

2008 PIGSKIN PREVIEW



# GORDON CENT.

## Warriors grow in ranks, hopes

By Rick Winters  
Rome News-Tribune Sports Writer

**CALHOUN** — Coming off a year when Gordon Central saw itself plummet to a winless season, it would be understandable to think that the atmosphere around the 2008 football season would be a little stale.



Gordon Central coach Chad Fisher has seen the number of Warriors more than double.

However, many things have changed since the end of the 2007 season that has invigorated the Warriors' football team, most notably the reclassification from AAAA to AA.

The drop puts Gordon Central up with foes more aligned to their school size and also sets up some heated rivalry games against Calhoun and Sonoraville.

Adding to the rivalries will be the new Community Cup, which will be handed out to the team (GC, Calhoun, Sonoraville and Adairsville) with the best head-to-head record.

"The Community Cup is interesting and will be good for all four schools," said head coach Chad Fisher. "It will give us something to play for other than the playoffs."

"It will give teams bragging rights and it is something that the coaches and the kids can get excited about. It is also a

way to get the community more involved."

Speaking of involvement, the Warriors have also seen their team members increase from 40 players at the end of last season to 85 players this year.

"We have doubled our team from last season and I think that has a lot to do with the reclassification," said Fisher. "It gives these kids a feeling that we can go out now and compete every Friday night."

Also attributing to the rise in attendance are the seniors who dedicated themselves in the off-season to go out and recruit for the football team.

"We sat down with the seniors last year and they made a commitment to working hard in the off-season to help recruit new players," added Fisher. "We have 25 seniors and along with the coaches they beat the halls down to find kids who wanted to play football."

"All these kids will be able to contribute to the team this year."

Among the players new and old who are set to make a big contribution this season are Dre Prather, Diondre Curtis, Dayton Luther, Jordan Carter, Chad Patterson, Devin Oesterle, Brandon Grubbs, Tucker Blalock and Mark Rhinehart.

Prather (5-10, 175, So.) will be the starting quarterback in his first year with the team.

"This will be something new for him but he has worked extremely hard since January to get ready," said Fisher. "He has learned the offense and is now starting to

PLAYERS TO WATCH



Gordon Central Warriors (from left) Keidric Johnson, Dayton Luther, Dre Prather and Mark Rhinehart

*'We have doubled our team from last season and I think that has a lot to do with reclassification. It gives these kids the feeling that we can go out and compete every Friday night.'*

Chad Fisher  
Gordon Central head coach

become a leader. He has a live arm and throws the ball in a nice tight spiral. Dre grows daily."

Diondre Curtis (6-1, 175, Jr.) will most likely get the majority of the carries at running back this year but Fisher stopped short of naming him a starter.

He added that the running back responsibilities will also be by committee with Cody Thomas (5-8, 180, Sr.), Chase Chasteen (6-1, 180, So.), Tre Upshaw (5-10, 185, Jr.) and Grubbs (5-10, 195, Sr.) also in the mix.

On defense, Luther (6-2, 265, Sr.) and Carter (6-1, 255, Jr.) will anchor the line.

"These guys are big and strong," said Fisher. "They also play a very physical game and will be able to help out the rest of the line when needed."

Patterson (5-10, 210, Sr.), Oesterle (6-1, 210, Sr.), Grubbs, Blalock (5-9, 180, Sr.) and Rhinehart (6-0, 200, Sr.) will each help fill a very deep linebacking core.

"The linebackers are going to do well," said Fisher. "We are expecting some big things out of them."

Also expected to make contributions to the team this

season are seniors Kalin Lay (6-0, 190, WR/DB), Nathan Duke (6-1, 200, TE/LB), Kedric Johnson (5-10, 175, WR/DB), Caleb Johns (6-5, 265, OL/DL) and Jonathan Benton (5-10, 230, OL/DL).

"Johns put on 20 pounds of muscle this off-season," said Fisher. "This is a good senior class and I can't wait to see what they can do."

As for non-seniors, Jared Noland (5-10, 170, Jr., QB/DB) and Kevin Johns (5-10, 201, Jr., RB/LB) are both expected to make immediate contributions.

As for Gordon Central's schedule, the Warriors had no luck drawing an easy schedule.

For their crossover game they drew Pepperell, a team that is expected to challenge Calhoun for the area championship.

"We have Calhoun and Pepperell back-to-back so that is going to be a tough stretch for us," said Fisher. "However, it will give us a chance to see where we stand. Other than that, I couldn't tell you too much about our schedule."

"Our focus is on the opener against Model and then we will go from there."

2008 SCHEDULE

Aug. 29	at Model
Sept. 5	at Heritage, Catoosa
Sept. 12	Open
Sept. 19	Trion
Sept. 26	Pepperell
Oct. 3	Calhoun
Oct. 10	at Adairsville
Oct. 17	Dade County
Oct. 24	Chattooga
Oct. 31	at Sonoraville
Nov. 7	Region Playoff

2008 ROSTER

2	Jaden Compton	Fr.	46	Zack Burgess	So.
3	Dre Prather	So.	47	Ivan Ramariez	Jr.
4	Justin Patterson	Sr.	48	Cody Kinsey	Jr.
5	Michael Caldwell	Sr.	49	Will Swaim	Fr.
6	Dylan Blalock	So.	50	Bobby Keadle	So.
7	Trey Upshaw	Jr.	51	Colt Ankney	Fr.
8	Devin Oesterle	Sr.	52	Ethan Warren	Sr.
10	Kalin Lay	Sr.	53	Chad Patterson	Sr.
11	Dakota Grogan	Sr.	54	Skylar Young	So.
12	Darius Gilbert	Sr.	55	Brandon McFry	Sr.
13	Lance Weimer	So.	56	Dillon McFry	Sr.
14	Ron Thompson	So.	57	Mark Rhinehart	Jr.
15	Jake Greeson	Sr.	58	Trevor Dutton	So.
16	Zane Pass	So.	59	Sean Banks	Fr.
17	Miker Arrivillaga	So.	60	Chad Childers	Jr.
19	Cody Thomas	Sr.	61	Keaton Thomas	Fr.
20	Diondre Curtis	Jr.	62	Blake Hilley	Fr.
21	Zach Taylor	So.	63	Casey Stanfield	So.
22	Jared Noland	Jr.	64	Caleb Johns	Sr.
23	Weston Walraven	Sr.	65	Jonathan Bento.n	Sr.
24	Miguel Martinez	So.	66	Jordan Carter	Jr.
25	Nick Jackson	Sr.	68	Dayton Luther	Sr.
26	Keidric Johnson	Sr.	69	Caleb Stansell	Fr.
27	Nathan Thompson	Sr.	70	Zack Walters	Fr.
28	Josh Turner	Sr.	71	Erik Reyes	So.
29	Josh Daum	Fr.	72	Chris Tinch	Sr.
30	Chase Chasteen	So.	73	Bryson West	Jr.
31	Nathan Duke	Sr.	75	Matt Chastain	Fr.
32	Zane Cooper	Fr.	76	David Anderson	Jr.
33	Jonathon Peek	Jr.	77	Bradley Cooper	Fr.
34	Pete Caudell	Jr.	78	Jamal Caldwell	Jr.
35	Billy Keadle	Fr.	79	Stephen Kilpatrick	Sr.
36	Kevin Johns	Jr.	80	Thomas Caldwell	So.
37	Jake Raley	Fr.	81	Ishmael Washington Jr.	Fr.
38	Nathan Wright	Fr.	82	Thomas Richardson	Fr.
39	Chance Grimm	Fr.	83	Josh Tatum	Sr.
40	Brandon Grubbs	Sr.	84	Aaron Parker	So.
41	Tyler Ballew	Fr.	85	Jake Davis	Sr.
42	Tucker Blalock	Sr.	86	Harley Barnette	So.
43	C.J. Bell	Fr.	87	Cody McCormack	Fr.
44	Austin Causby	Jr.	88	Matthew Pickle	Fr.
45	Richard Trejo	Sr.			



# ROCKMART

## Jackets' sting more dangerous

By Stephanie McCombs  
Rome News-Tribune Sports Writer

**ROCKMART** — Dallas Cowboys receiver Terrell Owens couldn't have said it better: "Getcha popcorn ready!"

After having to spend the postseason on the sidelines in 2008, the Rockmart Yellow Jackets are more than eager to make up for that missed opportunity this time around.



Rockmart head coach Dan Duff has a talented group of seniors and veterans returning.

Forget the fact the Jackets lost the first two games last season — Haralson County and Callaway — and dropped the must-win game to the Darlington Tigers, which ended their season.

This is a new year with new faces, and returning players with better and sharper skills.

"We've got a lot of people back that played," head coach Dan Duff said. "So we got a lot of experience."

"And I believe that makes for a good team."

As has been the case since he's been in charge of the program, Duff believes the key to his team's success will be determined on how well they gel and come together as one.

"If we come out of that real well," Duff said, "then I think we can have a really great season."

Rockmart will have the chance to take on teams they haven't matched up with in a while such as Cartersville, Bremen and Dade County, and hosts six of its 10 games.

"I'm not saying we've got to win all of them," Duff said. "But we put teams on there that we felt like would help us get to the next level. Challenging teams."

"And how we respond to that will tell us how our team will be."

The Jackets' highly-recruited quarterback, senior Brandon Haywood, will be entering his second year as a starter after rolling up some impressive numbers last season.

Playing a multiple role and catching the eye of college recruiters, Haywood completed 79-of-143 passes for 1,405 yards and 16 touchdowns in 2007, and showed he can run the ball as well, rushing for 730 yards and 10 touchdowns.

"I think he's going to be better," Duff said of Haywood, who earned a spot on the 2007 Rome News-Tribune All-Area team. "He's stronger and faster."

As a quarterback, Haywood said, "you always feel more pressured than any other member on your team."

"And I say this because you'll be congratulated for your success and criticized for your failure."

"We are really anxious about the upcoming season," he said. "And the competitors we will face."

While Haywood is the cornerstone of the Jackets' offense, Rockmart's defense has its own quarterback in Tyler Fuqua.

PLAYERS TO WATCH



Rockmart Yellow Jackets (from left) Chris Campbell, Brandon Haywood, Lorenzo Johnson and Orion Roland.

*'From the senior core down to the freshmen group, we are a good team with plenty of options.'*

Chris Campbell  
Rockmart senior lineman

Duff said Fuqua, who also plays as a receiver on offense, gives the defense what Haywood gives them on offense: "That leadership and that type of intense play."

"His off-season has been tremendous for him," Duff said. "He's as big as I have ever seen him."

Fuqua said the main thing for them to do is stay healthy and play as a team.

"If we do this, then there is nothing stopping us from having a great season except ourselves," he said.

Fuqua added, he's ready for his senior year and this upcoming season.

"This is what I've worked for my whole high school career," Fuqua said. "And I expect us to go deep this year even though we have a tough schedule."

Another great aspect for the Yellow Jackets will be Chris Campbell, who will anchor Rockmart's line.

"He's a great lineman," Duff said of the 270-pound senior. "He'll hit you hard. He's just a physical guy."

"We feel like," he said, "if

we need a yard we can run behind him and get it. That's exciting and he's going to be a good one for us."

Campbell said he expects to be a leader on the offensive and defensive line.

"With the talent on the offensive line we expect to open holes for the (running) backs," he said, "giving them room to do what they do best — score touchdowns."

"From the senior core down to the freshman group, we are a good team with plenty of options."

As for special teams, James Anderson will be returning as the Jackets' kicker.

The freshmen may also enter into the picture this year, Duff said, and will see time on the field.

"Very good ninth grade class," Duff added. "They bring a lot of talent to us. We're very excited about that."

As a whole, Duff said he feels like he has a great team.

"We have players who will listen to us," he said. "All that goes into making a good team."

"And the more they do that, the better we're going to be."

"We have a large senior class coming back this year," Fuqua said. "Which means we are going to have a ton of experienced skill players and a strong line."

"I see us having one of the best seasons Rockmart has had in a while."

2008 SCHEDULE

Aug. 29	Cedartown
Sept. 5	at Cartersville
Sept. 12	Bremen
Sept. 19	at Dade County
Sept. 26	Open
Oct. 3	Temple
Oct. 10	at Coosa
Oct. 17	at Pepperell
Oct. 24	Model
Oct. 31	Armuchee
Nov. 7	Region Playoff

2008 ROSTER

1	Tre Smith	Sr.	43	Zack Lewis	So.
2	Tony Mitchell	Fr.	45	Kendall Adams	So.
3	Roshmel Young	So.	46	Lane Odom	Fr.
4	James Anderson	Jr.	47	Ken Cooper	Fr.
5	Brandon Haywood	Sr.	50	Dylan Williams	Fr.
6	Tevin Clark	Jr.	51	Jonathan Jean	Jr.
7	Lorenzo Johnson	Jr.	52	Matt Robinson	Jr.
9	Corey Miller	Sr.	53	Josh Hatch	So.
10	Dylan Payne	Sr.	54	Jesse Purser	Sr.
11	Orion Rowland	Sr.	55	James Wilson	Sr.
12	Joseph Earwood	So.	56	Josh Cates	So.
13	Monty Hames	Sr.	58	Chris Campbell	Sr.
14	Clayton Simon	Fr.	60	Patrick Hulsey	So.
15	Terian Beavers	Jr.	61	Zach Thompson	Fr.
17	Jacob Brumbelow	Fr.	63	Casey Guzman	Fr.
18	Jordan Wright	So.	64	Caleb Campbell	Sr.
19	Dakota Hitchcock	So.	65	Kendric Harmon	Sr.
20	Dre' Cummings	So.	66	Austin Thaxton	So.
23	Michael Ledbetter	Sr.	67	C.J. Brown	Fr.
24	Austin Phillips	Sr.	68	Cody Rayburn	Sr.
25	Daniel Belman	Sr.	69	Jackson Bishop	Fr.
26	Tyler Fuqua	Sr.	70	Ashton Poellnitz	Fr.
27	Ontarius Shelley	Jr.	71	John Torline	Sr.
29	Jacob Rampley	Sr.	72	A.J. Brown	Jr.
30	R.J. Garrett	Fr.	73	Justin Lumpkin	Sr.
31	Justin Stocks	Sr.	74	Ethan McCarley	Sr.
32	Kyle Newberry	Fr.	75	Aaron Bing	Fr.
33	Bo Peek	So.	76	Kwame Adams	Sr.
34	Ruben Galvan	So.	77	Evan Reeves	Sr.
35	Patrick Williams	Fr.	78	Kaleb Burfield	So.
36	Devone Hall	Jr.	79	Jesse Pope	Jr.
37	Junior Virgile	So.	79	Jesse Pope	Jr.
38	Darius Holloman	Fr.	80	Ladarious Morris	So.
39	Nikko McCluskey	Jr.	81	Daulton Swindell	Fr.
40	Alex Harris	o.	83	Kody Gamel	Fr.
41	Dillon Williams	Jr.	88	Khalil Wood	So.
42	Dakota Gibbs	Fr.	89	Grayson Goss	Fr.