

2008 PIGSKIN PREVIEW

# REGION 7-AAAA

## Expansion creates wide-open race

By Jim O'Hara  
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Gone are the days when Region 7-AAAA was strictly a region representing the upper northwest corner of Georgia.

Thanks to reclassification, only a small group of the traditional 7-AAAA programs remain — Rome, Dalton and Northwest Whitfield.

Instead, the region extends from the state line with Tennessee to the outskirts of Atlanta, forcing the 15 schools to sub-divide and set up a playoff situation in the final week of the regular season.

That means the race for the region championship could be snatched away from the two traditional powers — Dalton's Catamounts, the defending champion, and Rome, who put together a string of six straight region titles before being upended last fall by Dalton.

And don't leave out the Bruins of Northwest Whitfield, which have made the playoffs in three of the last four seasons.

Odds are one of those schools will emerge as the No. 1 team from the A-half of the region, but will have to stop the top team from 7-AAAA/B to win it all.

**SUBREGION A**

**Cass Colonels**  
Head coach: Rick Casco  
2007: 4-5 overall, 2-5 region (6-AA)

Having lost the services of running back standout Richard Samuel, who is now at Georgia, the Colonels will be seeking to repeat their start in 2007, when they went 3-0, and not the finish, when they dropped their last three games.

Moving up to AAAA will be hard for Cass, which will be battling youth and inexperience, which is especially predominant on the offensive side of the ball.

Defense will have to carry the Colonels early on, with two solid cornerbacks, Tay Linley and Arthur LeGrand leading the way.

**Dalton Catamounts**  
Head coach: Adam Winegarden  
2007: 9-2, 7-0

A new chapter in Catamount history begins this fall with Adam Winegarden taking over the coaching whistle from Ronnie McClurg, who retired this spring after helping Dalton add to its amazing 48 straight winning season streak.

Loaded with athletes at the skill position, Dalton still must replace two weapons lost to graduation, quarterback Harrison Scott and Cameron Hudson.

Fullback Shaquon Moore is expected to be the go-to guy for the Cats on offense, with linebackers Garren Palmer and Ethan Bennett, and safety Carter Crutchfield anchoring the defense.

**Murray County Indians**  
Head coach: Josh Lowe  
2007: 0-10, 0-8 (5-AAAA)

After taking their bumps and bruises in AAAAA, the Indians will be trying to regain the high status they used to have in 7-AAAA.

Giving Murray the foundation to build on comes along the offensive front, where linemen Chris Coots and Cory Pritchett will be ready to open holes for running back Jacob Bajer.

Defense is the question mark for the Indians, who will rely on new faces to stop opposing teams.

**Northwest Whitfield Bruins**  
Head coach: Mike Falleur  
2007: 9-3, 5-2

Having reached the second round of the state playoffs last year, the Bruins have all the ingredients to make another postseason run.

Leading the way will be Dean Haynes, who is a threat on both sides of the ball and gives the Bruins big-play potential. Still, Northwest must fill in the gaps left by graduation.



File photo / Rome News-Tribune

Rome High senior linebacker Van Calhoun heads up an experienced defense that makes the Wolves a contender.

That is true along the line, where the Bruins have the size, but lack the inexperience. Once the newness factor is overcome, count on Northwest to be in the hunt.

**Rome Wolves**  
Head coach: Sid Fritts  
2007: 10-2-1, 6-1

No doubt that the Wolves are more than eager to reclaim a region championship, which eluded them last fall but failed to deter them from reaching the state quarterfinals.

Though not defending a title for the first time in six years, Rome will use defense to set the stage for another run with the top two tacklers from last season, Van Calhoun and Deonte Dennis, two of nine starters who return.

Hard-charging running back P.J. Green is the inside power factor for Rome's offense, and veteran Reggie Whatley has the speed to get the ball outside, but the Wolves must find replacements for three-year starting quarterback Cory Thacker and receiver Terrell Burley.

**Sequoyah Chiefs**  
Head coach: Sid Maxwell  
2007: 4-6, 4-5 (5-AAAA)

As one of the new kids on the 7-AAAA block, the Chiefs have some key building blocks on which to be successful.

Running back Chris Bellinger returns in the backfield, but will be counting on a young line to pave the way up front. And defensively, Ben Farist is back at linebacker and Tyler Adams returns to lead the secondary.

**Woodland Wildcats**  
Head coach: Steve Hamilton  
2007: 2-8, 2-7 (5-AAAA)

Winning seasons have been lean of late for the Wildcats, but this year may be the one where they turn the corner.

While depth is an issue, Woodland has some key starters who will make a difference — back Andrew Watts and linemen Trent Welch and T.J. Cross on offense, and linebackers Kodie Lentz and Melvin Bell on defense.

**SUBREGION B**

**Hillgrove Hawks**  
Head coach: Phillip Ironside  
2007: 9-2 (non-region schedule 5-AAAA)

The Hawks will be involved in their first-ever region run this season, hoping that the first three seasons of building the program can pay off.

Leading Hillgrove's charge into battle will be junior quarterback Synjin Days, the cornerstone of the Hawks' offense who is a multiple threat running and throwing the ball. Senior defensive back Douglas Ellis anchors the defensive unit.

**2007 FINAL REGION 7-AAAA REGULAR SEASON STANDINGS**

	All	Reg
xDalton	9-1	7-0
xRome	8-1-1	6-1
xNW Whitfield	8-2	5-2
xRidgeland	7-3	4-3
Ringgold	6-4	3-4
L'view-Ft. Ogle	2-8	2-5
SE Whitfield	1-8	1-6
Gordon Central	0-10	0-7

x- Made playoffs

# REGION 6-AAA

## Traditional powers joined by new teams

By Brad Easterwood  
Rome News-Tribune Sports Writer

Region 6-AAA has gone under a major facelift as the traditional region six schools in Carroll, Bartow and Polk counties will be joined by six schools from the northwest corner of the state, including Walker, Catoosa and Whitfield counties.

With the region being so big, 11 teams are in it, 6-AAA will be subdivided for the first time since the 1990s.

**SUBREGION A**  
**Heritage Generals**  
Head Coach: Tim James  
First Season

Catoosa County's newest high school program will have a tough road ahead of them as the Generals will play a full varsity schedule in their first year of existence.

The Generals will have very few upperclassmen and will rely on primarily sophomores and freshmen to be playmakers for their inaugural squad.

**LaFayette Ramblers**  
Head Coach: Perry Swindall  
2007 Record: 1-9, 1-4

After collecting just four wins in their previous three seasons, the Ramblers have turned to Perry Swindall, who won four state titles in Alabama. Swindall's oldest son, Evan, who has committed to Central Florida, will lead the LaFayette line. Defensively, seniors Zach Radetski and Paul Encardes will anchor the line.

**LFO Warriors**  
Head Coach: Todd Windham  
2007 Record: 2-8, 2-5

The Warriors have some talented playmakers on offense, led by junior quarterback Cody Commons. Shane Doggett will help lead the way on the defensive front four while state wrestling champion Derek Laney is quickly becoming a college prospect at defensive end.

**Ridgeland Panthers**  
Head Coach: Mark Mariakis  
2007 Record: 7-4, 4-3

Ridgeland has 10 of 11 starters back on offense. Senior receiver Mike Bowman (6-5, 210) is the No. 1-ranked wideout in the state by Rivals.com.

But defenses that focus on Bowman risk getting burned by senior Terry Freeman, who rushed for 23 touchdowns and over 2,000 yards last season.

The defensive line has two college prospects in seniors Cedric Weaver and Michael Roberson.

**Ringgold Tigers**  
Head Coach: Robert Akins  
2007 Record: 6-4, 3-4

The Tigers will have a top-level passer this fall in senior Zac Fairchild. The 6-foot-5, 220-pounder has a strong arm and

**2007 FINAL REGION 6-AAA REGULAR SEASON STANDINGS**

	All	Reg
xCarrollton	9-1	6-1
xHaralson Co.	8-2	5-2
xSandy Creek	6-4	5-2
xCedartown	5-5	4-3
Villa Rica	6-4	3-4
Cartersville	4-5-1	3-4
Cass	4-5	2-5
Central-Carroll	0-10	0-7

x- Earned playoff berth

**Cedartown Bulldogs**  
Head Coach: Mark Loudermilk

2007 Record: 5-6, 4-3

With three of the Top 150 players in the state of Georgia according to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, the Bulldogs should have the talent to compete with anyone in the region this fall.

The Green twins, Darius and Demetrius, along with Brandon Brown, the three Top 150 players, will be counted on to do a lot for the Bulldogs.

**Central-Carroll Lions**  
Head Coach: Mike Ledford  
2007 Record: 0-10, 0-7

The Lions haven't had a winning season in 16 years and went winless last year. However, new head coach Mike Ledford — the former West Georgia coach — is looking to change all that.

Central-Carroll will be based out of the I-formation under Ledford and will not throw the ball as much as in years past.

**Haralson County Rebels**  
Head Coach: Frank Vohun  
2007 Record: 8-3, 5-2

Haralson County hosted a state playoff game for the first time in school history last year, if they are to repeat that feat this year they will be doing so with new faces. Gone is nearly every key player from last season's playoff team.

However, Vohun is sticking with his spread offense with C.J. Meeks, Shane Potate and Tyler Hudgins competing to be the starting quarterback.

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