-11, 170); Jr. QB-DB Fernando Valenzuela; So. DL-TE Baltazar Pacheco (6-3, 175).

Strengths of offense: Speed and versatility.

Strengths of defense: Speed and aggressiveness.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Youth and numbers.

2020 expectations: Play aggressive, disciplined and get better each week.

Rincon/University

Head Coach: Khyree Copeland.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 6-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR/DB Steven Geiger 5-10, 170), 4 INT; Sr. WR/DB Adam Plante (5-11, 170), 2 INT; Jr. WR/DB Diego Meza (5-7, 160); Sr. WR Traevon Grigsby (6-1, 173); Jr. OL Chris Hodal (5-10, 179), 2 sacks.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Jaxon Sabourion (5-10, 202), 62 tackles; Sr. LB Jacob Vazquez (5-10, 204, 81 tackles); Sr. DB Clayton Valentine (5-8, 165), 16 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: So. RB David "Julu" Cordova (5-7, 168); So. Zane Lopez (5-8, 150); So. Eduardo Barboa (5-8, 165); Jr. Nate Pocock (5-9, 155); Daikawn Harrison (6-0, 175).

Strengths of offense: Being efficient. Using our tempo. Getting our athletes in space.

Strengths of defense: Aggressive style of play. Understanding situational football. Creating turnovers.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Young athletes. Change in leadership.

2020 expectations: Develop athletes and team. Maintain the culture. Revitalize the community.

Sunnyside

Head Coach: Glenn Posey.

Years as school's head coach: 7th year, 34-31 record.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: So. QB Deion Conde (5-7, 140), 1,604 passing yards, 13 TDs; Sr. WR Anthony Galvez (5-10, 175), 573 receiving yards, 4 TDs; Sr. WR Angel Cano (5-9, 165), 86 receiving yards; Jr. WR Nycholas McDaniel (5-7, 160), 211 receiving yards, 2 TDs; Jr. OL Jacion Taylor (6-2, 245); Sr. OL Jaimie Bravo (5-10, 230); Jr. OL Gabriel Graciano (6-2, 280); Sr. OL Rey Galaz (5-10, 200); Jr. OL Emanuel Samaniego (6-5, 275).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DE Mike Gomez (6-0, 205) 64 tackles; Sr. DE Obed Craft (6-0, 200), 25 tackles; Sr. NG Josue Carino (6-0, 260), 39 tackles, 5 sacks; Sr. LB Andrew Gonzalez (5-9, 190), 28 tackles; Sr. LB Ricky Escalante (5-9, 175), 77 tackles; Jr. LB Carlos Rendon (5-9, 200), 66 tackles, 2 sacks; Jr. LB Rene Fragoso (5-10, 170), 100 tackles, 3 sacks; Jr. FS Eddie Lopez (6-1, 165), 112 tackles, 2 INT; Jr. DB Nycholas McDaniel (5-7, 160, 58 tackles); So. SS Diego Rivera (6-3, 175), 33 tackles; Sr. Rover Dominic Murrieta (5-10, 160); **Also keep an eye on:** Jr. RB Mike Delgado (5-9, 180); Sr. WR Ruben Peralta (6-3, 190).

Strengths of offense: We were super young last season, having started a freshman quarterback. I think with our experience we can build ourselves into a solid football team.

Strengths of defense: Again we were super young. We had a great off season in the weight room so I expect us to play at a whole new level.

Team's biggest question mark(s): We need a couple more big guys for depth and competition.

2020 expectations: We expect to make the playoffs.

REGION NOTES: Marana slumped to 1-9 last season after a 7-4 playoff season in 2018. The transfer of its starting quarterback prior to last year did not help matters in a retooling season. Coach Louie Ramirez begins his third season at the helm.

4A Conference Football Preseason Rankings



Mesquite will start this season where it left off last year - as the No. 1 team in 4A. (Stephen Davis photo/MaxPreps)

By Andy Morales
azpreps365.com

1. MESQUITE: Scott Hare took over the head coaching position at Mesquite last year and brought along his brother Cory and father Steve. The Hares and the Wildcats then went on to appear in the first state title game in program history and wound up winning 28-23 over Desert Edge. If the Wildcats finish near the top of the 4A rankings this year, however, a date in the Open Division might await. Hare says his program is capable of another state championship despite playing in "the toughest region in 4A." Along with Mesquite, the Desert Sky Region is comprised of 3A state champion ALA-Queen Creek, 3A runner-up Benjamin Franklin, 4A state playoff team Marcos de Niza and Seton Catholic. The Wildcats return leaders Sr. QB Ty Thompson 6-4, 210 (4,074, 45 TDs; 562 yards rushing, 6 TDs), Sr. OT Judson Cole 6-3, 230, Sr. OG Nathan Hargis 6-1 225, Jr. ATH Andrew Morris 6-2, 205 (759 yards receiving, 5 TDs) and what Hare considers a "deep LB corps with smart coachable players with speed in the secondary." Mesquite does have to replace 3,000 yards of receiving with the graduations of Jacob Walker, Jordan Wollangk, Michael Sterling and Chris Hintze.

2. CANYON DEL ORO: Led by head coach Dustin Peace, the Dorados earned a No. 3 seed despite going most of the season without a dominating passing game and the loss of standout running back Stevie Rocker for half the season. Gavin Davis turned a lot of heads when he stepped in to fill the gap left by Rocker and games were won on the defensive side with only a handful of touchdowns given up to teams that didn't have a

guy named Bijan Robinson on their roster. Rocker committed to play for the University of Arizona. With Scottsdale Saguardo, Salpointe Catholic and Desert Edge moving up to the 5A Conference this fall, the Dorados have enough experience and returning firepower to make a deep run. Like Mesquite, however, an above average run in the regular season could see the Dorados competing in the Open Division, which is a completely different dynamic. Sr. QB Montana Neustadter (508 yards passing, 5 TDs, 637 yards rushing, 6 TDs) returns along with Sr. RB Rocker (6-0, 185) and Sr. TE Dustin Sheeley 6-0, 190. On defense, Sr. 6-2, 160 Ethan Seppala (41 tackles, 5 INTS) returns along with 6-0, 185 Sr. MLB Mike Williams (37 tackles).

3. SAHUARO: The Cougars took over the top seed in the 4A Conference after Scottsdale Saguardo and Salpointe Catholic qualified for the Open Division. With 11 years of coaching at Sahuaro, Scott McKee is one of 4A's veterans. Plus his experience as a player at Sabino and the University of Arizona helped guide the Cougars to an incredible run last year that came up short in the quarterfinal round. The Cougars will once again be in the unique position of taking over one of the top spots in the 4A playoffs if other teams are bumped up to the Open Division. A favorable seeding in the state playoffs is sometimes all a team needs to succeed in the postseason. McKee returns Sr. QB Devyn Roberts (613 yards passing, 8 TDs), Sr. ATH Jamir Gasaway (942 yards rushing, 11 TDs) and Sr. RB Trevion Watkins (743 yards rushing, 11 TDs) on offense and Sr. LB Miguel Yslas (32 tackles), Sr. LB Trevion Watkins (31 tackles) and Sr. DL Anthony Hogan (3.5 sacks) on defense.

4. GILA RIDGE: The Hawks made it to the 4A semifinal round last year coming out of the Southwest Region, but the program has been shifted over to the West Valley Region this year along with Northwest Christian, Greenway, Peoria, Cactus and Cibola. The team will still spend the first half of the season playing in the Yuma area, including one game in nearby Brawley, California. The Hawks finished with an 11-2 record with a 22-19 overtime loss to Cibola and a 35-28 loss to Desert Edge in the semifinals being the only blemishes. Head coach John Ellegood has Sr. QB CJ Wiggins (1,145 yards passing, 13 TDs) and Jr. WR Johnny Noriega (715 yards receiving, 9 TDs) returning on offense and Sr. DL Christopher Humphrey (3 sacks), Sr. LB Pono Renaud (53 tackles) and Tyler Faber (70 tackles, 3 INTs) coming back on defense.

5. CACTUS: The Cobras graduated their top three offensive threats and top five defensive standouts, including QB Conner Cordts (2,158 yards passing, 26 TDs; 841 yards rushing, 16 TDs), Anthony Flores (1,083 yards rushing, 14 TDs) and Nate "Doodles" Quinones (135 tackles, 6 sacks, 4 INTs). Head coach Joseph Ortiz still has weapons in Sr. WR Antonio Pratt (564 yards receiving, 6 TDs) and Sr. WR Justin Gomez (400 yards receiving, 3 TDs) and an impressive list of defensive standouts in Sr. DE Riley Davies (75 tackles, 6.5 sacks), Jr. OLB Justin Holmes (74 tackles, 6 sacks), Jr. DB Ryan Griswold (68 tackles) and So. DB Will Galvan (53 tackles). All five teams in the current configuration of the West Valley Region -- Gila Ridge, Greenway, Northwest Christian and Peoria, Cactus -- made the state playoffs last year.

6. GREENWAY: Ed Cook led the Demons to a 4A Skyline Region title last year and a No. 10 ranking. The program is looking for more this year, including a spot in the postseason for the third year in a row. Cook says he has a lot of experience coming back, beginning with Sr. RB Christian Johnson (1,700 yards rushing) and Jr. QB Aohdan Murphy (1,202 yards passing, 12 TDs). On defense, Cook says his whole secondary returns along with his big man upfront in Sr. NG Aaron Gerle (82 tackles, 13 sacks). Sr. DE/LB Ethan Slick, Sr. CB Anthony Kennedy, Sr. FS Caleb Wahner (5 INTs) and Jr. SS Milo Apodaca 6-1, 175 will help solidify the Demon defense.

7. POSTON BUTTE: The Broncos haven't been in a playoff game since 2014, but Dain Thompson hopes to lead his program to the postseason with a talented cast that includes RB Zion Burns and QB Gavin Lloyd. Burns (6-0, 180), a University of Nevada signee, rushed for 1,542 yards with 20 TDs last year, and Lloyd (5-11, 170) collected 792 yards passing with 3 TDs along with 665 yards rushing with 7 more TDs. Thompson also looks to experience on defense, "Because of injuries last season, many returners were forced into starting roles and produced." Burns also collected 39 tackles on defense and we will be joined by Sr. OLB/Nickel Nick Cocomello, Sr. SS Jimmy Brooks, Sr. FS Mattias Perez, Jr. LB Riley Nolan, Jr. OLB Justin Evans, Sr. DL Kalob Holzinger, Sr. DL Chad Huston, and Sr. DE Chris Fowler 5-9, 205 (36 tackles, 4 sacks).

8. ARCADIA: Vance Miller is in his first year with the Titans after coaching at Apache Junction since 2013. Miller replaces Kerry Taylor, who left to lead 2A Conference affiliate San Tan Charter in the program's first year of competition. The Titans are coming off of a 6-4 season and a No. 18 ranking and three years removed from an 0-10 campaign in the 5A Conference. Miller says his team will have, "speed, agility and intelligence" with plenty of "hand and arm strength." Sr. TE Trey Brown (Duke commit) 6-2, 215 and Sr. WR Crew Edwards 5-9, 150 (542 yards receiving, 6 TDs) return along with Sr. LB Nixon Nolan 5-7 165 (73 tackles) and Sr. DB Noah Richardson 6-2 170 (52 tackles).

9. COCONINO: Coach Michael Lapsley led Coconino to a 9-2 record and a region championship. And it was also a couple of plays away from defeating eventual 2019 state semifinalist Gila Ridge in the first round. He returns Sr. RB/LB Zach Bennett (1,753 yards rushing, 22 TDs), Sr. LB/RB Manuel Cardoza (98 tackles), Jr. LB/RB Jonathan Jaramillo (56 tackles, 2 sacks), Sr. DB/WR Malcom Morris (42 tackles, 2 INTs), and Jr. DB/TE Andy Ruiz 6-1, 180 (46 tackles). The Panthers play three of their last four games of the regular season at home and, by that time, the playoff picture for 4A should be clearer with which teams might play in the Open Division. Lapsley says his program has a "better understanding of game day adjustments. Improve speed and quickness. More aggressive at the line of scrimmage. Explosive."

10. ALA-QUEEN CREEK: From a 3A state title in 2016, to an 0-13 campaign in 2017 (with 11 of those coming via forfeit due to an ineligible player), to being ineligible for the 2018 playoffs, to another 3A state championship last year, that's some roller coaster of emotions ALA-Queen Creek's been on. The emotional swings didn't stop this offseason when it learned that D-I recruit Aziya Jamison (1,761 yards rushing, 26 TDs) transferred and the program was moved to 4A along with 3A state runner-up Benjamin Franklin and 3A semifinalist Northwest Christian. Despite the ups and downs, and if the Patriots were to win the games in the difficult Desert Sky Region, a spot in the playoffs might be available this year. That prospect would surely be par for the course for a program considering its recent history. Coach Rich Edwards will need to replace standout QB Rand Jensen and his 4,110 career passing yards and 56 TD passes. But returning are Sr. DE/OL Micah Ferrin (100 tackles, 13 sacks) and So. CB/WR Ryan Meza (3 INTs). The Patriots host St. Mary's to open their season on Oct. 2. Win or lose, there will be power points to be had.

4A Conference Team-By-Team Preview



As a sophomore Gila Ridge's Jonathan Noriega led his team with 715 receiving yards. (Mark Jones photo/MaxPreps)

By Andy Morales
azpreps365.com

DESERT SKY REGION

ALA-Queen Creek

Head coach: Rich Edwards.

Years as school's head coach: 7.

2019 record: (13-1, 3A State Champions).

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL/DE Micah Ferrin 6-5, 240; Jr. OL Haliaj Hali's 5-10, 280; Sr. OL Devon Teahon 6-4, 230.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DE/OL Micah Ferrin 6-5, 240 (100 tackles, 13 sacks); So. CB/WR Ryan Meza 6-0, 180 (3 INTs).

Also keep an eye on: Sr. K. McKaden Chatwin 6-3, 170; Jr. DB/WR Elijah Peters 5-10, 170; Jr. LB Jaden Manwaring 5-11, 210; Jr. QB. Logan Hubler 6-1, 165; Jr. DB/ QB. Brandon Wettstien 6-0, 190.

Strengths of offense: Center position. We have a ton of skill position talent. Our kicking is going to be a big time asset and strength.

Strengths of defense: Defensive end position. Defensive backfield.

Team's biggest question mark(s): We will be very young and inexperienced.

2020 expectations: Learn about ourselves. Gain experience. Grow and mature as a team.

More about program: We have a ton of talent and potential. If we will work hard and trust in the process and in each other we will be fine.

Benjamin Franklin

Head coach: Dave Jefferies.

Years as school's head coach: 5.

2019 record: 12-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Noah Badger 5-9, 190; Sr. OL Dean Terrill 5-9, 200; Jr. OL Brigham Alexander 6-5, 270; Jr. TE Garrett Jones 5-11, 165; Jr. OL Cole Parker 5-10, 230.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DL Noah Badger 5-9, 190; Sr. DB Dayson Blair 5-8, 140; Sr. LB Chancin Loving 5-10, 170 (111 tackles); Sr. DL Dean Terrill 5-9, 200; Jr. DL Brigham Alexander 6-5, 270.

Strengths of offense: Familiarity - fourth year running the Double Wing. Five of our seven guys up front return (OL/TE).

Strengths of defense: Three of four DL return.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Who will step up in the offensive skill positions? Who will lead the defense (graduated a 4-year starter at MLB)?

2020 expectations: Earn that 11th game!

Marcos de Niza

Head coach: Anthony Figueroa.

Years as school's head coach: First year.

2019 record: 6-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Antonio Hernandez 5-11, 160 (1,060 yards passing, 10 TDs); Sr. OL Enrique Ruiz 6-3, 230; Sr. OL Nickolas Samaniego 6-3, 255; Sr. OL Zachery Paiz 5-11, 270; Sr. WR Daivon Nelson 6-3, 185; Sr. WR Nico Updyke 5-8, 135; Sr. WR Nathan Camarena 6-2, 175; Sr. FB/TE Jacob Irlick 5-10, 200.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Jacob Irlick 5-10, 200 (69 tackles); Sr. DB Daivon Nelson 6-3, 185; Sr. DL Chris Ramirez 5-6, 235; Sr. DB Collin Gordon 5-9, 160 (52 tackles); Sr. DE Schofar Hill 6-2, 200 (10.5 sacks); Sr. DE Jakob VanDorn 6-0, 200; Jr. DT Lino Valenzuela 6-3, 320; So. FS Mason Stromstad 6-2, 158.

Strengths of offense: Returning experience at O-Line. Returning experience at QB. New scheme/system that fits returning and upcoming talent. Previously successful offensive coaching staff at other local high schools and college level. Limited tendencies for best successful mismatches.

Strengths of defense: Key returning starters. Previously successful offensive coaching staff at other local high schools and college level. Defense that matches our athletes strengths. Upcoming Classes with potential. Defense that controls tendencies and matchups.

Mesquite

Head coach: Scott Hare.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 11-3 (4A State Champion).

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Ty Thompson 6-4, 210 (4,074, 45 TDs; 562 yards rushing, 6 TDs); Sr. OT Judson Cole 6-3, 230; Sr. OG Nathan Hargis 6-1 225; Jr. Ath Andrew Morris 6-2, 205 (759 yards receiving, 5 TDs).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. MLB Andrew Morris 6-2, 205; Jr. FS Lavontae Trotter 5-11 180; Sr. OLB Connor Howlett 6-1, 190.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. WR Riales Hopper 6-0 185; Sr. DE Nick Salsgiver 6-5, 200; Jr. LB, Brayden Daly 6-0 190; Sr. RB Cameron Clinton 6-0 190; Sr. WR Dylan Lorenzen-hrenko 5-11 175.

Strengths of offense: QB Ty Thompson is the best player in the state. Will be bigger and more physical as an offense - Run game will be improved. Solid WR play.

Strengths of defense: Deep LB corps. Smart coachable players. Speed in the secondary.

Team's biggest question mark(s): How the juniors mesh with the seniors - Both classes have had success independently - now they need to come together. Depth - like most 4A teams. Replacing four of the top five ball carriers - very capable players ready to fill in - however a lot of receptions graduate

2020 expectations: State Title - We are capable. Region Title - Might be the toughest region in 4A. Practice with a purpose throughout the year.

Seton Catholic

Head coach: Pete Wahlheim.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 5-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. WR/DE Mike Williamson 6-3, 210; Jr. RB/DB Mikey Castro 5-11; Sr. Andrew Scranton 6-2, 190; Sr. OL/DL Matteo Ortiz 6-4 270; OL/DL Owen Garcia 6-2, 240.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DE/TE Chey Nieto 6-2, 200; Sr. DE/OL Matteo 6-4, 270; Sr. DB/WR Nolan Woolsey 6-0, 180; DB/WR Merrick Sycamore 5-11, 175.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. QB Nick DiPucio 6-1, 180; So. LB/FB Matt Raso 5-10, 175.

Strengths of offense: Good run blocking OL. Quality outside receivers.

Strengths of defense: Bringing back experienced defense. Physical players on defense.

Team's biggest question mark(s): How quickly sophomores adapt to varsity football. How our young QB develops.

2020 expectations: Expect to be a playoff team.

WEST VALLEY REGION

Cactus

Head coach: Joseph Ortiz.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

2019 record: 10-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR Antonio Pratt 5-8, 150 (564 yards receiving, 6 TDs); Sr. WR Justin Gomez 5-7, 165 (400 yards receiving, 3 TDs).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DE Riley Davies 6-3, 215 (75 tackles, 6.5 sacks); Jr. OLB Justin Holmes 5-10, 185 (74 tackles, 6 sacks); Jr. DB Ryan Griswold 5-10, 165 (68 tackles); So. DB Will Galvan 5-7, 140 (53 tackles).

Team's biggest question mark(s): Replacing QB Conner Cordts (2,158 yards passing, 26 TDs; 841 yards rushing, 16 TDs), Anthony Flores (1,083 yards rushing, 14 TDs), Nate Quinones (135 tackles) and Travis Combs (100 tackles).

Gila Ridge

Head coach: John Ellegood.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 11-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB CJ Wiggins 6-0, 160 (1,145 yards passing, 13 TDs); Jr. WR Johnny Noriega 6-0 180 (715 yards receiving, 9 TDs); Jr. OL Michael Doman 6-4 240.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DL Christopher Humphrey 6-2, 280 (3 sacks); Sr. LB Pono Renaud 5-10, 180 (53 tackles); Sr. CB Jacob Acedo 5-10, 150; Sr. DB Tyler Faber 5-8, 140 (70 tackles, 3 INTs).

Also keep an eye on: Sr. RB D'Marco Garcia- Richmond 5-8, 160; Sr. LB AJ Brown 5-10, 180; Sr. LB Hunter Kammann 5-11, 185.

Strengths of offense: Streamlined our run game to help us become a bit more dynamic. Having a returning QB who is extremely athletic will help us. Our offense will be in year two so we have had an entire season to work out the flaws is huge going into next year.

Strengths of defense: Our defense is simple but allows our players to play fast. Our DBs have a lot of playing time and saw some great competition late in the season, which helped them grow.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Who will step up? We lost most of our starters, and we need to see who will replace them. Depth. Once starters have stepped up, who will be behind them? Can we match the success of 2019. We have a ton of hungry young talent, but we lack experience at the varsity level.

2020 expectations: Compete in every game. Get better every week. Win the city (Yuma). Put ourselves in a position to make the playoffs again. Beat Cibola

Greenway

Head coach: Ed Cook.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 9-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Christian Johnson 6-0, 175; Sr. C Brent Kenyon 6-2, 240; Sr. WR/DB Daymond Neal 6-3, 180; Sr. WR Jamal Davis 5-9, 160; Sr. WR/RB Daniel Craig 5-11, 165; Jr. QB Aohdan Murphy 5-11, 175 (1,202 yards passing, 12 TDs); Jr. WR Elvis Auxier 5-10, 160; Jr. OL Zach Bauer 6-3, 260; Jr. OL Kyle Barnes 6-2, 220; Jr. WR Kendrick Pruitt 6-1, 175.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. NG Aaron Gerle 6-1, 255 (82 tackles, 13 sacks); Sr. DE/LB Ethan Slick 6-0, 175; Sr. CB Anthony Kennedy 5-9, 160; Sr. FS Caleb Wahner 6-0, 175 (5 INTs); Jr. SS Milo Apodaca 6-1, 175.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. P/K Brandon Woodland 6-0, 170.

Strengths of offense: Lot of experience coming back. Christian Johnson rushed for over 1,700 yds in 2019. Physical OL. Aohdan Murphy and all WRs coming back from last year.

Strengths of defense: Aaron Gerle is a monster up front. Secondary all back from last year. Will have a lot of speed on defense.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Need to replace inside and outside LB.

2020 expectations: Win Game 1. Finish with winning record. Win Region. Make playoffs. Make run at state championship.

Canyon del Oro RB Rocker took advantage of time off

By Andy Morales
azpreps365.com

The jury is still out on where Canyon del Oro running back Stevie Rocker (6-0, 195) fits in the long line of backs from southern Arizona, but his future looks promising.

From Vance Johnson, Michael Bates, Mario Bates, Ka'Deem Carey to Bijan Robinson, some of the top talent in the backfield from Arizona came from the Tucson area, and Rocker will get his chance. Rocker missed two games as a sophomore for the Dorados but he still managed to gain 1,163 yards on 130 carries for 8.9 yards a pop with 12 touchdowns.

His junior season was hampered by an ankle injury, and he was only able to add 371 yards to his total. But he was able to condition and add ten pounds to his frame to prepare for his senior season.

The injury also didn't keep Rocker from receiving some top offers from Cal, Arizona, BYU and Nevada. But the three-star recruit chose the hometown Wildcats on July 16 during a highly-anticipated decision released on social media.

Q: First, you were an all-star as a young boy playing youth football in Tucson and an exciting player for CDO. Soon, southern Arizona will get to see you on the Arizona field. What does it mean to you to represent your hometown in this way?

A: It means more than I can explain, it's awesome being able to represent the homegrown product.

Q: You gained some weight and a lot of muscle in the offseason. Do you think this was the missing piece, or is there something else you think you need to work on?

A: I think that was the missing piece. I've always been able to get my muscle up, but I could never gain any weight, so this extra off-season helped with that a lot.

Q: Everyone is still concerned about the COVID-19 pandemic. How did your family deal with the situation and was getting back to school to see your friends a top priority?

A: They always found a way to keep themselves busy whether it's working from home or just staying home in general. I'd love to get to see my friends, but my health and future were the number one priority.

Q: Tell us a bit about the Dorados this year and what you see from your teammates.

A: I believe we have a chance to make a ride to the championship, and we have a lot of returners, so I believe we'll make a very strong run for it.



Canyon del Oro running back Stevie Rocker is healthy now. That spells trouble for opponents. (Andy Morales photo/azpreps365.com)

Canyon del Oro - 4A Kino Region

Head coach: Dustin Peace.

Years as school's head coach: 11.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Montana Neustadter (508 yards passing, 5 TDs., 637 yards rushing, 6 TDs); Sr. RB Stevie Rocker 6-0, 185; Sr. TE Dustin Sheeley 6-0, 190.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. Ethan Seppala 6-2, 160 (41 tackles, 5 INTs); Sr. MLB Mike Williams 6-0, 185 (37 tackles).

Strengths of offense: Stevie Rocker only played six games last year from injury.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Lost top four defenders.

Northwest Christian

Head coach: David Inness.

Years as school's head coach: 10.

2019 record: 10-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Blake Sparks 6-2, 201; Jr. RB Grant Gibson 5-6, 150; Sr. WR Owen Arthurs 6-0, 165.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. LB Luke Johnson 5-11, 210 (100 tackles); Sr. DB Levi Huisman 5-10, 155; Sr. LB Julian Carpenter 5-11, 190; Sr. DL Ben Strawn 6-3, 215 (8.5 sacks); Sr. DL Tyler Howry 6-5, 230 (5 sacks).

Team's biggest question mark(s): Replace QB Easton Meier (1,169 yards passing, 16 TDs) and RB Austin Young (1,718 yards rushing, 11 TDs).

Peoria

Head coach: Will Babb.

Years as school's head coach: 8.

2019 record: 9-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. RB Cameron Mack 5-9, 185; Sr. OL/DL Trey Hendrix 6-1, 250; Sr. OL Jonah Wright 6-7, 285; Sr. OL Isaac Sanchez 6-0, 215; Jr. WR/KR Isaac Moreno 5-9, 160; Sr. WR Brandon Price 6-0, 180.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DB/RB Jeremiah Gossett 5-10, 170; Sr. DB/ATH Andrew Gaston 5-10, 170; Sr. DB/RB Andrew Camacho 5-10, 170; Sr. DB Devon Kociemba 5-10, 170; Jr. Richard Cortez LB 6-2, 200; Jr. Curtis Williams LB 6-0, 205; Sr. Isaac Sanchez DE 6-0, 215.

Also keep an eye on: TE/DE Jake Price 6-4, 225; QB Jayston Hefley 5-8, 170; LB Ben Mahaney 6-1, 200.

Strengths of offense: Running back position. Depth at skill positions. Three experienced o-linemen.

Strengths of defense: Defensive back returning. Linebackers returning. Experience.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Who will step up at QB. How the new starters will handle that role.

2020 expectations: I expect a tough schedule and physical play. I expect us to match our opponents physicality each week. I expect to play hard with great effort.

KINO REGION

Casa Grande

Head coach: Jake Barro.

Years as school's head coach: 5.

2019 record: 7-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Angel Flores 6-1, 210 (2,314 yards passing, 15 TDs; 912 yards rushing, 14 TDs); Jr. ATH R.J. Keeton 5-9, 170 (562 yards rushing, 6 TDs; 258 yards receiving).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. MLB Jake Thomas 5-10 (75 tackles); Jr. DB Dee Azcueta 5-8, 160 (47 tackles); Jr. LB Jake Sylvestre (45 tackles); Sr. DB Jett Hale 6-0, 155 (28 tackles, 4 INTs).

Strengths of offense: Angel Flores could pass 5,000 career yards as a junior.

Pueblo

Head coach: Jake Allen.

Years as school's head coach: First Year.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR Francisco Monares- Leon 5-7, 150 (143 yards rushing, 3 TDs); Jr. ATH Enrique Cancio 5-7, 150 (152 yards receiving, 3 TDs).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. ATH Enrique Cancio 5-7, 150 (26 tackles, 4 INTs).

Team's biggest question mark(s): Replacing top five offensive threats and top ten defenders.

Sahuaro

Head coach: Scott McKee.

Years as school's head coach: 11.

2019 record: 9-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Devyn Roberts 5-8, 145 (613 yards passing, 8 TDs); Sr. ATH Jamir Gasaway 6-2, 158 (942 yards rushing, 11 TDs); Sr. RB Trevion Watkins 5-11, 205 (743 yards rushing, 11 TDs).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Miguel Yslas 6-1, 215 (32 tackles); Sr. LB Trevion Watkins 5-11, 205 (31 tackles); Sr. DL Anthony Hogan 6-0, 210 (3.5 sacks).

Walden Grove

Head coach: Corey Noble.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 9-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Stephen Brower 5-10, 195 (498 yards rushing, 3 TDs); Sr. WR/DB Ty McDermott 6-2, 185 (553 yards receiving, 5 TDs); Jr. OL Gabriel Watkins-Daigle 6-2, 225; Sr. ATH Sebastian Adamski 6-0, 215.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DL Trey Girard 5-10, 235 (44 tackles, 5 sacks); Sr. DB Ty McDermott 6-2, 185 (25 tackles, 2 INTs); Sr. LB Sebastian Adamski 6-0, 215 (130 tackles); Jr. CB Zachary Young 5-9, 165.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. WR/DB Duncan Hoover 6-2, 185; Jr. QB Jason Stevens 6-3, 180; Sr. RB/LB/S Jeremy Lai, 6-1, 190; So. QB/ATH Caleb Lyden 5-10, 170; Sr. OL/DL Alberto Garcia 6-0, 240.

Strengths of offense: System continuity. Intelligent QB. Great Returning RB. Athletes. Motivated OL.

Strengths of defense: System continuity. Great returning LB. Team Speed. Pursuit. Intelligent DBs with a lot of experience.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Lost a lot of starters last two years (20+ each year). Have we put in the work? Are we going to be a WE or ME team? Can we win the big one? Are we all in?

2020 expectations: Compete in every rep. Be mentally tough and disciplined to win the big game. WE not ME. Win a playoff game. Increase our team GPA.

More about program: We've gotten better every year and last season was our most successful year in school history. But we've still got a long way to go. I think this group is going to put in the work to take that next step for as a program. It will all come down to that.

REGION NOTES: Mica Mountain will not have a varsity team this year. Angel Flores could pass 5,000 career yards for Casa Grande. ... Stevie Rocker returns after an injury last year for Canyon del Oro. ... Former Mountain View assistant Jake Allen replaces Brandon Sanders at Pueblo.

BLACK CANYON REGION

Apache Junction

Head coach: Bruce J Binkley.

Years as school's head coach: First year.

2019 record: 7-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR/DB Cameron Garcia 5-9, 165 (836 yards receiving, 11 TDs); Sr. OL/DL Zayden Furnish 6-1, 250; Jr. OL/DL JC Taylor 6-2, 235; Sr. OL/DL Roman Yashchuck 6-2, 240; Jr. OL/DL Ace Erickson 6-0, 250.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DB/QB Jordan Digos 5-7 145; Sr. LB/RB Nathan Munoz 6-0, 200 (24 tackles); Sr. LB/RB Brody Bullard 6-2 218 (83 tackles, 2.5 sacks); So. NG/OT Gavin Weeks 6-0, 305; Sr. DB/WR Aydin Franko 5-10, 180.

Also keep an eye on: So. QB/DB Gavin Limongello 6-0, 150; So. WR/DB Garret Garcia 6-0, 165; Jr. OL/DL Rudy Robertson 6-0, 250; Jr. DL/OL Aaron Edwards 5-9, 225.

Strengths of offense: Offensive line.

Strengths of defense: New DC with high expectations, Alex Murphy and good LB's.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Need to replace a great three-year starter at QB.

2020 expectations: To come together as a team.

Combs

Head coach: Travis Miller.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 5-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Joey Jensen 5-11, 190 (1,084 yards rushing, 13 TDs; 644 yards receiving, 7 TDs); Jr. RT Brodee Tucker 6-1, 255; Sr. G Collin Strebeck 6-1, 195; Jr. G Elijah Sanchez 5-10, 255; Sr. WR Lucas Corriveau 6-0, 185; Sr. WR Levi Tuckefield 6-2, 155; Jr. TE Tanner Price 6-2, 185 (364 yards rushing, 4 TDs).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DT Taniela Taunima 6-0, 275 (44 tackles); Sr. DE Mason Brockman 6-2, 200 (38 tackles, 9 sacks); Sr. DE Collin Strebeck 6-1, 195; Sr. MLB Dominik Richie 6-1, 220 (54 tackles); Sr. ILB Jace Judd 5-11 (76 tackles), 190; Jr. OLB Michael Devenport 5-9, 165 (68 tackles); Sr. SS Joey Jensen 5-11, 190; Jr. FS Tanner Price 6-2, 185; Sr. FS Levi Tuckefield 6-2, 155 (35 tackles, 3 INTs).

Strengths of offense: Experience at the skill positions with RB Joey Jensen, WR Lucas Corriveau and TE Tanner Price. We have several players going in to their third year at the varsity level. We have good team speed.

Strengths of defense: We return nine starters and have another 3-4 with quality playing time from the previous season. Our front seven are very experienced.

Team's biggest question mark(s): We have to replace a 3-yr starting QB. We have a new offensive coordinator. Who will step up and fill some vacancies on offense and defense?

2020 expectations: It has been six years since Combs has had a winning record. We look to do that. Be competitive in a tougher region.

Arcadia's Brown making a name for himself

By Leo Tochterman
azpreps365.com

Former 20-year NFL offensive linemen Ray Brown doesn't mince words when discussing the potential of his son, Trey.

"I know my son is better than me when I was in high school," Ray said.

Trey is entering his senior season as an outside linebacker at Arcadia High School and has been around football since he was in diapers.

So naturally he developed a passion for it.

"I've really just loved football since I was born," Trey said. "I've been around it my whole life and just watching (Ray) play just made me love it even more."

At 6-3, 205-pounds, Trey doesn't have the same physical frame his father had as a high school senior, but what they do share is a similar set of values.

"It's very noticeable, the impact that his father has had on him as far as a character standpoint," Arcadia head coach Vance Miller said. "He doesn't walk around with any ego in his way. He's willing to help the kid next to him with anything. It's parenting at its best."

Ray praised the growth in maturity and hard work he's witnessed from his son since the family relocated to Arizona after Ray joined Bruce Arians' coaching staff with the Cardinals.

"When we moved to Arizona my son had no offers and nobody knew who he was," Ray said. "He wasn't confident in what was out in front of him in regards to opportunity on the football field."

In Arizona, Trey blossomed, and in late August he committed to Duke.

Washington State, Colorado State and Northern Arizona University were among the other handful of other schools that were also after Trey. When it came to college, Ray made it clear that Trey would ultimately decide where to go.

"I think he's got to feel comfortable with where he's going to be," Ray said. "It can't be what mom and dad think about it. I think he knows that it's important that he projects how the coach sees him or how the team sees him."

After working as an assistant coach in the NFL, Ray is now Arcadia's junior varsity offensive line coach.

According to Miller, Ray's transition was seamless.

"Trey's dad supports everything we're doing," Miller said. "The kids love having him out there, and they all respond well to having him out there."

Teammates also love having Trey around, who developed into a leader for the Titans and is making an impact on both sides of the ball.



If you think you can hang with linebacker/tight end Trey Brown, the Duke-commit will be waiting for you at 4703 E. Indian School Rd., Arcadia High School. (Mark Jones photo/MaxPreps)

On defense, Trey's impressive combination of speed and sheer size makes him a menace against both the pass and the run. Trey uses those same physical tools to punish tacklers and make acrobatic catches as a tight end.

Ray thinks Trey's growth as a football player and person is due to different factors.

"There's been some unique individuals that have touched his life to get him to this point, and it's not just mom and dad," Ray said. "But it's been the Arcadia athletic community, the Arcadia school community and it's been the coaches. A lot of people really helped Trey get here, and I think he's very aware of that."

Despite his NFL pedigree, Ray tells his son to be his own person instead of someone chasing his father's shadow.

"My dad has always told me to just go out there and be myself, so I don't really feel any added pressure," Trey said. "He has told me that it's always going to be different."

Arcadia - 4A Black Canyon Region

Head coach: Vance Miller.

Years as school's head coach: First year.

2019 record: 6-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. TE Trey Brown 6-2, 215; Sr. WR Crew Edwards 5-9, 150 (542 yards receiving, 6 TDs); Jr. OL Frankie Leon 5-8, 220; Jr. OL Joseph Boyle 6-1, 245; Jr. OL James Phillips 6-4, 270; Sr. OL Andrew Carreon 6-3, 310; Sr. WR Yonis Aden 5-8, 145; Sr. WR Noah Richardson 6-2, 170; Jr. WR Lucas Rice 6-0, 165; So. K Isaac Delacruz 5-8, 135.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DL Brody Ramirez 6-3, 230; Sr. LB Clayton Kinkle 5-10, 185; Jr. LB Jacob Swords 5-11, 200; Jr. DB Antonio Green 5-9, 160; Sr. DB Crew Edwards 5-9, 150; Sr. DB Matthew Alire 5-10 165; Sr. DB Cisco Rodarte 5-11 165; Sr. LB Nixon Nolan 5-7, 165 (73 tackles); Sr. DB Noah Richardson 6-2, 170 (52 tackles).

Also keep an eye on: So. DL Cabot Wigginton 5-9, 185; So. DL Juan Mendez 5-8, 230.

Strengths of offense: Speed. Agility. Intelligence. Hand and arm strength. Physicality.

Strengths of defense: Speed. Toughness. Diverse. Adaptive. Intelligence. Team's biggest question: Adaptation to new regime. Conformity to new philosophy. Limited time to learn new philosophies.

2020 expectations: Excitement, can't wait to start. Gel as one unit. Total buy-in.

More about program: The biggest obstacle we have to overcome is our time restraint. We are a new staff with new philosophies and without being able to work with our kids this spring, we will face a major time crunch when we have the opportunity to get back on the field.

Flagstaff's Jaramillo no longer just a bruiser

By Leo Tocherman
azpreps365.com

Flagstaff running back Luis Jaramillo reached tremendous heights during his first two seasons on varsity, eclipsing 2,300 rushing yards, 300 receiving yards and scoring 32 touchdowns.

And that's only on one side of the ball.

Jaramillo, who doubles as a middle linebacker for the Eagles, also muscled his way to 140 tackles (10 for losses), four sacks and three forced fumbles the past two years. He worked tirelessly during this strange offseason to improve every aspect of his game, but the area of greatest focus was improving his speed and agility.

In his last two campaigns, Jaramillo relied a lot on brute force to punish Grand Canyon Region defenders. Flagstaff head coach Todd Hanley spoke highly of Jaramillo's football IQ as well as his ability to shed contact.

"He's one of the most instinctive backs that I've been around in my coaching career," Hanley said. "He's unique. He's a bulldozer. He's kind of like a Jerome Bettis-style kid. It's kind of weird. He's like a bruiser. He's just our primary guy. I've never seen him get beat one-on-one."

According to Hanley, lack of speed and agility kept Jaramillo from reaching the next level of development.

But in the early days of summer workouts, Hanley noticed a major improvement from Jaramillo in that respect.

"He's in just tremendous shape," Hanley said. "He's just ridiculously faster and stronger than he was last year, and he's gonna be something really special. He just needed to work on his speed, and he did that."

Prior to the cancellation of the remainder of the school year in mid-March due to Covid-19, Jaramillo joined Flagstaff's track and field team to improve on his speed.

Jaramillo believes that this experience will do wonders for his game.

"For me it all started with footwork, getting that footwork up and bringing that agility workout," he said. "Then, once I got that footwork, we worked on the technique of it all. And the form of how to run. It helped a lot. I'd never done it before. They tweaked little things with how I run, which helped me out greatly, and I expect that to help me in my senior year."

The 2019 season was Jaramillo's first under Hanley, who instituted a new RPO system.

Now, in year two, Hanley expects the offense to run much more smoothly. Hanley mentioned that the increased familiarity with the scheme should do wonders for Jaramillo.

"I'm expecting a lot bigger numbers from him," Hanley said. "Our team underwent a complete overhaul with the offensive system and everything, so I think there were some limitations that had nothing to do with him. Our offense is pretty much going to run through him, so I really expect him to have a lot bigger numbers."

With Jaramillo shouldering a lot of the offensive load, can Flagstaff's 6-foot, 215-pound bulldozer continue to consistently punish opponents at middle linebacker?

"He's in such incredible shape already, if we need him to not come off the field, he can do that," Hanley said. "I don't think there are diminishing returns with him. This year I think we'll need him some more on defense. So we'll look at the situation and game plan and get him out there if we think we are at a disadvantage."

Jaramillo is an enormous game-changer on both sides of the ball, but aside from his on-field talent, Hanley also lauded Jaramillo's growth as a leader in the locker room and overall selflessness.



Flagstaff's Luis Jaramillo can still Jerome Bettis his way through defenders, but he's also anxious to show off his newfound speed this year. (Mark Jones photo/MaxPreps)

"He's clearly a guy that kids look to and that players watch how he behaves because he's clearly the best guy," Hanley said. "He was very unselfish in embracing that and blocking and getting downfield and knocking guys on their butt when other guys have the ball, and then turning around and playing defense when we needed him, even when he was tired."

Jaramillo has received attention from colleges (Carthage, Concordia, Mayville State, Puget Sound, Simpson, Western New Mexico) but he plans to play the season out before making an official decision on his next path.

"It's all exciting," Jaramillo said. "I'm loving the process. I still have a whole year to make a final decision."

Hanley and the rest of Flagstaff's coaching staff gave Jaramillo some lofty goals to strive for during the upcoming season.

"We don't just want him to be the best running back in Flagstaff," Hanley said. "We want him to be the best running back in the state, not just the Grand Canyon Region. He really embraced that. He really wants to play at the highest level, too. We gave him the road map and of course he researched on his own what we thought he needed to do and he's doing it. I couldn't be happier. You dream for kids like that."

While these may seem like lofty aspirations, Jaramillo is confident that he can get it done.

"For me it's all a mental state," Jaramillo said. "I got to get it to where I know that coming into the game that I am going to excel and perform at the highest level so I can be recognized as the best running back in the state."

Flagstaff - 4A Grand Canyon Region

Head coach: Todd Hanley.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 6-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB/LB Luis Jaramillo 6-0, 215 (1,032 yards rushing, 12 TDs; 36 tackles, 4 sacks); Sr. OG Sean Kelly 5-11, 210; Jr. TE/DE Nick Morrow 6-8, 225; Sr. WR Ryan Tagle 5-11, 175 (329 yards receiving, 2 TDs); Sr. OG Ares Van Ness 5-10, 230; Sr. Slot Jace Wetzel 5-9, 165 (380 yards receiving, 2 TDs); Jr. Slot Ethan Ayup 5-9, 165; Sr. C/OT Riley Cartwright 6-3, 245; Sr. C Javon Tochoney 6-0, 235.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DE/TE Nick Morrow 6-8, 225; Sr. DE/OLB Kevin Edwards 6-1, 200 (3 sacks); Sr. DE Lance Smith 6-1, 225; Jr. DT Spencer Smith 6-2, 220; Jr. DT Nick Harju 5-11, 205; Sr. DT/C Javon Tochoney 6-0, 235.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. Slot/RB Gunner Price 5-11, 180; Jr. RB/LB Marcus Salcido 5-7, 170; Sr. QB Morgan Bewley 5-9, 170; Sr. LB/Slot Collin Doucette 5-11, 190; Sr. OLB Zack Morse 5-11, 185.

Strengths of offense: Second year in offensive system, kids understand the scheme. Mobile, high football IQ, QB. Return all region RB Jaramillo 2 year 1000+ rusher. Big play slot receiver and all-region punt/kick returner Wetzel. Deep threat WR Tagle.

Strengths of defense: Whole DL returns, depth at DT and DE. 6-8 DE Morrow, deflects passes, blocks punts pressures QB's. Very good depth coming up from last year's JV crew.

Team's biggest question mark(s): What is our schedule and will we get to practice. QB battle between Sr. Bewley and Jr. Bodie Maier.

2020 expectations: Increase offensive production. High tempo offense. Get into playoffs.

More about program: We strive to show the most effort, enthusiasm and toughness of any team in the state. Every day in every way!

Tempe

Head coach: Brian Walker.

Years as school's head coach: 11.

2019 record: 7-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. OL Humberto Ledezma 6-3, 255; Jr. TE/H Jalen Walker 6-1, 215; Jr. QB Charlie Allison 5-7, 170 (1,158 yards passing, 15 TDs); Sr. WR Jodee Lee 5-8, 160 (269 yards receiving, 4 TDs); Sr. RB Jabree Richardson 5-8, 170 (1,375 yards rushing, 5 TDs); Sr. WR Cameron Galbreath 5-9, 175.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. SS Isikeli Fakava 6-0, 195; Sr. OLB Sal Barraza 5-9, 190 (41 tackles, 7 sacks); Sr. FS Torrence Hawkins 6-1, 175; Jr. DL Soane Fakava 5-11, 220.

Strengths of offense: Returning QB who has been working extremely hard on his foot speed and arm strength. Will have some depth at running back with a combination of size, strength and speed.

Strengths of defense: We should have a lot of overall team speed. Physical group of players who love to initiate contact.

Team's biggest question mark(s): We will be very young up front. Not a lot of overall team depth.

2020 expectations: Continue to get better and learn the game of football. Focus on what's directly ahead of us and appreciate the blessing of being able to play this great game.

SKYLINE REGION

Glendale

Head coach: Rob York.

Years as school's head coach: 4.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Rocco Bruney (2,136 yards passing, 16 TDs; 1,056 yards rushing, 13 TDs.); Sr. RG Jesus Zayas Jr. C Manny Gortarez; Jr. LG Cristian Oropeza; Jr. LT Chris Ramirez; Sr. WR/RB/DB Colby DeRosier; Sr. WR Jaquel Bell (547 yards receiving, 4 TDs); Sr. WR Claude Allen; Sr. RB/LB Jason Rogers; Sr. WR/DB Donny Murdock.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Colby DeRosier; Sr. DB Daveun Moton; Sr. DE/LB Jason Rogers; Sr. DB Donny Murdock; Jr. LB Ali Sawadogo; Sr. LB Geno Montes (62 tackles); Sr. LB Angel Baugh; Sr. DL Erick Contreras; Jr. LB Christian Perry; Jr. DL Chris Tovar.

Strengths of offense: Most of our skill players are returning. All but one of our offensive linemen are returning. Most of the offensive starters have 2 years of varsity experience.

Strengths of defense: Veteran group of players.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Explosiveness on offense.

2020 expectations: Get better every day. Beat our rival school. Finish the year with a winning record. Win the Region. Make the state playoffs.

Moon Valley

Head coach: Seth Millican.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR Jordan Richardson 6-0, 160; Jr. OL Cordell Outridge 6-0, 215; Jr. QB Micah Southwick 6-2, 172 (1,106 yards passing, 8 TDs); Jr. OL James Conner Huey 5-9, 175; Sr. OL Julian Camba 5-11, 285; Sr. OL Ezequiel Munoz 6-1, 290.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. CB Jordan Richardson 6-0, 160 (47 tackles); Jr. DL Cordell Outridge 6-0, 215 (64 tackles, 3.5 sacks); Sr. CB Jordan Richardson 6-0, 160; Jr. DL James Conner Huey 5-9, 175; Sr. LB Angel Atrisco 5-10, 180 (64 tackles); Sr. DL Julian Camba 5-11, 285; Sr. DL Ezequiel Munoz 6-1, 290.

Also keep an eye on: So. WR/CB Deyon Bradley 5-11, 170; Jr. OL Joseph Gutierrez 5-11, 250; Sr. CB Alex Contreras 5-10, 160; Sr. DB Dylan Kretschmer 6-0, 160.

Strengths of offense: Continuity (Same OC from last year for first time in a long time). QB Micah Southwick. Legit, special kid and we are super lucky to have him!

Strengths of defense: Attitude, effort and commitment.

Team's biggest question mark(s): We finished the 2019 season with 28 football players. Moon Valley needs the next wave to step up.

2020 expectations: In 2020, we earn some respect.

Shadow Mountain

Head coach: Ron Fagan.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Christian Thomson 5-11, 155 (1,753, 14 TDs); Jr. WR Anthony Thomson 5-10 (215 yards receiving).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. S Christian Thomson 5-11, 155 (31 tackles); Sr. CB Reece Calvin 5-10 (27 tackles); Sr. DE Nick Turner (5 sacks); Sr. OLB Kishawn Porter (4 sacks); Jr. CB Anthony Thomson 5-10 (2 INTs).

St. Mary's

Head coach: Jose Lucero.

Years as school's head coach: First year.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR/DB Seamus Sullivan 5-8, 150 (364 yards receiving, 6 TDs); Sr. WR/DB Jack Burch 6-3, 180; Sr. FB/LB Ben Sanford 5-10, 180; Sr. FB/LB Liam Phelan 6, 200 (644 yards rushing, 6 TDs); Sr. OL/DL David Wilmowski 6, 220; Sr. OL/DL Antonio Figueroa 6-1, 275; Sr. WR/DB Francis Chang 5-10, 165.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR/DB Seamus Sullivan 5-8, 150; Sr. WR/DB Jack Burch 6-3, 180 (2 INTs); Sr. FB/LB Ben Sanford 5-10, 180; Sr. FB/LB Liam Phelan 6, 200 (59 tackles); Sr. OL/DL David Wilmowski 6, 220 (32 tackles, 5 sacks); Sr. OL/DL Antonio Figueroa 6-1, 275; Sr. WR/DB Francis Chang 5-10, 165.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. WR/DB Anthony Pacheco 6-1, 170.

Strengths of offense: We feel we have great experience at most skill positions. We like the athleticism of our offensive line. We are a very disciplined group.

Strengths of defense: Return a majority of our skill position players. Kids play with great effort and energy. Very disciplined.

Team's biggest question mark(s): New OL/DL stepping up and making plays. New QB stepping in for the first time, but we are confident.

2020 expectations: To play four quarters of SM football every game. Compete for a region championship and playoff spot. Huge goal is to make the playoffs and wear gold pants.

Thunderbird

Head coach: Matt Nalette.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Jeffrey B. Lillie 6-0, 175 (973 yards passing, 9 TDs); Jr. RB Jordan Lahusky 5-11, 150 (229 yards rushing); Sr. ATH Cedric Harris-Lacy 5-9, 152.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. C Kyler McConnaughy 6-0, 176 (24 tackles).

GILA REGION

Amphitheater

Head coach: Jorge Mendivil.

Years as school's head coach: 6.

2019 record: 5-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. ATH Isiah Hill 5-8, 175 (706 yards rushing, 8 TDs); Jr. RB Kiko Trejo 5-7, 160 (606 yards rushing, 3 TDs).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. ATH Isiah Hill 5-8, 175 (60 tackles). Sr. LB Isaiah Escalante 5-9, 160 (60 tackles).

Catalina Foothills

Head coach: Darius Kelly.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Gavin Sowers 5-8, 170 (257 yards rushing); Sr. WR Derrick Williams 5-11, 170 (370 yards receiving, 8 TDs); Sr. TE Garrick Krautz 6-3, 220 (320 yards receiving, 2 TDs).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. MLB Garrick Krautz 6-3, 220 (74 tackles).

Douglas

Head coach: Hunter Long.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. K Kiki Escalante 5-8; Jr. WR Alejandro Molina 6-0, 165.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. SS Guibran Berthely 5-7, 155; Sr. DL Gabriel Galaz 6-0, 205.

Empire

Head coach: George Kelly.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 1-9.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Jaden Magnusson 5-11, 131; Sr. RB Yani Brown 5-10, 160 (668 yards rushing, 6 TDs); Sr. ATH Adam Kaufman 5-8, 165.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. CB Jacob Puentes 5-8, 130 (45 tackles); Sr. RB Lyle Tanner 5-11, 175 (40 tackles); Sr. DB Yani Brown 5-10, 160 (3 INTs).

Palo Verde

Head coach: Mike Wells.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Dario Marchica 6-0, 180 (1,723 yards passing, 18 TDs); Sr. WR Tristan Spalding 5-11, 155; Sr. WR Marcell Kelly 5-10, 130 (491 yards receiving, 2 TDs).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. SS Tristan Spalding 5-11, 155 (58 tackles, 2 INTs); Sr. FS Marcell Kelly 5-10, 130 (36 tackles); Sr. FS LJ Miller 5-10, 145 (2 INTs).

Rio Rico

Head coach: Kevin Kuhm.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Edryann Rodriguez 5-10, 159; Sr. K Gabriel Romero-Davis 5-7, 120.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. LB Anthony Amezcaga 5-6, 170 (23 tackles), Sr. DL Miko Rodriguez 6-2, 315.

GRAND CANYON REGION

Bradshaw Mountain

Head coach: Bob Young.

Years as school's head coach: First year.

2019 record: 5-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. ATH Josh Grant 6-1, 180 (761 yards passing, 9 TDs; 496 yards rushing, 9 TDs); Jr. QB Moises Hernandez 5-9, 155 (466 yards passing, 4 TDs); Jr. WR Francisco Valentin 5-11, 170.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. LB Michael Kelley 6-1 (70 tackles, 5 sacks); Jr. OLB Aiden Ott 6-0 (38 tackles); Sr. DL Mason Stultz 6-2, 195 (7 sacks);

Coconino

Head coach: Michael Lapsley.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 9-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB/LB Zach Bennett 5-9, 180 (1,753 yards rushing, 22 TDs); Sr. OT/DT Logan Benedict 6-3, 280; Sr. OG/DT Kylor Dunlap 5-9, 215; Jr. OT/DT Jose Montoya 5-9, 250; Jr. C/DT Xavier Nakai 6-0, 280; Jr. TE/DE Matias Ortiz 6-1, 210; Jr. TE/DB Andy Ruiz 6-1, 180; Sr. QB/DB Ryan Seery 5-7, 155; Jr. QB/LB Jonathan Padilla 6-0, 185.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB/WR Jacob Begay 5-8, 150; Sr. LB/RB Manuel Cardoza 5-10, 180 (98 tackles); Jr. LB/RB Jonathan Jaramillo 6-0, 180 (56 tackles, 2 sacks); Sr. DB/WR Malcom Morris 5-9, 145 (42 tackles, 2 INTs); Jr. DE/TE Matias Ortiz 6-1, 215; Jr. DB/WR Timothy Rodriguez 6-0, 165; Jr. DB/TE Andy Ruiz 6-1, 180 (46 tackles); Sr. DB/QB Ryan Seery 5-7, 155.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. FB/DE Tyson Fousel 6-0, 185.

Strengths of offense: Returners who are familiar with the system. Expectations are set. Passing game improvements.

Strengths of defense: Knowledge of system. Expectations. Coverage improvements. LBs. **Team's biggest question mark(s):** Lack of Spring Football. Accountability on "at home" workouts. Depth.

2020 expectations: Better understanding of game day adjustments. Improve speed and quickness. More aggressive at the line of scrimmage. Explosive.

More about program: Looking to repeat as region champs and compete at a very high level.

Lee Williams

Head coach:

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 4-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Devean Santos 5-9 (382 yards passing, 4 TDs); Sr. QB Levi Beckham, 6-1, 215 (272 yards passing, 2 TDs, 150 yards rushing, 3 TDs); Sr. Kameron Toms 6-1 (322 yards receiving, 3 TDs); Sr. Rye Samson (109 yards receiving).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. Jeff Barohna (33 tackles); Sr. Donald DelMonaco (30 tackles); Sr. James Garcia (30 tackles, 4 sacks); Sr. Zach Allen (29 tackles).

Mingus Union

Head coach: Doug Provenzano.

Years as school's head coach: First year.

2019 record: 0-10.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Zachary Harrison 5-11 (1,585 yards passing, 10 TDs); Sr. RB Andrew Meyer 5-11, 165 (638 yards rushing, 4 TDs); Sr. WR Andrew Nahar 6-0, 183 (278 yards receiving); Sr. WR Jonathan Sanchez (203).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. CB Angelo Alvarez 5-7, 165 (44 tackles, 3 INTs); Sr. ILB Zach Figy 6-4, 205 (26 tackles).

Mohave

Head coach: Rudy Olvera.

Years as school's head coach: 5.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Ricardo Ramirez 6-5, 315; Sr. RB Ryan Porter 5-9, 165 (1,179 yards rushing, 11 TDs); Sr. QB Elias Resendez 6-3, 175; Sr. WR Seth McKusker 5-8, 150; Sr. OL Lucas McClure 6-1, 250; Sr. TE Carter Payne 6-2, 180; Sr. OL Chris Brown 5-9, 200; Jr. OL Angel Corona 5-10, 240; Jr. TE/FB Raul Martinez 6-2, 200; Jr. WR Alan Hacegaba 6-2, 180; Sr. OL Jordan Jenkins 6 270.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DL Ricardo Ramirez 6-5, 315 (57 tackles, 2 sacks); Sr. DB Elias Resendez 6-3, 175; Sr. DL Lucas McClure 6-1, 250; Sr. OLB/DE Carter Payne 6-2, 180; Sr. DL Chris Brown 5-9, 200; Jr. DL Angel Corona 5-10, 240; Jr. OLB/DE Raul Martinez 6-2, 200 (52 tackles, 3 sacks); Jr. OLB/DE Alan Hacegaba 6-2, 180 (45 tackles); Jr. DB Josh Cox 5-8, 165 (29 tackles); Jr. MLB Yahir Acero 5-10, 175 (50 tackles).

Strengths of offense: We have a great group of young men. Good, smart and tough offensive line. Speedy running back with great potential and speed.

Strengths of defense: Lots of talent coming back and eager to be leaders. All linebackers return. Big physical nose ready to lead the defensive line.

Team's biggest question mark(s):

New coaching staff. New offensive scheme. New defensive scheme.

Prescott

Head coach: Cody Collett.

Years as school's head coach: 6.

2019 record: 7-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OT Vinnie Oldfield 6-0, 260; Sr. WR Brayden Nelson 6-0, 165; Sr. WR Nathan Briseno 5-10, 175; Sr. OL Shadrick Lemons 6-0, 245; Sr. RB Nate Wright 6-0, 185.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Luke McCauslin 5-11, 180; Sr. LB Nate Wright 6-0, 185; Sr. DL Chase Madrid 5-9, 185.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. QB Wyatt Snyder 6-0, 160; Sr. RB/DB Ryland Waples 5-9, 155; So. RB/LB Cody Leopold 5-10, 185; Jr. DB Cervando Vega 5-9, 145.

Strengths of offense: Deep at RB - three guys that are all good led by Nate Wright. Wide Receiver Nelson led region and Nathan Briseno is good.

Strengths of defense: Three-year year starter Luke McCauslin. Coachable group.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Experience. We lost 26 seniors.

2020 expectations: Continue to be one of the best in Grand Canyon Region. Compete for a playoff spot.

More about program: 100th year of Prescott football this season. Also, a brand new state of the art turf field that in my opinion is the best in state.

SOUTHWEST REGION

Buckeye Union

Head coach: Kelley Moore.

Years as school's head coach: 6.

2019 record: 6-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OG Reupena Tagaloa 6-4, 330; Sr. C, Francisco Arteaga 6-0, 195; Sr. OG Joel Diaz Hernandez 6-1, 250; Jr. OT, Jaime De la Rosa 6-0, 220; Sr. WR Camron Bales 6-0, 165.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Wyatt Gates 5-10, 205; Sr. DB Antonio Johnson 5-9, 160; Jr. DB Jaelon Richardson 6-0, 160.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. DB Tim Croskey 6-1, 185; So. LB Izayah Garcia 6-0, 205; Sr. DE D'Mari Johnson 6-7, 245; So. OLB Salehe Koonooka-Williams 6-1, 210; Jr. QB Tyler Hill 5-10, 160.

Strengths of offense: Offensive line experience. Key skill personnel.

Strengths of defense: Speed. Physicality.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Scope of the offense. New defensive coordinator.

2020 expectations: Maximize potential. Make 100th year of the school memorable.

More about program: With the advent of COVID 19, I believe our community will see passion and inspiration on the field that may have not been witnessed in many years.

Deer Valley

Head coach: Dan Friedman.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Trent Green 5-8, 145 (540 yards passing, 2 TDs); Sr. OL Brandon Schwartz 6-4, 250; Jr. RB Ashton Hill 5-11, 200 (695 yards rushing, 8 TDs); Jr. OL Dylan Henderson 6-5, 225; Sr. Slot Kaiden Hosler 5-7, 145; Sr. WR Matthew Weed 5-9, 165; Sr. OL Ryan Riley 6-0, 205; Sr. OL Ethan Yellowman 5-11, 330; Jr. OL Damien Marquez 6-2, 325; Sr. WR Kellen Huth 6-1, 155.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Donny Moore 5-10, 230 (53 tackles, 2 sacks); Jr. LB Jermaine Moore 5-11, 205 (44 tackles); Sr. OLB Jaden Stewart 5-7, 170 (42 tackles); Sr. DL Brandon Schwartz 6-4, 250; Jr. DL Josh Gartshore 5-9, 220; Jr. FS DJ Miles 6-2, 205; Sr. C Christian Clay 6-0, 145; Sr. C Adrian Onyango 5-11, 190; Sr. OLB Gavan Carlson 5-10, 175.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. K/WR/DB Tanner Bobic 5-8, 155.

Strengths of offense: Boat load of returners. Offensive line.

Strengths of defense: Experience. Linebackers.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Will we get some crossover athletes to come out?

2020 expectations: Winning season.

Speed to Burn: Catch Poston Butte's jack of all trades if you can

By Leo Tochterman
azpreps365.com

Zion Burns can do it all on the football field.

Whether it's breaking a huge gain out of the backfield, locking down an opposing team's receiver at cornerback, or taking a punt to the house, he has the ability to take over a game from anywhere on the field. As a junior at Poston Butte, Burns rushed for 1,542 yards and 20 touchdowns, all while splitting carries and playing both sides of the ball. The 6-foot, 180-pound Burns rushes with a unique combination of power and agility, which is partly why he's considered a top-20 senior in the state of Arizona ahead of the 2020 season.

Poston Butte head coach Dain Thompson expects to utilize Burns and his 4.43 speed this year, as he's done previously, as a jack of all trades.

"There is a great likelihood he (Burns) will be in the same boat this year," Thompson said. "If we can create some depth, where he's a full-time running back, then that's great for us. If we don't have those young guys that step up and take over one of those roles as a corner, then we already know what we can do with him."

Thompson trusts Burns to play at a high level on both sides thanks to the elite athletic traits he possesses.

"You have to be a tough kid and super committed and in great shape to play two ways," Thompson said. "Last year, he was a full-time corner and we did running back by committee at times."

After such a strong junior campaign, Thompson mentioned that he'd like to see Burns make little improvements to the areas he already succeeds at to really round himself out before graduating.

"I think that we really just want him to keep moving in the direction he's moved in already," Thompson said. "His leadership abilities have improved drastically over the last year. We expect him to play with a lot of confidence, and we just look for him to be better at everything he's done for us so far. He ran the ball extremely hard last year, and I think that's one of his key things. He's a strong runner, and he's got great speed and length on defense."

In addition to his growth on the football field, Thompson praised Burns' growth as a vocal leader since joining varsity as a sophomore.

"Most kids as sophomores who wind up playing varsity are pretty quiet," Thompson said. "As a junior, his responsibilities on the team grew. He was more of a lead by example guy. He wasn't going to be boisterous very often. Already this year we're seeing that his ability to communicate orally has improved drastically. I think that because of his abilities, kids are going to ultimately look to him to lead and show the way, so it's good that he's finding his voice before his senior year."

Burns' impressive 2019 campaign was in part fueled by a family tragedy that motivated him to have a huge year.



*Keeping up with Poston Butte's Zion Burns won't be easy this season.
(Photo courtesy of Dain Thompson)*

"I lost a family member before the season," Burns said. "I kind of used it as positivity instead of negativity to make them proud of me."

As a result of his breakout season last year, Burns was awarded multiple scholarship offers from several Division I schools. Ultimately, Burns picked the University of Nevada, where he will play defensive back, citing the family atmosphere as one of the main reasons for choosing the Wolf Pack.

"I just liked it when I got there," Burns said. "I liked the way that the coaches treated me and my family and how I was treated as more than just an athlete."

Poston Butte finished 5-5 in the 4A Conference last season, but with Burns ready to take another leap and 17 starters returning, including four two-way players, expect the Broncos to improve upon that win total in 2020.

Poston Butte - 4A Black Canyon Region

Head coach: Dain Thompson.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 5-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Zion Burns 6-0, 180 (1,542, 20 TDs); Sr. QB Gavin Lloyd 5-11, 170 (792 yards passing, 3 TDs; 665 yards rushing, 7 TDs); Sr. RB Nick Cocomello 5-10, 175 (309 yards rushing, 6 TDs); Sr. OC Miles Hammond 6-1, 190; Sr. OG David Guedea 5-11, 220; Sr. WR Mattias Perez 5-11, 155 (291 yards receiving, 3 TDs); Jr. TE Zac McMahon 6-3, 170; Sr. Slot Jimmy Brooks 6-1, 185.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. OLB/Nickel Nick Cocomello 5-11, 175; Sr. CB Zion Burns 6-0, 180 (39 tackles); Sr. SS Jimmy Brooks 6-1, 185; Sr. FS Mattias Perez 5-11, 155; Jr. LB Riley Nolan 5-11, 165; Jr. OLB Justin Evans 6-0, 170; Sr. DL Kalob Holzinger 6-0, 240; Sr. DL Chad Huston 6-0, 220; Sr. DE Chris Fowler 5-9, 205 (36 tackles, 4 sacks).

Also keep an eye on: So. OL Cade Alisa 6-4, 260; So. OL, Bobby Gaitan 5-11, 235; Fr. OL David Kamody 6-3, 310; Fr. WR/S, Travis Ford 6-3, 170; So. TE/QB/S Connor Lopez 6-3, 190.

Strengths of offense: Returning QB, Gavin Lloyd as a triple threat: runner, passer and leader. Returning RB Zion Burns, fast and tough, Division I athlete. Overall team experience, lots of guys who contributed in different positions return. OL: Although we only return two players, our line will be bigger and more athletic this year. Versatility: We were a run heavy team last season. Experience and a returning QB will allow us to be more balanced.

Strengths of defense: Experience: Because of injuries last season, many returners were forced into starting roles and produced. Depth: We return nine players that started at different times at LB. Nick Cocomello OLB/Nickel will show up as an elite play-maker. Our team speed will be significantly better than a year ago. **Team's biggest question mark(s):** Our depth will be so much better. Who will earn starting positions is a question? Returners keep their spots or possibly get beat out!

2020 expectations: Train hard, practice hard and perform as a TEAM. Prepare as a starter, take advantage of every opportunity. Be the most physical team on the field. Our weekly goal is to win each game. Period.

Estrella Foothills

Head coach: Derek Wahlstrom.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Ty Perry 5-11, 185 (716 yards passing, 6 TDs); Sr. WR/DB Daylen Batchan 6-2, 175; Sr. WR/DB Zach Hobbs 6-2, 185; Sr. WR/DB Conner Betts 6-2, 175 (279 yards receiving, 3 TDs); Sr. C/DL Corbin Triplett 5-11, 225; Sr. G/DL Marc Jones 6-0, 200.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB/FB Quinlan Popham 6-3, 210 (112 tackles); Sr. LB/TE Matt Gundogan 6-2, 215 (58 tackles); Sr. S/RB John Coleman 5-10, 180 (50 tackles, 2.5 sacks); Sr. DL/OL Thai Armstrong-Soto 6-2, 225; Sr. LB/TE Patrick Bontrager 5-10, 185 (68 tackles, 5.5 sacks); Sr. DB/WR Wesley Gutwein 6-1, 175; Sr. DB/WR Chris Olgin 6-0, 175; Jr. DL/OL Donnell Danley 6-0, 265

Strengths of offense: This senior class has been really tight knit and I think they will do something special. Our passing game may be pretty special with the return of Ty Perry from injury.

Strengths of defense: Our linebacking corps have played together on varsity for three seasons. They are an excellent group of young men that will lead.

Team's biggest question mark(s): We are converting to a new defensive scheme. Our QB is returning after he was injured in game four.

2020 expectations: We hope to start quickly in 2020.

Lake Havasu

Head coach: Karl Thompson.

Years as school's head coach: 12.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Cole Fuller 6-1, 180 (2,669 yards passing, 19 TDs); Jr. ATH Cody Pellaton (221 yards rushing, 2 TDs)

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. ATH Cody Pellaton (57 tackles); Sr. Jordan Cummings (36 tackles); Sr. MLB Aaron Bracamonte 6-0, 190 (32 tackles).

Youngker

Head coach: Anthony Cluff.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. WR DeShaun Conway 6-1, 170; Sr. C Andres Flores 5-10, 310; Sr. T Jacey Figueroa 6-2, 220; Sr. T Efrain Ramirez 6-2, 220; Jr. G Lorenzo Llanez-Serna 5-8, 240; So. WR Evan Aguirre 5-6, 150.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DE Emmanuel Flores 6-3, 205 (34 tackles, 4 sacks); Sr. LB Anthony Jackson 5-11, 200 (91 tackles); Sr. OLB Raul Caldera 5-9, 160 (65 tackles); Sr. NT Calvin Cluff 5-10, 175; Sr. S Julian Montoya 5-8, 155 (45 tackles, 4 INTs); Jr. LB Matt Preston 5-10, 175.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. K Edgar Delgado 5-9, 160; Sr. WR/OLB Giovanni Carrera 5-10, 180.

Strengths of offense: Returning Lineman. Young experience at wide receiver.

Strengths of defense: Veteran leadership. Three best defenders returning.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Young quarterback. Replacement at corner.

2020 expectations: Compete from game one.

COPPER SKY REGION

Carl Hayden

Head coach: Steven Arenas.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Roberto Lopez 6-0, 225; Sr. OL Louie Perez 5-8, 200; Jr. OL Andrew Lopez 6-2 220; Jr. OL Bryan Medina 6-1 240; Jr. OL Camden Bergen 6-3 260; Sr. QB Bryce Charles 6-0 150; Sr. RB Kevin Yarbough 6-3, 190 (1,230 yards rushing, 11 TDs).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Michael Cristobal 5-8, 155; Sr. CB Bryce Charles 6-0, 150; Sr. DL Roberto Lopez 6-0, 225; Jr. DB Andy Delgado 5-10 160; Jr. DL Braulio Tell 6-1, 200; Sr. CB Elijah DeLeon 5-10 140.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. DL Rudy Mares, 5-10, 260; Sr. DL Jae'vion Brown, 6-1, 280; Sr. RB Roman Amaro, 5-8, 155.

Strengths of offense: Strength continues to be our big boys up front. Good size and experience. 1,000 yard rusher returning for senior year.

Strengths of defense: Kid are really coachable on this side of the ball.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Depth is always a question mark for us. We need to stay healthy. Lost several key players last year to injury.

2020 expectations: We believe we can compete for a region title this year.

Sierra Linda

Head coach: Nate Gill.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

2019 record: 0-10.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. T Fabian Pina 6-3, 275; Sr. WR/CB Damirion Barber 5-11, 170 (401 yards receiving, 4 TDs); Sr. WR/DB Jan Ruiz 5-10, 175 (244 yards receiving, 2 TDs); Jr. RB Josh Berg-Nabors 5-8, 175 (414 yards rushing, 3 TDs); Jr. WR/CB Xavier Quintanilla 5-9, 160; Jr. C Louis Cheno 5-11, 250; So. ATH Traven Vigenser 6-1, 175; So. WR Stephon Daily 6-3, 170; Jr. G Jaden Acevedo 5-10, 230.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. CB Damirion Barber 5-11, 170 (33 tackles, 4 INTs); Sr. Safety Jan Ruiz 5-10, 175 (29 tackles, 4 sacks); Sr. LB Salvador Orozco 5-10, 190 (45 tackles, 2 sacks); Sr. LB Saul Marquez 6-2, 200 (33 tackles, 2 sacks); Jr. DT Anthony Mendez 6-2, 260; Jr. CB Xavier Quintanilla 5-9, 160.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. FS Jose Grado 5-11, 175; Jr. DE Jesse Leyvas 6-4, 225; So. LB Lloyd Burris 5-10, 175; So. DE Shekeem Moore 6-2, 205.

Strengths of offense: Experience. More athletic. Speed.

Strengths of defense: Experience. Expectations. Stronger. More Athletic.

Team's biggest question mark(s): QB experience. Mental toughness. Talent meshing.

2020 expectations: Vast improvements all around on the field of play. 48 minute mentality. COMPETE.

More about program: Have had 110 in the program in back-to-back years, and five college football signees for 2020. 0 college football signees prior to arrival (9 seasons).

Vista Grande

Head coach: Chris Semore.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

2019 record: 0-10.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Donald Altaffer 5-10, 165 (1,481 yards passing, 8 TDs); Sr. WR/DB Christopher Hernandez 5-11, 170; Sr. WR/DB Jace Atkins 5-11, 175 (331 yards receiving); Jr. WR/DB Tyrese Constable 5-9, 155 (257 yards receiving, 3 TDs); Jr. WR Carson Meiner 5-8, 170; Sr. OL Jimmie Madrid 6-4, 285; Jr. OL Daniel Ahlman 6-0, 250; Sr. OL Calvin Velazquez 6-1, 215.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR/DB Christopher Hernandez 5-11, 170 (55 tackles); Jr. DB Jaevin Heath 5-10, 165; Jr. DB Tyrese Constable 5-9, 155; Jr. DB Michael Easley 5-10, 157; Sr. DL Calvin Velazquez 6-1, 215; Jr. LB Eric Foerster 6-0, 150.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. OL/DL Skyler Higdon 6-5, 275; Sr. RB/LB Louis Tellez 5-8, 174; Jr. WR/DB Nick Padilla 6-0, 165; So. OL/DL Josh Fairbanks 6-4, 270; So. WR Angelo Tapia 5-9, 165.

Strengths of offense: Returning starters. Returning all skill position players.

Strengths of defense: Returning starters. New defensive coordinator. Aggressive attacking schemes.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Linebacker depth. Offensive and defensive line depth.

2020 expectations: Go in to each week prepared to win. Play with great effort. Execute at a high level.

Washington

Head coach: Tim Mayfield.

Years as school's head coach: 4.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Gabriel Segovia 5-10, 145 (661 yards passing, 4 TDs); Sr. QB Michael Gruppo 5-10, 150 (552 yards passing, 10 TDs; 414 yards rushing, 6 TDs); Sr. RB Dominick Sanders 5-10, 160 (247 yards rushing, 5 TDs; 237 yards receiving, 3 TDs).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DT Gilbert Calderon 5-10, 256 (68 tackles, 9 sacks); Sr. OLB Fernando Campoamor 5-7, 150 (55 tackles).

Yuma

Head coach: Bo Seibel

Years as school's head coach: First year.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Jaynoah Medel 5-10 (424 yards passing, 4 TDs); Sr. QB Jacob Straub 5-9, 160 (320 yards passing); Sr. RB Erick Cervantes 5-8, 160 (303 yards rushing, 4 TDs); Jr. RB Isaac Torres 6-0, 195 (280 yards rushing); Sr. WR Alex Mosqueda 6-2, 170 (535 yards receiving, 3 TDs);

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DT Jayden Dobson 6-2, 235 (49 tackles); Jr. DB Julian Becerra 5-6, 145 (42 tackles, 2 INTs); Jr. DE Jaynoah Medel 5-10 (31 tackles); Jr. DT Julian Goldsbrough 6-1, 190 (4 sacks).



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It takes a village: Determined Thompson thriving under watchful eye of family, mentors



Meet the Thompson family: (from L-R) Clay, Dirk, Melissa and Ty, Mesquite's D-I-bound quarterback. (Thompson family photo)

By Jose Garcia
azpreps365.com

Ty Thompson is a multi-mythical state champion in tetherball. At least in his mind he is.

They don't give out trophies for playing the playground game, but the super competitive Thompson would display them if they did.

"I was undefeated all the way through junior high," said the Mesquite High senior as a matter of fact.

Thompson isn't kidding about his overpowering tetherball game.

He's a nice kid, but just don't challenge him — at anything. That will to succeed isn't immediately apparent.

But it's there, hidden and constantly bubbling behind his calm demeanor. They do give out trophies in football, however, and Thompson, the next great Arizona high school senior quarterback, is chasing them and so much more.

In two short years he skyrocketed up the nation's high school quarterback rating charts. He worked extremely hard to get there, but Thompson also credits the supportive team around him for helping him reach this point.

It begins with his family and continues with former NFL quarterback Donovan McNabb, some of the best quarterback trainers in the state and his Mesquite High family.

"There are a couple of important things that my parents instilled in me since I was young," Thompson said. "Not to ever accept mediocrity is one of them. That never flew in this house."

His dad, Dirk, works in finance information security and his mom, Melissa, is an endurance athlete and flight attendant.

As a young kid, Dirk recalls seeing his son's competitive spirit when Thompson played with his brother, Clay, who is three years older than Thompson. At one point, the Thompson brothers were the same height and many thought they were twins before Thompson kept growing.

Besides toting a tight end frame and strong right arm, Thompson also is a bright student (ranked 15th overall in his senior class at Mesquite). Origami sheets, Rubik's Cubes and chess boards were once his go to toys.

Even back then, he also hated to lose. Dirk sensed that when Clay and his brother were playing a video game.

"I was in the kitchen and heard them hooting and hollering and then saw Clay holding his stomach," Dirk said. "Ty hit him because he was losing. We had a conversation about being a good loser."

Later on that day, Thompson was losing again to his brother. This time he took a different approach, but not exactly the one Dirk wanted.

"Ty turned off the game," Dirk said, "and he looked at me as if to say, 'That's better than hitting him, right?'"

That sibling rivalry evolved into brotherly love and always doing the right thing, just like their parents taught them.

COVID-19 extended Clay's summer stay at home before returning to the University of Texas Permian Basin, where he plays Division II baseball.

"Spending time with Clay has been one of the positives about the pandemic," Thompson said.

The coronavirus also halted Thompson's religious gym routine, but he continued to train at home and with another big brother of sorts, McNabb.

Thompson met McNabb when he was 11, when McNabb was asked by a friend to talk to a team Thompson was on. McNabb didn't know at the time, but he was Thompson's favorite NFL quarterback.

"The fact that I'm working with (McNabb) now is surreal," Thompson said.

McNabb, a former high school multi-sport star, lives in



Mesquite's Ty Thompson is coming off a season in which he threw for 4,074 yards and 45 TDs. (Darin Sicurello photo/MaxPreps)

the Valley, trains high school kids and coaches club basketball.

His daughter, Lexi, plays basketball at Seton Catholic.

"I look at Ty like a little brother of mine," McNabb said. "I want to see him be successful. I want to see him be prepared and ready to go. And hopefully three years from now we'll be talking about him being drafted in the first round of the draft."

Working under center is one important thing Thompson is learning from his mentor.

McNabb is also making sure Thompson is prepared to compete for the starting job as soon as he lands at the school he committed to, the University of Oregon.

"The thing I will put on Ty's plate is that I will continue to challenge him," McNabb said. "Yeah, you're the man at Mesquite, but I need you to be the man at Oregon right now. When you take a step on to the campus, and during your first week of practice, I want people to say, 'You know what, that is our future.'"

"There's no other way. Listen, we are not going for the free items and wearing the gloves. We want to play."

When he stepped on Mesquite's campus for the first time, Thompson wasn't the man.

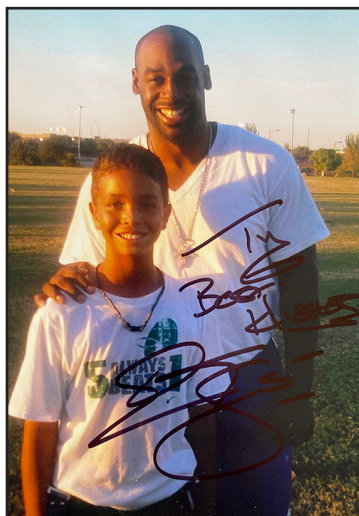
Two of his first five varsity completions went to the opponent. It happened during his first varsity game, in 2017, when he was a freshman, but that was a turning point.

He vowed to train more than ever after that game.

"The thing that separates Ty is that football is something he loves, and he's willing to do whatever it takes to get better at it," McNabb said.

Thompson first worked with then Mesquite coach Chad DeGranier, a former Arena Football League quarterback whose dad played in the NFL, and DeGranier's former state championship quarterback at Cactus Shadows, Phillip Aholt.

Thompson also connected with local radio sports host Dan Manucci, a former NFL and McClintock High quarterback, and another well-known Valley passing trainer, Mike Giovand Thompson also picked up a thing or two from one of his youth football coaches, current Casteel coach Bobby Newcombe, a former University of Nebraska starting quarterback.



From fan to student, there's history between former NFL quarterback Donovan McNabb and Ty Thompson. (Thompson family photo)

Each trainer taught different principles that allowed the 6-foot-4, 215-pound Thompson to really flourish in and out of the pocket. Everything he learned was on full display late last season while helping secure Mesquite's first state title.

In the state semifinals, with Mesquite trailing 21-20 in the final three minutes, Thompson orchestrated the eventual winning drive, culminating with a back shoulder 12-yard scoring reception by Jacob Walker. Mesquite's defense sealed the win with a goal line stand.

In the 4A final against Desert Edge, Thompson threw an interception that almost cost his team the game.

But that's also when Thompson's determination kicked in. He ran across the field to make a touchdown saving tackle during the 53-yard interception return.

"If Ty doesn't make the tackle we lose," said another mentor of Thompson's, Mesquite coach Scott Hare. "That tackle was ginormous, and the ball was on the opposite hash mark."

What also impressed Hare about his prized quarterback was that he didn't sulk after the interception.

Thompson went directly to his sideline, picked up the ball and started tossing it with a receiver to prepare for his next drive.

Thankfully for Mesquite, its defense held once again, setting up the winning drive with less than three minutes remaining. The composed Thompson drove his team down the field to set up the 33-yard game-winning pass.

We'll let the student of the game explain what he saw on the final touchdown that allowed Mesquite to win 28-23.

"Michael Sterling ran across the safety's face," Thompson said. "The safety stood in the middle and decided to go with Jacob. I chose Michael, and I chose right."

Making the correct reads continued in the offseason when Thompson was invited to the prestigious Elite 11 event, where the best of the best incoming senior quarterbacks compete.

From the start of the event in Tennessee, Thompson confidently performed everything he mastered up to that point to establish himself as an MVP Elite 11 contender.

His three-day showing also helped raise his national stock.

"I knew the drills like the back of my hand," Thompson said. "I was dialed in."

"I felt like it solidified the confidence I have in myself."

His high school mission isn't over, though.

Mesquite isn't a perennial power, but it's Thompson neighborhood school, and he wants to keep raising the profile of the program.

"Mesquite's been my home since I was a freshman," he said. "There's never been a question or thinking of going elsewhere to get more looks or offers. Going to my home school, playing there and making it better and leaving a legacy, that's been my plan all along."

Below: Mesquite celebrating its 2019 title in 4A. (Steve Paynter photo/MaxPreps)



3A Conference Football Preseason Rankings



Snowflake and RB Terren Green are reloading for another run at the 3A crown. (Chris Stanley photo/MaxPreps)

By Andy Morales
azpreps365.com

1. SNOWFLAKE: Snowflake gave up an interception deep in its own territory late in the fourth quarter of the 2019 3A semifinal game, allowing Benjamin Franklin to take a 16-14 lead. But, with 28 seconds left, the Snowflake Lobos got another shot to reach their first final since 2014. A 35-yard field goal attempt, however, failed. Benjamin Franklin won't be in the way this season and neither will 2019 3A semifinalists Northwest Christian and American Leadership Academy Queen Creek. That trio moved up to 4A, and the Lobos remained in the 3A Conference as the team to beat despite losing QB Ethan Ramage (1,497 yards passing, 12 TDs) and RB Brig Turley (1,485 yards rushing, 24 TDs). Returning RB Terren Green (1,300 all-purpose yards) and Jr. QB Caden Cantrell will lead the team and the Lobos will get Sr. Mayson McKinlay back from a knee injury, which kept him out all of last season. McKinlay is a threat as a RB and WR. Returning center/Jr. captain Carter Solomon adds experience and leadership. Returning RG David Ruiz is undersized but smart and plays big. Green also had 159 total tackles and leads a solid group of LBs. Bradley Ruiz and Solomon anchor a big, strong defensive front that should be difficult to move. Payson Cardon and Noah Baum return as quick, tough DEs. Cardon had 71 tackles from his DE spot last season. Josh Solomon and Ryson Stuart bring back experience as CBs and the secondary will be tough with the return of McKinlay as a safety/OLB. Rev Brimhall, Nick McVicker, Camden Brimhall and Ty Solomon round out a solid group of LBs.

2. BLUE RIDGE: The Yellowjackets ran up against Snowflake in the quarterfinal round last year but a favorable seed this year could help Blue Ridge. Experience at QB with three-year starter PJ London (2,349 yards passing, 10 TDs) along with an experienced receiving corps, with each having at least two years of experience, will be huge for Blue Ridge. The Yellowjackets have four returning starting linemen with several big backups pushing them along with experience in the secondary. Inside LB's are strong with good football sense and there's increased size up front.

3. ROUND VALLEY: The Elks won the 2A state championship last year over Phoenix Christian, and both teams have moved up to the 3A Conference along with Thatcher. The 3A East Region will be gauntlet with Snowflake, Blue Ridge, Round Valley, Payson and Winslow. But Marcus Bell and his close-knit coaching staff are 90-26 at Round Valley. Bell led the Elks to the state title last year, and he earned runner-up finishes in 2013, 2016 and 2018. Other state titles for the program include 1966, 1970, 1971, 1979, 1980 and 1985 but those were also at the 2A level. The team loses RB Marc Irigoyen, who came up big with a 28-yard TD run with 4:06 left in the state final to give the Elks their first lead of the game. Phoenix Christian led 28-13 with 2:25 left in the third quarter but it was all Round Valley from there. Round Valley also loses QB Tayvin Bevell, but the program always seems to regroup.

4. SABINO: An overtime loss to Ben Franklin in the regular season, along with a loss to Safford in the final regular season game of the year, cost the Sabercats a higher seed. That put the team on a collision course with ALA-Queen Creek in the state playoffs after the team took out revenge on Safford in the first round. The Sabercats lost RB Andrew Owen (515 yards rushing and 3 TDs), Diego Armijo (768 yards receiving, 8 TDs), Sam Valenzuela (507 yards receiving, 3 TDs) and Jayson Petty (351 yards receiving, 5 TDs) to graduation and Michael Masunas transferred to Hamilton. But Sr. QB AJ Skaggs (2,495 yards passing, 25 TDs) returns. With 4,119 career passing yards, Skaggs could be the 12th player from southern Arizona to pass for more than 5,000 yards. Also returning is Jr. RB Kenny Blackman (356 yards rushing, 5 TDs) and Sr. WR Dawson Szarek (313 yards receiving, 5 TDs). Four starting offensive linemen return along with top defenders Sr. LB Luke Thompson (102 tackles), Sr. DE Beau Chaney, Sr. DT Adam Brauer (6-5, 300), Jr. DB Derek Sanchez and Sr. DB Korbin Mukle-bust (42 tackles).

5. PHOENIX CHRISTIAN: The Cougars beat Round Valley in the 2019 regular season and played 3A state champion ALA-Queen Creek close last year. A late-game collapse against Round valley in the 2A final denied the team its first state championship since 2004. The Cougars lost Man-Man Freeman (2,237 yards rushing, 37 TDs) to graduation but almost every other starter on offense returns, including breakaway threat RB/WR Howard Russell (683 yards rushing, 8 TDs; 733 yards receiving, 13 TDs), QB Adrian Fleming (833 yards passing, 13 TDs) and QB Jose Herrera (718, 9 TDs). The offensive and defensive lines are experienced, and head coach Brian Cole is 145-44 in his career and could get to 150 in November. Cole led North Canyon to a 5A state championship in 2005 and Joy Christian to state championships in 2012 (8-man) and 2015.

6. VALLEY CHRISTIAN: The Trojans made the jump from the Metro West Region to the Metro East Region after winning their region in 2018 and taking second in 2019 to Yuma Catholic. Valley Christian will be going up against ALA-Gilbert North and most likely AZ College Prep in the new region configuration. Kirk Sundberg (17-7 in his two seasons with the Trojans) returned home to coach in Michigan. But in stepped the team's former defensive coordinator, Jake Petersen, who's been at the school since 2014. He will return Jr. QB Jadon Hanzal (1,073 yards passing, 9 TDs., 540 yards receiving, 4 TDs) and Sr. RB Tony Gomez, Jr. (672 yards rushing, 13 TDs.) on offense and Jr. LB Justin Regehr and Jr. LB Treyten Hortsman on defense. The Trojans' biggest tests of season will come on Oct. 9 vs. Phoenix Christian in a non-region matchup and on Oct. 30. That's when the Trojans will travel to play a very experienced Arizona College Prep team in a game that might determine the region championship.

7. THATCHER: The Eagles jump right into the 3A Conference with an away game at Pima and then at home vs. Snowflake. The team will go with new head coach Daniel Jones. A former DE/TE on two state championship teams from Blue Ridge, Jones spent the last few years as an assistant at 6A Desert Ridge. Thatcher reeled off championships from 2016-2018 with a combined record of 39-3 before making it to the semifinal round last year. Thatcher returns Sr. QB Mark Wren (242 yards passing, 4 TDs.), Sr. RB Michael McBride (367 yards rushing, 4 TDs.) and Sr. MLB Michael McBride (15 tackles). The Eagles will contend also with Pusch Ridge, ALA Gilbert, Florence and San Tan Foothills. It will end its regular season against rival Safford in one of the biggest 3A games of the year. Don't remind Safford, but Thatcher has a four game win streak against 3A Safford.

8. ALA-GILBERT NORTH: Randy Ricedorff is 23-10 in his three years at ALA-Gilbert North. The Eagles won the 3A Metro East Region in 2018, but the program was not eligible for postseason play. The team cruised through region play last year after going 2-6 in "freedom games" before losing to top-seeded Benjamin Franklin 35-28 in the state quarterfinal round. As mentioned before, Benjamin Franklin moved up to the 4A Conference along with Northwest Christian and ALA-Queen Creek. The Eagles will get tested in non-region games vs. Snowflake and Thatcher. It'll end its regular season against sister school ALA Ironwood. Sr. QB Jack Ricedorff (1,907 yards passing, 15 TDs) returns along with Jr. RB Easton Webster (541 yards rushing, 7 TDs) and Sr. slot Tillman Willis 5-8 140 (272 yards receiving). Jr. LB Spencer Nielson (43 tackles, 2 INTs) and So. LB Luc Asay (47 tackles, 2 INTs) return on defense.

9. YUMA CATHOLIC: Rhett Stallworth has 121 wins and three state championships with the Shamrocks, but a 37-34 loss to state nemesis Northwest Christian in the quarterfinals last year ended another shot at the top. Yuma Catholic's ultracompetitive rivalry with NW Christian will take a break this year for the first time since 2008. The Shamrocks are stacked on defense with Sr. DB Jonah Leon, Jr. DB Mario Martinez, So. LB Jarred Marquez, Jr. LB Devon Schmidt-Black, Sr. DL Jacob Bernal and Jr. DB Austin Priest returning. But the program will have to replace QB Gage Reese and his 10,621 career passing yards. Three returning QB's are battling for the top spot. Sr. WR Jona Leon (723 yards receiving, 10 TDs) returns but 1,000-yard rusher Jamar McFarlane graduated.

10. SAFFORD: The Bulldogs won the 3A South Region last year after struggling to get past the No. 2 spot, but the team fell to region foe Sabino in the first round of the state playoffs. The program returns Sr. RB CJ Scrivner (813 yards rushing, 10 TDs) and Sr. RB Eduardo Ogaz (485 yards rushing, 5 TDs) on offense and Sr. DB Jared Garcia (39 tackles), Sr. DB Angel Atencio and Sr. LB CJ Scrivner (4 sacks) return on defense. Former Eastern Arizona head coach John O'Mera takes over after leading the Gila Hanks for 15 years.

3A Conference Team-By-Team Preview



(L-R) Victor Aguirre (83 tackles last year), Christopher Walter (1,035 passing yards) and Ruben Torres (340 rushing yards) return for Florence this year. (Mark Jones photo/MaxPreps)

By Andy Morales
azpreps365.com

SOUTH REGION

Florence

Head coach: Scott Howard.

Years as school's head coach: 6.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Christopher Walter 6-2, 205 (1,035 yards passing, 7 TDs.); Sr. C. Jacob Sarraillon 5-10, 200; Sr. OT Kolton Stone 6-2, 315; Sr. OT Michael Lewis 6-1, 235; Jr. WR Isaac Sandoval, 6-1 180 (149 yards receiving, TD.); Jr. WR Cade Stenson 6-4 200; Jr. WR, Thomas Carberry, 5-8, 160 (140 yards receiving, 3 TDs.).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DE, Wyatt Manning 5-11, 185 (2 sacks); Sr. DT, Michael Lewis 6-1, 235; Jr. DE/DT, Ryan King 6-3, 235 (2 sacks); Jr. LB, Victor Aguirre, 6-2, 215 (83 tackles); Jr. LB, Kaleb Lewis, 5-10, 185 (66 tackles); Jr. LB, Ruben Torres, 5-10, 180; Jr. DB, Isaac Sandoval, 6-1, 185; Sr. DB, Angel Rankin, 5-10, 175.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. OG/DT Aiden Cook 5-11, 250; So. DT, Wrangler Guilliams, 6-4, 250; Jr. RB/LB Joshua McEvoy, 5-11, 180; So. WR/LB Anthony Pistorio, 5-8, 180; So. WR/DB, Adomi Barnett, 6-2 170.

Strengths of offense: Offensive line has experience and talent coming back. Skill positions are athletic and tough. Returning a 2-year starter at QB.

Strengths of defense: Returning most of the defense. Athletic and physical. LBs have a lot of experience coming back. Real good group.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Replacing a 1,600 yd rusher.

2020 expectations: Learning from last year's close losses. We will finish all games. Dominate at the line of scrimmage. Win the region. Make the playoffs. Compete for a State Championship.

Pusch Ridge

Head coach: Kent Middleton.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 5-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB/LB Evan Lovett 6-2, 200 (775 yards rushing, 10 TDs.); Sr. OL/DL Justin Ripperdan 6-1, 230; Sr. OL/DL Nick Urias 6-0, 225; Jr. RB/LB Javier Grajeda 5-6, 170 (205 yards rushing, 4 TDs.); Jr. QB/Rec/DB Hayden Hallett 6-1, 165; Jr. QB/DB Ryan Fontaine 5-9, 165; So. TE/Rec/DE Will Way 6-5, 220; So. Slot/DB Bryce Jewell 5-8, 150; Sr. HB/RB/LB Gabe Castro 5-10, 190.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB/DL/HB Phillip Raica 5-11 210; Sr. LB/DL/HB Gabe Witt 5-11, 197; Sr. DL/OL Jon Morgan 6-0, 265; Sr. DL/LB/TE

Jonathan Carroll 6-0, 190 (3 sacks); So. LB/Slot Tyler Mustain 6-1, 175 (64 tackles); So. DB/Slot Bryce Jewell 5-8, 160 (35 tackles, 2 Ints.); Jr. LB/RB Javier Grajeda 5-6, 170 (43 tackles); Jr. LB/TE Christian Cromwell 5-10, 185 (60 tackles); Jr. DB/QB Ryan Fontaine 5-9, 165.

Also keep an eye on: So. RB/DB Cody Rafacz 5-9, 165; So. RB/LB Blake Dean 5-10, 180; Jr. DL/OL Luke VandenBosch 5-9 170; Sr. DE/OL Carson Lewis 6-1 185; Jr. Rec/QB/DB Jayden Rittenbach 6-0 165.

Strengths of offense: Experience. Depth at skill positions. Decent speed. Hard working. Potential for good run/pass balance.

Strengths of defense: Experience. Decent speed. Aggressive attitude. Hard working. Camaraderie.

Team's biggest question mark(s): New staff. New schemes. Overall depth.

2020 expectations: Be in great condition/develop depth. Unity/one play at a time/one game at a time. Continued improvement throughout the season. Balance on offense. Swarm on defense.

More about program: Continue to build on past success. Develop a program built on character, class and reliability. Become champions on and off the field thru Christian principals and attitude.

Safford

Head coach: John O'Mera.

Years as school's head coach: First year.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB CJ Scrivner 6-1, 185 (813 yards rushing, 10 TDs.); Sr. RB Eduardo Ogaz 5-8, 155 (485 yards rushing, 5 TDs.)

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Jared Garcia 5-10, 155 (39 tackles); Sr. DB Angel Atencio (5-10, 150); Sr. LB CJ Scrivner 6-1, 185 (4 sacks).

Team's biggest question mark(s): New head coach John O'Mera, led Eastern Arizona College for 15 years.

Sahuarita

Head coach: Don Watt.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 5-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: So. FB Brady Radovich (422 yards rushing, 4 TDs.).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. LB Mark Cabeen 5-9, 175 (42 tackles); Sr. OLB Anthony Giarraputo 5-9, 150 (36 tackles, 2 INTs.); Sr. DE Monasetti Molio'o 5-9, 150 (35 tackles, 2 sacks).

Sabino's Skaggs a student of the game

By Andy Morales
azpreps365.com

While the Phoenix area is known for its great high school quarterbacks, southern Arizona embraced the running game with the likes of Bijan Robinson, Ka'Deem Carey, Michael Bates, Mario Bates, Vance Johnson, Fred Sims and David Adams.

The result? 8,000 to 10,000 career passing yards is seen as a dominant stat line in Phoenix but 5,000 is viewed as the benchmark of a great QB in the Tucson area due to the differences in offensive styles.

Former Pinnacle QB Spencer Rattler threw for state record 11,083 yards before graduating in 2019, and former Catalina Foothills standout Rhett Rodriguez collected 8,694 from 2013 to 2016 to set the southern Arizona standard.

The group just under 5,000 career passing yards is numerous, and most promising careers end between 4,000 and 5,000 yards. But Sabino senior A.J. Skaggs is the latest to knock on the door and enter into this elite group.

His predecessor at Sabino, Alex Bell, graduated in 2018 with 4,347 career passing yards, and Skaggs has 4,119 entering his senior season with the Sabercats. Skaggs helped lead the Sabercats to a 10-3 record and 3A semifinal finish in 2018 as a sophomore and an 8-4 record and a quarterfinal finish last year.

But he also lost five of his top six receivers to graduation or transfer. Sr. WR Dawson Szarek (313 yards receiving, 5 TDs) was number four on his list of receivers last year.

AZPreps365.com caught up with the talented incoming senior this summer to talk about his 2020 goals, recruiting and new corps of Sabino receivers.

Q: First, can you tell us how you see your team this year and what the mindset is?

A: Our mindset for this year is to eliminate all the little mistakes we made last year and play as a single unit every single week. Our team this year is coming back with a lot of young talent and lots of experience, be on the lookout for some rising freshmen and sophomores to step up and make a big impact this year.

Q: On a personal note, you are about 900 yards away from doing what only 11 other QBs in the history of Southern Arizona have done with a realistic shot at finishing somewhere in the top 10 in career passing yards. Is that something you think about or is it something that will come when it comes?

A: It's not something I'm thinking about right now. The only goal on my mind is to give everything I have every week and lead my team to a state championship. If it happens then it happens, and that would be a huge honor, but right now all that's on my mind is preparing my team to be the best we can be once the season starts.

Q: You lost five of your top six targets from graduation or transfer. Tell us about your next group of receivers.

A: Yes, we had lots of talented receivers who I can count on to make plays when we need to. This year I have been working with my guys since December, building that chemistry that we need so when the game is on the line I can trust them to go make a play. Some of the names to look out for are Gabe Garcia, Dawson Szarek, Beau Chaney and many more. I'm very confident in this year's receiving corps and think they have a shot to be even greater than last year's.



Sabino quarterback A.J. Skaggs keeps moving up the southern Arizona passing charts. (Andy Morales photo/azpreps365.com)

Q: You were an Ed Doherty nominee and you are invited to the prestigious Hawaii Tiki Bowl in Hawaii. Tell us a bit about those recognitions and what they mean to you and the program.

A: Yes, both of those recognitions were a huge honor for me especially being an Ed Doherty award nominee. It's something I've wanted since I was a kid, so getting that was awesome. However, there were lots of mistakes I made last year which I am looking to eliminate this season. I have been watching film every single day and perfecting my craft since December so I'm looking to have an even better season than I did last year. My game is night and day different from last season, and I can't wait for all this work to pay off in games.

Q: How is your collegiate recruiting going?

A: It's going great, however, it's very tough during these times. I have been putting video together of my training every month to send out to coaches and I also filmed all my field tests since we aren't able to go to any combines or camps. Most schools I have been talking to are Ivy League/FCS schools who have been amazing to me and my family during these uncertain times, and I look forward to continuing to build these relationships with them.

Sabino - 3A South Region

Head coach: Ryan McBrayer.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 8-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB AJ Skaggs 6-1 (2,495 yards passing, 25 TDs.), 200; Jr. RB Kenny Blackman 5-9, 180 (356 yards rushing, 5 TDs.); Jr. OT Jake Warman 6-1, 210; Jr. OT Travis Morin 6-0, 210; Jr. OG Logan Sowers 5-9, 190; Sr. WR Dawson Szarek 5-9, 170 (313 yards receiving, 5 TDs.).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Luke Thompson 6-1, 210 (102 tackles); Sr. DE Beau Chaney 6-7, 230; Sr. DT Adam Brauer 6-5, 300; Jr. DB Derek Sanchez 5-10, 160; Sr. DB Korbin Muklebus 5-9, 150 (42 tackles).

Also keep an eye on: Sr. C/OG Zach Brown 6-2, 300; Jr. LB Zachary Tolson 5-10, 180; Jr. DB Nezayah Stubblefield 6-3, 165; Jr. RB Alex Lopez 5-9, 160; So. WR Dom Parsons 6-1, 170.

Strengths of offense: QB with lots of talent and experience. Four Returning O-Linemen with starting experience. Home run capable RB.

Strengths of defense: Athletes on the back end. Long defensive ends. Big defensive tackles.

Team's biggest question mark(s): How are last year's role players able to handle spotlight? Who is going to catch the ball? Linebacker play.

2020 expectations: Show up ready to go every week. Continue the legacy of Sabino football.

More about program: Family affair: Under QB Coach Collin McBrayer (brother of HC Ryan) Sabino QB's have thrown for 85 TD's in the last three years.

San Tan Foothills

Head coach: Jeremy Beamon.

Years as school's head coach: First year.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL/DL Ozzy Gonzales 6-3, 250; Sr. OL/DL Rhett Lilly 6-0, 255; Sr. OL/DL Jose Olvera 5-11, 210; Sr. OL/DL Darian Hall 5-10, 210; Sr. OL/DL Cecil Thomas 6-1, 240; Sr. WR/DB Cutter Kuhl 5-10, 155 (216 yards receiving, 3 TDs.); Sr. WR/LB Justice Gutierrez 6-1, 175; Sr. WR/DB Michael Eriacho 5-10, 150 (477 yards receiving, 5 TDs.); Jr. QB Brett Lincoln 5-10, 160 (1,049 yards passing, 11 TDs.).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL/DL Dylan Maselli 6-0, 260; Sr. FB/DL Carlos Soto 5-7, 200; Jr. RB/LB Wesley Jurena 5-6, 155 (52 tackles, 6 sacks); Sr. RB/LB Seth Walsh 5-9, 175 (65 tackles, 2 sacks); Jr. WR/DB Chris Clark-Smith 5-9, 160; Jr. WR/DB Anthony Hood 5-9, 165 (36 tackles); Sr. WR/DB Bryce McHaney 5-9, 150; Sr. WR/DB Cutter Kuhl 5-10, 155 (54 tackles, 3 INTs.); Sr. WR/DB Michael Eriacho 5-10, 150.

Strengths of offense: Offensive line.

Strengths of defense: Linebackers and secondary.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Consistency.

2020 expectations: Get better each week.

Thatcher

Head coach: Daniel Jones.

Years as school's head coach: First year.

2019 record: 8-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Mark Wren 6-1, 190 (242 yards passing, 4 TDs.); Sr. RB Michael McBride 6-2, 210 (367 yards rushing, 4 TDS.); Sr. TE, DE James Shumway 6-2, 200; Sr. OL, DE Porter Henderson 6-4, 250; Sr. OL, DL Brock Conrad 5-10, 250; Sr. OL, DL Mason Lee 6-2, 230; Sr. OL, DL Jackson Lutz 6-2, 320; Sr. OL, DL Levi Skinner 6-3, 295; Sr. WR Brayden Oliver 6-1, 180.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. MLB Michael McBride 6-1, 210 (15 tackles). Jr. RB, DB Slade Shupe 6-1, 175; Jr. WR, DB Trevin Gaylord 6-3, 185; Jr. DB Nick Puzas.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. RB Mason Underwood (6-1, 180). Coming off an injury missing his Jr. season and he is ready to make his mark. Sr. WR Jacob Ward (5-11, 175). Sr. C Covin Woods (6-2, 250) Injured last year, finally healthy and ready to play.

Team's biggest question mark(s): New coach. New division. Can they all rise to the occasion and hang week in and out with the bigger schools.

2020 expectations: Thatcher has a rich football history and an excellent recent run. We expect to be in the mix and fight for a state title no matter what division we are placed in. With so many returning starters and a few key additions look for Thatcher to make their presence felt in 3A.

REGION NOTES: Former Safford head coach Eric Hjalmarson is now the head coach at Willcox. Thatcher moved up from 2A. Jeremy Beamon is in his first year at San Tan Foothills.

CENTRAL REGION

ALA-Gilbert North

Head coach: Randy Ricedorff.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 7-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Jack Ricedorff 6-2, 195 (1,907 yards passing, 15 TDs.); Sr. T Crew White 6-5, 235; Sr. T Alex Wright 6-3, 240; Sr. G Emerin Bayless 5-10, 215; Jr. G Corbin King 6-0 225; Jr. RB Easton Webster 5-10, 170 (541 yards rushing, 7 TDs.); Jr. Slot Spencer Nielson 5-11, 180; Sr. Slot Tillman Willis 5-8, 140 (272 yards receiving); Jr. WR Johnny Bellino 5-11, 170; So. WR Luc Asay 6-1, 195. Sr. RB Emeka Ogbonna 5-10, 180 (transferred in from Brophy Prep).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. LB Spencer Nielson 5-11, 180 (43 tackles, 2 INTs.); So. LB Luc Asay 6-1, 195 (47 tackles, 2 INTs.); Jr. G Corbin King 6-0, 225; Sr. C Rylen Randall 5-11, 165; Sr. DT Breyson Wilcock 6-4, 240.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. WR/DB Aiden Horricks 5-11, 180; Sr. DB Porter Zuccato 6-0, 180; Sr. DB Luke Hall 6-1, 175; Sr. DT Seth McAfee 6-3, 255; Jr. LB Maddox Matheny 6-3, 190.

Strengths of offense: Jack Ricedorff is a three year starter at QB. All offensive lineman but one return. Easton Webster returning at RB is very promising. All four of our receivers are bigger, faster, and stronger and know the system better. **Strengths of defense:** The size (6-3 average) and speed of our defensive front is impressive. Both of our outside LB's return and are very flexible in what they can do.

Team's biggest question mark(s): We have to find a middle LB. We have to replace Kade Thorley at center, who was very good. Anxious to see who steps up and challenges some of the returning players as well as creating depth.

2020 expectations: To win the state championship.

More about program: I am very excited about our coaching staff and being able to work with a great group of guys and many family members.

ALA-Ironwood

Head coach: Travis Epperson.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 0-10.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Kyle Johnson 5-10, 145; Sr. OL Jeremy Buenrostro 6-2, 300; Jr. OL Preston Thompson 5-10, 165; Jr. WR Andrew Fearn 5-10, 150; Jr. RB Shai Wright 5-6, 190; Jr. WR Christian Hardenburg 5-8, 140; Jr. RB Ryan Hammer 5-11, 170.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DL Jeremy Buenrostro 6-2, 300; Sr. LB Josh Scott 6-0, 155; Jr. DB Andrew Fearn 5-10, 140; Jr. DB Christian Hardenburg 5-8, 140; Jr. LB Shai Wright 5-6, 190; Jr. LB Ryan Hammer 5-11, 170.

Team's biggest question mark(s): How quickly can we integrate all of the young players and get them to compete at a varsity level? Depth at every position.

2020 expectations: Be more physical. Compete.

Coolidge

Head coach: Rodger Schenks.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB/DB Greg Rodriguez 5-10, 175 (930 yards rushing, 11 TDs.); Sr. OL/DL Froylan Gonzalez 6-4, 255; Sr. OL/LB. Joe Cardenas 5-9, 215; Jr. OL/DL Denzel Glass 6-3, 270; Jr. WR/DB/K Connor Ferguson 5-9, 150; Jr. RB/LB Comar Jefferies 5-9, 185 (687 yards rushing, 8 TDs.); Sr. WR/DB Alijah Christiansen 5-11, 165; Sr. QB/TE/DL Jacob Gunter 6-3, 210; Sr. TE/DL Angelo Palacios 5-11, 210.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB/TE Malachi Rodriguez 5-10, 185; Sr. DB/RB Greg Rodriguez 5-10, 175 Sr. LB/ TE Angelo Palacios 5-11, 205; Jr. DL/TE Charles Jefferies 6-4, 220; Sr. DE/TE Amir Pinder 6-2, 215; Jr. DB/WR Augustin Chaing 6-0, 180; Sr. WR/DB Alijah Christiansen 5-11, 165; Jr. LB/RB Robert Feierstein 5-10, 180; Jr. DL/OL Jaden Hunt 6-1, 280.

Also keep an eye on: So. DB/RB Belclem Namegabe 6-1, 170; Jr. WR/LB Jadon Maldonado 5-9, 170; So. OL/DL Isiah Newton 5-10, 220; So. WR/DB Jose Ruiz 5-9, 150.

Strengths of offense: Starters back on line. Two starting RB and four WR that played a lot and are comfortable with offense. 2nd year players are in the system. Football IQ improved.

Strengths of defense: Starters back and mental toughness these guys have.

Speed and relentless pursuit. Defensive strength. Football IQ has improved over the off season.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Just believing in themselves. Depth. Can underclassman jump in and rotate? Everyone can make plays.

2020 expectations: Win First Game. Make the Play-offs. Respect Attitude Pride #RAP.

Eastmark

Head coach: Scooter Molander.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: New program.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: So. WR/DB Alex Campos 5-6, 150; So. WR/OLB Kaiden McCarty 5-7, 155; Jr. TE/DE Aidan Wright 6-2, 185; Jr. TB/FS Zavian Strom 6-0, 185; So. FB/LB Jeriah Krize 5-9, 180; So. OT/DE Brayden Prosser 6-2, 200; So. OG/LB Preston Bradford 6-0, 195; Jr. C/DT Ryan Schrum 5-8, 205; So. OT/DE Mason Williams 6-3, 200; So. QB Gianni Mascolino 5-8, 150; Jr. QB Colin Randolph 5-9, 180.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: So. WR/DB Alex Campos 5-6, 150; So. DB/RB Diego Rodriguez 5-7, 160; Jr. TB/FS Zavian Strom 6-0, 185; Jr. SS/WR Devyn Johnson 6-0, 175; So. FB/LB Jeriah Krize 5-9, 180; So. OG/LB Preston Bradford 6-0, 195; So. LB/FB Gavin Wilson 5-10, 185; Jr. LB/WR Cameron Brown 6-0, 175; So. OT/DE Mason Williams 6-3, 200; So. DT/OG Deangelo Murillo 5-10, 235; So. DT/OG Leo Marquez 5-10, 230.

Also keep an eye on: Fr. RB/DE Jordan Howard 6-2, 210; Fr. QB/DB Blake Heffron 5-6, 155; So. K/P Spencer Elzinga 5-6, 150; So. K/P Derek Martin 5-11, 155; WR/DB Javery Mayberry 6-0, 155.

Strengths of offense: Guys have really worked hard in off-season. Great understanding of offense for young players.

Strengths of defense: Rally and run hard to the ball. Great understanding of Defense for young players.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Challenging 3A schedule with very few junior players. Coming together as a team without spring ball.

2020 expectations: Goal is to control what we can control--effort and attitude. Play fast and hard for the entire game.

Gilbert Christian

Head coach: Danny Norris.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 5-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB/FS Matthew Hershey 5-10, 180 (543 yards offense); Sr. OL/LB Luke Webb 6-0, 210; Sr. RB/LB Darion Martin-Dantzler 5-8, 190; Sr. TE/DL Nigel Stanbury 6-1, 210; Sr. RB/CB Marcus McWilliams 6-1, 175; Sr. RB/DB Brody Curtner 6-0, 175 (309 yards rushing, 4 TDs.); Jr. OL/DL Luke Bishop 5-8, 200; Jr. RB/DB Caden Heyn 6-0, 170.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB/FS Matthew Hershey 5-10, 180; Sr. OL/LB Luke Webb 6-0, 210; Sr. RB/LB Darion Martin-Dantzler 5-8, 190; Sr. TE/DL Nigel Stanbury 6-1, 210; Sr. RB/CB Marcus McWilliams 6-1, 175; Sr. RB/DB Brody Curtner 6-0, 175; Jr. RB/DB Caden Heyn 6-0, 170; Sr. LB/K Jace Feely 6-1, 180; So. RB/DB Hayden Smith 5-10, 160.

Also keep an eye on: So. OL/DL David Brewer 5-10, 170; Jr. OL/DL Xander Heaney 5-8, 170; Jr. TE/DL Ryan Coleman 5-10, 175; So. OL/DL Gavin Biesterfeld 6-2, 180; So. OL/DL Caleb Panepinto 5-8, 160.

Strengths of offense: We return our QB, Matthew Hershey. He is a smart young man with a versatile skill set that we will take more advantage of in 2020. Our skill players are going to be another year older and stronger. Marcus McWilliams will be a dynamite player for us this year.

Strengths of defense: Our secondary returns everyone and will be a definite strength going into the season. Seniors Luke Webb and Nigel Stanbury will lead our front seven.

Team's biggest question mark(s): We are going to miss our 2019 class in terms of production and leadership. Our offensive line will be young. We will need to get stronger and grow through adversity early on in the season.

2020 expectations: We will compete with effort, discipline, integrity and love for the game, as well as our opponents every single week.

METRO EAST

Coronado

Head coach: Curt LeBlanc.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

2019 record: 0-10.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Mikel James 5-9, 175; Jr. WR Daijon Safford 6-0, 165 (937 yards receiving, 8 TDs.); Sr. OG Tim Allen 6-0, 250 So. TE Anthony Goseyun 6-2, 185; Jr. WR Isaiah Brown 6-1, 165.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. SS Mikel James 5-9, 175; Jr. OLB Isaiah Brown 6-1, 165; Sr. OLB Owen Peabody 6-1, 170; Jr. LB Jalen Cardenas 5-7, 165; Jr. FS Daijon Safford 6-0, 165; Jr. LB William Bermejo 5-10, 165; Sr. DB Robert Kendrick 6-0, 170; Sr. DB Juan Booth 5-10, 165.

Strengths of offense: Returning two year starter at QB. Returning starter at WR. New OC.

Strengths of defense: Return leading tackler Peabody. Return starting LB James. Return starting LB Brown. New DC.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Total numbers in program. Ability to learn two new schemes (O & D). Staying healthy for duration of season.

2020 expectations: No eligibility issues. No injuries. Improve on last season.

More about program: Despite the low numbers of our program, quite proud of how tough our kids have competed despite their overall lack of experience in the game. The attitude of our kids has been exemplary.

Fountain Hills

Head coach: Jason Henslin.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Shane Davenport 6-2, 180 (1,820 yards passing, 16 TDs.); Jr. LT Porter Sweet 6-2, 205; Jr. RB Calvin Lupien 6-1, 170 (507 yards rushing, 4 TDs.); Jr. C JT Despain 6-0, 210; Jr. RG Hector Leon 6-3, 245; Jr. WR Jake Barnard 5-9, 155.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. SS Braden Wendt 5-9, 160 (66 tackles); Jr. DE Porter Sweet 6-2, 205 (84 tackles, 4 sacks); Sr. LB Connor Smout 5-10, 175 (53 tackles); Sr. LB Brandon Colabianchi 6-0, 172; Jr. CB Jake Barnard 5-9, 155; Jr. DT Tyler Cardello 6-2, 195; Jr. DT Hector Leon 6-3, 245.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. WR Savion Boone 5-11, 150; So. RB/OLB Gavin Furi 5-8, 145.

Strengths of offense: QB play. Shane is entering his third season as starter, he's ready to lead this team and control the game by playing smart football. Offensive Line - for the first time in a few years we're returning three upperclassman starters. They should make big running lanes for Calvin, Gavin and others.

Strengths of defense: We return seven starters from last year's team. They are all experienced now and have been getting stronger in the off-season.

Team's biggest question mark(s): How will this team gel? We dealt with some internal issues last season that affected us on the field. Our off-season leader meetings have focused on bringing team unity and cohesion.

2020 expectations: Our goals are to play disciplined, tough football. We won't have more players than anyone or the biggest ones. We've been preaching discipline with details while giving 100% effort in practice and games.

Payson

Head coach: Bryan Burke.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: QB/DB Trevor Cline 6-1, 205 (1,876 yards passing, 20 TDs., 1,022 yards rushing, 12 TDs.); OL/DL Soto Sellis 5-11, 219; OL/DL Connor Faust 6-0, 210; OL/DL Zac Cancasci 5-10, 220; OL/DL Rohan Smith 5-11, 215; RB/LB Travis Christianson 6-1, 185; WR/DB Jojo Ortiz 5-11, 145.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: QB/DB Trevor Cline 6-1, 205 (40 tackles, 4 INTs.); WR/DB Jojo Ortiz 5-11, 145; OL/DL Soto Sellis 5-11, 219 (42 tackles); OL/DL Connor Faust 6-0, 210 (41 tackles, 5 sacks); RB/LB Travis Christianson 6-1, 185 (109 tackles, 3 sacks).

Also keep an eye on: Sr. DL, Cyrus Krieger, 5-11, 210; Sr. RB Bladimir Benitez, 5-9, 155; Jr. LB/FB Nick Dimbat, 5-8, 176; Sr. 12, LB, Tory Daniels, 5-10, 150; So. WR/DB Dexter Waterman, 5-8, 145.

Strengths of offense: Returning first team 3A Conference Offensive Flex player Trevor Cline is a dual threat. Returning 4/5 Offensive line and talented RBs will lead to a strong downhill run game. Very flexible offense that can be very versatile without changing personnel.

Strengths of defense: Strong and physical D line that will be tough to run against. Lots of experience returning in a secondary that led 3A in interceptions in 2019.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Depth in receiving corps. Secondary.

2020 expectations: Repeat as 3A East Region Champs. Deep Run into the playoffs.

Valley Christian

Head coach: Jake Peterson.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Jadon Hanzal 6-0, 165 (1,073 yards passing, 9 TDs., 540 yards receiving, 4 TDs.); Sr. RB Tony Gomez, Jr. 5-9 (672 yards rushing, 13 TDs.).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. LB Justin Regehr 6-0, 195; Jr. LB Treyten Hortsman 6-1, 175.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Moved from Metro West to Metro East.

METRO WEST

Bourgade Catholic

Head coach: Marcel Lopez.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 6-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Matthew Espinoza 5-8, 140; Sr. WR Sean Trujillo 6-0, 174; Sr. WR Noah Dreher 5-7, 155 (370 yds receiving, 5 TD). Sr. WR Sebastian Gameros (5-11, 170); Sr. WR Joseph Chavez (5-10, 160); Sr. OL Eric Erran (5-10, 220).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Chase Bonheimer 5-9, 174 (58 tackles); Sr. DE Jack Sullivan 6-3, 188; Sr. LB Brody Gatson 5-10, 182; Sr. DB Sean Trujillo 6-0, 174; Sr. DB Joseph Chavez 5-10, 160; Sr. DT Mark Mendoza 5-9, 235; Sr. DT Eric Erran 5-10, 220.

Strengths of offense: This will be the deepest and most experienced WR group that we have had at Bourgade Catholic. We have a lot of different packages that we are able to use that allow us to be pretty dynamic with our offense.

Strengths of defense: We have a solid group of players returning on the defensive side. This defense will be fast and physical with a lot of big hitters getting after the ball carriers. We have a strong group of experienced LB's that will lead our defense this year.

Team's biggest question mark(s): This is the first time in three years where a new QB will be taking snaps for us. Espinoza has waited his turn and has worked hard in the weight room and on the field to prepare himself for this opportunity. All of the weapons are there and now we just have to get them the ball.

2020 expectations: We expect to be in contention for the region and make the playoffs this year. This group is led by an outstanding senior class that will be the first group to have been in this system for four years.

More about program: Marcel Lopez won a state championship playing for St. Mary's.

With COVID-19 battle behind him and family, Blue Ridge's London anticipating big season

By Andy Morales
azpreps365.com

P.J. London is set for his senior season with Blue Ridge, but that was not his priority during the break.

His family fell victim to the COVID-19 pandemic, with each family member seemingly taking turns dealing with the serious effects of the disease and various levels of reactions and symptoms. London is happy to be on "this side" of the disease, and for good reason.

The Yellowjackets have one of the most storied histories in all of Arizona, with an incredible 15 state championships, including 11 undefeated seasons. The first championship came under Joe Girardi in 1974, and Tom Marsing led the Yellowjackets to four straight championship appearances before winning it all in 1983, the first undefeated season (11-0) in program history.

Then came Paul Moro.

Moro passed away in January of 2019 with 336 career wins (318 at Blue Ridge), 13 state championships and 10 undefeated seasons with the Yellowjackets. The school's football field was named after Moro that month.

Moro left the school in 2013, Jake Belshe led the team in 2014 and Bob London, P.J.'s dad, took over in 2015. London had immediate success with a playoff appearance, but the program just had two wins in 2016.

Then came P.J.

The Yellowjackets went from 2-8 in 2016 to 9-3 in 2019 with London throwing for 2,349 yards passing. London (6-3, 202) enters his senior season with 4,614 career passing yards, the most successful total since Blue Ridge's Bryan Williams graduated in 2007 with 4,172 career passing yards.

We caught up with P.J. London to get his thoughts on Blue Ridge football and the anxious moments he and his family experienced this summer.

Q: Can you give us some insight on what it's like to play for your father. Did he coach you in youth football or any other sports?

A: Playing for my dad is awesome. I get to spend a lot of time with him. He pushes me hard, twice as hard as everyone else, and I love it. We've developed a great relationship. When my brother was a sophomore, he broke his neck in a practice and couldn't play football any more. After that, my dad decided to take a year off from coaching high school and coach me in 6th grade. He wanted to make sure that we were being taught how to play the game the right way. Then, he went back to high school after that and has been my coach since freshman year. Also, my dad coaches me in track and during this offseason he had me on a speed and agility workout that got me faster for this season.

Q: Tell us about your experience at the Elite11 QB camp in Los Angeles.

A: I had an amazing time at the Elite 11 camp in LA. I had the opportunity to throw with great quarterbacks and had a fun time doing it. Going against some of the best quarterbacks in the nation really pushed me to do better. I also throw with my QB coach, Dan Manucci, and he's got me throwing the ball better than ever. When I throw with coach Manucci, I get to throw with (Mesquite's) Ty Thompson, and we've developed a great relationship. Ty pushes me to throw better, and I'm thankful to throw with one of the best quarterbacks in the country.

Q: You have a very high GPA. Tell us how you've been able to keep your studies together and your QB skills intact during the pandemic.

A: My family has always told me to be a student first and athlete second. My parents have helped me learn to manage my time, so when I get to college I know how to manage my day with sports and school. Hopefully, having a 4.4 GPA will help me look better for colleges. While doing online school this spring, I had my brother and sister help tutor me. Both of them graduated from the University of Notre Dame. They are both teachers and have helped me a lot with becoming a better student.

Q: Blue Ridge has seen some tremendous success the last couple of years. Can you tell us what you attribute that to and how you view your upcoming season?

A: When I was little, I would go watch my dad coach when Blue Ridge was one of the best in the state. I would go to their workouts and watch how hard they worked. I saw exactly what it takes to win championships. My teammates and I have been working hard and are excited for this season. We are all determined to win games.

Q: How is your college recruiting going?

A: My college recruiting has been slow, but with the help of coach (recruiting coordinator) Lou Perrone, my recruiting started to turn up. I was hoping to be able to go to college camps this summer, but, due to Covid-19, I wasn't able to do that. I'm hoping to have a senior season and be able to have the opportunity to play at the next level.

Q: Can you walk us through your recovery from COVID and how it affected your family? What did you experience? How did you find out? What were the treatments like?

A: I think the craziest part of it all was that we took every precaution. We limited where we went, wore masks, sanitized and disinfected, but that goes to show how awful a bug it is. My mom helped my sister move, and we are pretty sure that's how it started for us. My mom got sick first. She pretty much had every symptom. She had a bad cough, a fever, body aches, loss of smell and taste, and chills. She was sick for eight days, went to the ER, the whole works. It was scary at moments, so I'm really thankful to be on this side of it. I got sick next. I had chills, a light fever, a small cough, body aches, and loss of taste and smell, but for me it came and went in a couple days. My brother got sick after me and had the same symptoms as my mom, as well as having it just as badly affect him. He was sick for around 10 days, and only this past weekend fully recovered. My dad didn't have it as bad as anyone in the family. He tested positive, but for him it was just like a sinus infection. In the end, my mom, dad, and brother were all tested and came back positive, and while I wasn't tested because I didn't have enough symptoms, I was a presumptive positive. In all, it was a scary experience; there was no treatments we could really do, besides bed rest and staying hydrated. I am so thankful we are all on this side of it, and I hope people understand how scary and powerful the virus is, and it just takes one exposure to get sick.



Blue Ridge quarterback P.J. London (middle back with reddish hair), his dad Robert, Blue Ridge's coach (far right), and other family members battled COVID-19 this summer. Thankfully, the Londons have recovered. (London family photo)

Chino Valley

Head coach: Michael Gilpin.

Years as school's head coach: First year.

2019 record: 2-9.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Jayden Smith 5-9, 165 (1,010 yards passing, 6 TDs.); Sr. OL Rudy Melendez 6-1 230; Jr. C Isaiah Kimerlee 5-10, 235; Jr. TE Dakota McMains 6-1 190; Sr. WR Dante Debono 5-9 145; Sr. WR Kamren Loftin 5-9 155; So. RB Harrison Setter 5-9 180.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Collin Knight 5-10, 175 (132 tackles); Sr. DL Rudy Melendez 6-1, 230 (46 tackles); Jr. DL Isaiah Kimerlee 5-10, 235; Jr. DE Dakota McMains 6-1, 190 (75 tackles, 3 sacks); Sr. DB Dante Debono 5-9, 145 (40 tackles, 2 INTs.); Sr. DB Kamren Loftin 5-9, 155; So. DB Johnny Parrish 5-10, 165; Sr. DL Evan Sosa 5-11, 180 (37 tackles, 4 sacks).

Also keep an eye on: So. TE/DE Kaden Wagner 6-2, 235; So. OL/DL Mac Thomas 6-0 210; So. OL/DL Andres Trillo 5-11, 175; Fr. RB/LB Wyatt Ellis 5-10, 170.

Strengths of offense: Jr. QB Jayden Smith returns after leading 3A West in total yards per game last season with 183/per. Skill position group is experienced and talented.

Strengths of defense: 3A leader in tackles (132) Sr. LB Collin Knight returns. Bookend DEs Jr. DE Dakota McMains 6-1, 190 and So. DE Kaden Wagner 6-2, 235 should help solidify the defensive line. All section DB Dante Debono should be tough to throw on this year.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Offensively: We need to improve greatly along the offensive line. Both run blocking and pass protection was poor last year. Defensively: We need to learn how to hold leads in the second half (we had four second half leads slip away last year).

2020 expectations: Our expectations are to field a much tougher, more disciplined team this season. Our main goal is to compete hard in every game for all four quarters.

More about program: Chino Valley is a great little town. I really feel that they want to be a football town. Our job is to try to help make that a reality. We have some outstanding young men in this program and we are excited to undertake the journey of building a quality football program with them.

Paradise Honors

Head coach: Josh Goodloe.

Years as school's head coach: First year.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Chad Harrell 6-0, 172; Sr. RB Brian Le 6-0, 170; Sr. WR/RB DJ Berry 5-10, 180 (372 yards receiving, 4 TDs.); Sr. OL Benjie Castro 6-0, 240; Sr. OL Colton Sopko 5-10, 245; Sr. WR Jose Delgado 6-1, 170; Sr. OL Victor Ortiz 6-2, 250; So. OL Josh Trevillian 5-10, 256; So. WR Logan Varca 5-10, 160; Jr. WR Trey Hermann 5-10, 160 (378 yards rushing, 5 TDs.).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Brian Le 6-0, 170 (37 tackles); Sr. LB Mason Ashton 5-10, 220; Sr. DL Benjie Castro 6-0, 240; Sr. DL Colton Sopko 5-10, 245; Jr. DB Trey Hermann 5-10, 160; Sr. DB Jose Delgado 6-1, 170; Sr. LB Kevin Partida 5-10, 180 (47 tackles); So. DE Jonathan Webb 6-1, 195; So. LB Hank Stabler 6-0, 170; So. DB Caden Shipley 6-0, 160; Sr. DL Victor Ortiz 6-2, 250.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. WR Antwuan Bowers 6-2, 170; So. DB/WR Mikey Young 6-1, 150; Jr. QB/DE/WR Daniel Juarez 6-5, 240; So. OL Andrew Domville 6-0, 210; Jr. DB/WR Ian Sjolander 6-0, 160.

Strengths of offense: Returning four of the starting offensive linemen from a year ago. Versatility of the skill position. Experience second year in the system. Hiring of position coaches Mike Young, Lionel Varvel and Bill Laing. This group brings years of experience that will help move the offensive culture forward. QB returning experience and young incoming talent.

Strengths of defense: Returning seven starters and four players that were impact players a year ago on defense. Installation of a new scheme to fit the personnel and allow the players to play. Hiring of new defensive coordinator Malik Starks and position coaches Lyle Hollins, Rich Ruelas and Adrian Paredes. These coaches will raise the bar and create a physical aggressive defensive culture. Aggressive.

Team's biggest question mark(s): We have athletes and experience, can this senior class take the next step and lead the program to the playoffs? Can the sophomore class fill important roles when it comes to playing on Friday nights? We need to create more depth.

2020 expectations: We want to be one team with one goal and go 1-0 each week. If we accomplish this goal, the rest will take care of itself. In 2020, we want to be competitive in every game and not face big losses as a year ago. Improve in the win column from last season. Play aggressive physical brand of defense. Be explosive on offense. As a coaching staff we want to help the senior class reach the goal they set back in January to return the program to the playoffs.

Phoenix Christian

Head coach: Brian Cole.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 12-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB/WR/DB Howard Russell 6-0, 180; Sr. QB/DB Adrian Fleming 5-11, 175; Sr. OL/DL Cristian Sanchez 5-11, 255; Sr. OL/LB Anthony Castillo 6-0, 230; Sr. OL/LB Tyrique Holly 6-0, 225; Jr. QB/DB Jose Herrera 5-11, 180; Jr. WR/DB Daniel Becerra 5-9, 165; Jr. OL/DL David Pupua 6-3, 280.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Howard Russell; Sr. DL Cristian Sanchez; Sr. LB Anthony Castillo; Sr. LB Tyrique Holly; Jr. LB Devonta Anderson; Sr. DB Genaro Vega 5-9, 170; Jr. DB Jose Herrera; So. DB Angel Gutierrez 5-9, 165.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. RB Zach Cline 5-10, 185; Sr. OL/DL Marcos Ulibarri 5-10, 270; Sr. WR Angel Martinez 5-10, 160; So. WR/DB Daniel Mock 5-11, 175; So. WR/DB Kam Hatter 6-0, 175.

Strengths of offense: O-line experience. Returning QB's. Howard Russell.

Strengths of defense: Linebackers. D-line play. Toughness.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Can we compete in 3A?

2020 expectations: Be competitive every game. Play as a team. Make the playoffs. Win State.

More about program: We have some great kids coming back. Moving up a division, depth could be an issue.

Wickenburg

Head coach: Mike Mitchell.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

2019 record: 4-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. TB/LB Bryson Alder 5-10, 170; Jr. QB/DB Calergero DiCamillo 5-10, 169; Sr. TE/LB Clay Watson 6-0, 180; Jr. FB/LB Korbyn Dowdy 5-11, 180; Sr. OT/DT Jett Uldrickson 6-2, 210; Jr. OG-DT Justin Lara 6-1, 200; Jr. C/DT Michael Bowie 5-9, 185; Jr. WR S Kaden Conway 5-10, 160.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. C Bryson Alder 5-10, 170; Jr. C Calergero DiCamillo 5-10, 169; Sr. LB Clay Watson 6-0, 180; Jr. LB Korbyn Dowdy 5-11, 180; Sr. DE Jett Uldrickson 6-2, 210; Jr. F Kaden Conway 5-10, 160; Jr. DT Justin Lara 6-1, 200.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. C DT Michael Bowie 5-10, 185; Sr. TE DE Ben Balow 6-3, 190; Sr. RB/DT Kade Roberts, 5-10, 170; So. WR/C Eleazar Dominguez 5-8, 160; So. OT/DT Austin Lauritsen 6-1, 260.

Strengths of offense: Returning QB who had to start as sophomore experienced now. Bryson Alder, one of best athletes in 3A. TB and C. Offensive Line.

Strengths of defense: Very good LB. Transfer Ben Balow joins Jett Uldrickson at DE. Korbyn Dowdy can become college punter.

Team's biggest question mark(s): It appears we are having five month summer. Defensive front has talent but must play well this year. Team speed should be better this year.

2020 expectations: Expect to be competitive like 2018 team. Must grow in pre-season faster than last year.

More about program: Hopefully, we didn't enjoy being in the middle of the pack last year. We have to expand our expectations and compete like we can. This could be a sleeper team!

EAST REGION

Blue Ridge

Head coach: Robert London.

Years as school's head coach: 5.

2019 record: 9-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB/DB/P/K PJ London 6-3, 205; Sr. Rec/LB Austin Slaughter 6-4, 175; Sr. Rec/DB Reece Esparza 5-9, 140; Sr. Rec/DB Jacob Kern 5-7, 130; Sr. RB/DB Damon Mitchell 6-1, 160; Sr. RB/LB Ethan Marbello 5-5, 150; Sr. OL/DL Micah Heisler 6-2, 235; Sr. OL/DL Dimitri Muncy 5-11, 235; Jr. OL/DL Andy Hoffmeyer 6-0, 225; Jr. RB/DB Jose Galindo 5-6, 140; Jr. RB/LB Christian Roman 5-8 185.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB/DB/P/K PJ London 6-3, 205; Sr. Rec/LB Austin Slaughter 6-4, 175; Sr. Rec/DB Jacob Kern 5-7, 130; Sr. RB/DB Damon Mitchell 6-1, 160; Sr. OL/DL Micah Heisler 6-2, 235; Sr. OL/DL Dimitri Muncy 5-11, 235; Sr. OL/DL Ronan Palmer 5-10, 220; Jr. RB/LB Cody Wallace 5-10, 165; Jr. RB/DB Jose Galindo 5-6, 140; Jr. TE/LB Ryan Cox 6-2, 185; Jr. OL/LB Hershall Gregg III 5-10, 185;

Also keep an eye on: Jr. OL/DL Mykael Lupe 6-1, 255; Jr. OL/DL Royer Gonzalez 5-9, 270; Jr. OL/DL Andrew Henderson 5-9, 180; Jr. OL/LB Crete Vallery 5-11, 170; Jr. OL/DL Darius Burnette 6-1, 230.

Strengths of offense: Experience at QB, PJ's a three year starter. Receiving corps is an experienced group, all have at least two years of experience. Four returning starting linemen with several big backups pushing them.

Strengths of defense: Experience in the secondary. Inside LB's are strong with good football sense. Increased size up front.

Team's biggest question mark(s): As always, depth is an issue. We have a lot of 2-way players. Strength. Being cut off from the weight room for so long is an issue. Inexperienced players have to step up.

2020 expectations: To play hard, get better every day. Play for each other, team first. Don't waste opportunities and enjoy every second.

Round Valley

Head coach: Marcus Bell.

Years as school's head coach: 9.

2019 record: 11-2 (2A State Champions).

Show Low

Head coach: Monte Maxwell.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Trenton Beeler 5-9, 165; Sr. TE Kevin Whipple 6-3, 205; Sr. G Jacob Webb 5-10, 190; Sr. T Nathan Jones 6-3, 220; Sr. WR/QB Talon Lester 5-10, 135; Sr. WR/K Tanner Lusk 5-10, 135; Jr. RB Quinton Maxwell 6-1, 215; Jr. QB Colten Yeager 6-1, 150; Jr. RB Bryson Ryan 5-10, 180.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB/S Trenton Beeler 5-9, 165; Sr. DE/LB Kevin Whipple 6-3, 205; Sr. LB Jacob Webb 5-10, 190; Sr. DT/DE Nathan Jones 6-3, 220; Jr. LB/S Quinton Maxwell 6-1, 215; Jr. MLB Cooper Ervin 5-7, 185; Jr. CB Colten Yeager 6-1, 150; Jr. CB Bryson Ryan 5-10, 180; Jr. NT Jacob Holloway 5-9, 230; Jr. DE AJ Henderson 6-3, 210.

Strengths of offense: Returning starting TE, FB, RB, QB, WR, and two OL. Strong running game. Very good play action passing game. Possibly a great passing game with development of WR.

Strengths of defense: Returning six full time starters and four part time starters/contributors. Very good vs. the run. Exotic defense that is different from what you normally see. Experience as we return two seniors and one Jr. that will be third year starters. Very solid tackling team.

Team's biggest question mark(s): COVID-19 and it's repercussions. Developing the left side of our line and a new center. Controlling turnovers.

2020 expectations: We expect to compete for the 3A East Region title. We expect to be in the hunt come playoff time. Great, hardworking senior group that will help lead us through these unprecedented times.

More about program: Last year started out well and then we were hit with a rash of injuries to key players. Due to this, a number of younger players got a ton of varsity experience. Even with these younger players, we still competed well in our region and our region did well in the playoffs. This experience will bode well for us in the upcoming season.

Snowflake

Head coach: Kay Solomon.

Years as school's head coach: 5.

2019 record: 10-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Terren Green 5-11, 195 (981 yards rushing, 12 TDs.); Sr. TE Nick McVicker 5-10, 200 (494, 3 TDs.); Sr. C Carter Solomon 6-2, 290; Sr. OL David Ruiz 5-11, 200; Sr. RB Mayson McKinlay 5-10, 180.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Terren Green 5-11, 195 (159 tackles, 3 INTs.); Sr. DL Carter Solomon 6-2, 290; Sr. DE Payson Cardon 6-0, 190 (10 sacks); Sr. DL Bradley Ruiz 6-6, 300; Sr. CB Ryson Stuart 6-0, 175; Sr. CB Joshua Solomon 6-0, 185; Sr. LB Rev Brimhall 6-1, 195.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. Sam Crockett K/P 5-10, 180; Jr. Caden Cantrell QB 6-1, 200; Jr. Noah Baum TE/DE 6-1, 200.

Strengths of offense: Returning RB Terren Green 1,000 yards rushing and 1,300 all-purpose yards. Solid Jr. QB Caden Cantrell is smart, strong arm, and tough. Will get Mayson McKinlay back from knee injury which kept him out all last season. He is a threat as RB and WR. Returning center and Jr. captain Carter Solomon adds experience and leadership. Returning RG David Ruiz is undersized but smart and plays big.

Strengths of defense: Returning LB Terren Green had 159 total tackles and leads a solid group of LBs. Bradley Ruiz and Carter Solomon anchor a big, strong defensive front that is difficult to move. Payson Cardon and Noah Baum return as quick, tough DEs. Cardon had 71 tackles from his DE spot last season. Josh Solomon and Ryson Stuart bring back experience as CBs and the secondary will be tough with the return of Mayson McKinlay as a Safety/OLB. Rev Brimhall, Nick McVicker, Camden Brimhall and Ty Solomon round out a solid group of LBs.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Can we make up the time we have lost due to the Covid-19 school closure? When can we get back on the field?

2020 expectations: Get back on the field ASAP and overcome all the uncertainty mentioned in the questions above. Build team chemistry and trust through hard work and team activities. Win the 3A East Region. Win the 3A Conference championship. Continue to build the Lobo football legacy of helping create good

football players and great young men.

More about program: We are endlessly grateful for the support of the people and businesses in our small communities of Snowflake and Taylor. There is no better place to experience Friday Night Lights than in small towns like this. We are excited to get this 2020 season rolling.

Winslow

Head coach: Brandon Guzman.

Years as school's head coach: 5.

2019 record: 7-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Robert "Sonny" Wilbanks 5-9, 175 (728 yards rushing, 8 TDs.); Jr. QB Jace Lyons 5-11, 155 (680 yards passing, 11 TDs.); Sr. FB Aiden Kislingbury 5-6 200; Sr. WR Cipriano Childers 6-1, 135; Jr. G Gage Thomas 5-7, 200; Jr. TE Chris Arellano 5-8, 215.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. CB Robert "Sonny" Wilbanks 5-9, 175; Sr. FS Cipriano Childers 6-1, 135; Sr. DE Cylis Gonzalez 6-0, 200 (6 sacks); So. DE Seth Matrecito 6-2, 185; Sr. MLB Aiden Kislingbury 5-6, 200 (39 tackles).

Also keep an eye on: Jr. RB/DB Gabe Meunier 5-6, 135; Sr. WR/DB Michael Dugger 5-8, 135; Sr. C/LS Tysen Leonard 5-9, 210; Sr. K Trevor Cavazos 5-7, 200.

Strengths of offense: Return skill guys with experience at QB.

Strengths of defense: Return DE's Cylis Gonzalez & Seth Matrecito, both will put pressure on the QB. Depth at DT with Gage Thomas, Chris Arellano, Aiden Kislingbury, ShiRon Dale and Brendan Padilla.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Replacing four starters on OL. Replacing two starters at LB. Leadership, we lost 20 seniors from last season.

2020 expectations: Compete for region championship. Keep building off of our 7-3 Season last year. Make the playoffs.

WEST REGION

Cortez

Head coach: Daniel Hopper.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 0-10.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. TE/DE Junior Barrios, 6-2, 215; Jr. QB/WR Deavon Felix 6-4; Jr. RB/WR Oscar Hernandez 5-6, 160.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. ATH Jose Almanza 5-5, 130; Sr. FS Dylan Ortega 5-7.

Dysart

Head coach: John Ganados.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 1-9.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Bobby Gardea 5-10, 175; Jr. WR/QB Alex Moreno 5-10, 185; Sr. RB/WR Gabe Silvas 5-9, 165; Sr. WR Isaiah Hernandez 5-9, 165; So. WR Prince Zombo 5-11, 180; Sr. WR Fred Garcia 5-10, 160; Sr. OL Abel Aguirre 5-10, 265; So. OL Julian Laborin 6-1 230; Sr. OL Kevin Urbina 5-11, 245; OL Vicente Izaguirre 5-10, 255; Sr. TE Mauricio Valles 5-10, 200; Sr. QB/ATH Ruben Falcon 5-9, 160.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Nick Highley 5-8, 155; Jr. DE Austin Mather 5-10 185; DE/LB James Massey 5-9, 165; Sr. S Ruben Falcon 5-9, 160; Sr. DE Mauricio Valles 5-10, 200; Sr. DB Fred Garcia 5-10, 160; Jr. OLB Calin Shaffer 5-10, 175; Jr. LB Michael Clymer 5-11, 180.

Also keep an eye on: SLOT/DB Roberto Blanco 5-9, 160.

Strengths of offense: Offense should execute well have some returners with experience.

Strengths of defense: Defense should play well with returning starters.

Team's biggest question mark(s): We have to learn how to win games.

2020 expectations: Goals execute, start fast, and finish strong! Win games!

Kingman

Head coach: Russ Stryker.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 4-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Charles Williamson 5-7, 175 (246 yards rushing, 3 TDs.); Jr. RB Garrett Stryker 5-10, 145.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: So. LB Harley Naylor 5-8, 195 (54 tackles, 5.5 sacks); Jr. FS Malakai Bell 5-11, 160 (3 INTs.).

River Valley

Head coach: Jonathan Clark.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

2019 record: 7-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. RB Zach Hammett 5-8, 170 (1,264 yards rushing, 10 TDs.).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. LB Shawn Stice 5-8, 136 (50 tackles); Sr. CB Amaro Contreras 5-9 (45 tackles); Jr. DL Michael Dulin 6-2, 220 (6 sacks).

AZ College Prep's Championship Mindset Helping Diaz Thrive

By Andy Morales
azpreps365.com

We asked Chandler Arizona College Prep senior athlete Joel Diaz (6-1, 180) how he sees the coming season and his own progression as an athlete. He collected 92 tackles and three interceptions and also averaged almost 30 yards returning kicks as a junior for the Knights.

Diaz, a 3A Conference Player of the Year candidate, also has 11 college offers on the table.

Q: Your program went from 2-8 when you were a freshman to 8-2 last year and a playoff appearance. Tell us a bit about that rise and what do you attribute it to?

A: "Well it's been quite the ride to say the least. Having very little success those first two years was tough, but we never stopped believing. Every player that stuck through those rough years believed that we were destined for greatness, and that pushed us to keep going and prove to everyone the team we could be. I attribute that mentality and a lot of our success to coach (Myron) Blueford. From Day 1, he never had a doubt that we'd be a great team. He constantly reminded us of our potential, our talent, and how if we just kept working and working we would be great. He's quite the incredible coach. He got us all to buy into that belief, and buy into the team and the work. Everything he does he does with a championship mentality, and he's put that mentality not only in us, but our other coaches as well. He's set the standard at a championship. Everything we do — our practices, workouts, even our yoga — is done with a championship mentality, and I think that's really what's gotten us to where we are now. Belief and hard work. Never giving up. Buying into the program and each other. We've always seen ourselves as a championship team, and we're just getting started."

Q: You have 11 college offers at this point and you carry an incredible 4.8 GPA. What will be your selection process and what do you plan on studying in college?

A: I'm looking to go into aeronautical engineering, but the majority of small schools won't have that program, so I look for more mechanical engineering there. And when I'm looking at schools I look at their football program obviously, scholarship opportunities, location, and culture. My parents can't afford to put me through college. So schools that I can get nearly all, if not all, of it paid for are my best options. I like more urban areas, but a location isn't going to stop me if it's the school for you. And most importantly the culture. I want to play for a program that emphasizes family and treats their players like family, coaches that treat me like family and show they care during the recruiting process. Because those are the coaches and programs I want to play for."

Q: You were invited to compete for U.S. National Team in the International Bowl. Tell us about that experience.

A: "The week I spent in Dallas for the International Bowl was probably the best week of my life. There was never a dull moment, everything was go-go-go and football-football-football. We were completely immersed in the game the entire time, from meetings to practices to meals, everything was football and it was incredible. We had to learn our whole playbook in four days, which was actually pretty difficult but exciting, and it pushed me as an individual and us together as a team. Everyone there was your friend. You walk in and everyone accepts you as their teammate and it grows from there. I learned so much from that experience. I got to see many different coaching styles. I got to see different types of players. I gained a much deeper knowledge of football because we were always talking ball and having to learn an entirely new defense. It really grew my knowledge and understanding of the game and gave me a different perspective. It is definitely one of if not the best experience of my life."

Q: You also participated in the Under Armour All-America Camp at Williams Field in March. What did you learn from that experience?



Arizona College Prep's Joel Diaz participated with a U.S. National Team in the International Bowl in Dallas. (Photo courtesy of U.S.A. Football)

A: "The UA camp was incredible. The level of coaching and competition really pushed me. The biggest thing I learned was that I can compete with anyone in the state at any level. It was also great to meet other athletes and see different coaching styles."

Q: Tell us how you have been dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic as a family, student and an athlete.

A: "As a family, we've been going on a lot of outdoor day trips, hiking and things to just get out of the house. I've got a lot of little siblings so they need things to do. For the most part just trying to hang in there, trying to do our part in stopping the virus spread. As a student, I had to just buckle down and get through it. I had three AP tests to take, so I needed that last quarter of instruction. And even though grades didn't count, I needed to be prepared for my tests. So I did all my needed classes every day and took extra care in prepping for my tests and did a lot of AP practice in order to get ready. It was certainly not ideal, but I did it. And as an athlete, I dealt with the pandemic by continuing to do field work and workouts on my own. I didn't have a gym since the gyms were closed and I don't have any weights at home, so I had to get very creative with my workouts. I put together high intensity mostly bodyweight workouts. And they were actually better than expected as once we finally did get back into the weight room I had increased all of my maxes. I am fortunate to have a huge back yard that I could set up cones and drills and work on footwork at home. All of my offers actually came during the pandemic, so I've also been spending a lot of time on the phone with coaches and whatnot. Right now COVID has kind of thrown a wrench in my recruiting, as well as my senior season. But I can't control that, so I'm just going to keep working and hope things will sort themselves out."

AZ College Prep - 3A Metro East Region

Head coach: Myron Blueford.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Mark Chavez 6-1, 200 (1,851 yards passing, 24 TDs.); Sr. RB Richie Williams 5-9, 198 (1,688 yards rushing, 17 TDs.); Sr. WR Bryan Dyson 5-11, 155 (856 yards receiving, 11 TDs.); Jr. WR Bryce Chen 5-10, 165; Jr. OL Keaton Messerole 6-1, 255; Jr. OL Devan Kukreja 5-10, 265; Sr. OL Sebastian Ybrahim 5-9, 215; So. OL Marco Palafox 5-11, 210.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. FS Joel Diaz 6-2, 190 (92 tackles, 3 INTs.); Sr. SS Caden Churnetski 6-1, 160; Sr. LB Kellen Gibson 6-2, 220 (129 tackles, 4 sacks); Jr. LB Nathan Chumley 6-0, 175; Sr. DE Mario Duncan 5-11 (7 sacks), 175; Sr. DT Jakob Warren 5-10, 255; Sr. DT Aaron Barnes 6-0, 270.

Also keep an eye on: So. WR Jayden Diaz 6-0, 170; Jr. DE Carter Patten 6-5, 195; So. DE/TE Brandon Bowman 6-2, 175; Jr. LB/S Cameron McDonald 5-11, 180; Jr. LB/RB Andrew Stephens 5-9, 170.

Strengths of offense: Every stat leader is coming back this year with three college bound seniors. Offensive line is older and more mature. Competent and confident in our offense.

Strengths of defense: Two Division I bound seniors at key positions. More understanding of the defense. We were a top defense in the 2019 season.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Have key positions to fill at corner and line-backer. Adapting to new wrinkles in defense. Developing depth across our entire roster.

2020 expectations: We want to go deeper in the playoffs and contend for a championship. Win our region. Have the best statistical output on offense and defense in the past four seasons.

More about program: We predicted that we would have our first winning season and make the playoffs last year and we did just that. We had one of, if not the biggest single season turnaround from 1-9 to 8-2. All of our key players are coming back and we will be better than we were last year.

Yuma Catholic

Head coach: Rhett Stallworth.

Years as school's head coach: 11.

2019 record: 7-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. C Brandon Weatherby 6-3, 260; Sr. WR Jona Leon 5-8, 170; Sr. OL Adrian Perez 6-1, 200; Jr. WR Austin Rush 5-9, 155.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Jonah Leon 5-8, 170; Jr. DB Mario Martinez 6-0, 170; So. LB Jarred Marquez 6-1, 185; Jr. LB Devon Schmidt-Black 5-9, 160; Sr. DL Jacob Bernal 5-9, 190; Jr. DB Austin Priest 5-11, 150.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. LB Zach Castaneda 5-9, 185.

Strengths of offense: Good Receiving corps. Depth at QB.

Strengths of defense: Secondary has experience.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Finding three offensive linemen to step up. Defensive line play.

2020 expectations: Expect to compete. Lots of sophomores going to play that need to step up.

REMAINING TEAMS

Chinle

Head coach: Alan Barwick.

Years as school's head coach: 3 (7-13).

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Nick Begay 6-0, 205; Sr. WR Keyshawn Yazzie 6-0, 165; Sr. WR Cvto Lowe 5-11 165; Sr. WR Darrell Brown 5-7 155.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: DT Vincent Totsoni 6-1, 230; Sr. DB Casey Jones 5-7 125; Sr. DB Darrell Brown 5-7 155; Jr. LB Luke Jones 5-10 165.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. ATH Nicholas Littleman 6-1 160; Sr. ATH Payton Wagner 6-0 175; Sr. ATH Kobe Whitehorse 6-1 225; Sr. ATH Jay Jones 6-1 165; So. ATH Timothy Clark 5-8 145.

Strengths of offense: Unity and Speed.

Strengths of defense: Familiarity, experience and hungry.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Can we bring it all together in time for the season? How will our new guys fit and adapt to football? Will our young kids be ready for the Friday Night Lights?

2020 expectations: Compete in games. Finish plays and give 100% effort.

Ganado

Head coach: Adriel Shirley.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 7-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Elton Kirk 5-9, 170 (1,083 yards passing, 20 TDs); Sr. RB Tony Shirley 5-8, 169 (1,463 yards rushing, 12 TDs); Sr. WR Michael James 6-1, 165 (489 yards receiving, 10 TDs).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. MLB Tony Shirley 5-8, 169 (109 tackles, 4 sacks, 3 ints); Sr. FS Michael James 6-1, 165 (39 tackles). Jr. DE Marquis West 6-1, 235 (37 tackles).

Monument Valley

Head coach: Bryan Begay.

Years as school's head coach: 13.

2019 record: 4-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: So. SL/DB Roberto Flores; Jr. OL/DL Caden Kescoli; Sr. C/LB Latrell Maloney; SL/DB Devaughn Poorman, Jr. OL/DL Tyson Atene.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. OL/DL Blane Begay; Jr. OL/DL Darnell Johnson; Jr. OL/DL Justin Parrish; Jr. WR/DB Nahvonie Gray.

Also keep an eye on: So. OL/DL Keegan Holiday 6-1 275; So. OL/DL Koy Phillips 5-11, 265.

Strengths of offense: The quarterback position is solid. Starting quarterback Andrew Sheppard. Will need to become an instant team leader both on the field and in the locker room and basketball court. Should he get hurt, Albrandon Byjoe is waiting in the wings. Albrandon will play slot or maybe split time with Andrew. Returning is little speed demon, Cauy Betoney, he is a breakaway threat. Returners are good shape, need to develop some split ends in the process, but most talented group since the 2016 team. MV's offensive strengths and weaknesses is going to be based on the offensive line. Games will be won or lost in the trenches.

Strengths of defense: Need to reload at both linebacker and defensive back. Lots of youth played in the secondary, now they have the experience to compete. Expect more interceptions from the secondary. MV has experience coming back.

Team's biggest question mark(s): If there is football, when can we begin practice. Football will change the way we coach, practice, lead, and play kids due to covid-19. Lots of unanswered questions will be answered as football gets closer.

2020 expectations: Win the 3A North. Get back to what was state playoffs year in and out. Advance as far as we can in state playoffs. Be better people. Keep all drama off the field.

More about program: We are going to compete with the best. Obviously, some people are going to put us down and not have us very high, but we are the type of team that will continue pushing regardless of the situation.

Page

Head coach: Bubba Billie.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Robert Smith 6-0, 170; Sr. OL Lovato Sandoval 6-0, 170; Sr. WR Dahntay Dunbar 5-10, 150; Jr. WR Hunter Richardson 5-11, 145; Sr. OL Michael Wilmes 5-9, 185.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Ethan Tate 6', 180; Sr. DB Dahntay Dunbar 5-10, 150; Jr. DB Hunter Richardson 5-11, 150; So. DB Kyun Tate 5-5, 120; Sr. LB Mac Anderson 5-9, 175; Sr. DL Lovato Sandoval 6', 170.

Strengths of offense: Robert Smith's leadership.

Strengths of defense: Having Mac Anderson back.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Offensive and defensive Line. Running back.

2020 expectations: Win the region. Make the playoffs.

Tuba City

Head coach: Vincent Lee.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR/DB Nick Yazzie 5-7, 155; Sr. OL Calvin Joshevama 6-0, 210; Jr. QB/DB Papsiya Lomayestewa 5-8, 165; Jr. RB/DB Xander Mitchell 5-7, 145; Jr. RB/WR Julius Hernandez 5-7, 145; Jr. RB/DL Julian Reyes 5-6, 160; Jr. RB/DL Levander Yazzie 5-8, 180; Jr. OL Casey Draper 5-8, 180; Jr. OL Tryrin Mann 5-8, 220

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. OLB/DB Sean Kaya 5-7, 155; Jr. SS/DB Papsiya Lomayestewa 5-8, 165; Jr. CB/DB Lincoln Bilagody 5-8, 150; Jr. Thayer Nez 5-8, 180; Jr. Joseph McCabe 5-10, 185; So. Jacoby Dodson 5-7, 160; So. Jeremy Yazzie 5-8, 155; So. Elroy Watson 6-0, 240; So. Pedro Martinez 5-10, 150.

Strengths of offense: Entire offensive backfield is returning. Overall better understanding of offensive scheme from upperclassmen.

Strengths of defense: Many upperclassmen will start on defense. Greater understanding of technique and scheme verse last year.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Opening the offense up and allowing players to take more ownership and control of the offense. Team leadership. Who will lead the team?

2020 expectations: Score points and give us an opportunity to compete and win more games! Compete in our conference. Establish our program in the 3A North.

More about program: Last year was a trial by fire for a very young and inexperienced team. This year, we look to compete and win more games with the expectation to compete in the 3A North.

Window Rock

Head coach: Wilbur Begay, Jr.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 5-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Caden Bia (194 yards passing, 3 TDs); Jr. Gemini Bitsie 5-8, 145 (52 yards receiving).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL/DL Caleb Dickson 6-2, 305 (53 tackles, 13 sacks).

Odyssey Institute

Head coach: Jon Castellanos.

Years as school's head coach: 2 (15-7).

2019 record: 7-4 (14 seed).

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Carson Eveland 6-0; Sr. WR Zack Wright 6-1, 168; Sr. WR Isaac Rubio 5-6.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Levi Gutierrez 5-8; Jr. MLB Osiris Gonzales 5-10.

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2A Conference Football Preseason Rankings



2A's preseason No. 1, Santa Cruz, is marching into this season seeking its first state title since 1980. (Darin Sicurello photo/MaxPreps)

By Jose Garcia
azpreps365.com

1. SANTA CRUZ: Thatcher, Round Valley and Phoenix Christian are gone. But winning the 2A Conference won't be a cinch. Santa Cruz knows it. "With Thatcher, Round Valley and Phoenix Christian leaving (to 3A), if you look at our track record, those teams were giving us trouble," Santa Cruz coach Rishard Davis said. "But we also can't think about it just that way. Because St. Johns and Benson and teams like Trivium Prep are also looking at it like they have a shot now. That's all the kids need, is to give them a shot. We are well aware of who is in our conference, and we can do ourselves a disservice if we think this is going to be a cakewalk." The last time Santa Cruz played for the title, a 28-27 OT loss to Thatcher, was in 2017. The skill players on that team were more experienced than this year's team. But what stands out, as a group, about the 2020 Dust Devils are the lines on both sides of the ball, which remain intact. The team also welcomes back tight end Dylan Hukill, Santa Cruz's leading receiver two seasons ago, from injury. But its state title hopes will likely ride on the shoulders of the Ogle brothers, Hunter and Wyatt. Hunter, the team's returning leading rusher and tackler, is as tough as they come. Word is that Hunter gained some speed to go along with his non-stop motor. The team's strong safety last year, Wyatt, is moving to starting quarterback this year. Wyatt is just as tough as his brother—both are wrestling champs—but faster and will serve as another running back in Santa Cruz's single wing. "This team is really coachable," Davis said. "They do everything you tell them to do. I haven't had that, especially from the seniors. Most of them have been together since elementary school. Now it's just a matter of if they can stay focused." Winning the program's first championship since 1980 is the prize if they stay focused.

2. BENSON: The program prides itself on its old school, hard-nose style of play. Eighteen-year coach Chris Determan sets that tone, and his kids follow. What isn't present, though, for the first time in Determan's tenure is a senior on the roster. It's just one

of those years. But Benson still plans on making a playoff run. Nine sophomores played plenty in the previous season, and they are back. The 15 juniors on the team have played on the same teams since their Pop Warner days. Two of those players, RBs Tristan Martinez and Devin Bowling, and FB Jace Barney should keep Benson's Wing-T moving with the help of four returning offensive linemen. "We'll do some stuff to maximize our speed," Determan said. There's also depth at RB and WR. Running the offense this year will be Determan's son, QB Brok. The defense is athletic and runs well, coach said. The head honchos on defense are Martinez, Brok, Bowling, Barney, CB Jimmy Lerblance, CB Angel Rigney and FS Mundo Esparza. Most of the starters will play on both sides of the ball unless some of the freshmen are ready to play Benson's physical brand of football.

3. ST. JOHNS: The knees aren't moving like they used to. He can't throw a football with the same zip. But coach Mike Morgan's love for his kids and community is as strong as ever. That keeps him feeling young and motivated. As the start of his 42nd season in coaching approaches—32nd at St. Johns—Morgan is one win away from occupying the top rung of the state's all-time coaching victory ladder. "That's what they tell me," said Morgan about the possibility of becoming the first Arizona coach to reach 337 football victories. "It's been a long process but something I'm really proud of to get to this point. If it happens, it'll also be part of the community and the school as well and everybody who has played for me at St. Johns since I got here in 1989." Morgan's first attempt at reaching the milestone will be against none other than St. Johns' 100-plus year rival Round Valley on Oct. 2 at the dome in Eager. Morgan will take with him a squad with improved all-around speed. RB Ira Tullous and new QB James Thomas are the elusive ones. Tight end Slade Nevin and lineman Nick Patterson also will play big roles. Patterson (6-3, 260) is receiving Division II interest and currently holds four of the five heavyweight weight room records of St. Johns.

4. PARKER: The Broncos aren't done. In 2019, the program re-recorded its first 10-win season since 2000 and first 6-0 start since 1969. They also won their first playoff game in eight seasons, which whet their postseason appetite. "We are going to take it one week at a time, but they are real hungry," coach Jeston Lotts said. This is the most size and depth Lotts carried in his nine years as the program's coach. The starting offensive line weighs in at 215, 230, 255, 265 and 275. The leader of the big group is guard Abraham Silva. Sr. Emanuel "E-Man" Alaniz (1,300 rushing yards, 16 TDs last year) is one of the top running backs in 2A. But he's not the only 1,000-yard rusher in Parker's Wing-T. Sr. Uriah Martinez (20 TDs last year), whose brother Ezra is the starting center, also is back. A more seasoned Fabian Lamas, a Sr. QB, is heading into his second season under center. "There's still some work to be done," Lotts said. "We need to see if we can be physical and wear the good teams down." The defense is young but also athletic and big. Only five seniors dot Parker's roster, but the junior class dresses about 17 players. The junior leaders are Tyson Ross, Joe Martinez, Cameron Poole, Silva and Jacob Bennet. Needless to say, the team and Parker community can't wait to open the season against rival Wickenburg and make a run at their first state title since 1971.

5. TRIVIUM PREP: Some advice for opponents. Don't pay too much attention to All-State WR August Hubbard (6-4, 180) this season. Do so and risk getting burned by Trivium Prep's added speed on the outside, including coach Michael Spencer's son, Dylan, a slot receiver. Another Trivium Prep player who's not hard to miss is RB Josh DeGraves. The program isn't expecting its run game to slow down behind the 6-3, 220-pound senior. There's work to be done on the team's offensive and defensive lines, but three-year starter Luke Hirth and senior Cameron Bunker are a pair of 6-3, 200-plus pound linemen who can open lanes for DeGraves. Staying healthy and the production of a new quarterback will be key this year. "We prepare to win every game," coach Spencer said. "There won't be much of a drop off, but the younger talent needs to step up this season." Since joining 2A in 2018, Trivium Prep hasn't dropped a regular season game.

6. VERITAS PREP: Since almost everybody returns, the expectations are higher for the Phoenix team after last season's 8-3 overall, undefeated region season. The team's speed and athleticism should make up for the lack of size. "We lost some bodies but not ability," coach Jason Black said. "We can attack from different angles defensively, and with all the returning pieces we don't have to start over. We just have to add to what they know." Dual threat Gage Lentz (2,258 passing yards, 26 passing TDs, team-high 13 rushing TDs last year) also lines up against a team's best receiver. Sr. Nisa Maafu averaged 11.6 per carry last year while banged up but still rushed for 847 yards and 8 TDs and totaled 42 tackles and four sacks. Black is expecting Maafu and Lentz to each reach the 1,000 rushing mark this season. Veritas Prep did lose a 1,000 yard receiver but the very capable Harris Lytle, a Sr. captain, will become the downfield threat for the Falcons this year. Another senior captain, slot/OLB Marko Vuletic, never leaves the field and was the team's third leading tackler last year. But the team's Mighty Mouse is Eli Rovelo (5-5, 150). A rugby fan with a "heart of a lion," Rovelo is a "machine" and led the team in tackles last year with 99. He's the team's middle line-backer and, get this, a starting guard. This season, Veritas Prep is chasing its first ever playoff victory after reaching the playoffs for the first time last year. The coaching staff, including defensive coordinator Norman Williams and offensive coordinator Matt Pinnick, are reaping the rewards for the work they did to get their program off the ground three years ago. That's when the program was in need of players.

7. SAN TAN CHARTER: #WeTheCulture is about to learn if #WeAreReady. Coach Kerry Taylor certainly believes so. The new kid on the 2A block will know soon if it's an upper echelon team. San Tan's 2A introduction is against preseason favorite Santa Cruz on Oct. 2. Taylor did his 2A homework this past summer, watching film from last season on every one of this season's opponents. As for his team, Taylor said his receiving corps is 6-7 deep, offensive line is big and carries three good running backs. At quarterback, despite starting a freshman, Taylor is confident Zayden Neill can direct San Tan's balanced attack. On defense, the strength of the team is at linebacker, led by Sr. Jacob Loggins. The goal of Taylor, his 30 varsity players and staff with NFL

experience is ambitious: #best2Ateamever. "Yes," said Taylor when asked if it's state title or bust. "Not only do we want to win a state championship, but we have the tools to be the best 2A team ever. "That's what we are chasing." The 2A has been put on alert, but then again if you follow Taylor on Twitter and his hashtags you probably already knew that.

8. MORENCI: Last year, despite making the playoffs, was a down year for the team. But coach Joseph Garcia expects his young team (17 freshmen, a strong sophomore class, 7-8 seniors) to bounce back this year after playing one of 2A toughest schedules. With 49 kids in the program, depth won't be an issue for Morenci this year. "Our younger guys are stepping up," Garcia said. "Our o-line is starting to gel and backs are hitting the holes better. Our defense will be younger, but it flies to the ball." Two sophomores, Daylen Johnson and Derek Saenz, were battling for the starting quarterback spot. Saenz is the mobile QB, and Johnson is the thrower. Sr. L.T. Morey will carry the load at halfback for a program known for its physicality. This year, the team is starting a new defensive line, but it returns 15 starters.

9. CHANDLER PREP: The 2A track record of the coaching Britains, father Tommy and son Josh, is a good one. So expect Chandler Prep to build on what former coach Chris Goodman started. The next step is to win the program's first ever playoff game. The Britains love their teams to be physical on both sides of the ball. So moving their strongest player, Sam Martin, a 1,000-yard rusher last year, to the line wasn't too surprising. Whatever the team needs, that was Martin's take, Tommy said. With only one returning lineman, Chandler Prep needs some heft there. Look for returning started quarterback Reece Villaboy, senior RB/LB Aidan Daly and sophomore Sterling Harris to lead the charge offensively in the Brittain's ground game. Harris was injured somewhat last year but is a dynamic and talented player, Tommy said. Of the 28 kids on the team, 16 are juniors. Tommy loves what he sees from his defense so far, saying, "They are coachable. Not big but fast and will be assignment ready." Daly, the leading tackler last year, senior lineman Daniel Peake, who didn't miss a summer training day, DL Langston Harris, Sterling's older brother, and Villaboy are just some of the defensive standouts. Returning to the sidelines for the Britains also is Tommy's dad, 79-year-old Gary, who will coach the offensive line. "He's an old school guy who doesn't mince words," Tommy said.

10. MIAMI: An emergency school board decision gave Miami the go-ahead to start practicing in early September. It was good news for Miami but bad for opponents. The Vandals, a program that turns 100 in 2023, are capable of reaching the second round of the playoffs for only the second time since 1993. "I was just so excited to play this season," coach Brandon Powell said. "We return nine starters on offense and eight on defense." Powell thought he had to run the ball more this season after losing a tight end and a receiver. But he'll continue to spread the ball around thanks to the progress the Peña twins, sophomores Angel and Jaime, made in the offseason and the addition of Wisconsin transfer Chris Laughman. "Three diamonds to help keep the focus off Gabe Escobedo (1,617 receiving yards, 17 TDs last year)," Powell said. As a freshman, Angel was Miami's leading tackler last year, but he and his brother will also serve as receivers this season. Credit Powell's son, Ryan, for getting the Peñas up to speed on offense during the summer. Laughman will line up on the opposite side of Escobedo. Expect Jr. RB Justin Cook (992 rushing yards in 2019) to catch more out of the backfield as well. The offensive line returns four starters, more good news for a Miami team that's expecting Ryan (32 TD passes, 2,917 passing yards in 2019) to run the ball a lot also. Angel, Sr. NG Skyler Guerrero and Sr. DE Jayven Badilla are the generals of Miami's experienced defense. And, we didn't forget, but Miami's other big goal is to beat rival Globe and keep the Copper Kettle for a third straight year.

2A Conference Team-By-Team Preview



St. Johns coach Mike Morgan (in red) is one win away from becoming the state's all-time leader in career victories. (Paul Campbell photo/MaxPreps)

By Jose Garcia
azpreps365.com

GILA REGION

Arizona Lutheran

Head coach: David Peter.

Years as school's head coach: 5.

2019 record: 7-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Josiah Cunningham (6-3, 230); Sr. TE TJ Gray (5-8, 150); Jr. TE Luke Grippo (221 receiving yards) 6-0, 150; Jr. RB Jacob Holguin (274 rushing yards, 209 receiving yards) 5-8, 140; Sr. OL Trevor Humbert 6-0, 250; Jr. RB Gabriel McKenney (491 rushing yards, 168 receiving yards) 6-0, 170; Sr. OL Jonathan Mendoza 5-10, 230; Jr. C Travis Parker 5-10, 220.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DL Josiah Cunningham 6-3, 230; Sr. DL TJ Gray 5-8, 150 (25 tackles, 5.5 sacks); Jr. LB Luke Grippo (40 tackles) 6-0, 150; Jr. CB Jacob Holguin 5-8, 140; Sr. LB Eli Jacobson (59 tackles) 5-9, 170; Jr. LB Gabriel McKenney (37 tackles) 6-0, 170; Sr. DL Jonathan Mendoza 5-10, 230; Jr. S Jack Schaumberg (20 tackles) 6-2, 150.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. CB/RB Isaiah Gonzales 5-8, 140; Sr. LB/RB Dawson Wall 6-0, 160.

Strengths of offense: Athletic and talented younger players who saw tons of minutes on varsity last year. Familiarity with our scheme.

Strengths of defense: Athletic and talented younger players who saw tons of minutes on varsity last year. Getting stronger this offseason will help us against power running teams.

Team's biggest questions marks: We graduated two quality QB's. Who will compete for that position? What will our summer program look like in the face of the challenges the Coronavirus presented to us in the spring.

2020 expectations: We are a team that puts our Christian faith into word and action by serving each other each day. We are a team that trusts each other to put maximum effort into everything that we do. We are a team that is disciplined and works to win each day. We are a team that competes each day to be better than before, compete for a region championship, and make a strong push into the playoffs.

NFL Yet Prep Academy

Head coach: Armando Ruiz Jr.

Years as school's head coach: 5.

2019 record: 3-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB/LB Isiek Ayala (724 passing yards and 10 TDs, 1,331 rushing yards and 15 TDs) 5-11, 220; Sr. TE/DE Andres Bermudez 6-0, 195; Jr. G/DE Estevan Bermudez 6-0, 210; Sr. WR/DB Jose Lopez (197 receiving yards) 6-0, 180; Sr. OL/NT Matthew Mata 6-3, 245; Sr. C/DT Anthony Navarro 5-10, 240.

Strengths of offense: Strong QB. Big offensive line. Experience.

Strengths of defense: Strength. Strong LB play.

Team's biggest questions: Adjusting to new division/opponents. Learning new playbook.

2020 expectations: Win first game in new division. Win two out of our first four.

More about program: Isiek Ayala dominated in his sophomore season and is a really special talent. Keep an eye out for him. He's a jack of all trades. Also, look for our senior class to make some noise.

Heritage Academy

Head coach: Tony Stillings.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB LeTrell Beck (330 passing yards, 410 rushing yards and 7 TDs) 5-9, 175; Sr. WR Kyle Boblett 6-0, 140; Sr. TE Charlie Lines 6-2, 180; So. OT Tristan Rios Manzo 5-11, 250; So. RB Jonathan Rojo (267 rushing yards) 5-8, 155; Jr. C Diego Samaniego 5-7, 185.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DL Colton Ingle 5-9, 180; Sr. LB Charlie Lines (119 tackles, 4 sacks) 6-2, 180; Sr. N Caleb Moseley (17 tackles) 5-7, 185; Sr. CB Jacob Phengdy 5-11, 140; So. LB Jonathan Rojo (41 tackles) 5-8, 155; Sr. SS Brody Sheets (21 tackles) 5-11, 155.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. K/WR Ramon Arteaga 5-7, 145; Sr. OT Eduardo Herrera 5-10, 230; So. CB/WR Ryder Lines 5-11, 140.

Strengths of offense: Athletic QB who can run the ball. Experienced WR.

Strengths of defense: Speed to the ball. Aggressive, experienced LB's. Quick D-line.

Team's biggest questions marks: Experience on the O and D-lines. Depth.

2020 expectations: Win the program's first region game. Compete for a playoff spot.

More about program: Entering our 3rd year overall in the AIA. Won our first AIA contest last season. Looking to build on that with our first region win and playoff berth this season.

Sequoia Pathway Academy

Head coach: Donnie Margerum.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

2019 record: 9-1.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. G/LB Curtis David 6-0, 210; Jr. S/WR Jyrie Gamble 6-3, 160; Sr. C/MLB Logan Keller 5-9, 220; Jr. G/LB Weston Klee 5-10 200; Sr. DE/TE Yufiel Jones 6-4, 225; Sr. QB/DB Alex Montano 5-9, 160.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DE/G Curtis David 6-0, 200; Jr. S/WR Jyrie Gamble 6-3, 160; Sr. DE/TE Yufiel Jones 6-4, 225; Sr. LB/G Logan Keller 5-9, 220.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. DE/WR Nolan Cook 6-1, 195; Fr. WR/CB Demone DeMar Jr. 6-0, 150; Sr. RB Marcus Keeton 5-9, 165; Sr. RB/S Andre Smith 5-10, 170; Sr. WR/CB Izaiah Stewart 5-9, 170.

Strengths of offense: Extremely athletic, fast, versatile, experienced, poised.

Strengths of defense: Hungry, fast, smart, great leadership, hunt in packs.

Team's biggest questions marks: How will we bounce back from losing the (charter) state title in 2019? Will the offensive line hold up? Who will emerge as the new big play weapons? How will we respond to new AIA division?

2020 expectations: We expect to win. Win Rillito Region. Make playoffs. State.

More about program: This will be Sequoia Pathway's first season entering AIA coming over from CAA along with San Tan Charter, which we lost the state title to last season. It should be fun to see how we both do this upcoming season.

SALT REGION

Arete Prep

Head coach: Cord Smith.

Years as school's head coach: 4.

2019 record: 6-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. RB Jack Bellomy (524 rushing yards, 15 total TDs) 5-10, 165; Jr. RB Joseph Connelly (103 rushing yards, 5 total touchdowns) 5-10 165; Jr. QB/DB Matthew McClelland (2,413 passing yards, 23 TD passes) 6-1, 170; Sr. LB/RB Chris Morrison (215 rushing yards) 6-0, 170; Sr. WR/LB Ryan Schade (470 receiving yards) 6-0, 175; Sr. OL/DL Jack Spano 6-3, 220.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: So. DE Zack Allen 5-11, 150; Jr. DB Joseph Connelly 5-10, 165; Jr. DB Matthew McClelland (7 INTs) 6-1, 170; Sr. LB Chris Morrison 6-0, 170; Sr. LB Ryan Schade (32 tackles) 6-0, 175; Sr. OL/DL Jack Spano (70 tackles) 6-3, 220.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. WR/DB Derek Denton 6-2, 170; Jr. WR/DB Tyler Driggs 5-9, 160; Sr. WR/DB Owen Kremer 6-0 165.

Strengths of offense: All-State, third-year returning QB Matthew McClelland passed for 2,400 yards or more in the last two seasons. He rushed for over 1,100 yds last year. All-Region RB Jack Bellomy returns at RB. An experienced receiving corps that knows the Air Raid and our spread offensive system. Special teams coach Rick Alvarez thinks the X-factor might be the Chargers' kickoff and return teams.

Strengths of defense: Having the experience and knowledge of our defensive coordinator, Joe Crawford, who was the head coach at Imagine Prep Superstition. Saftey Matthew McClelland, who broke a state record with 5 INT's in a game, returns at safety. All-Region senior LB Chris Morrison returns to our defensive corps.

Team's biggest questions marks: Moving up from 1A 8-man to 2A 11-man will be the biggest challenge. Senior lineman Jack Spano is the only returning starter on the O-line. As one of the smallest schools in 2A, our two-way starters will be challenged.

2020 expectations: We will need to fight and scratch to keep up with some of the best 2A teams in the state. The new 2A Salt Region looks to be exciting. Globe and Miami and San Carlos have teams with long storied traditions, while San Tan Charter and Sequoia are fresh off the Charter Athletic Association. We are also excited to renew some new rivalries within our Great Hearts network. Playing Glendale Prep and Veritas Prep will be exciting and challenging.

Globe

Head coach: Mark Openshaw.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Avirum Curiel (157 rushing yards, 4 TDs, 182 receiving yards) 5-10, 145; Sr. RB/WR Seth Durbin 5-6, 130; Sr. WR Seth Fane 6-2, 150; Sr. QB Caden Hansen (1,087 passing yards, 10 TDs) 5-7, 175; Jr. WR Angel Hernandez (112 receiving yards) 5-6, 145; Jr. G Nickolas Lottes 5-10, 180; Jr. G Dawson Shaffer 5-11, 240; Sr. T/TE Jimmy Taylor 6-4, 200.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. OLB Avirum Curiel (41 tackles) 5-10, 145; Sr. OLB Gus Curiel (53 tackles) 5-10, 150; Sr. S Seth Durbin 5-6, 130; Sr. CB Seth Fane (2 INTs) 6-2, 150; Jr. NT Angel Hernandez (31 tackles) 5-6, 145; Jr. DE Chase Lemke; Sr. CB John Martinez 5-6, 120; Sr. DE Jonathan Ortega 5-11 200; Sr. CB Diego Varela 5-5, 120.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. LB Gabe Gerardo; So. RB Andrew Gonzales; So. WR Wendsler Nosie 6-0, 160; So. QB/WR Anasco Sanchez 5-8 150; So. G Ryan Thompson 6-0, 265.

Strengths of offense: We have a young but experienced offensive line. We return an All-Conference RB and QB along with multiple talented and experienced WRs. Lots of returning starters with experience in the system and with each other. Family atmosphere.

Strengths of defense: Simplicity and experience. Returning All-Conference OLB and NT and multiple other high caliber returning starters. Confidence in the system and with responsibilities. Competitive atmosphere. Athleticism.

Team's biggest questions marks: Pass Protection. Replacing graduating playmakers. Stopping the run.

2020 expectations: Winning record. Win the region. Qualify for the playoffs.

Holbrook

Head coach: Christopher Starkey.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

2019 record: 0-10.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. OL Manuel Baca 6-0, 225; So. OL Mauricio Baca 5-10, 195; Jr. OL Teyton Begay 6-0, 185; Sr. RB/WR John Lee 6-1, 160; Jr. OL Malakai Johnson 5-9, 185; So. QB Marcus Oberriter (964 passing yards, 621 rushing yards) 5-8, 145; So. RB/WR Daniel Montijo 5-8, 145; Sr. RB John O'Brien (499 rushing yards) 5-9, 175; So. WR/TE/H-Back Izzy Ramos (119 receiving yards) 6-1, 175; Sr. WR Keith Scheuerman 6-1, 165; Jr. OL Caden Tom 6-1, 185.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DL Manuel Baca 6-0, 225; So. DL/LB Mauricio Baca 5-10, 195; Jr. LB Teyton Begay 6-0, 185; Sr. Jr. DL/LB Malakai Johnson (53 tackles) 5-9, 185; LB/DB John Lee 6-1, 160; So. DB Daniel Montijo (50 tackles) 5-8, 140; So. DB/LB Marcus Oberriter (38 tackles) 5-8, 145; Sr. LB John O'Brien (81 tackles) 5-9 175; So. LB Izzy Ramos (82 tackles) 6-1, 175; Sr. DB Keith Scheuerman (42 tackles) 6-1, 165; So. DB/LB Kyle Smith 5-7, 140.

Also keep an eye on: Fr. OL/DL/LB Jace Allison 6-3, 170; Fr. OL/DL/LB Slade Allison 6-0, 165; So. OL/DL Noland McCabe 6-0, 190; So. TE/H-Back/DL/LB Jacob Richards 5-10, 160; So. WR/DB Quentin Thomas 6-2, 170.

Strengths of offense Returning a sophomore QB Marcus Oberriter, who started all 10 games as a freshman. Key skill players return with a few new ones looking to make an impact. Five returning offensive linemen returning who each got valuable playing time last season. Three-four underclassmen, including incoming freshman, have already began to make a name for themselves. Our QB is taking a leadership role and developing relationships with his backs and receivers on and off the field. Second year in the same system. Being the 5th head coach in five years, they haven't run the same system for more than a season. Bringing in a unique system last season had its learning curves but towards the end of the season things started to click. Year 2 should be fun.

Strengths of defense: Return 2nd and 3rd leading tacklers from last season. A So. MLB is returning who played in all 10 games and was a top-3 tackler in the state. Returning team captain John O'Brien is looking to make a huge impact, playing a number of different positions. Zoom meetings have allowed for us to break down different parts of the defense and make teaching it simpler. As with the offense, Year 2 in the same system will make a huge difference. The underclassmen are ready to step up and play where they are needed. We have some very unselfish players moving up the ranks.

Team's biggest questions marks: How will we handle the adversity COVID-19 has created? Upperclassmen. There aren't that many of them at this point. What will they do to continue to sway the Holbrook football culture? How will moving down to 2A affect our numbers, mind set and playing field? Will the off-season pay off? Before COVID-19 we had great numbers in the weight room and there was a lot of excitement in the program. Can we refocus now and get back together when it's time to get back to work. Finding the right fit for a few players. We have a few athletes who can play anywhere on the field. It going to be a very strategic placement week by week.

2020 expectations: Continue to build the 'Brook! We are building a culture of excellence, honor and pride. Get better every week. Find the positives each game. Holbrook will field a team every week that fights until the end, and does it the right way, regardless of the circumstance.

More about program: Holbrook is a special place. It's a diamond in the rough. I've never lived in a place with better people, people who truly care for each other. We are building something special here, because of the people here. It's hard, frustrating, humbling, and gratifying all at the same time. We are continuing to transition and not cutting any corners. We don't mind that we don't get the same attention as all the schools in the Valley, because we know we are different. We know we face challenges no other school in Arizona, even in the country, faces. But we don't make excuses, we move forward day by day, and do things the right way. We know by doing this eventually wins will come along. Holbrook football is on the rise. We are glad to share the journey with you!

Santa Cruz's Ogle is pound-for-pound one of AZ's toughest players

By Jose Garcia
azpreps365.com

As a freshman, Hunter Ogle went trophy hunting.

In his sights was a big back/linebacker, soon-to-be college running back Alec Fitz Wyble-Meza, who outweighed Ogle by about 60 pounds in 2017. Back then, Wyble-Meza and Ogle were teammates at Eloy Santa Cruz High when Ogle, the scout running back, ran right at the then senior Wyble-Meza.

"I almost trucked Alec, and after that I felt I can be pretty good," Ogle said. "Alec said, 'Dang, good hit.' And I thought, 'Dang, this might be for me. If I can almost break a tackle from (Wyble-Meza), imagine what I can do to smaller people.'"

Ogle is tough, but the Eloy community knew that way before he made Wyble-Meza's legs wobble.

But it was on the wrestling mat, not the gridiron, where folks expected Ogle to immediately thrive. Becoming a 4-time high school individual champ was Ogle's goal for as long as he could remember.

But that wrestling dream was crushed after a state runner-up finish as a freshman. As Ogle recharged his wrestling batteries after that state championship loss, football sparked a new passion.

"I still get butterflies every time I step on the field just as a game is about to start," Ogle said.

On defense, Ogle, a linebacker, flies to the ball every chance he gets.

On offense, the 2A Conference's second returning leading rusher tends to grind his way to as many yards as possible.

With 1,844 rushing yards and 93 tackles, no other player in 2A contributed as much to a team as Ogle did last year. This season, before it was shortened, a 2,000-rushing yard, 100-tackle season was a realistic goal for the senior with a non-stop motor.

"The weird thing about Hunter is we try to give him breaks, but he won't let us," Santa Cruz head coach Rishard Davis said.

A fractured wrist didn't even stop Ogle.

He injured it two seasons ago during a game, got the wrist taped and kept playing the rest of the season without telling his coach about the injury.

"I didn't want to stop playing," Ogle said.

Ogle said he's fractured the same wrist before and didn't think it was a big deal.

The injury, however, did hamper Ogle's second attempt at a wrestling title two years ago, when he finished third.

The thing he had to heal the most was his heart, though. Ogle lost his drive for wrestling after the completion of his freshman season.

"My whole goal was to be a 4-time state champ," Ogle said. "I was working so hard for that, and when it didn't happen it was devastating."

His asthma and allergies also slowed him down.



Hunter Ogle averaged 7.7 yards per carry last season as a running back and led the Dust Devils with 93 total tackles. (Santa Cruz Valley High School photo)

But Ogle rekindled his love for wrestling last year, when he started retaking his asthma medication. After catching his second breath, Ogle went on to win his first individual title.

"I was happy," he said. "I'm humble. I wasn't out there celebrating but was happy. It took a lot of hard work. I've been working at it since I was in second grade, and it finally paid off."

Also winning an individual wrestling crown last year was Ogle's brother, Wyatt, a junior and Santa Cruz's new starting quarterback.

Bryant and Brandi, Ogle's parents, watched their sons' dual crowning wrestling achievements from the stands.

"It makes me want to work that much harder when I see my parents in the stands," Ogle said. "I don't want to lose in front of them. They've always been there for me."

"I'll be honest, I was a bit teary-eyed when I saw Wyatt win it. It motivated me to also win."

Ogle wants to continue competing in football or wrestling or both after high school, he said.

The 5-10, 160-pounder had no offers heading into the season. But if they do come along, a school will land one of the grittiest athletes in this year's Arizona senior class.

Santa Cruz - 2A Gila Region

Head coach: Rishard Davis.

Years as school's head coach: 7.

2019 record: 10-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. DB Ricardo Alaniz (560 rushing yards and 7 TDs, 54 tackles); Sr. WR David Avilez (377 rushing yards and 6 TDs); Jr. DB Steve Calvin (263 rushing yards and 7 TDs, 5 INTs); Sr. OL Diego Castillo; Sr. OL Juan Castillo; Sr. TE Orlando Davis Jr. (191 receiving yards); Jr. OL Tanzor Gil; Jr. DB Wyatt Ogle; Sr. TE Sias Lopez; Jr. OL Robert Maldonado; Sr. RB Hunter Ogle (1,844 rushing yards and 23 touchdowns); Jr. OL Elijah Tellez.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB David Avilez; Sr. DL Diego Castillo (43 tackles); Sr. DL Juan Castillo (26 tackles); Sr. LB Orlando Davis Jr.; Jr. DL Tanzor Gil (45 tackles); Sr. LB Maurico Lopez (64 tackles); Sr. LB Hunter Ogle (93 tackles).

Also keep an eye on: Jr. TE Davin Ethington; Soph. ATH Max Rodriguez.

Strengths of offense: Experience.

Strengths of defense: Experience.

Team's biggest questions mark(s): Quarterback play.

2020 expectations: Be the best team we can be.

More about program: The Ogle brothers were also state champions in wrestling this past year.

Miami

Head coach: Brandon R. Powell.

Years as school's head coach: 4.

2019 record: 7-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OT Jayven Badilla 5-11, 200; Jr. RB Justin Cook (1,200 yards rushing) 5-11, 180; Jr. WR Gabe Escobedo (850 receiving yards) 6-1, 185; Sr. G Skylar Guerrero 6-1, 250; Jr. OSB Weezy Koyayesva 5-6, 175; Sr. G Luiz Romero 5-10, 225; Jr. FB Jayden Stewart 5-10, 175; Sr. QB Ryan Powell (3,000 passing yards, 800 rushing yards) 5-9, 215.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DE Jayven Badilla 5-11, 200; Jr. CB Justin Cook 5-11, 180; Jr. FS Gabe Escobedo 6-1, 185; Sr. NG Skylar Guerrero 6-1, 250; Jr. CB Brayden Kauers 5-6, 150; So. Angel Pena 5-6, 140; Sr. DE Luiz Romero 5-10, 225; Sr. DE Chris Shadle 5-10, 180.

Also keep an eye on: So. C Gabe Garcia 5-10, 225; So. MLB Jaycob Goss 5-9, 180; So. TE Andre Hayes 5-10, 180; So. Slot Jaime Pena 5-6, 140; So. G Uriel Perez 6-3, 250.

Strengths of offense: My 2nd year back, so 2nd year with most guys in my offense. Returning our triple threat 3K passer, 1,200 Yd RB and 800 yard WR. Good Young WR to add to mix. Experienced OL in last season's system. Four of the five open spots will be filled with good sophomores.

Strengths of defense: Bringing back nine starters. DB's. Size of front three. Speed and football awareness. Second year in coach Rocha's schemes.

Team's biggest questions marks: Need to find guys to spell two-way players. Need to get smarter at the game. Need to get stronger. Need to get better at tackling. Less selfishness.

2020 expectations: Run plays better each game. Better knowledge of basic football game situations. Expand the offensive play book this season. Work hard on tackling drills. Just be better than we were last season.

More about program: Won Copper Kettle two years in a row for the first time since 91-92.

San Tan Charter

Head coach: Kerry Taylor.

Years as school's head coach: 1st year.

2019 record: 8-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL/DL Ethan Ball 5-10, 270; Sr. WR/LB Jacob Loggins 6-2, 185; Sr. OL/DL Kevin Perkins 6-3, 240; Sr. QB/FS Jared Neville 6-5, 195; Jr. RB/LB Aden Watson 6-1, 200.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. OL/DL Jacob Fiore 6-1, 200; Sr. DB/WR Michael Fiore 5-11, 165; Jr. LB/RB Isiah Galaviz 5-11, 195; Jr. LB/TE Lewis Tauscher 6-0, 180.

Also keep an eye on: Fr. QB/FS Zayden Neill 6-1, 165.

Strengths of offense: Balanced offense with playmakers at key positions.

Strengths of defense: Linebacker group is deep and talented.

Team's biggest questions marks: How fast can they adapt to the new coaches and system? Will the move up to 2A be a challenge?

2020 expectations: Players buying into the new culture and system. Coming out the gates fast. Explosive and disciplined style of football.

More about program: #WeTheCulture.

St. Johns

Head coach: Mike Morgan.

Years as school's head coach: 31.

2019 record: 9-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. WR/DB Joseph Bushman 6-1, 170; Sr. WR/DB Gage Heap 5-9, 145; Sr. OL/DL Nick Patterson 6-2, 260; Sr. OL/LB Jake Skousen 5-11, 180; Sr. WR/RB/QB/DB Dion Perry 5-5, 135; Sr. RB/FS Ira Tullous 5-10, 160.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DB Joseph Bushman 6-1, 170; Jr. DE Alton Cox 5-11, 170; Sr. DB Gage Heap 5-9, 145; Sr. DL Nick Patterson 6-2, 260; Sr. LB Jake Skousen 5-11, 180.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. RB/LB Chase Gray 5-7, 180; Jr. OL/DL Riley Green 6-5, 255; Sr. OL/DL Brady Overson 6-3, 200; Sr. TE/LB Slade Nevin 5-11, 180; Jr. QB/DB James Thomas 5-10, 180.

Strengths of offense: Running game. Passing the ball. Size up front. Intelligence.

Strengths of defense: New players that love defense. Secondary. Interior defensive line. Multiple defense. Team speed.

Team's biggest questions marks: Team strength. Team speed. Team unity.

2020 expectations: Win our league. Have a winning record. Make the playoffs.

More about program: The following players could fill some big shoes in the upcoming season: Dion Perry, Slade Nevin, Brady Overson, Riley Green, Case Heap, Jay Wahl, Anthony Diamond, Gage Trickey, James Thomas, Dayson Spencer, Ryan Lewis, Chase Gray, Gavin Harris, Kyson Price.

SAN PEDRO REGION

Benson

Head coach: Chris Determan.

Years as school's head coach: 18.

2019 record: 8-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. FB Jace Barney (309 rushing yards and 8 TDs) 5-9, 200; Jr. OL Ryan Francione 6-0, 180; Jr. OL Ricky Garcia 5-11, 185; Jr. OL Joe Jackson 6-1, 265; Jr. OL Cameron McFarland 5-10, 165.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DT Devin Bowling (59 tackles, 6 INTs) 5-10, 165; Jr. LB Brok Determan (33 tackles) 6-1, 165; Jr. DE Ryan Francione (36 tackles) 6-0, 180; Jr. DT Ricky Garcia 5-11, 185; Jr. DT Joe Jackson (17 tackles) 6-1, 265.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. FS/TE Mundo Esparza 6-2, 165; Jr. WR/DB Jimmy Lerblanc 5-11, 170; Jr. LB/RB Tristan Martinez 6-0, 175; Jr. FB/DE Gabe Osuna 5-10, 175.

Strengths of offense: Athletic and varsity experience.

Strengths of defense: Athletic and varsity experience.

Team's biggest questions: Depth.

2020 expectations: Be good young men both on and off the field and to compete and have a shot to win every game.

Morenci

Head coach: Joseph Garcia.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 4-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Adam Chacon 6-0, 245; Sr. K/WR Hugo Mancinas 5-11, 160; Sr. TE Maddux Martinez 6-1, 207; Jr. OL Richard Trott 5-11, 173; Jr. WR Tony Roybal 5-10, 140; So. QB/WR Derek Saenz 5-11, 142.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: So. DE Gavin Baca 6-0, 162; Sr. LB Dakota Bamburg 6-0, 174; So. DE Patrick Chavez 5-11, 167; Jr. SS Brenden Enriquez 5-10, 170; Sr. LB Maddux Martinez 6-1, 207; Sr. LB Paul Daniel Moreno 5-8, 164; Sr. FS LT Morey 5-10, 162; Jr. WR Tony Roybal 5-10, 140; So. DE Derek Saenz 5-11, 142; Jr. DL Richard Trott 5-11, 173.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. OL/LB Shawn Hudman 5-10, 150; So. QB/WR/DB Daylen Johnson 5-10, 165; So. OL/DL Mateo Palomarez 5-11, 200; Jr. OL/DL Jericho Sanchez 6-0, 245; Jr. RB/LB Kaden Summer 5-11, 165.

Strengths of offense: We have young offensive linemen, but they are eager to learn and improve. Our skill players have good hands and solid speed.

Strengths of defense: We have a strong core of experienced defensive players that fly to the football.

Team's biggest questions marks: We need to replace our starting quarterback from the last two years.

2020 expectations: I expect our team to work hard and compete in every game we play. By focusing on ourselves and getting better every day, the record of wins and losses will take care of itself.

Tombstone

Head coach: Jerry Rhoades.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 2-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL James Bryant 6-3, 170; Sr. RB Hadden Chamberlain 5-11, 170; So. OL Jaden Degnan 5-10, 160; Jr. REC Kadin Dyess 5-5, 125; Sr. K/REC Zeke Esparza 5-8, 150; Jr. RB/REC Dometrious Fanning 5-8, 150; Sr. RB/REC Payton Foster 5-9, 145; So. OL/RB Aian Greenlee 5-6, 140; Sr. REC Chris Holloway 5-6, 135; Jr. REC Shawn McCoy 5-11, 135; Sr. QB/REC/DB Jacob Oliver 5-11, 170.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DL James Bryant 6-3, 170; Sr. LB Hadden Chamberlain 5-11, 170; So. DL Jaden Degnan 5-10, 160; Jr. DB Kadin Dyess 5-5, 125; Sr. DB Zeke Esparza 5-8, 150; Jr. DB/LB Dometrious Fanning 5-8, 150; Sr. DB/LB Payton Foster 5-9, 145; So. DL/LB Aian Greenlee 5-6, 140; Sr. DB Chris Holloway 5-6, 135; Jr. DB Shawn McCoy 5-11, 135; Sr. DB Jacob Oliver 5-11, 170.

Also keep an eye on: Any new kid that comes out.

Strengths of offense: We are completely re-structuring our offense.

Strengths of defense: We've played it for a year.

Team's biggest questions marks: Numbers. We finished 2019 with 12 guys. New kids coming out. Incoming freshmen.

2020 expectations: Thirty kids on team. Learn new offense. Finish 5-5.

More about program: We will be young, Our numbers hopefully will be better than last year. Our kids will play hard.

REGION NOTES: Bisbee Seniors Manny Amaya (99 tackles), Tyler Schasteen (80 tackles) and Christian Contreras (67 tackles) are the team's returning leading tacklers. ... Pima hired state championship coach Jim Hughes. ... Willcox also hired a new coach, Eric Hjalmarson, who moved over from Safford.

AGUA FRIA REGION

Glendale Prep

Head coach: Robert Addicott.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 3-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB/DB Arlen Alter 5-10, 155; Jr. WR/DB Caleb Ferguson (174 receiving yards) 6-0, 165; Sr. WR/DL Zander Jones 6-4, 185; Jr. C/DL Brenden Lawrence 5-11, 220; Sr. OL/DL Anthony Levinson 5-11, 185; Sr. OL/DL/LB Elijah Mizysak 6-0, 200; Sr. WR/LB Malachi Mizysak (617 receiving yards, 10 total TDs) 6-2, 185; So. WR/DB Jacob Rickey 5-7, 140; So. OL/DL/LB Jonah Smith 5-8, 175; Jr. QB/DB Sam Terpstra (1,181 passing yards) 6-2, 175; Sr. RB/DB Joseph Valenzuela (663 rushing yards, 9 total TDs) 5-8, 160.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. WR/DB Caleb Ferguson (16 tackles) 6-0, 165; Sr. WR/DL Zander Jones (26 tackles) 6-4, 185; Sr. OL/DL Anthony Levinson 5-11, 185; Sr. OL/DL/LB Elijah Mizysak (74 tackles) 6-0, 200; Sr. WR/LB Malachi Mizysak (80 tackles) 6-2, 185; So. WR/DB Jacob Rickey (37 tackles) 5-7, 140; So. OL/DL/LB Jonah Smith (33 tackles) 5-8, 175; Sr. RB/DB Austin T 5-8, 150; Jr. QB/DB Sam Terpstra (25 tackles) 6-2, 175; Sr. RB/DB Joseph Valenzuela (49 tackles) 5-8, 160.

Also keep an eye on: So. WR/DB Ericson Bailey 5-8, 150; Fr. QB/DB Griffin Brazel 5-8, 145; Sr. LB Anthony DeLa Cruz 5-11, 170; So. OL/DL Vijay Patel 6-0, 200; So. WR/DB Manuel Valenzuela 5-7, 135.

Strengths of offense: Returning QB Sam Terpstra has a better understanding of system and is a leader. Skill players returning. We have talented receivers with better understanding of system. Improvement with our line, with experience and new players with a little more size. Returning Jr. RB Valenzuela is in his 2nd year of football and has better knowledge of game and is tough and quick.

Strengths of defense: Better understanding of the game, reads, techniques. Improved speed. Addition of LB coach Mooberry.

Team's biggest questions marks: With restrictions due to COVID-19, we have new players that are behind with not being able to do spring football as normal. While we have more players, we still lack numbers and size.

2020 expectations: Keep building, better execution and understanding the big picture. Improved passing game with talented QB and receivers. Improved defense. Less points allowed. Capitalize on 3rd and 4th downs.

More about program: We were a young team and have young players this year as well, however, we have a good core group of returning players, especially at the skill positions. If we can give our QB time and block for RB, we can put up some points. Defense needs to step up this year. A big part of our defense is getting more players so we have less players playing both ways.

Kingman Academy

Head coach: John Morgando.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

2019 record: 2-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB/SS Charlie Anderson (596 passing yards, 32 tackles, 4 INTs) 6-0, 170; Sr. G/DE Seth Birmingham 6-0, 185; Sr. RB/DE Isaac Carter 5-8, 180; Sr. RB/LB Matt Eads 6-0, 175; Sr. G/NT Jason Lester 5-10, 270; Jr. T/NG Logan Sealy 6-5, 260; Jr. C/DT Dylan Steadman 5-9, 180; Jr. WR/FS Evan Steadman 5-9, 150.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. G/DE Seth Birmingham 6-0, 185; Sr. RB/DE Isaac Carter 5-8, 180; Sr. RB/LB Matt Eads (56 tackles) 6-0, 175; Sr. G/NT Jason Lester 5-10, 270; Sr. WR/CB Ben Polizzi 5-8, 150; Sr. RB/CB Peter Zephier 5-8, 170; Jr. WR/FS Evan Steadman 5-9, 150; Jr. TE/MLB Landon Oktay 6-0, 175; So. WR/SS Jordan Tyson 5-6, 130.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. T/DT Michael Eads 5-9, 185.

Strengths of offense: Returning lots of starters. Getting some new athletes out this coming year.

Strengths of defense: Returning lots of starters. Solid LB/SS core.

Team's biggest questions marks: Everything currently happening and how well we prepare at home. New athletes who are coming out to play high school football as seniors for the first time.

2020 expectations: Big bounce back from last year in numbers and commitment. Better success in 2A competing against similar school size.

Parker

Head coach: Jeston Lotts.

Years as school's head coach: 9.

2019 record: 10-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB/S Emanuel Alaniz 6-0, 185; Sr. QB Fabian Lamas 5-8, 180; Sr. FB/MLB Uriah Martinez 5-10, 195; Jr. OL/DL Abraham Silva 5-9, 215.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB/S Emanuel Alaniz 6-0, 185; Jr. OLB Kooper Maniaci 5-10, 180; Sr. FB/MLB Uriah Martinez 5-10, 195; Jr. DL/LB Wayne Miller 6-1, 205; Jr. CB Tyson Ross 5-11, 155; Jr. ILB Anthony Taylor 6-1, 195.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. OL Jacon Bennet 6-4, 270; So. LB/RB Gage Honomichl 6-0, 175; So. OL Ezra Martinez 6-0, 185; Jr. OLB/RB Genaro Lopez 5-10, 180; Jr. CB/RB Joe Martinez 5-9, 150.

Strengths of offense: Speed, strength, football IQ.

Strengths of defense: Speed, strength, tough.

Team's biggest questions marks heading into summer: Lack of varsity playing experience.

2020 expectations: Reach our full potential as young men. Be the toughest, most physical team in 2A. Compete for a region championship.

Saint John Paul II

Head coach: John Padilla.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. C/DL Max Amicarelli 6-1, 245; Sr. RB/REC/LB Juan Baldonado 5-10, 160; Jr. OL/DL Cole Bower 6-5, 220; Jr. OL/DL Josh Cabrera 5-11, 245; So. FB/LB Gabe Dominguez 6-0, 225; So. RB/DL Issac McKim 5-7, 150; Jr. QB/DB Mike Myers 5-10, 165; Jr. OL/DL Carlos Ramirez 6-5, 230; Jr. OL/LB Raul Reyes 5-10, 235; Jr. RB/REC/LB Chase Rojas 5-11, 170; So. WR/DB Sam Sloma 5-8, 150.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. DB/WR Jeremy Flores 5-6, 160; So. DL/OL Noe Gonzalez 5-6, 220; Jr. DB/WR Juan Flores 5-9, 160; Jr. OL/DL Frank Ramirez 6-0, 200; So. DB/WR Luis Quiroz 5-6, 150; So. RB/LB Eric Rodriguez 5-10, 165; Jr. RB/DB Jorge Rodriguez 5-6, 160; So. DB/WR Noah Salvador 5-10, 150; Jr. DL/OL Paul Shulski 5-8, 170; So. DB/WR Mike Vargas 5-6, 150.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. K/REC/DB Isiah Barbosa 5-11, 165; So. DB/RB Osvaldo Falcon-Martinez 5-8, 165; Jr. WR/DB Catarino Portillo 6-0, 175; Jr. REC/DB Edward Verdugo 5-11, 160; So. K Carlos Encinas 5-7, 175.

Strengths of offense: Skill position, o-line.

Strengths of defense: Team pursuit.

Team's biggest questions marks: Numbers.

2020 expectations: Winning season with six wins. Stay healthy.

More about program: Excited about our first varsity season.

Tonopah Valley

Head coach: Dustin Johnson.

Years as school's head coach: 5.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. OL/DL Esteban Calvillo 5-9, 220; Sr. WR/DB Luis Diaz (235 rushing yards, 153 receiving yards, 5 TDs) 5-11, 155; Sr. WR/DB Cameron Gates (132 rushing yards) 6-1; So. QB Chace Logan 6-0, 150; Sr. WR/DB Oakland Webb (165 rushing yards) 5-7, 155. 165.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. RB/LB Juanangel Martinez (39 tackles) 5-9 175; Jr. WR/DB Prince Robertson (30 tackles) 5-7, 140; Sr. WR/DB Oakland Webb (43 tackles, 2 INTs) 5-7, 155.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. RB/LB Tomas Moreno 5-10, 180; So. WR/DB Jermaine Pate 5-5, 140; Jr. OL/DE Tikari Hickie 6-5, 260; Sr. TE/DE Andy Vargas 6-0, 175.

Strengths of offense: Speed, athleticism, explosive, hard working.

Strengths of defense: Speed, open field tackling, good in coverage, coaching.

Team's biggest questions marks: Experience, especially on the line. Replacing many starters. Limited offseason time together.

2020 expectations: Get better every day. Growing into men, future husbands and fathers. Create lifetime of memories.

Trivium Prep

Head coach: Michael Spencer.

Years as school's head coach: 4.

2019 record: 10-1.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Cameron Bunger 6-3, 220; Sr. RB Josh DeGraves (216 rushing yards) 6-2, 210; Sr. OL Luke Hirth 6-3, 200; Jr. OL Caleb Hamilton (215 rushing yards) 6-0, 305; Sr. WR August Hubbard (605 receiving yards, 4 TDs) 6-4, 180; Jr. WR Dylan Spencer 5-6, 140.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. LB Mason Anderson 6-2, 180; Sr. LB Josh DeGraves (53 tackles, 10 for loss) 6-2, 210; Sr. DB August Hubbard (21 tackles) 6-4, 180; Jr. LB Adison Martin (28 tackles) 5-10, 165; Sr. DB Kaleb Robinson (39 tackles) 5-11, 170; Jr. DB Blue Lopez-Rodriguez (52 tackles) 5-10, 170; So. DL Nick Padilla 5-10, 230

Also keep an eye on: So. WR Cohen Aldridge 6-1, 160; So. QB Conner Aldridge 6-1, 160; Jr. OL/DL Jojo Greene 6-1, 260; Jr. LB Kaden Scott 6-2, 185.

Strengths of offense: Talented and deep group of skill players. Strong and smart offensive line.

Strengths of defense: Return a fast and aggressive secondary. Big and athletic linebackers.

Team's biggest questions marks: Starting a new young quarterback. Replacing 2,000 yard rusher in David Marquez who graduated.

2020 expectations: To play assignment sharp. To rally to the ball and wrap up.

VERDE REGION

Camp Verde

Head coach: Rick Walsworth.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 2-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. OL Corey Johnson; So. OL Josiah Hicks; Sr. OL Jason Dalley; Jr. OL Rogelio Carrillo Carrillo; Jr. QB Garrett Dulaney (717 rushing yards & 7 TDs); Jr. QB Jacob Oothoudt (499 rushing yards and 5 TDs); Sr. RB Peyton Kelley (671 rushing yards and 5 TDs); Jr. RB Kayden Boggess (427 yards and 1 TD).

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. LB Peyton Kelley (62 tackles, 1 INT); Jr. FS Garrett Dulaney (58 tackles, 1 INT); Jr. LB Jacob Oothoudt (34 tackles); Jr. LB Kayden Boggess (29 tackles).

Also keep an eye on: Sr. OL/DL Jason Dalley; Jr. OL/DL Landon Petty; So. OL/DL Jakob Evans-Flick; Sr. K/P/RB/DB Luis Venegas (139 rushing yards, 3 TD's, 35.2 yard punt average, 1 INT and 6 tackles); Jr. RB/DB Matt Loza.

Strengths of offense: Returners with two years of experience in the offense.

Strengths of defense: LB's.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Depth.

2020 expectations: Compete every week and do not beat ourselves.

North Pointe Prep

Head coach: Jason Shaw.

Years as school's head coach: 1.

2019 record: 4-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB Cylar Alley (211 receiving yards, 14 TDs) 5-10, 160; Jr. WR Joshua Clark 5-10, 165; Jr. OL Nathan Fuentes 5-10, 210; Jr. OL Anthony Johnson 6-0, 255; Jr. RB. Brayan Mendoza (1,550 rushing yards and 8 TDs) 5-6, 135; Jr. OL Eden Viscalla 5-10, 200.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. LB Joshua Clark (38 tackles) 5-10, 165; Jr. DB Vincent Glesmann (21 tackles) 5-9, 135; Sr. DB Daniel Pacheco (17 tackles) 5-9, 135; Sr. DL James Soto 5-8, 220; So. LB James Winburn 5-8, 185.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. WR Gabriel Chavez 5-9, 140; Jr. WR/DB Esteban Gonzales 5-8, 140; Jr. OL/DL Caden Melton 5-10, 160; Sr. DB Alex Ritchie 5-6 140.

Strengths of offense: Running game. 2 All-Region players returning. Playing Experience. Quarterback.

Strengths of defense: Playing Experience. Simplified scheme.

Team's biggest questions marks: Depth. New offensive scheme.

2020 expectations: Adjust to new schemes. Winning record. Win region. Make playoffs. Win first round playoff game.

More about program: My (Jason Shaw) first year as head coach after serving as defensive coordinator last year. Going from Double Wing offense to Air Raid offense this year.

Scottsdale Prep

Head coach: David Primavera.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 5-4.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL/LB Michael Barnes 5-8, 155; Jr. WR/DB Carson Boyll 5-7, 170; Jr. OL/DL Maddux Delnero 6-0, 170; Sr. OT/LB Logan Dunlap 6-0, 190; Sr. QB Oscar Frias 6-2, 170; Sr. OL/DL Clement Petite; Sr. RB/LB Thomas Reinhardt.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL/LB Michael Barnes 5-8, 155; Sr. OT/LB Logan Dunlap 6-0, 190; Jr. OL/DL Maddux Delnero 6-0, 170; Sr. OL/DL Clement Petite; Sr. RB/LB Thomas Reinhardt.

Strengths of offense: Speed on the perimeter.

Strengths of defense: We are fast to the ball.

Teams biggest questions marks: Three new starters in the secondary.

2020 expectations: Win our region.

Veritas Prep

Head coach: Jason Black.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 8-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. OL/DL Aaron Bill 6-1, 195; Sr. WR/DB William Jakubczyk 6-0, 150; Sr. RB/DE Nisa Maafu (874 rushing yards and 8 TDs) 6-0, 185; Jr. QB/DB Gage Lentz (2,258 yards passing and 26 TDs, 873 rushing yards and 13 TDs) 6-2, 170; Sr. WR/DB Harris Lytle (534 receiving yards and 4 TDs) 6-0, 140; Sr. OL/LB Jonathan Morrison 6-0, 165; Jr. OL/LB Eli Rovelo 5-5, 150; Sr. RB/LB Marko Vuletic 5-11 160; Jr. WR/DB Anthony Williams 6-0, 145.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. WR/DB Andrew Cordova 6-1, 145; So. OL/DL Brennan Fisher 6-2, 255; Sr. OL/DE Mason Kaminski 5-11, 175; Jr. QB/DB Gage Lentz (4 INTs) 6-2, 170; Sr. RB/DE Nisa Maafu (42 tackles, 4 sacks) 6-0, 185; Sr. WR/DB Harris Lytle (94 tackles) 6-0, 140; Jr. WR/DB Anthony Williams (24

tackles) 6-0, 145; Jr. OL/LB Eli Rovelo (99 tackles) 5-5, 150; Jr. LB/RB Will Tork (46 tackles) 5-8, 155; Sr. RB/LB Marko Vuletic (78 tackles) 5-11, 160.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. OL/DE Dylan Africa 6-0, 175; Sr. RB/LB Kole Zielinski 5-8, 155.

Strengths of offense: Speed on the outside. Strong running game. Third year starting QB. Depth on the O line. Continuity.

Strengths of defense: Experience, athleticism, intelligence.

Team's biggest questions marks: Overall depth on the roster. No organized weight room, conditioning.

2020 expectations: Region Crown to defend. Return trip to the playoffs.

REGION NOTES: Valley Lutheran (4-5 in 2019) was led by QB Jaylen Elliott (1,594 passing yards, 945 rushing yards), Diego Vasquez-loya (5 TD receiving) and Jimmy Newton (90 tackles) last year.

RILLITO REGION

Santa Rita

Head coach: Richard Sanchez.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 3-7.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Richie Acosta 5-11, 225; Jr. OL Kyle Arnold 6-3, 265; Jr. FB James Davis 5-7, 195; So. RB Andres Gomez 5-7, 170; Jr. OL Joe Haskins 5-10, 190; Sr. OL Jesus Mejia 5-10, 205; Jr. RB Fernando Molina 5-10, 185.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. LB James Davis 5-7, 195; So. LB Andres Gomez 5-7, 170; Jr. DT Joe Haskins 5-10, 190; So. CB Manny Mero 5-9, 140; Jr. LB Fernando Molina 5-10, 185; Sr. LB Jesus Mejia 5-10, 205; Jr. DT Josiah Pocase 6-2, 205; So. DE Lennox Pye 6-0, 190; Sr. FS Cameron Thompson 5-11, 175; Jr. DT Oscar Valle 6-1, 285.

Also keep an eye on: So. TE/LB Francisco Gallardo 5-11, 205; Sr. WR/DB Decorious Golden 6-1, 175; So. OL/DL Manny Ruiz 5-10, 210; Sr. DE/OL Edgar Peralta 5-10, 210; So. WR/DB Cameron Walker 6-3, 180.

Strengths of offense: Run game returning RB's and lost only one from OL.

Strengths of defense: Returning 10 out of the 11 starters and others with significant playing time.

Team's biggest questions marks: Two years ago we had only three players in the weight room, 5/6 eligible. Prior to COVID-19 we had 36 kids players and made great strides in strength and developing athleticism and grades were not going to be an issue. We were looking to have a productive spring and summer training. I am not sure what to expect when we all get back together and start working.

2020 expectations: I believed we were making progress and would have a better year than the previous two seasons prior to COVID-19. We have already lost three months and possibly may lose another two. If we can get all 36 players back and add our 10-15 freshmen to the team and not be hurt by eligibility, we might be able to exceed last numbers of wins by 3-4 games. We have been working with our players on being resilient in the offseason. We are hoping that this was accomplished with all 36 players.

Tanque Verde

Head coach: Jay Dobyns.

Years as school's head coach: First season as coach.

2019 record: 0-10.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Corbin Austin QB/DB 6-1, 190; Carson Jones WR/DB 6-0, 180; Cameron McCracken QB/DB 5-11, 175; Isaac Moran OL/DL 6-1, 230; Jacob Mooney WR/DB 5-11, 170; Ryan Oppel TE/DL 6-3, 215; Dillon Simmers RB/DB 6-1, 200.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Dalton Arnold LB/RB 5-10, 195;

Mason Brady LB/RB 6-2, 220; Westin Birch LB/RB 6-2, 210.

Strengths of offense: Balance, unity.

Strengths of defense: Discipline, Aggressiveness.

Team's biggest questions marks: Coming off 0-10 season in 2019. New head coach, new staff, new system.

2020 expectations: Compete, consistency, toughness, discipline, teamwork.

REGION NOTES: Freshman Mario Burruel started at QB for Catalina last year. His leading receiver was junior Jacob Thomas. Nick Bupp. ... Sequoia Charter is a first-year AIA school.

1A Conference Football Preseason Rankings



Superior's band of brothers are regrouping for another run at the 8-man crown. (Steven Davis photo/MaxPreps)

By Jose Garcia
azpreps365.com

1. SUPERIOR: During the summer, coach Ryan Palmer made his team watch footage of the last game it played. He did it not to remind his players of the 2019 1A championship loss to Williams, but to study the small details it takes to win the big games. The Panthers were the only Arizona 8-man team to give Williams, the favorite to win it all last year from the outset, a game. But that didn't console the players. After three straight trips to the title game, anything but a win feels empty. Superior's six seniors are pushing the underclassmen to fill the void last year's senior class left. "We have some of the best skills players in the conference," Palmer said. "It's just a matter of the senior group that graduated. They were key role players." Adam Navarrette, likely the fastest player in 1A, will be stationed in different spots as the new starters adjust. The senior will line up at wide out, running back and quarterback, and keep making plays from his linebacker spot. Matthew Diaz-Gonzalez is more than capable to handle the H-back role, Palmer said. Matthew Cruz threw 40 TD passes last year and learned some valuable lessons in the 2019 final. His new go-to option will be the vastly improved Josh Marquez. Finding a couple of more guys to block for those dynamic skill players was one of Palmer's biggest jobs during the offseason. One of those jobs, center, was filled by sophomore Zachary Duarte (5-11, 220) last year. Duarte is the strongest player Palmer's coached heading into his 12th season at the school.

2. WILLIAMS: The team is reloading to defend its title behind a group of players who are anxious to finally to start a game. That group waited patiently for a couple of seasons behind last year's great senior class. The very physical Sr. RB/LB Blake Smith is one of those players. Smith will pair up with the speedy Drew Logan, a sophomore, to form a formidable 1-2 punch behind one of 1A's best offensive lines. That line will be anchored by RG Cesar Santana, LG James Eischen and the bullish Bryton Cox, a 6-2, 260-pound center. Cox is the only new starter on the offensive line. "We should be able to control the line of scrimmage and make plays with the skill in the back," Williams coach Jeff Brownlee said. Brownlee is expecting DE/TE Louis Lara and Sr. MLB Cody Jensen to be as disruptive as ever. The starting quarterback is Zain Grantham, who took last year off but was the starting quarterback two years ago in the team's state semifinal game. "We are ready to go," Brownlee said.

3. MOGOLLON: The team has a new coach, but the same goals remain. "I am confident that we will make it the postseason and play in the championship game," coach Rick Samon. Samon started coaching at Mogollon in 1999, and was the team's defensive coordinator before stepping in to run the team this season. The retired DPS officer will make some "subtle but positive changes" to the offense and defense. Samon asked former long-time Mogollon head football coach Ron Tenney if he can remain on the staff and serve as a mentor to a couple of young coaches. "I'm a team guy," Samon said. The extra time off served Mogollon well, Samon said. His team gained some strength and speed as it prepared for its shortened season. A couple of move ins will add more size to his offensive line, and Samon is counting on last year's juniors to step up this season. Samon's grandson, MLB Jayk Kelton, and Sr. QB Caden Owens QB and OT Diego Amaya are doing their part to make sure the younger players are prepared. Mogollon reached the semifinals last year with four freshmen starting.

4. BAGDAD: Dalton Mills (72-13 record) is heading into his 9th season at Bagdad, where opponents expect a tough, physical battle every time they play the Sultans. They'll get more of that this year plus also try to chase down a skill player or two. Only three seniors are on the team this year, but this year's team is much stronger, especially at the sophomore and junior levels. This also might be the fastest team Mills has coached since his 2016 championship squad. QB Rocky Sandoval's favorite two targets last year graduated, but 6-2 Connor Watson, who started as a freshman, is more than ready to step into the No. 1 WR role. Mills is also expecting the much stronger Sandoval to run more this year. Bagdad's strongest player, Mills' stepson Steven Peterson, is moving from the offensive line to the backfield, where 3-4 players will rotate. Some of the new faces who can also break away are TE Garrett Reeves and WR Cooper Williams. "We just have to get some kids to block for them," Mills said. "That's our biggest challenge."

5. TEMPE PREP: After a 1-9 season, winning a state championship the following year isn't something coaches often expect. But Larry Cain is. Based on his familiarity with the 8-man conference, which Tempe Prep was placed in this year, and his players, Cain is confident his team can make history this season. Only two programs from the Valley have won an 8-man title since 1996. If Tempe Prep becomes the third, it'll also win the program's first crown. "I had my expectations printed on the back our practice T-shirts: Anything less than winning the (1A Conference) state championship is unacceptable," Cain said. "This is our year to make a serious run." Cain coached at Gilbert Christian, where he was 32-9 from 2012-15 in the 1A Conference. This year's Tempe Prep team is faster than any of the Gilbert Christian teams he coached, Cain said. It'll also dress 10 seniors with plenty of experience and desire to prove that last year's 1-9 2A season was a minor hiccup. Injuries sidelined some of the team's best players last year, including QB Hayden Sampson, who was injured during a scrimmage. This year, Sampson is one part of the team's "two-headed QB monster." Diego Foster is the other QB who will share time with Sampson. But the two will be on the field most of the time playing different skills positions. When Sampson lines up at WR along with Luis Ternyneck, teams will get a heavy dose of Tempe Prep's speed. DE/MLB Thomas Holmes (6-0, 205) is another leader returning from injury. Tempe Prep will carry only 20 players, but none of the starters will play two-ways. "We are good across the board," Cain said.

6. ST. DAVID: Coach Braden Davis is a school psychologist, but he won't have to play any Jedi mind tricks to get the best from his team this season. He might have to coax his defense to do a much better job than in previous years, however. But Davis did simplify some things on offense so he can spend more time on shoring up his defense. Davis isn't as concerned this year about his team for obvious reasons. "This is the most talented team we've had since our 2016 team (went 7-3)," he said. "We are not big, but we are fast." Last year's team was expected to do better than its 5-4 record, but injuries and weather cancellations stalled Davis' team's progress. One of those returning injured players, RB Cody Didion, was the team's leading scorer two seasons ago. The much stronger and faster Talon Haynie, a junior RB, also returns. Running Davis' offense, which is expected to be more balanced this year, is his son, Logan. Logan is next in line in his football family tree. Tom, Davis' father, is an Arizona High School Hall of Famer, and his brother, Brett, also coached football. So Logan (6-3) is well-schooled in being an on-the-field coach. One of Logan's favorite targets will be returning tight end Kason Jacquez (6-4, 185), a tough matchup for any defender, Davis said. Logan's No. 1 threat last year before he was injured, WR Robby Gooding, is another tall target. Helping protect Logan and opening lanes is the squad's strongest player, C/NG Bobcat Pacheco. If St. David needs to fill a spot, the team's jack of all trades, Jr. ATH Jake Goodman, can step in. "We hold them to a high standard," Davis said. "We expect them to play their best but also show sportsmanship and a lot of character wherever they go."

7. SAN MANUEL: What does San Manuel have? It's one of the biggest questions in 1A entering the season. For starters, the team is young (17 of its 26 players are either freshmen or sophomores). But this is the biggest freshman class San Manuel's welcomed in coach Ernie Ivy's 10 years at the school. It's also home to a hero. Ivy is the assistant fire chief of San Manuel. What 1A schools also want to know about San Manuel is if some of Hayden's players transferred to the school. Hayden's played in the state semifinals the past couple of years but isn't playing football this fall. "I haven't seen them yet," said Ivy two weeks before the season kicks off. After last year's 2A season was over, San Manuel finished 4-6 and with only 16 players. But most of San Manuel's players are versed in 8-man football, having played it in junior high. It's the coaches who are learning the terminology and nuances. Some of the freshmen who will immediately start are QB Nicholas Velasquez and the team's strong man, lineman Aiden Lozoya. Returning lineman starter Johnathen Rodriguez also will do "some damage" on defense this year. Noah Huerta was one of the top receivers in 2A last year, Ivy said. Huerta is one of the few players on the team who is quick. "I expect us to do well this year," Ivy said. "I expect to hit the playoffs, something we haven't seen in quite a few years (since 2011). I've got some depth and think we can do very well."

8. SALOME: When he took over four seasons ago, coach Bryan McCarty's team was young, just like this year's squad. McCarty (23-13 in 4 seasons) molded that first group into a winner. This year's inexperienced bunch also can churn out victories. "We are looking for the same thing," coach said. "The expectations will remain the same, to compete for the region title against Bagdad, which we play at the end of the season." Six freshmen will likely see some playing time this year, but they are used to playing against bigger and older players, having done so during junior high. Francisco Soberanes, a "fearless" linebacker, and center Stephen Avila (6-1, 230) are two of the freshmen who will start on Day 1. Avila is already the captain of the offensive line and makes the calls. But Salome is returning some much needed experience to help guide the youngsters, including QB Nick Dautel. "He's super accurate when he gets going," McCarty said. All-region lineman Alvaro Alvarez (6-0, 230) is moving to the backfield, where the team can use his speed and agility. Miguel Navarro, a part-time starter last year, is now a fulltime starter in the backfield as well after having a good summer. Sr. DE/LB Michael Fonville and Soph. LB/DB Gabriel Beltran also saw plenty of reps last year. Speaking of a very productive but chaotic summer, depth won't be a concern, as McCarty trained the biggest summer group he's had since he's been at Salome.

1A Conference Team-By-Team Preview



Jason McGrath is three-year starter at quarterback for Duncan. (Mark Jones photo/MaxPreps)

By Jose Garcia
azpreps365.com

EAST REGION

Cicero Prep Academy

Head coach: Abdul Noah.

Years as head coach: 1 (first season as football program).

Strengths of offense: Wide receivers.

Strengths of defense: Overall quickness.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Lack of football and league playing experience.

2020 expectations: Given that we are a brand new program, the expectations are for us to be extremely competitive week in and week out, gain experience and develop into a formidable program in the years to come.

Lincoln Prep

Head coach: Paul Schubring.

Years as school's head coach: 2.

2019 record: New AIA school.

Returning starters on offense: Sr. LG Xavier Cisneros; Jr. WR Eli Johnson; Jr. WR Connor Kreun; Jr. WR Ryan Mills; So. RG Darren Nguyen; Sr. C Cesar Salazar; So. QB Shane Sasso; So. RB Xavier Tafoya.

Returning starters on defense: So. CB Walker Buehler; Sr. DE Xavier Cisneros; Sr. SS Dominic DeBratto; Sr. NT Miyka'el Durkin; Jr. DE Luke Kretsch; Jr. LB Grady Luce; Sr. LB Dario Woods; Sr. CB Emilio Woods.

Also keep an eye on: So. ATH Jackson Dille; So. WR Geoffrey Kim.

Strengths of offense: Talented athletes at skill positions. Experienced offensive line led by Salazar. Last year was the first year of the program, so our boys will know what to expect and be ready. Returning all starters.

Strengths of defense: Dominic DeBratto is an All-Region, aggressive blitzer. Good speed at skill positions. Returning all starters.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Can we make the leap from year one to year two? How will our seniors play after only one year of football experience? Do we match up better against our traditional regional powers?

2020 expectations: .500 record/playoff contention. One All-State player. Multiple all-region players on offense and defense.

Tempe Prep

Head coach: Larry Cain.

2019 record: 1-9 (in 2A).

Returning starters on offense: Sr. QB Hayden Sampson; Sr. WR Louis Ternyik 6-2, 195; Jr. WR Moises Canizales 5-10, 165; WR Diego Foster 5-11, 170; Jr. TB Bubba Jordan 5-8, 150; Sr. C Mike Degeer 6-0, 210.

Returning starters on defense: Sr. DE Thomas Holmes 6-0; Jr. CB Joseph Patterson 5-10; Jr. CB Jacob Dendy 5-11, 160; FS Ridley Diez De Medina 160.

Also keep an eye on: Sr. QB/WR Hayden Sampson 6-1; Sr. WR Luis Ternyick 6-2,

195; WR/QB Diego Foster 5-11, 170.

Strengths of offense: Team speed, chemistry and knowledge of the offense we run. Desire to score 60 points a game.

Strengths of defense: Defensive complexity, size and experience.

2020 expectations: Anything less than winning a state championship is unacceptable.

REGION NOTES: Hayden, a program that reached a final and semifinal the last two years, isn't playing this season due to the pandemic.

NORTH REGION

Williams

Head coach: Jeff Brownlee.

Years as school's head coach: 11.

2019 record: 10-1.

Returning starters on offense: Sr. G/DT James Eischen (5-8, 190); Sr. G/DT Ceaser Santana (6-3, 230).

Returning starters on defense: Sr. DE/TE Luis Lara (6-1, 190) 63 tackles; Jr. CB/RB Jesse Sagor (5-10, 160).

Also keep an eye on: So. C/DT Bryton Cox (5-11, 225); Sr. QB/CB Zain Grantham (5-7, 150); Sr. TE/LB Cody Jensen (5-10, 165); So. RB/CB Drew Logan (5-11, 170); Sr. RB/LB Blake Smith (5-8, 180).

Strengths of offense: Speed. Two running backs with speed and one with power and speed. Physical. We pride ourselves on controlling the line of scrimmage. Working on improving our passing game.

Strengths of defense: Playing physical.

Team's biggest questions marks: We lost a great senior class, however, a lot of our number 2's could have started on other teams. Now it's time for them to shine.

Being young. Who will step up to be our team leader?

2020 expectations: Come together and play as a team. Take it one game at a time.

More about program: We have buy in with the kids in regards to the program. We will continue to be physical and play like champs.

REGION NOTES: El Capitan finished 1-6 last season. ... Joseph City (4-5 last year) graduated a couple of key skills players. Jr. Tyler Penrod (37 tackles last year) is the team's returning leading rusher. It also graduated its top two tacklers. ... Mayer only won three games in the last two years, an uncharacteristic stretch for the program with a strong tradition.

WEST

Anthem Prep

Head coach: LeRoy McGrue.

Years as head coach: Over 20 yrs. experience as a position coach, 1st season as Anthem Preps' head coach.

2019 record: 4-8.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. QB/FS Gunner Dukeshier (5-10, 175) 900 yards passing, 1200 rushing 26 total TD; Sr. TE/DE Ryan Osha (6-4, 200); Sr. C/DE Cyrus Peterson (5-11, 220); Sr. C/DT Jacob Motter (6-3, 225); Sr. WR/DB Benjamin Dixon (5-9, 170); Sr. DT/ Daniel Samiec (5-8, 145).

Also keep an eye on: Jr. QB/LB Jacob Crawford (6-5, 180).

Strengths of offense: Speed.

Strengths of defense: Smart, fast, physical.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Grasping the complexity of the new offense.

2020 expectations: Playoffs.

Bagdad

Head coach: Dalton Mills.

Years as school's head coach: 8.

2019 record: 7-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Steven Peterson (6-0, 200); Sr. QB Rocky Sandoval (5-7, 150) 22 TD passes; Jr. QB/WR Connor Watson (6-2, 170) 545 receiving yards, 16 total TDs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Jr. NG/LB Cecil Brower (5-10, 165); Jr. LB/DL Keiland Lucero (5-10, 190) 12 tackles; Sr. DE Steven Peterson (6-0, 200) 4 sacks; Jr. DB Connor Watson (6-2, 160) 31 tackles, 3 INTs.

Also keep an eye on: Jr. OL/FB/NG Elijah Aguilar (5-9, 190); So. WR Charleton Harness (6-1, 160); So. C/NG Lorenzo Medina (5-11, 220); Jr. TE/DE Garrett Reeves (6-1, 170); Jr. WR Cooper Williams (6-0, 150).

Strengths of offense: We should have a lot of team speed at the receiver position. Connor Watson is an explosive athlete who will be moved around. He will play WR, RB, and QB. He is a threat wherever we put him. Rocky Sandoval is a quality quarterback at our level. He understands the offense and knows how to get the ball in our athletes' hands. We have two quality quarterbacks who will lead our offense to a quality year.

Strengths of defense: We have a lot of newcomers on both sides of the ball, but our returning starters on this side of the ball will make a huge impact. We have some quality guys at each level of the defense. Steven Peterson might have been our best defensive lineman last year as a rotator. At linebacker is where we will have someone new. We have experience coming back at defensive backs. Watson, Cooper Williams and Nick Elliot all had some time playing back there.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Running back and offensive line will be a concern as we go through the summer. How do we replace the loss of seniors who were our running backs and linebackers? We also lost two seniors who played offensive line and defensive line.

2020 expectations: Our goals really don't change. We always want to win our last game of the year. We know that we lost a lot. But we are also excited about other guys getting their chance to prove themselves. Becoming one unit and better people are always part of what we want to accomplish.

Desert Heights Prep

Head coach: Kendrick Felix.

Years as head coach: 7.

2019 record: 9-2.

Returning starters on offense: Jr. QB Jacob Hanback (6-2, 185); Sr. WR Jacob Dawson (5-11, 175); Jr. RB Jerek Aguon (5-9, 165); Sr. Julian Szemeis (5-10, 165); Sr. OL Brysen Andriso (6-1, 250); Jr. WR Kenyon Boatman (5-10, 150); Sr. Jonathon Gephart (5-10, 230).

Returning starters on defense: Sr. LB Ryan Jenkins (5-11, 185); Jr. DB John West (5-9, 150); Sr. LB Matt Schreiber (5-11, 180).

Also keep an eye on: Jr. WR/DB Coby Munoz (6-2, 170); So. WR Casey Jenkins (5-10, 140); Sr. DE/OL Joey Williams (6-2, 210); So. OL Pablo Vera (5-11, 260).

Mohave Accelerated

Head coach: Adam Gibson.

Years as school's head coach: 3.

2019 record: 3-6.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB Damien Burris (5-8, 145); Jr. WR Logan Cota (5-9, 150); Jr. C Chris Evens (5-7, 165); Jr. OL Ian Fancher (5-9, 165); So. OL Mark Fancher (5-7, 145); Jr. QB Kelden Holmes (6-2, 170); Sr. OT Jacob Jensen (5-10, 260); Jr. DL Thomas Kendell (5-10, 175); So. TE Bryce Merrigan (6-2, 170).

Strengths of offense: Having a QB with some time under his belt. Speed and depth.

Strengths of defense: Having more numbers. Adding more technical skill to our defense.

Team's biggest questions mark(s): Will there be a season.

2020 expectations: Keeping all players academically eligible. Making playoffs. Section title and state ring.

Salome

Head coach: Bryan McCarty.

Years as school's head coach: 4.

2019 record: 6-3.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: So. OL/RB Alvaro Alvarez (5-11, 250); Jr. QB/WR/RB Nick Dautel (5-10, 165) 3 TD passes, 465 total yards, 4 INTs.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: So. DE/DE Fernando Armenta (6-1, 185) 20 tackles; So. DL/LB Alvaro Alvarez (5-11, 250) 45 tackles; So. LB/DB Gabriel Beltran (5-9, 160) 41 tackles; Jr. DB/LB Nick Dautel (5-10, 165) 28 tackles; Sr. DE/LB Michael Fonville (5-10, 185) 30 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Frosh OL/DL Stephen Avila (6-2, 220); JR. WR/DB Fernando Amaya (5-9, 165); SR OL/DL Vidal "Bear" Bollas (6-0, 265); So. WR/DB Kevin Castillo (5-8, 150); So. FB/LB Miguel Navarro (5-8, 180); Fr. RB/LB Francisco Soberanes (5-8, 160); Fr. WR/DB Edgar Velazquez (5-7, 155).

Strengths of offense: We will be young, but the younger classes have had a lot of playing time playing against tough competition at their last level. We will rely on our speed and trying to get our playmakers into space.

Strengths of defense: Speed and making correct reads. We are pretty balanced at each level of the defense.

Team's biggest question mark(s): How the young athletes are going to have to step up and get major playing time. How they adjust to now being in every play and having to make plays every down.

2020 expectations: My expectations won't change from having a senior heavy team last year. Come in, work your tail off, learn, ask questions, give your all and play with our BAMN mentality (By Any Means Necessary). No excuses and get the job done. We may struggle a bit early on, but if we keep working on our technique, keep pushing each other during film and practice, and stay focused on our team goals, we will be OK. Our expectations are to play our best, get into the playoffs, and make some noise.

More about program: Teams are going to underestimate us because the majority of our team will be made up of sophomores and freshmen, but our expectations of ourselves don't change. We are going to go prepare hard each week, come out and give everything we can to execute at a high level and we are playing to win every game on the schedule.

REGION NOTES: Desert Heights Prep is a new AIA school. It went 37-3 under current coach Kendrick Felix in the previous five seasons in the Charter Athletic Association.

SOUTH REGION

Phoenix Day School for the Deaf

Head coach: Dave Huber.

Years as school's head coach: 10.

2019 record: 3-5.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Sr. OL Rene Acosta; Jr. OL Sean Conol; Sr. TE Angel Cubas; Sr. WR Jamal Molina 101 receiving yards 3 TD catches, 560 all-purpose yards; Jr. QB Isaac Nubes 655 passing yards and 11 TD passes, 516 rushing yard and 6 TDs; Sr. Athlete Osmar Ramirez; Sr. C Jose Santiago.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. DL Rene Acosta 2 sacks; Jr. NT Sean Conol 2 sacks, 34 tackles; Sr. DE Angel Cubas; Sr. LB Adrian Fera; Sr. DB Jamal Molina 2 INTs, 30 tackles; Sr. DB Osmar Ramirez; Sr. LB Jose Santiago team-high 50 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: Fr. Athlete Jeremiah Whitehead; Sr. WR Kaleb Henderson. Strengths of offense heading: Returning most of our starters, including OL and QB.

Strengths of defense heading: Returning most of the defensive starters. Returning our defense coordinator.

Teams biggest questions marks: Losing one of our best player in PDS history to graduation. Football conditioning/fundamentals.

2020 expectations: To compete hard every game.

REGION NOTES: Duncan coach Eric Bejarano made some adjustments for the upcoming season. With such a young team (only 3 seniors and 2 juniors) and lacking size, he had to. He is switching to the pistol to spread the ball around. He moved his athletic tight end Tommy Hille to running back and a center, Spencer Smith, to tight end. Jason McGrath is three-year starting quarterback. Three-year starter Austin Bigler (6-2, 210) and two-year starter Logan Basteen (6-3, 215) will direct the offensive line. Some of the youngsters Bejarano expects to step in and start immediately are Soph. RB/WR Ben Harris and Soph. FB/LB Emiliano Ortega. ... Fort Thomas' Sr. Darius Antonio (45 tackles) was the team's leading receiver last year with 815 receiving yards and 11 TDs. Darien McCabe caught 7 TDs. Soph. Tyler Black and Sr. Terrold Robertson (38 tackles) are the team's returning leading rushers. ... Valley Union will attempt to bounce back from its first winless season in likely a long time.

Superior's Swiss Army knife, Navarrette, and team looking to finish job

By Leo Tochterman
azpreps365.com

Despite being located in a town with just north of 3,000 residents, Superior High School has built a nontraditional high school football powerhouse in recent years.

The Panthers are coming off six consecutive winning seasons and three straight 1A championship game appearances behind head coach Ryan Palmer.

A big reason why Superior reached those championships is the play of senior Adam Navarrette, whose versatility makes him a true weapon for Superior across the field.

"Adam has been a big playmaker for us ever since his freshman year," Palmer said. "He's kind of the ultimate utility player, and that's on both sides of the ball."

With a smaller roster and playing 8-man football, Navarrette's ability to move around and stay on the field is invaluable for the Panthers.

"On offense, we want to get the ball into his hands as much as possible, and then on defense, the same thing," Palmer said. "He's a utility player that can shut down the opponent's best receiver as a DB."

Navarrette welcomes the challenge of playing the majority of snaps in the game, regardless of what side of the ball it may be.

Last year, he led Superior in rushing yards (707; 9 yards per carry) and finished second in receiving (633 yards) and tackles (67). The senior also ended 2019 with team highs in touchdowns (22) and all-purpose yards per game with 176.

Needless to say, no other returning 1A player did as much as Navarrette did for his team last year, according to maxpreps.com.

"I love playing both ways," Navarrette said. "The defensive side is my favorite. Getting hits, interceptions, and sacking the quarterback. It definitely takes a toll on me, though, because the next day I'm all sore and bruised up."

Palmer also praised Navarrette's leadership and his ability to lead by example.

"He's going into his senior year, and he's always been a great character," Palmer said. "He's kind of got that never back down mindset, so that he can be the best player on the field. He's been lifting on his own, he's been showing up to conditioning every single time, which is what a leader does."

In 2019, the Panthers' season ended in disappointment, as the Panthers fell to Williams High School 35-20 in the 1A championship game.

Sloppy play and a lack of size were cited as the main reasons for the defeat. Superior is using the crushing loss as motivation heading into the upcoming season.

Navarrette, specifically, used the loss as fuel to improve his game this offseason.

"Last year, losing the state championship, every time that I go back and watch film of the game it motivates me even more," Navarrette said. "I watch it at least every two weeks and after I watch I immediately go work out or practice on the field."



Senior Adam Navarrette is looking for a fourth straight state title game appearance and second championship. (Jim Willittes photo/MaxPreps)

Navarrette used this offseason to bulk up after his team was physically overpowered in the championship game.

"They were a lot bigger, stronger and faster than us, but there were a ton of chances for us to win the game," Navarrette said. "The chances were there, we just didn't take advantage of it."

"I'm thinking it (football) will get delayed right now. I'm kind of worried about it, but I have to do my best and keep working."

Navarrette still has ambitions to play at the next level but has yet to receive any formal offers.

With added size, Navarrette thinks he can make it at the next level.

"The only thing I need to improve is just my size, because I'm just too small if I want play at the next level," Navarrette said. "I'm only 5-7, 145-pounds. I can feel myself getting stronger, but it's just kind of hard for me to really gain weight right now."

As for teams goals, he and his teammates remain focused on one thing.

"All of us have one goal and that's to make it to the state championship and win it all," he said.

Superior - 1A East Region

Head coach: Ryan Palmer.

Years as school's head coach: 12.

2019 record: 9-2.

Returning starters on offense, 2019 stats: Jr. QB Matthew Cruz (6-0, 185) 40 TD passes, 2,342 total yards; Sr. C Zach Duarte 5-11, 220; Sr. RB/DB Matthew Diaz-Gonzalez (5-7, 145) 280 rushing yards, 144 receiving yards; Sr. WR/LB Josh Marquez (5-11, 180) 337 receiving yards; Sr. RB/LB Adam Navarrette (5-7, 145) 707 rushing yards.

Returning starters on defense, 2019 stats: Sr. RB/DB Matthew Diaz-Gonzalez (5-7, 145) 98 tackles, 4 sacks; Sr. DB Andrew Martinez (5-11, 145) 41 tackles; Sr. WR/LB Josh Marquez (5-11, 180); Sr. DE Marc Mendoza (5-9, 150) 52 tackles, 8.5 sacks; Sr. RB/LB Adam Navarrette (5-7, 145) 67 tackles.

Also keep an eye on: So. OL/DL Ben Duarte (6-2, 300); So. OL/DL Marques Contreras (5-10, 220); Sr. WR/DB Nathan Duarte (6-0, 150); Sr. WR/DB Matthew Perez (6-0, 150).

Strengths of offense: Championship experience, speed.

Strengths of defense: Championship experience, speed.

Team's biggest question mark(s): Depth.

2020 expectations: Expectations are to compete for championship.

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made the form update and when? Is he is on both rosters? Were they informed? Which forms are missing signatures? How many physicals expire this week? Did we do the physical check? Do we have the attendance record? Who has discipline received? Is the data? Did she follow return-to-play protocol? Who has diabetes? Do we have the equipment? Does anyone still have equipment? Who needs contacts? When did the last physical? Is she certified to drive the van? Did he pass the physical? How quickly can we update our social media policy? How much are the physicals? Can she travel without medication? Are they calling sports? How much are the physicals? Do we have the COVID-19 screening records? Can we provide the paper trail to legal? Can we review the policy with our Athletic Trainer? Is the father authorized for pickup? Who has physicals? Did we deactivate the key fob? Did he sign his contract? Did we know he had a pacemaker? How much the family pay? Do we have the field trip? Did they read the policy in their native language? Are coaches? Which coaches completed all certifications? Who is taking attendance? Can we alert parents regarding weather? Who has contacts? Does coach know he is on suicide watch? Can we alert parents? Did she sign the fitness center waiver? Who has physicals? Are signatures time-stamped? Can we alert parents?

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