

Section B



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Season Opener:

Friday, August 25 at 7 p.m.

Wakulla War Eagles travel to Tallahassee to play the Chiles Timberwolves



It's time for War Eagle football!

Player photos Varsity Page 3 JV Page 6	This year's War Eagles to watch Page 2B	Team photo and schedules Pages 4-5
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PHOTO BY GERALD BROWN

War Eagle Jeremiah Thomas picks off a Madison pass and returns it to midfield. On the next play, the War Eagles would score on a pass from Haden Klees to Delvon Zanders.

Team is looking to make a championship run

By WILLIAM SNOWDEN
Editor

This year's War Eagle team is loaded with weapons.

And speed. “There are big hopes,” says Head Football Coach Scott Klees, who adds: “I think we have the ability make a run for a state championship.”

A talented team and some high expectations. The potential drawback is whether the team has the depth behind the starters to make a run.

How good the back-



Wakulla Head Football Coach Scott Klees

ups play with determine how far the War Eagles can go in the season and playoffs.

Last year's run ended when then-junior quarterback Haden Klees (son of the coach) suffered a season-ending injury – a broken collarbone. (Well, not completely season ending: he did come in for a series or two later in the season with that broken collarbone when backup QB Owen Klees, his younger brother, was taken out of a game after the referee thought he may have suffered concussion. With no other real option, Coach Klees sent Haden into that game and says now that

he could feel his wife's eyes from the stands boring into him. Haden was pressured in that game but threw the ball away rather than take any hits – much to the coach's relief.)

Before Haden's injury, the War Eagles were 7-1, ranked No. 2 in the state, and with Haden among the top quarterbacks in the state for passing. In only eight games, he amassed some gaudy numbers throwing for almost 2,000 yards and 20 touchdowns.

Haden, who has committed to Samford Uni-

versity, says he's ready.

(And Coach Klees says this year Owen is ready to step in if his brother goes down. “Owen's ready to go,” Klees says. In most programs, Owen would be the No. 1 quarterback, the coach says.)

A lot of the passes thrown last year went to receiver Samron Brinson, who had 707 yards receiving and 13 touchdowns.

“He faced double-coverage from other teams,” Klees says. “They knew the ball was coming to him – and he still got

open!” Both Haden Klees and Brinson were named to the watchlist for this year's All-Big Bend Offensive Player of the Year.

On the other side of the ball, linebacker Tanner Lanier is on the watchlist for Defensive Player of the Year. Last year, he had 108 tackles and 5 sacks.

“On defense, Tanner Lanier is leader,” Klees says. “We'll go as far as he takes us.”

Playing both sides of the ball as receiver and

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FROM THE COACH



COACH Scott Klees

Scouting report: Chiles has a good defense with 9 of 11 players returning. They also have a new QB who's the real deal, one of the fastest kids in Tallahassee.

Keys to victory: No turnovers, that's most important. And play physical.

Last week: The scrimmage with Madison showed areas of play that need improvement.

PRESEASON SCRIMMAGE

War Eagles show team speed against Madison Cowboys

Varsity was down 28-22 in a half marred by turnovers; but second string and JV played well in second half to go up 35-28

By WILLIAM SNOWDEN
Editor

The Wakulla War Eagles varsity showed team speed but were down 28-22 to Madison in the first half.

The varsity played the first half, then second-string guys played the third quarter, and JV played the fourth

quarter.

Head Coach Scott Klees was pleased that all 90 kids in the football program got some playing time.

There were mistakes, as is to be expected early in the season. The varsity had three turnovers – including a fumble and an interception that

were returned for scores.

“You can't turn over the ball,” Klees said. “We had some late snaps, some bad route running at times.

“We see what needs to be fixed,” the coach said, “and we'll see how much we can improve over this next week.”

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Six players to watch this season



COLE PITTMAN
Right Tackle

Coach Klees praises Cole Pittman for his hard work ethic: “Hard-nosed, hard-working kid. Just comes to work.” Not a star, doesn’t get a lot of attention, Klees says, but “He’s a special kid. He makes us go.”

Game he’s looking forward to: “Chiles. It’s the first game.”

Nickname: “Pip.”

Favorite Team: “Alabama.”

Favorite Player: “Julio Jones. We have the same birthday.”



TANNER LANIER
Linebacker

The senior linebacker is leader of the defense. Last year he had 108 tackles and 5 sacks and was named to the All-Big Bend Defensive Team. He’s named as possible All-Big Bend Defensive Player of the Year.

His goal this year: “Getting Coach Klees his first (championship) ring.”

Game: “The Disney one.”

Team: “Florida Gators.”

Player: “Anthony Richardson.”



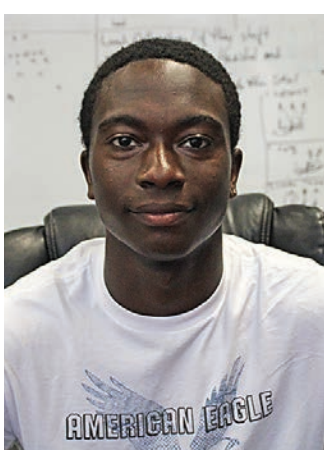
KANE TUCKER
Lineman

While some War Eagle linemen are small, this senior lineman is big – 6’6” and 250 pounds – and he should be easy to spot on the field.

Goal: “I want the line to really improve, to dominate and really show it.”

Game: “Balboa (from California, at Disney). To play a team that’s very foreign to us is good for team-building.”

Nickname: “Big red.”
Team: “FSU.”



Samron Brinson
RECEIVER

Named, along with Haden Klees, as potential All-Big Bend Offensive Player of the Year, he finished last year with 13 TDs and 707 receiving yards.

Goal: “State championship. The games we lost last year we shouldn’t have lost... To stay healthy.”

Game: “The ones we lost. And the playoffs.”

Team: “49ers.”
Player: “Davante Adams.”



Haden Klees
QUARTERBACK

In 8 games last year, he threw for almost 2,000 yards and 20 TDs. Then he broke his collarbone. He says he’s worked on his flexibility to try to prevent injury. He is a commit to Samford University.

Goal: “To win a state championship.”

Game: “The district games. They’re most important.”

Team: “Samford Bulldogs.”
Player: “Joe Burrow.”



BRADLEY KELLY
Running Back

The senior is a bruising running back who runs over defenders instead of juking. He’s bulked up some in the offseason, up to around 210 pounds.

Goal: “Going to state. We’re all on the same page with that one.”

Game: “Orlando. It’s different. Something we haven’t done since I’ve been on the team, other than Bainbridge.”

Player: “Saquon Barkley.”



First play in the preseason game: War Eagle Nehemiah Chandler returns the opening kickoff for a touchdown.
PHOTOS BY GERALD BROWN



Students in the student section. Stands were packed.

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WEEKLY WAR EAGLE GAME HIGHLIGHTS
on the Wakulla Report,
Wolf 103.1, ESPN 97.9
and WAVE 94.1!



Quarterback Haden Klees scrambles out of the backfield.

War Eagles show team speed against Madison

From Page B1

The first play of the game was a 75-yard kickoff return by Nehemiah Chandler.

Madison and Wakulla exchanged punts, then on the next series a Madison pass was intercepted by Jeremiah Thomas and was returned to midfield. Next play: quarterback Haden Klees connects with receiver Delvon Zanders for a perfect pass for a touchdown to put Wakulla up 14-0.

But the Cowboys are

tough, and they came back with a quick drive and scored a touchdown on a sweep play. They went for 2 and scored to make it 14-8.

At the start of the second quarter, Klees was scrambling and had the ball knocked loose – it was recovered by a Cowboy defender for a scoop and score. Again, the Cowboys went for 2 and made it to take a 16-14 lead.

On the next series, War Eagle receiver Samron Brinson caught his first pass of

the game and showed how quick and elusive he is, dodging defenders and breaking tackles until he was finally taken down on the Cowboy 11. Unfortunately, a couple of plays later a fumble gives the Cowboys the ball at the 5.

On the War Eagles’ next offensive series, a pass on the sideline was picked off and returned for a touchdown. (Coach Klees said the receiver was supposed to run an out pattern and instead went up.) Cowboys again went for 2,

but the attempt was no good. Madison up 22-14.

The Cowboys tried a squib kick and it was picked up by Samron Brinson and returned for a touchdown. The War Eagles went for 2 and made it to tie the game at 22 all.

Klees praised the kickoff returns by Chandler and Brinson, saying they were great runs, but he also praised other members of the special teams unit for the great blocking that set up the

runs. But minutes later, the Cowboys scored on a 75-yard run to put them back on top. Went for 2 but didn’t make it.

Halftime score was 28-22. Seconds came in for the third quarter: Backup quarterback Owen Klees threw a 15 yard touchdown pass. War Eagles went for 2 but didn’t make it. Score tied at 28 all.

In the fourth, the JV teams played and the War Eagles scored again to go up 35-28 over the Cowboys.

The team is looking to make a championship run

From Page B1

defensive back is Nehemiah Chandler, who is a Georgia Tech commit as a defensive back.

Slot receivers include Jeremiah Thomas, who made second-team All-Big Bend last year on both offense and defense, and Delvon Sanders. And more receivers in Gabe Carter and Devontae Roberts, who played at Rickards last year but is back at Wakulla.

And running the ball is Bradley Kelly, a bruising

runner who tends to take on tacklers. (Klees says Kelly’s running style reminds him of Jerome Bettis, aka “the Bus.”) “Any of these guys can play,” Klees says. “The problem is getting each of them enough touches.”

He adds that this is, by far, the fastest team he’s ever had. And he clarifies that he means overall team speed.)

A Klees-coached team is typically physical. Asked about that, the coach pauses and admits, “Right now, we’re not.”

But, he says, he’s working on it.

A game circled on a lot of player’s schedules is the Thursday night, Aug. 31 game in Orlando against Balboa High School from San Francisco. The game will be played at the Austin-Tindall Sports Complex in Kissimmee.

Balboa was California state champs two years ago and made a run in the playoffs last year, Klees says.

He notes that the Balboa linemen average 6’3” and 300 pounds.

Klees says that the first couple of weeks of the regular season are going to be a learning curve for players and coaches. That’s normal, but it’s exacerbated by four new assistant coaches on the staff – and Klees is still down two coaches.

SEASON OPENER AT CHILES

This is going to be a big game, Klees says of the season opener against the Chil-

es Timberwolves. Nine of the 11 starters on Chiles’ defense returned – and they are very good on defense.

While the Timberwolves lost some players on offense, Klees says they have “a new quarterback who’s the real deal. He’s one of the fastest kids in the Tallahassee.”

“We’ll have to play at a high level to win,” he says.”

Klees is expecting a tough game again.

“The game last year came down to overtime,” he said.

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2023 WAKULLA WAR EAGLES



1 Gabe Carter



2 Bradley Kelly



3 Delvon Zanders



4 Amonta Harris



5 Devontae Roberts



6 Samron Brinson



7 Nehemiah Chandler



8 Tanner Lanier



9 Marcus Gardner



10 Haden Klees



11 Jeremiah Thomas



13 Jesse Turner



14 Sion Ransom



15 Owen Klees



16 Brandon Burton



17 Jakari Ward



18 Jedd Hoffman



19 Brady Jackson



20 Herschel Blackmon



23 Chris Smith



25 Luis Quintonilla



27 Ashton Harris



28 Kayden Johnson



50 Mason Blair



51 Matthew Chastain



52 Marlon Gardner



54 Dalton Avera



55 Kohlson Pippin



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60 Antonio Egltan



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2023 War Eagle schedule

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- Aug. 25 at 7 p.m. at Chiles.
- Thu, 8/31 vs. Balboa (San Francisco), at 7 p.m. in Orlando
- Fri, 9/8 at 7 p.m. vs. Munroe (Quincy) at WHS.
- Fri, 9/15 at 7:30 p.m. vs. Seminole County at WHS.
- Thu, 9/21 at 7 p.m. at Mosley (Lynn Haven).
- Fri, 9/29 at 7 p.m. at Rickards.
- Fri, 10/6 at 7 p.m. vs. St. John Paul II at WHS.
- Fri, 10/13 at 7:30 p.m. vs. Taylor County at WHS.*
- Fri, 10/20 at 7 p.m. at North Florida Christian.
- Fri, 10/27 at 7:30 p.m. at Suwannee. *

* - District game

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2023 War Eagle JV schedule

- Thursday, 8/24 at 7 p.m. at North Florida Christian.
- Wed, 8/30 at 7 p.m. vs. Gadsden County at WHS.
- Thu, 9/7 at 7 p.m. vs. North Florida Christian at WHS.
- Tue, 9/12 at 7 p.m. at Munroe (Quincy).

- Thu, 9/14 at 7 p.m. at Taylor County.
- Wed, 9/20 at 7 p.m. vs. Mosley (Lynn Haven) at WHS.
- Thu, 9/28 at 7 p.m. vs. Chiles at WHS.
- Thu, 10/5 at 7 p.m. vs. Florida High at WHS.
- Wed, 10/11 at 6:30pm at Rickards.

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Sheriff Jared Miller and WCSO says
"Wishing the team a great Season"
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Jeremiah Washington



Jordan Barnes



Danny Godbolt



Marvin Johnson



Auvion Thomas



Heath Milligan



Wyatt Brown



Leeanthony Green



Brandon Hayes



Anthony Vargas



Jayden Jean



Demarkus Roberts



Hayden Blackshear



Darien Jones



Jarell Randolph



Derek Davis



Rayshon St. Hilaire



Aiden Downer



Logan Smith



Ajontae James



Kelvin Melton



Ashton Brooks



Sean Warren



Reice Carraway



Aries Travis



Joshua Hoover



Nate Baker



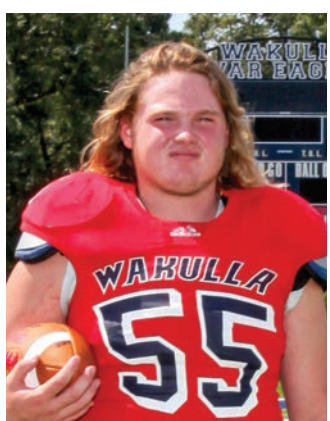
Jackson Crow



Jayvonta Harris



Antonio Harvey



Hunter Avery



Brice Rowan



Alex Akins



Jayden Hughes



Wyatt Jones



Jacob Kinsey



Isaiah McCarty



Landyn Kirkland



Aiden Burgess



Colby Carranza



Shayne Lewis



Allen Byrd



Wyatt Folsom

Not Pictured:

Randy Moore
Raheem Moore

Sam Wright
Kayden Johnson

Levi O'Grady
Brady Jackson



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Middle row: Allison Brown, Sophie Jacobs, Moriah Groover, Amaya Riggles, Kylie Lassiter, Lille Granger
Front Row: Kaitlyn Smith, Kaitlyn Bickford, Amelia Brown, Amber Jackson, Aubrey Manning, Sophie Stalvey

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2023 WAKULLA WAR EAGLE BAND



PHOTOS OF BAND BY GERALD BROWN

Photos of the 2023 Wakulla High School band playing at the preseason game against Madison.

FLAG CORPUS

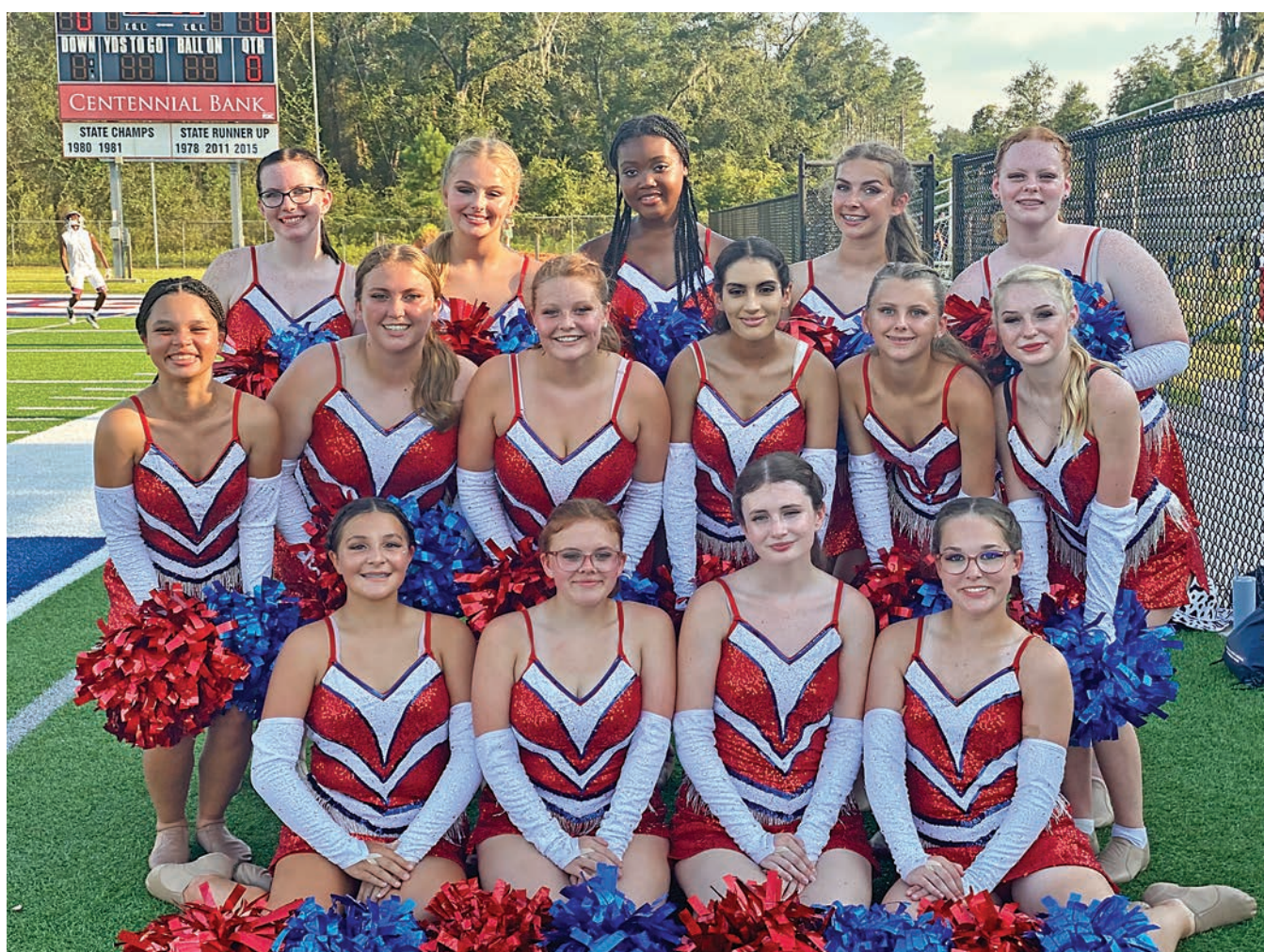


PHOTO BY KATIE DAVIS



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