

Section B



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Season Opener:

Friday, August 21 at 7 p.m.

Wakulla War Eagles host the Gadsden Jaguars at J.D. Jones Stadium.



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It's time for War Eagle football!

New Coach Derek Allen Jr. is at the helm

By **WILLIAM SNOWDEN**
Editor

Ten years ago, 2016, Derek Allen was getting ready to take over the Wakulla War Eagle offense as quarterback. He led the team, under Head Coach Scott Klees, to the playoffs.

Allen makes his return to the War Eagles as the new head coach, after Klees retired from coaching at the end of last season.

Allen comes to Wakulla after coaching at Blountstown as offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach, and before that as wide receivers coach at Harris County High School. In addition to serving as head coach, Allen is the offensive coordinator and play caller for the War Eagles.

He is a run-first coach, he says, but when the defense starts crowding the box, he goes for deep passes.

New quarterback Ashton Brooks has a strong arm, Allen says, and can throw a ball 60 yards in the air.

Brooks will be looking

downfield for a receiving corps that includes Jarell Rudolph, Rhyeem Moore, Randy Moore, and Demarkus Roberts.

The offensive line will be headed by senior Brice Rowan at center, and senior Wyatt Jones at left tackle.

The defense includes lineman Antonio Harvey, linebacker Rayshon St. Hillaire, and safety Jaylen Jones – who returns to Wakulla after playing last year at Blountstown.

Allen says he sees his role as a football coach as “Preparing these guys for life. As a coach, everybody wants to win football games, but the main thing is setting these guys up for life.”

Other coaches on the staff include defensive coordinator Chris Beverly, who played at Citadel, D-line coach Doot Ingram, who Allen brought from Blountstown, and longtime linebacker coach Vic Culley. Other coaches include Marcus Farlin, Michael Pierce, Paxton

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The late Kyler Jones' mom Susan and sister Molly, both seated, with a representation of Jones' jersey on the field house before Friday night's preseason game.

Season dedicated to Kyler Jones, Coach Jordan Brown

This year's War Eagle football season is being dedicated to late player Kyler Jones, who died in a diving accident, and late coach Jordan Brown.



Late Coach Jordan Brown, above, and player Kyler Jones, right.

Both will be commemorated with a helmet sticker for this season.

A representation of Jones' No. 11 jersey was posted on the field house for Friday's exhibition game. Wakulla Sun sports photographer Ken Fields printed one of his player photos of Jones and had it signed by the team and presented to the Jones family.

Coach Brown died in May, and Head Coach Derek Allen was touched by the loss, noting Brown had coached him back when he was playing.



PRESEASON SCRIMMAGE

Preseason game gets cancelled due to weather

By **WILLIAM SNOWDEN**
Editor

The black clouds in the east kept building, and headed straight for J.D. Jones Stadium on Friday night, where the Wakulla War Eagles were scheduled to play an exhibition game against the Evans High School Trojans from Orlando. Kickoff had been set for 7 p.m.

But at 6:30 p.m., lightning strikes within 10 miles started the delays

– with Athletic Director Tim Wheeler determining that the teams could come on the field at 7 p.m. with kickoff set for 7:45 p.m. Then the lightning was within 3 miles. The game was pushed back to after 8 p.m.

At that point, while the sky in the east was black, overhead at the stadium was bright and sunny.

One Wakulla player poked his head out of the locker room and could be heard saying that he

didn't care if the game started at midnight, he wanted to play.

But it was not to be: the sky opened up with a deluge. More lightning strikes.

The Trojan coaches met with the War Eagles: The Trojans couldn't start later than 9 p.m., they needed to get back to Orlando.

The game was called. In fact, most of Friday night's games in the area were cancelled due to lightning.

COACH'S CORNER

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COACH
Derek Allen

FROM THE COACH

Scouting report: Hard to know what to anticipate from Gadsden – new coach, no film. But the Jaguars are always big upfront and have skilled guys.

Keys to victory: Be physical. Hit and hit and hit. I want them to get on the bus after the game and say, I don't want to play them again.

Last week: Disappointed is the cancellation of the game.

Players to watch this season



ANTONIO HARVEY
Defensive tackle/end - Senior

Game he’s looking forward to: “Godby.” He noted that former War Eagle defensive coordinator Grady Guess is coaching at Godby, making a rivalry game that much more intense.

How far do you think the team can make it this year: “Hopefully to state.”



RAYSHON ST. HILLAIRE
Linebacker - Senior

Game he’s looking forward to: “Godby. They’re a good football team – the our old defensive coordinator is there.”

How far do you think the team can make it this year: “State.”



ASHTON BROOKS
Quarterback - Senior

Game he’s looking forward to: “Godby.”

How far do you think the team can make it this year: “I want to go all the way, but.. We got a good shot with a new coach.”



WYATT JONES
Left tackle - Senior

Game he’s looking forward to: “Godby. I think they have the most hype around the city right now.”

How far do you think the team can make it this year: “I think we can make it to the Final Four and hopefully play for state.”



BRICE ROWAN
Center - Senior

Game he’s looking forward to: “Godby. Our old defensive coordinator Coach Guess is there, and they have a lot of good players.”

How far do you think the team can make it this year: “State is where we want to be. I think we can make a very good run at it.”



JAYLEN JONES
Safety - Senior

Game he’s looking forward to: “Godby. Our old defensive coordinator went there. Plus, they have the top wide receiver in the state (who) committed to Clemson” and he wants to play against him.

How far do you think the team can make it this year: “Deep in the playoffs.”

New coach Derek Allen Jr. at the helm

From Page B1

Tomaini, Ra’Kwan Allen, and Bre Hill.

Coach Allen had looked forward to the preseason game against Evans High School from Orlando, a 5A team, whose team is headed by a quarterback who has committed to Maryland.

Unfortunately, the game was cancelled because of lightning – which was the fate of a lot of football games scheduled for Friday night, from Pensacola to Jefferson County.

“Sucks for that team that drove for four hours to be here,” Allen said.

For his team, Allen said “The only thing you can do

is shift and point and now our focus is on Gadsden County.”

His scouting on Gadsden is spotty: The Jaguars came under extensive sanctions from the FHSAA last year for violations. They didn’t play a spring game. They have a new coach who didn’t coach last year.

Allen said he went back two years on the coach, and watched the Jaguar’s Blue & White game.

While last year’s sanctioned Jaguars were stacked with Division 1 talent, it’s not clear what the team will be like this year.

“There’s not a lot to go off of,” Allen said.

Still, Allen says Gadsden

is similiar to Wakulla in having a lot of homegrown kids.

And he expects the Jags will be “big up front and they always have skilled guys.”

For his War Eagles, Allen says he wants them to play Wakulla football: “Physical. Hit and hit and hit. When the other team gets on the bus, I want them to say, ‘I don’t want to play them again.’”

CHANGES WITH BOOSTERS

A major change for the team is with boosters.

Suåperintendent Rick Myhre has made financial transparency of groups

supporting extracurricular activities a priority. That means, funds raised on campus for support of student activities must be accounted for internally.

For football, the Gridiron Club has stepped back from some of its fundraising activities – selling stadium seating, parking passes, signs at the stadium, all of that has now fallen to the coach with help from his wife – and is going forward with an off-campus fundraiser.

On Oct. 17, at 3Y Ranch, the Gridiron Club will hold a Fourth Quarter Legacy fundraiser from 4 to 9 p.m.

The group is seeking sponsorships ranging from

\$2,500 to \$500. Individual tickets are \$75.

The flyer states that the goal of the event that “strengthens community pride, reconnects generations of Eagles, and provides critical support of program needs, including equipment, uniforms, facilities, player development, team experiences, and other initiatives that enhance the student-athlete experience.”

Details at wakullagridironclub.com.

For Coach Allen, “The biggest thing, besides Ws and Ls, is bringing the whole Wakulla community here on Friday night.”



Demarkus Roberts, Jaylen Jones, Jarrell Randolph, Danny Godbolt, Darien Jones, Randy Moore, Ashton Brooks, Antonio Harvey, Bryce Manning, Al Black, Zep Simm Carty, Zay Carnline, Jayce Hoffman, Michael Godbolt, Kyler Jones, Demitris Nortsey, Kasen Small, Logan Smith, Davion Godbolt, Gavin Randolph, Jaylen Cloyd, Ry Downer, Jackson Montford, Landon Kilpatrick, Triston Burnsed, Wyatt Jones, Anth Rowan, Trenten Barwick, Kadyn Reynolds, Noah Olandez, Rashod Rollins, Joe Bunc Colby Carranza, Aries Travis, Bryce Wiggins, Jessie Ransom, Peyton Griffin, C.J.

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2026 War Eagle schedule

- Fri, 8/21 at 7 pm vs. Gadsden County at WHS
- Fri, 8/28 at 7: pm at Taylor County
- Fri, 9/4 at 7 pm at Chiles
- Fri, 9/11 at 7:30 pm at Pace
- Fri, 9/18 at 7 pm vs Rickards
- Fri, 9/25 at 7 pm vsSuwannee*
- Fri, 10/9 at 7 pm vs Godby*
- Fri, 10/23 at 7:30 pm @Baker County*
- Fri, 10/30 at 7 pm vs Leon

* – District game

2026 War Eagle JV schedule

- Thu, 8/20 TBA vs Madison County
- Thu, 8/27 at 6 pm @ Gadsden County
- Thu, 9/3 at 6:30 pm @Rickards
- Wed, 9/9 at 6 pm vs Gadsden County
- Wed, 9/30 at 6 pm @ FSUHS
- Thu, 10/15 at 6:30 pm @ Leon

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RyHeem Moore,
mons, Isaiah Mc-
on, Armon Lind-
an Cooper, Aiden
ony Blake, Brice
ce, John Chancy,
J. Whitehead.

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 01 Blackshear, Mikey	 02 Revell, Landen	 03 Robinson, Knox	 04 Harvey, Sean	 05 Peixoto, Rick	 07 Wiggins, Bryce	 08 Sims, Isaiah
 09 Dolan, Wiley	 10 Walker, Kamren	 11 Jones, Landon	 12 Strutz, Brady	 13 Walker, Kendell	 14 Blake, Airston	 15 Williams, Kohen
 16 Rochelle, Kensaiah	 17 Thomas, Brantlee	 18 Lindsey, Owynn	 19 Simmons, Justice	 20 Moki, Austin	 21 Ream, Landon	 22 Lassiter, Brantley
 23 Sapp, Demari	 24 Harris, Sam	 25 Bell, Hunter	 26 Goldbolt, Davion	 27 Wright, Tan- ner	 28 Sheffield, Liam	 30 Harris, Jeremy
 32 Crum, Logan	 33 Marks, Bran- don	 34 Dicks, Ean	 35 Stroud, Holden	 44 McQueen, Jakoda	 48 Rouis, Otis	 50 Prasil, Quinn
 52	 54 Cook, Chris- topher	 55 Crowson, Walker	 57 Reynolds, Kady	 58 Robbins, Riley	 61 Steele, Joel	 62 Dean, Wyatt
 65 McKee, Aiden	 70 Brown, Tate	 74 Cody, Maliki	 75 Chunn, Peyton	 81 Brickles, Angelo	 84 Richardson, Mathew	
Cloyd, Jaylen 6	Gray, Cooper 59	Not Pictured Cook, Logan	Not Pictured Cook, Logan	Francois, Kervins	McKee, Aiden	

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Varsity cheerleaders

Varsity Cheerleaders Standing: Coach Dollar, Kaitlyn Bickford, Christian Green, Tristen Hubbell, Emily Matson (Co-Captain), Kiersten Eddinger (Captain), Layla Cook (Co-Captain), Charli Deshazier, Stella Hamby Coach Cook. Left kneeling Taylie Oaks, Danika Gurtler, Amber Jackson, Kaitlin Smith, Katelyn Newberry and Maddison Hart.



Junior Varsity cheerleaders

JV Cheerleaders Front Row: Addison Haggerty, Adalyn Lee, Kinsey Smith, Co-Captain Ariel Smith, Vivianne Loney, Javonni Fleming, Co-Captain Paityn Grove, Kaleigh Largent. Back row: Aubree Simmons, Captain Braelyn Weeks, Raegan Lundy, Lily Robinson, Cheyenne Lefeavers, Emaree McCallum, Brenlyn Hicks, Sophie Savory, Malayne Scriber.

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the music and the sound of the drums.

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-Colleen Skipper Mitchell

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2026 WAKULLA WAR EAGLE BAND



PHOTOS ON THIS PAGE BY PERRY DISSMORE

The War Eagle Marching Band gives a showcase performance at J.D. Jones Stadium on July 31.



Band Directot Matthew Spindler

