

2017 FOOTBALL PREVIEW



***Newberry Academy
Newberry High School
Mid-Carolina High School
Whitmire High School
Newberry College***

***• Team Rosters • Starting Line-Ups
• Game Schedules • Gearing Up for the Season***

**THE NEWBERRY
OBSERVER**

Bulldogs ready for new season after productive off-season

By Kelly Duncan
kduncan@newberryobserver.com

NEWBERRY — Newberry High School head football coach Phil Strickland and his Bulldogs are ready to take the field once again.

“I feel like we’ve had a really productive off season. The kids worked hard in the weight room and we’ve had a lot of seven on seven perimeter work. We actually won a couple of tournaments that we played in, but you still have to block and tackle, so that’s what we’re trying to focus on now,” said Strickland.

During the pre-season, Strickland said the team is still making mistakes, missing tackles on defense and missing assignments on offense.

“We haven’t really hit since last December up until last week, so we’ve just got to get back in tune with football,” said Strickland.

The Bulldogs won’t be seeing any new opponents this season, but will have their eye on Fairfield Central High School as one of their biggest match-ups during the season.

“Clinton, in the past has always been a big rival for us and of course Mid-Carolina, which is usually the last game of the season, is always a big game for us,” said Strickland.

Senior Tyriq Goodman will be serving as quarterback for the Bulldogs, having played 14 games last year.

“Tyriq was behind Shai Werts and didn’t get a lot of playing time. We couldn’t play him on junior varsity because he was our backup, so he



2017 Newberry Bulldogs Varsity Team

missed a year but got a lot of valuable experience and has gotten better and better. Any time you play a 14 game season at quarterback, it’s always good to have someone like that,” said Strickland.

Strickland said altogether the team lost about 20 seniors, which didn’t compare to the prior year when the team lost 33 seniors.

“The good thing about

these seniors is that they have been playing for a couple of years so they have a lot of experience. You’re always sad to see seniors go but that’s the thing about high school football, somebody’s got to take their place. But we feel like we’ve got a good nucleus of kids to compete, but we are returning a good many starters. We’ve got about eight on offense and seven on defense,

so we’re really pleased about that,” said Strickland.

Returning this season is senior running back Amir Abrams, who gained almost 2,500 yards last season and scored 33 touchdowns for the Bulldogs.

“We’ve also got three returning offensive lineman who played all last year. They are helping these young kids out in making calls and helping

get them in the right place,” said Strickland.

Strickland also said repetition will be key in preventing missed blocks and tackles.

“Repetition is important and putting them in game situations. We’re working to get better at it, it’s just something that you have to go do in order to get better at it,” said Strickland.

Overall, Strickland

is happy with his team and is focused on taking the field and playing.

“We feel like we’ve got a good group of players. But there’s nothing like experience, that’s why you go through the pre-season. We scrimmage really good teams and I think that does nothing but make you better,” said Strickland.

Reach Kelly Duncan at 803-768-3123 ext. 1868 or on Twitter @TheNBOnews.

COACHING STAFF

Head Coach/QBs: Phil Strickland
Running backs: Art Boozer
Assistant running backs: Brian Gordon
Defensive line: Cedric Jeter
Offensive line: Hu Mills
Assistant offensive line: Cornelius Cromer
Linebackers: Bill Harvey
Assistant linebackers: Brian Redd
Receivers: Derrick Hamilton
Assistant receivers: Peyton Hill
Defensive backs: Tom Eachues
Assistant defensive backs: Kelvin Whitener
Athletic Director: Chad Cary
Principal: Kyle Cannon
Athletic Trainer: Caitlyn Hart

2017 NEWBERRY BULLDOGS VARSITY FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 18: Keenan
 Aug. 25: Ninety Six
 Sept. 1: @ Batesburg-Leesville
 Sept. 8: Chapin (Homecoming)
 Sept. 15: @ Fairfield Central
 Sept. 29: @ Woodruff
 Oct. 6: Broome
 Oct. 13: @ Clinton
 Oct. 19: @ Chapman
 Oct. 27: Mid-Carolina
 Kick-off is 7:30 p.m. for all games

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2017 NEWBERRY BULLDOGS ROSTER

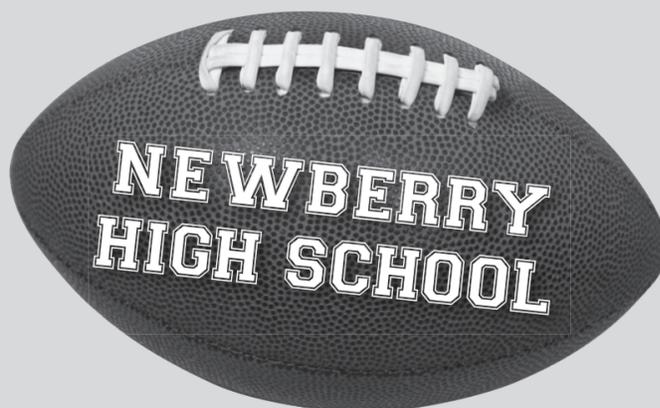
No.	Name	Grade	Position	No.	Name	Grade	Position
1	Jaleel Gillam	12	WR/DB	44	Amir Griffin	11	DL
2	Daniel Goings III	12	DB	46	Javon Gallman	11	LB
3	Zymere Epps	11	WR/DB	50	Dalton Reynolds	12	DL/OL
4	Mytalleek Brooks	11	DB	52	Kobe Sligh	11	OL/DL
5	James Werts	12	DL/RB	53	Keontae Singleton	12	OL
6	Gabe Harmon	12	LB	54	Amir Cromer	12	OL
7	Tyriq Goodman	12	QB	55	Alec Blackmon	12	OL
8	Terrell Rogers	12	DB	57	Jarious Singley	12	OL
9	Darius Stephens-York	12	WR	58	Bentrez Douglas	11	OL
10	Jeremy Jackson	12	WR	59	Jordan Johnson	11	RB
11	Justin Reed	11	DL/TE	62	Brady Ruff	12	OL/DL
12	Ahmad Willis	11	LB/WR/QB	65	Raekwon Ruff	11	DL
14	Asaris Good	10	WR/DB	66	Demarcus Scurry	11	DL
15	Malik Johnson	12	DB	67	Tavaris Kinard	11	OL/DL
16	Zay Chalmers	10	R	68	Esco Rikard	11	DL
17	Casey Shealy	11	LB	70	Devon Truesdale	11	OL
18	Davonta Ruff	10	WR	71	Michael Sosa	11	OL/DL
19	Willie Young	12	LB/RB	73	Stanley Davenport	11	DL
20	Marcus Moore	11	DB/RB	77	James Sims III	12	OL
21	ZyKeith Scott	12	DB	78	Murray Sheppard	12	OL
22	Amir Abrams	12	RB	80	Collin Springer	12	LS
24	Tailyn Caldwell	10	DB	82/74	Caleb Bickley	12	TE
25	Rae Wilmore	10	RB/DL	84	Ny Downing	11	TE/DE
26	Clayton Day	11	LB	85	Darius Gray	11	TE/DE
28	Shaquille Nelson	11	DB	86	Cyrus Shoaf	12	LB/TE
29	KT Robinson	11	LB/RB	87	Nastradamus Johnson	11	DB
30	Kentrell Caldwell	10	LB/RB	89	John Eason	11	WR
34	Tony Mason	12	LB/RB	90	Joshua Epps	12	DL
37	Frank Deleski	12	DB	91	Ulises Benitez	12	K/P
42	Maurice Huguley	11	DL	92	Berkley Derrick	12	P
				93	Jovanny Benitez	12	K/P



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2017 Newberry Academy Varsity Football Team

Eagles ready for third year of varsity football

By Andrew Wigger
awigger@newberryobserver.com

NEWBERRY — The Newberry Academy Eagles are getting ready to enter their third year of varsity football and Head Coach Benji Sease said he is looking forward to having a winning record and making it to the state playoffs. “We won three games last year. That was a big improvement over our first year. The first year we pretty much got it handed to us. Last year we were competitive in every game, won three games. I say it is a difference between getting beat and losing, the first year we got beat a lot, last year we

just lost a few games,” he said. This season the Eagles are down a few players. Last year they had 15 players and this year they are down to 12. Sease said they still have a good bit of talent. “We will be able to play. We had to modify some stuff in practice, and we are not doing a jamboree this year because it is a glorified scrimmage and it is another chance to get somebody hurt,” Sease said. “We modified practice where we are not hitting as much and trying to take as much risk out of practice so that we can make it through the season.”

While an injury would not prevent the Eagles from playing, it would significantly hurt the team. Since there are only 12 players on the team, every player will have a position on offense and defense. Sease said his players are used to playing on both sides. The team will also continue with the Spread Offense. “I expect us, if we need three yards, to be able to hand it off and pound it up the middle, if we need to, or if we need to throw it I expect to be able to throw it outside on the edge to Luke Allen or Wes Huffstutler,” he said.

The majority of the Eagles are returning players this year, but two new players have been added to the team. Elijah Longshore (offensive line/defensive line) is coming over from Newberry High School. “After a week of practice he has really come around and made a big improvement, just after one week of practice,” he said. Wes Huffstutler is coming to The Academy from Chapin. Sease said he is a 6-foot-4, 205 pound athlete who has experience playing basketball. He has not played football since the seventh grade. “He is just a gifted

athlete. He has made a quick transition in one week,” Sease said. This year’s quarterback is Matthew Cole and while Cole did not play last year, he did play his ninth grade year. Sease said he took some time off and has not played for about two years, and this is his first year back. “He played quarterback for the middle school JV team that ninth grade year. He has a good arm, good decision making skills, is a good leader. He is a natural quarterback,” he said. One change to the team is Daniel Bannister, who has played running back for

the Eagles, but this year was moved to the eagle back position. “That is kind of a do-all position for us, run the ball, catch the ball. So that is our biggest difference on offense, moving him to that new position,” Sease said. The teams the Eagles will play will be the same as last year, the only difference being is that all of last year’s home games are now away, and all of the away games are now home. Sease said this year’s rivals will be Laurens Academy and Richard Winn Academy. Reach Andrew Wigger at 803-276-0625 ext. 1867 or on Twitter @TheNBOnews.

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2017 NEWBERRY ACADEMY EAGLES VARSITY FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Sept. 1 @ Northside Christian Academy
Sept. 8 @ Wardlaw Academy
Sept. 15 Richard Winn Academy
Sept. 22 OPEN
Sept. 29 Laurens Academy
Oct. 6 Cathedral Academy (Homecoming)
Oct. 13 @ King Academy
Oct. 20 Clarendon Hall
Oct. 27 @ Jefferson Davis Academy
Kick-off is 7:30 p.m. for all games

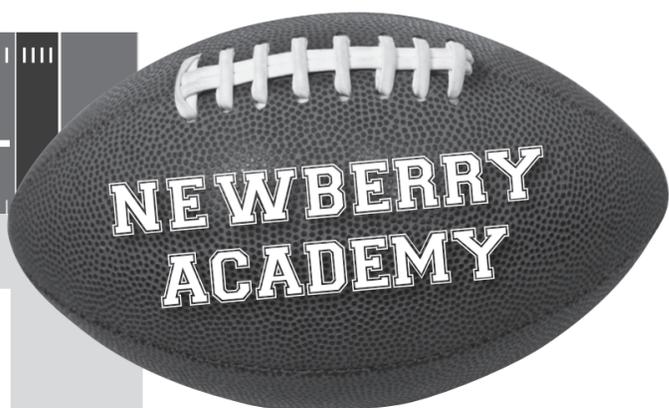
2017 NEWBERRY ACADEMY EAGLES ROSTER

No.	Name	Grade	Position
1	Matthew Cole	12	QB/DB
3	Will Nobles	10	DL/OL
5	Austin Dehart	10	RB/DL
6	Wes Huffstutler	12	WR/LB
10	Zach May	10	WR/DB
11	Jimmy Franklin	12	OL/DL
12	Johnny Riggs	12	OL/DL
13	Daniel Bannister	12	RB/LB
28	Luke Allen	11	WR/DB
32	Hunter Taylor	10	OL/DL
64	Bryce Horn	12	OL/DL

COACHING STAFF

Head coach: Benji Sease
Offensive line/co-defensive coordinator: Rick Doran
Defensive coordinator: Mike Taylor
Offensive coordinaotr: Clarke Dehart

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A Great Season

CNNGA

Go Teams!



2017 Mid-Carolina Rebels Varsity Football Team

Mid-Carolina Rebels ready to rumble into new season

By Kelly Duncan
kduncan@newberryobserver.com

PROSPERITY — Mid-Carolina High School head coach Louie Alexander and his Rebels are making sure they are ready for Week 1 of the upcoming football season.

“We are really optimistic. This is a really good bunch of kids. Our younger kids coming in seem to understand what we’re trying to do and our older kids have really gelled together through summer workouts. I think it’s a much closer knit bunch and they seem to all get along and that has a lot to do with how we progress,” said Alexander.

Going into a new season, Alexander said the team lost around 20 seniors, with between 17 and 18 returning for the Rebels.

“We lost some pretty

good players, but with that being said, we have some kids that can step in and do their job. It’s very exciting to go into practice just because of the attitude the kids have. Losing people definitely hurts, but when you have people that can step in and do the job it’s exciting to see where they can go also,” said Alexander.

As of right now, Cade Ruff will be quarterback for the Rebels, along with CC Boyd. Alexander said plans are to use Boyd in dual spots at wide out and to be a backup to Ruff.

“Cade played some quarterback for us last year when Corey (Stone) got hurt. He’s got reps for quarterback for three years and he was a backup to Corey the last couple of years. Honestly, if I thought we had a play-maker out wide that could have

done the things Cade did the last couple of years at wide receiver, Cade very easily could have been our quarterback,” said Alexander. “Cade is such a dynamic player with a ball in his hands, ran great routes, did great things at wide out that I didn’t feel like we had. Cade throws it really well, he’s poised, has got tremendous leadership skills that kids kind of flock to.”

Alexander also praised Boyd, whom he called a “quiet leader.”

“CC is a young kid. He was our junior varsity quarterback last year. Most of his reps right now are going to come at wide receiver or in the secondary. He’s a quiet leader. He does things pretty well and he does it the right way. I think we’ve got a really good one in Cade and grooming another really good one in CC.

They both just do everything you ask them to do,” said Alexander.

Alexander said their main goal is getting everyone to their Week 1 game against Chapin.

“It’s good to have rivals but in our situation with the kids that we have, we have to treat everybody like a rival. You can’t get up just to play Chapin or Newberry and I think honestly that’s what we’ve been doing the past couple of years. We have to do a better job as a staff and the kids have to do a better job at understanding that every Friday night is just as important as the previous Friday night,” said Alexander.

During preseason practices, Alexander and his coaching staff worked with new offensive and defensive line-man, where they have continued to teach the

fundamentals to help the team get better as a group.

“It’s been all about trying to get them to go in the right direction and I think we haven’t been very physical the last couple of years. In the summer, you can’t really work on being physical, but you can preach being physical. We’ve got a good bunch, we’re changing things up front to maybe play more to our strengths and what our abilities allow us to do,” said Alexander. “The last couple of years, we may have asked kids to do things we physically weren’t capable of doing, so we’ve gone back to the drawing board and we’re going to see where that takes us.”

The Rebels are also in the process of healing injured players. CC Boyd is recovering from

a concussion, Preston Bookman and Jarvis Green are dealing with ankle issues, Hunter Sanders is tending to a knee injury and Sam Moore is going through concussion protocol.

“We’re looking forward to a new season. A lot of these guys were a part of something the last couple of years that we all weren’t very proud of and with the coming of a new season it gives up all something to look forward to. We work really hard and we’re going to try to approach each week with different milestones and different goals. Instead of looking record-wise at the end of the year, we’re truly looking to get from week to week and day to day,” said Alexander.

Reach Kelly Duncan at 803-768-3123 ext. 1868 or on Twitter @TheNBOnews.

2017 MID-CAROLINA REBELS ROSTER

No.	Name	Grade	Position
1	Curtis Graham	12	RB/LB
2	Preston Bookman	10	RB/LB
3	Christopher “CC” Boyd	10	QB/WR/DB
4	Jalen Bates-Caldwell	12	SLOT/DB
5	Jack Edwards	11	WR/DB
6	Tre’ Sims	11	RB/DB
7	Manny Wadsworth	11	WR/DB
8	Jerel Dewalt	11	WR/DE
9	Mason Hawkins	12	TE/HB/DB
10	Cade Ruff	12	QB/DB
11	Shawon Sims	12	SLOT/DB
12	Tyrone Coleman	12	WR/DB
14	Mikel Livingston	11	WR/DB
15	Jackie Stroud	11	WR/DB
16	Garett Shealy	11	TE/LB
17	Colby Samuels	11	WR/DB
18	EJ Gallman	12	RB/DB
19	Fritz Lewis	10	QB/DB
20	BJ Tobe	10	SLOT/DB
21	Dee Wise	11	SLOT/DB
24	Drew Moore	11	RB/LB
25	Zacorian Byrd	10	WR/DB
26	Troy Richburg	11	TE/LB
27	Tyrese Gray	10	SLOT/DB
28	Rhett Shealy	11	TE/LB
32	Martinez Gallman	10	RB/DE
33	Zach Frick	10	RB/DB
34	Jarvis Green	12	RB/DE
38	Hunter Sanders	12	TE/DE
40	Sam Moore	11	TE/LB
44	Rod Byrd	12	TE/DE
51	Grey Morris	12	OL/DL
52	James Davenport	10	OL/DE
54	Micah Amick	12	OL/DE
58	Jack Lominick	12	OL/DL
60	Will Morse	12	OL/DL
63	Brody Harkins	12	OL/DL
64	Miles Dewalt	12	OL/DL
72	DJ Sims	12	OL/DE
75	Parker Pitts	10	OL/DL
76	Xavier Holley	11	OL/DL

COACHING STAFF

Head Coach: Louie Alexander
OL: Dylan Fulmer
RB: Lindsey Stribble
WR: Clay Cotney
TE: Jackie Harris
DL: Steven Flinchum
LB DC: Ethan Campbell
LB: Carl Moore
CB: Kyle Branham
S: Gary Wilbanks

SCHOOL STAFF

Principal: Ray Cooper
AP: Zeb Reid
AP: Neda Epps
AD: Louie Alexander
Band: Brandon Armstrong
Cheer: Sherry Bedenbaugh
Athletic Secretary: Jennifer Long
DFO: Charles Seibert
ASST: Ed Branham
Video: Ludy Werts
AT: Amber Williams

2017 MID-CAROLINA REBELS VARSITY SCHEDULE

Aug. 25: @ Chapin
 Sept. 1: Saluda
 Sept. 8: @ B-L
 Sept. 15: @ Ninety Six
 Sept. 22: Abbeville
 Sept. 29: @ Broome
 Oct. 6: Clinton (Homecoming)
 Oct. 13: Chapman
 Oct. 20: Woodruff (Senior Night)
 Oct. 27: @ Newberry
 Kick-off for all games is 7:30 p.m.



Wolverines ready for new season

By Andrew Wigger

awigger@newberryobserver.com

WHITMIRE — The Whitmire High School Wolverines are back and ready for a new season of varsity football.

This season fans will see a few new players on the field, a few of which will be starters.

This year's new players include Logan Ricks (tight end), Caleb Bowers (defensive end/tight end), Wyatt Crase (tight end), Chandler Crumley (linebacker/full back), Nate Stanley (defensive back/wingback), Chansel Minick (tight end), Joey Rosenfeld (defensive line/offensive line), Jihad Fisher (defensive line/offensive line), and Gage Gedeist-Farmer (offensive line/defensive line)

Crumley, Stanley, and Gedeist-Farmer are all starters this year.

Head Coach Charlie Jenkins said newcomer Tymere White is the strongest guy on the team. Crumley is big, strong and athletic, Stanley is smart, strong and quick and Gedeist-Farmer is big, strong and smart.

"They seem to be acclimating well to varsity football. Since its my fourth season these guys ran our offense as middle schoolers seventh, eighth and ninth grade. So the adjustments come with the speed and size of the opponents and the intensity of a varsity game," Jenkins said.

Jenkins said key returning players this season include defensive back JR Epps, who is a returning starter at cornerback and Quentin Aughtry, a defensive back/wingback that Jenkins said is the best defensive player. He also said Kyle Hunt, who slots in at defensive back/wingback, will have a bigger role this year.

Other key players include:

Trey Lyles, a defensive back/wingback who



2017 Whitmire Community School Varsity Football Team

has an injured ankle, but will be back soon

Defensive back Lomas Davis will be a four year letterman

Alan Mikel Stanley, a defensive end/tight end, is a two way starter

Garrett Jenkins, a defensive end/tight end who is a new starter

Jaylen Brown at defensive back/wingback

Bailey Holloman at quarterback/defensive back

Matthew Prather, a returning linebacker/fullback, was a leading tackler as a freshman

Linebacker Alex Little will be four year letterman

Donte Fisher, offensive line/defensive line, is one of the Wolverines big guys

Jordan Stone, offensive line/defensive line, will be a contender to be All Region this year

CJ Saverance, at

defensive end/offensive line, is strong and smart

Andrew Felker, offensive line/defensive line, is the returning center.

"Bailey Holloman (quarterback) returns for his second year under center. We threw a lot at him last year and he made a lot of progress. I look forward to him having a great senior year," Jenkins said. "Bailey earned his spot with his athleticism and a strong arm."

This season will also see some changes in the returning players positions. CJ Saverance moves from tight end to offensive tackle.

"CJ might have the best hands on the team but we do not throw it too much and we need his size at tackle. He is a team first guy, I am still going to try and throw him a few passes if we get a chance," Jenkins said.

This season the Wolverines will also see a new athletic trainer on the field.

Raegan Smith, a graduate of Indiana University and a graduate student at the University of South Carolina, replaces Beverly Wood who took an assistant principal position at Mid-Carolina Middle School.

The Wolverines will play the same teams as last year, the only change will be that every home game last year will be an away game this year and vice versa.

"We have a tough schedule. Wagener-Salley returns just about everybody from last year's team and they beat us 36-0 last year. Ridge Spring-Monetta is a constant in Class A. Lewisville played for the Upper State Championship last year. Bethune-Bowman returns

everybody and they went 7-3 last year," Jenkins said. "In our region we have all been rivals for a long time. Calhoun Falls, Ware Shoals, Dixie, and the reigning champions McCormick. McCormick has Duke commit Mateo Durant back for one more season."

This season, Jenkins said they will need to keep it simple and add a little bit as they go through the season. He said that their biggest challenge will be depth this season.

"More players will have to play both ways ... offense and defense. Our strength will be secondary play on defense. We also return our leading tackler player-sophomore Linebacker Matthew Prather. Having our quarterback returning is very big for us," he said.

This season the Wolverines will continue the

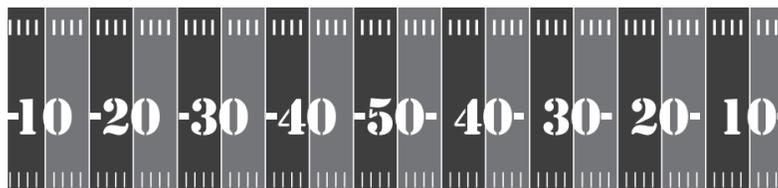
Double Wing Offense, which is an offense that features two tight ends, two wingbacks, one fullback and a quarterback in the backfield. This offense utilizes zero line splits. As for defense, they will start out in a 3-5-3.

"Coach Campbell will adjust our strategy and personnel according to who we are playing," Jenkins said.

This season Jenkins said he is looking forward to the Week Zero game against Wagener-Salley.

"It's not for a trophy and its a non-region game, but that game has stuck with me for a year. They thumped us pretty good last year. It was a gut check and last year we did not respond well. I want to see if we have improved," he said.

Reach Andrew Wigger at 803-276-0625 ext. 1867 or on Twitter @TheNBOnews.



2017 WHITMIRE WOLVERINES ROSTER

No.	Name	Grade	Position
1	JR Epps	11	DB
2	Quentin Aughtry	12	DB/WB
3	Kyle Hunt	11	DB/WB
4	Trey Lyles	11	DB/WB
5	Lomas Davis	12	DB
6	Christian McLaren	11	DB
7	Alan Mikel Stanley	11	DE/TE
8	Garrett Davis	11	DB
9	Garrett Jenkins	11	DE/TE
10	Jaylen Brown	11	DB/WB
11	Bailey Holloman	12	QB/DB
13	Ben Burleson	12	LB/OL
14	Logan Ricks	10	TE
15	Caleb Bowers	10	DE/TE
20	Wyatt Crase	10	TE
22	Chandler Crumley	9	FB
23	Matthew Prather	10	LB/FB
25	Alex Little	12	LB
31	Nate Stanley	9	DB/WB
32	Chansel Minick	12	TE
50	Donte Fisher	11	OL/DL
52	Jordan Stone	11	OL/DL
54	Terrence Gibson	11	OL/DL
58	Joey Rosenfeld	11	DL/OL
59	CJ Saverance	11	DE/OL
60	Tymere White	11	NG
63	Jihad Fisher	10	OL/DL
71	K.D. Wicker	12	OL/DL
73	Andrew Felker	10	OL/DL
78	Gage Gedeist-Farmer	10	OL/DL

2017 WHITMIRE WOLVERINES VARSITY FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 18: @ Wagener-Salley
 Aug. 25: Great Falls
 Sept. 1: Ridge Spring-Monetta (Hall of Fame Game)
 Sept. 8: @ Lewisville Away
 Sept. 15: Branchville (Homecoming)
 Sept. 22: @ Bethune-Bowman
 Sept. 29: Ware Shoals (Youth Night)
 Oct. 13: Calhoun Falls (Senior Recognition)
 Oct. 20: @ Dixie
 Oct. 27: @ McCormick
 Kick-off is 7:30 p.m. for all games

COACHING STAFF

Athletic Director: Donald Addis
Head Coach: Charlie Jenkins
Varsity Staff: Andrew Campbell, Jarrod King, Steve Lockwood, Chris Martin, John McCarley
Equipment: Frankie Wilbanks
Stats: Terry Wilbanks
Athletic Trainer: Raegan Smith
Cheer Coach: Gwen Clark



Thanks, Coaches!
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Good Luck This Season!

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Newberry College football warming up



Photos Courtesy of Newberry College

The most significant change from a season ago comes at the quarterback position, where Nick Jones is expected to take over for departed Harlon Hill Trophy finalist and SAC Offensive Player of the Year Raleigh Yeldell.



Wide receiver Markell Castle, whose 976 receiving yards in 2016 led the SAC and ranked third in Newberry history, is expected to be a huge contributor to the Wolves' success on the gridiron this season.



The Wolves have a challenging schedule in 2017 with six games scheduled away from Setzler Field. The Wolves host 2016 playoff team UNC Pembroke on Sept. 30 but travel for critical SAC matchups at Carson-Newman (Sept. 23), Lenoir-Rhyne (Oct. 7), Wingate (Oct. 28), and Catawba (Nov. 4).

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Asst. HC/Def. Coordinator Stephen Flynn leading a drill.

Courtesy of Newberry College

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Newberry College ready to defend SAC title

By **Randall Stewart**
For The Newberry Observer

NEWBERRY – By any measure, the 2016 season was arguably the best in Newberry College history.

An undefeated season in the South Atlantic Conference, just the 16th team in the 42-year history of the league to accomplish the feat. The second outright and third overall conference title in school history. A record-tying 10 consecutive wins. A No. 16 final national ranking. A still-active 10-game SAC winning streak that stretches back 22 months.

Certainly a lot to live up to for the 2017 squad that was picked by the league's coaches to defend their conference crown, the first time in school history Newberry

has been tabbed as the preseason conference favorite.

"(Being picked first) is an honor, there's no question about it," Coach Todd Knight commented during a recent media appearance with Columbia's WIS-TV. "But I'm excited to see how our kids are going to react to it. We've always been the hunter around here. Now, all of a sudden, the role has changed and we are the hunted at this point."

The most significant change from a season ago comes at the quarterback position, where Nick Jones is expected to take over for departed Harlon Hill Trophy finalist and SAC Offensive Player of the Year Raleigh Yeldell.

Jones saw action in six games last season with one start, going 21-for-30

for 320 yards and a pair of touchdowns. He also rushed 23 times for 77 yards and a score.

Fortunately for Jones, he'll have two preseason first team all-SAC weapons at his disposal in wide receiver Markell Castle, whose 976 receiving yards in 2016 led the SAC and ranked third in Newberry history, and tight end Baptiste Stagers. He'll also be protected by an offensive line that boasts three preseason all-conference selections.

Defensively, the Wolves are led by inside linebacker Joe Blue and defensive end Jamarcus Henderson. The duo makes up half of Newberry's contingent on the preseason all-SAC first team, along with defensive end Josh Parker and outside linebacker Will

Elm.

Blue and Elm finished the season ranked first and fourth in the SAC, respectively, in solo tackles. Blue finished first or second on the team in 10 of Newberry's 12 games last season and reached double figures on five occasions. Elm had seven or more tackles on four occasions, including a team season-high 13 stops at Mars Hill.

Henderson is Division II's fourth-leading returner in tackles for loss after racking up 22.0 stops behind the line of scrimmage for 95 yards lost in 2016. He was named a second team All-American by Don Hansen's Football Gazette last season. Parker had 36 tackles, 4.0 tackles for loss, and a pair of sacks as a key reserve.

With weapons at so

many positions, Knight doesn't expect many newcomers to contribute heavily in 2017. But a few players in their first year with the program have caught his eye.

"Sean Smith is a transfer from Middle Tennessee," the ninth-year head coach said. "Another Lowcountry kid for us, from Summerville. He plays tight end, and the funny thing is he and Baptiste (Stagers) lived like five miles apart back home. He's really pushing Bap. We're actually planning to play with double tight ends a lot. We're really excited about what he brings to the offense."

"We've also got a couple of guys up front that have been impressive in camp so far. Cam Williams played at Lexington and Jacob

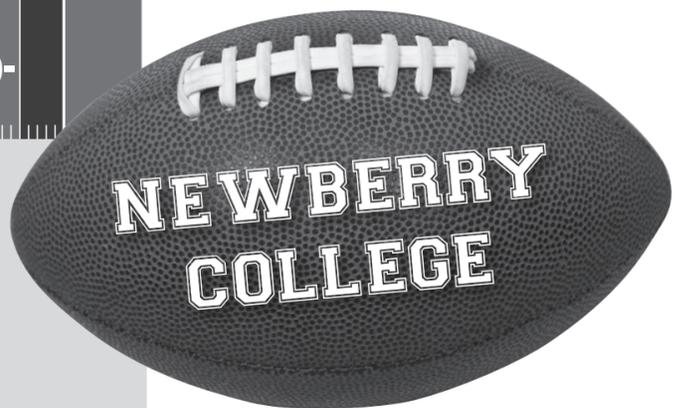
Springs went to Green Sea Floyds. Both of them have looked really good at this point. We think Kevin Weber, a transfer from Brevard, can make an impact in the kicking game. And we're very deep at tailback, but Catriez Cook from Gilbert has been really impressive so far."

The Wolves have a challenging schedule in 2017 with six games scheduled away from Setzler Field. The Wolves host 2016 playoff team UNC Pembroke on Sept. 30 but travel for critical SAC matchups at Carson-Newman (Sept. 23), Lenoir-Rhyne (Oct. 7), Wingate (Oct. 28), and Catawba (Nov. 4).

The 2017 season begins with a trip to Division I FCS power The Citadel on Sept. 2 at 6 p.m.

2017 NEWBERRY COLLEGE WOLVES SCHEDULE

Sept. 2: @ The Citadel — 6 p.m.
 Sept. 9: @ Virginia Union — 4 p.m.
 Sept. 16: Virginia University of Lynchburg — 4 p.m.
 Sept. 23: @ Carson-Newman — 1 p.m.
 Sept. 30: UNC Pembroke — 4 p.m. (Family Weekend)
 Oct. 7: @ Lenoir-Rhyne — 2 p.m.
 Oct. 14: Tusculum — 1 p.m.
 Oct. 21: Limestone — 4 p.m. (Homecoming)
 Oct. 28: @ Wingate — 6 p.m.
 Nov. 4: @ Catawba — 1:30 p.m.
 Nov. 11: Mars Hill — p.m. (Senior Day — Military Appreciation Day)



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