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# FALL

## SPORTS PREVIEW



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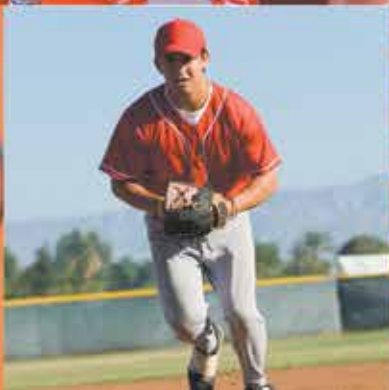
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# Tigers make critical progress as they prepare for 2021

Head coach Rials calls Region 1 field the SEC West of Class 6A

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**  
tony@gulfcoastmedia.com

**BAY MINETTE** — Coach Scott Rials came to Baldwin County High School last season and like every other team had to adjust to football in the time of COVID-19.

He lost about four months of serious initial preparation but feels good about his Tigers' progress going forward. Progress he called critical to future success as he begins his second season at BCHS.

"We feel like we are headed in the right direction for our team," Rials said. "The players have worked hard. Had a good spring and a good offseason. But just about any offseason would be good



SUBMITTED BY TINA COVINGTON

## Baldwin County head coach Scott Rials

compared to what we went through last year. Had a great June and we are excited about where we're headed and what we've got instore. We've gained back what we lost and are headed in the right direction. And we have a game in a month,

so it's time to focus," Rials said.

He added that the Class 6A Region 1 field is one of the toughest in the state and compared it to the South Eastern Conference's West Division in the NCAA.

The 2020 Tigers lost five

games in a row, two of which were forfeits due to COVID. However, they closed out the season with wins over Citronelle, Gulf Shores and LeFlore.

He said coming in with the COVID complications taking place in his first season made things tough. But he said the circumstances that his and other teams went through made for a stronger team spirit.

"We have learned and grown together as a staff and hopefully that will go down to the team and we can also all work and learn together. But, we have a great bond, the players and the coaches," he added. "The relationship we have is strong. Like the old saying, 'What don't kill you makes you stronger.' So I'm proud of the guys' work ethic and the direction that we're going."

Now with a fall and spring behind him, he's

getting ready for kickoffs on the road at Mary G. Montgomery Aug. 20 and Mattie T. Blount Sept. 3. The Tigers then come home to Lyle Underwood Stadium's Simmons Field to host their first home game with Region 1 rival Spanish Fort on Sept. 10.

"Everyone has been working hard together and has worked together really well. This is an awesome group. We will continue to work hard and prepare for this season."

Due to COVID-related forfeits last season, Baldwin County High has to play seven games of the 2021 season away.

Asked if the term "Road Tigers" might be a rally cry for the team this season, Rials said "Heck yes, we'll be the Road Tigers!"

He added that he feels privileged to be a Baldwin County Tiger. "It's been a blessing to be here and everyone has been so wel-

coming. It feels like home and that is what you want, to go to a place where everyone makes you feel welcome. We are blessed to have that happen."

The 2021 Tigers have only three starters to replace this year.

Rials first head-coaching job was at South Academy in Montgomery from 1998 to 2003. Later at Elba High School, he led the Tigers to a Class 2A state championship in 2011, the Tigers went to the Class 2A State Championship and beat the Tanner Rattlers with a 34-14 score. After nine seasons at Elba, he led the Satsuma Gators for two seasons on the bayou. In 2015 he took the Luverne Tigers into state-championship contention. The Tigers then made it to the 2018, 2A State Championship but took the state runner-up trophy after an embattled loss to Fyffe's Red Devils 21-19.

# Admirals hope to make the Class 3A playoffs again and sail beyond first round

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**  
tony@gulfcoastmedia.com

**DAPHNE** — Bayside Academy head coach Phil Lazenby said the 2021 Admirals are not high in number, but are high in drive, skill and football smarts. He also knows they play in one of, if not the toughest, leagues in the state, AHSAA Class 3A's Region 1.

"The numbers aren't there. We don't have a lot of players, but we've got good, talented kids," he said. "And we feel like we are going to have a good football team this year. We have experienced players coming back. About six starters returning on each side of the ball, so we have that to build on. Senior class isn't huge but we'll have



SUBMITTED PHOTO

## Bayside head coach Phil Lazenby

about 12 who will be seniors. We also have some new kids who came out for the first time as well."

Regarding the strong points of the Admirals this season, he said his offensive line's experience

will be a big plus.

"We have four guys with a lot of experience and three of them have been starters for us," he said. "We also have more size up front than we have had before. And with our

starting quarterback and our starting running back coming back, we should be in good shape to run behind these guys."

Entering his 15th season at the Bayside helm, Lazenby also has one of the most experienced coaching staffs in the state, perhaps the country, including former head coaches and coordinators with a cumulative experience of 130 years on the sideline and practice field. The Admirals' skipper picked up his 100th coaching victory last year.

He said he has learned a lot from his players/students and the game by teaching what he has learned.

"Learned a lot from a lot of kids and it's been fun and I have learned a

lot from the kids, but also from my fellow coaches, some of whom coaches at 6A, 7A levels. So, it's also very nice to know that when I left this morning to come here. I left the kids in the hands of very, very capable people who do it right."

Regarding the COVID chaos of last season, he felt that despite the disruptions he was proud of his players throughout. The Admirals made the playoffs and finished 8-3 in 2020. Their first-round loss was to eventual Class 3A runner-up Montgomery Catholic.

"The thing about last year is that we had a bunch more ups than we had downs," he said. "We lost two regular season games to one of the best teams T.R. Miller and the

No. 1 team at the time Flomaton. Those were the downs, but we never quit and we learned and got better for facing off against tough competition like that."

When asked if he ever thought of retiring, Lazenby added that a mentor of his once said: "You will know when your ready to retire because the wins will be become less exciting and the losses harder to take. "But I still enjoy a Friday night. I still enjoy knowing that your kids have gone out there and played hard and done their best. It may not even be a win, but knowing that they played their hardest. I appreciate that effort and every year I tell them that I cannot wait to watch you guys play."

# Coach King, Daphne planning back-to-back trips to 7A playoffs

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**  
tony@gulfcoastmedia.com

**DAPHNE** — The Jubilee City Trojans moved up to Class 7A last year, but jumping right into the bigger pond did not dampen their winning ways. Daphne High alum and Trojan head football coach Kenny King led his team to round two of the 2020 state playoffs. It was their fourth gridiron playoff appearance in his five seasons at DHS.

“I felt like last year was a big step for us to move up (to 7A), but it was also a crazy time,” he said referring to COVID issues and protocols. “Going from last spring and into summer training and trying to get everybody prepared, it was challenging. But everybody from the



TONY WHITEHEAD / STAFF PHOTOS

## Daphne head coach Kenny King

administration, the staff, the faculty and our guys all did a great job of getting our athletics back on point. The Alabama High School Athletic Associ-

ation did a great job of keeping athletics going. My coaching staff really put in the necessary work to stay informed and keep the kids safe and aware

of what was going on, but still also knowing that it could all be shutdown.”

Looking ahead to this fall he said he’s generally pleased with the work put in and the progress so far.

“We have a great group of players this year who are ready to step up along with 10 returning seniors, five on offense and five on defense. The younger guys are ready to step up and fill those shoes left by the class of 2021.

“These guys understand what it takes to be successful and are willing to put in the hard work. Last year that paid off with getting to host a playoff game. We hope to have that same kind of success and want to pick it up from where we were last year and keep it going this year.”

With key skilled posi-

tions to fill, Kaden Pierce is expected to start at quarterback following Trent Battle who signed with TCU. At running back DHS has Ty Bradley returning who is expected to pick up some of the yardage Battle produced as a run/pass threat.

“I think I’ll have a big role,” Bradley said. “I’ll carry it more, maybe catch it a little bit more. I just want to be a leader for the team.”

On defense, the Trojans will look to leadership from defensive end James Quinnelly who is a Memphis commit.

King also said he and the team are excited about plans for a major upgrade of Trojan Field at Jubilee Stadium beginning at the end of this season. The Trojans are

37-19 under the former DHS Trojan defensive end’s leadership over his five seasons at the helm of his alma mater.

As a former scholarship recipient and NCAA Division I player at the University of Alabama, King was asked what his thoughts were on college players being compensated for the use of their name, image and likeness (or NIL).

“I think as long as they do it right, it’s a great opportunity for student athletes for helping promote their school. If the school is making money off of an athlete’s performance and popularity, then the player should get a share of it.”

King was drafted by the Arizona Cardinals in 2003 and later played for the Baltimore Ravens.

# Still young Elberta program jumps from 1A into tough Class 5A Region 1

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**  
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**ELBERTA** — In a span of just two seasons of varsity football, the Elberta Warriors went from a Class 1A program to a team with a Class 5A, Region 1 schedule ahead of them.

The Warriors were 3-7 in 2020 in just their third season. They compete in the tough 5A, Region 1 with defending state champion St. Paul’s, perennial power UMS-Wright and rising Faith Academy.

The 2020 season was head coach Nathan McDaniel’s first at Elberta after six seasons as head coach of 6A Baldwin County. Because of the COVID restrictions last year he said that year two feels somewhat like year one.

“Last year was just weird across the board,



## Elberta head coach Nathan McDaniel

dealing with new classification, hurricanes. It was a whirlwind just getting started. And there was a time when we played three games in eight days. So I’m glad and excited now that we got an entire off-season under our belts and looking to prepare for this season.”

He added that the

change from 1A to 5A so quickly was a serious adjustment.

“We went from 40 kids the spring before (2020) to 119 this past spring. It went well, the gains they have made this offseason have been tremendous.”

He also said that higher numbers of players is a big advantage in prepara-

*‘We went from 40 kids the spring before (2020) to 119 this past spring. It went well, the gains they have made this offseason have been tremendous.’*

## NATHAN MCDANIEL Head coach

ration from preseason through the regular schedule and hopefully beyond.

“The biggest thing when you talk about numbers is just the ability to practice the way you want to. It’s hard when players have to divide their time like that,” said McDaniel.

“They don’t get the number of reps or as much work on tempo that you want each of them to get. And when you practice that many more kids,

it also builds depth down the road. So, when you go from playing Fruitdale and Foley JV to playing St. Paul’s, that’s a big difference.”

Elberta senior Seth Sims said the jump to 5A was exciting but challenging.

“We went from playing Fruitdale — and they were playing six or seven guys on both sides — to St. Paul’s rotating in two Division I running backs,” he said.

He feels good, however, about rising to meet the challenge.

“I expect a lot,” he said. “Defensively, we are night and day better. Way more confident. A lot more physical.”

McDaniel said about 95 of his players will dress out for the first few varsity games and a big advantage is having fewer players playing on both sides of the ball.

“Our kids have worked very hard and we’re really excited about the direction we’re headed,” he said.

After coming within six points of making the playoffs last year, he added that the next progression is to get to the postseason.

Besides St. Paul’s, the Warriors will also be competing with traditional Region 1 powerhouses Faith Academy and UMS-Wright.

# BALDWIN COUNTY

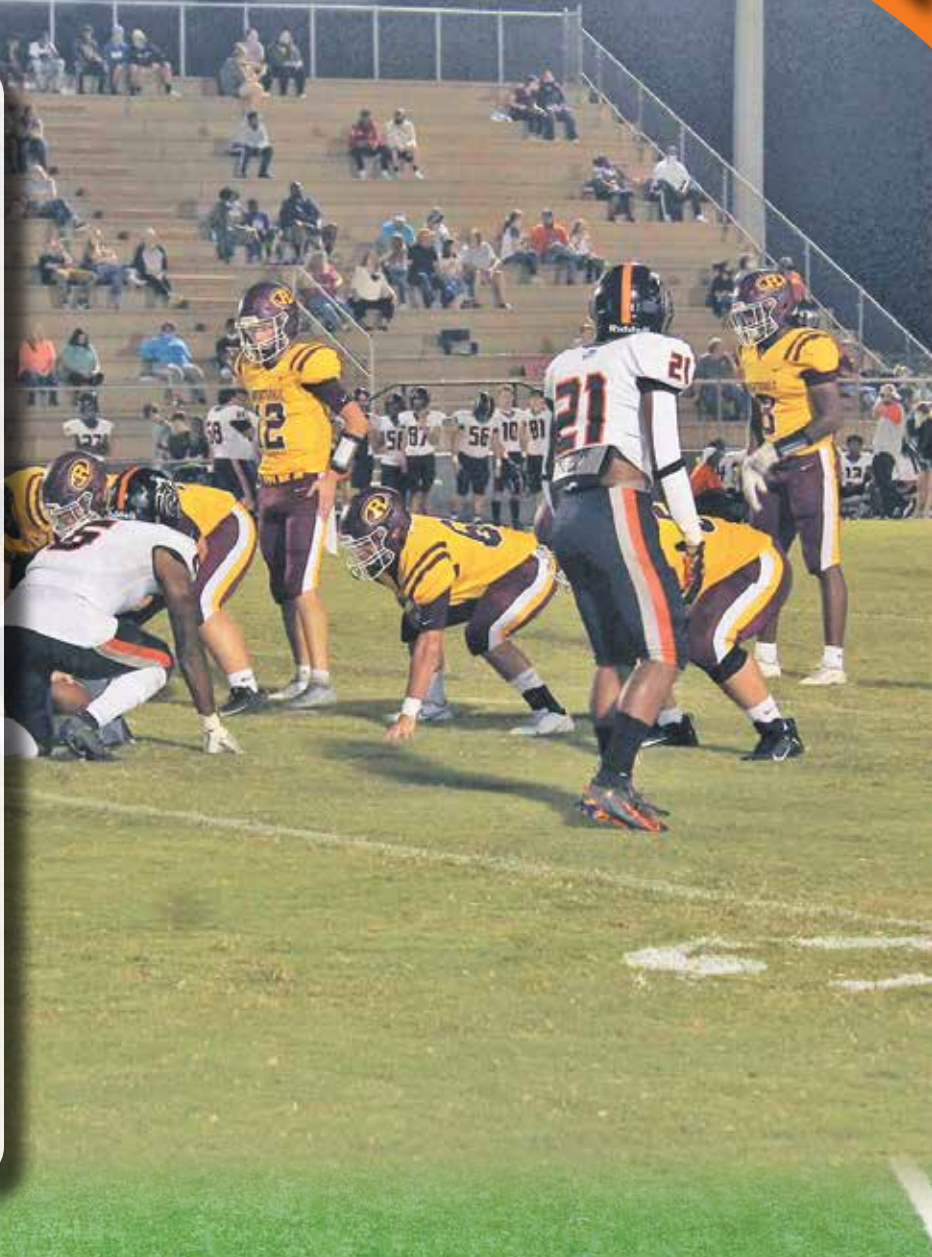


# TIGERS

## 2021 BALDWIN COUNTY HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 20	Mary G. Montgomery	AWAY
Aug. 27	Open	
Sept. 3	Blount	AWAY
Sept. 10	Saraland	HOME
Sept. 17	Spanish Fort	HOME
Sept. 24	Foley	AWAY
Oct. 1	McGill-Toolen (Mobile)	HOME
Oct. 8	Citronelle	AWAY
Oct. 15	Gulf Shores	AWAY
Oct. 22	Robertsdale	HOME
Oct. 29	LeFlore	AWAY

NOTE: Some open dates and others may be rescheduled. Visit school websites for updates.



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### 2021 BAYSIDE ACADEMY FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 20	Escambia County (Atmore)	HOME
Aug. 27	Houston Academy (Dothan)	HOME
Sept. 3	Excel	HOME
Sept. 10	Hillcrest-Evergreen	AWAY
Sept. 17	T.R. Miller (Brewton)	HOME
Sept. 24	B.C. Rain	AWAY
Oct. 1	Flomaton	AWAY
Oct. 8	Cottage Hill Christian (Mobile)	HOME
Oct. 15	Chickasaw	AWAY
Oct. 22	Open	
Oct. 29	Elberta	AWAY

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# 2021 DAPHNE TROJANS



## 2021 DAPHNE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 21	Lee (Montgomery)	AWAY
Aug. 27	Davidson (Mobile)	HOME
Sept. 3	Fairhope	AWAY
Sept. 10	Theodore	HOME
Sept. 17	Foley	AWAY
Sept. 24	Open	
Oct. 1	Alma Bryant (Irvington)	HOME
Oct. 8	Mary G. Montgomery	AWAY
Oct. 15	Murphy (Mobile)	HOME
Oct. 22	Baker	AWAY
Oct. 29	Spanish Fort	HOME

NOTE: Some open dates and others may be rescheduled. Visit school websites for updates.



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## 2021 ELBERTA HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 21	Gulf Shores	HOME
Aug. 27	Robertsdale	AWAY
Sept. 4	Faith Academy (Mobile)	HOME
Sept. 10	Satsuma	AWAY
Sept. 17	B.C. Rain	AWAY
Sept. 24	St. Michael Catholic	AWAY
Oct. 2	Open	
Oct. 7	LeFlore (Mobile)	HOME
Oct. 15	St. Paul's Episcopal (Mobile)	AWAY
Oct. 22	UMS Wright (Mobile)	HOME
Oct. 29	Bayside Academy	HOME

NOTE: Some open dates and others may be rescheduled. Visit school websites for updates.



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# The FHS Bucs hope to sail deeper into the playoffs this year

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**  
tony@gulfcoastmedia.com

**FAIRHOPE** — The Pirates have sailed into the playoffs for four straight seasons, but have run aground in the first round each time. Fairhope head coach Tim Carter said he feels good about returning this year despite losing some key contributors like quarterback Riley Leonard (now at Duke) to graduation. The Pirates finished 8-3 in 2020 after losing to Central-Phenix City in the first round of the Class 7A playoffs.

With 34 seniors coming into 2021 Carter hopes to make the first round again and beyond. But the Pirates will miss Leonard's multi-tasking run/pass threat playmaking



TONY WHITEHEAD / STAFF PHOTOS

## Fairhope head coach Tim Carter

contributions. However, Carter liked what he saw in their spring workouts.

"We had a very good spring this year. We

played Saraland in the spring game and we were very competitive," he said. "That's always a very good sign. Excited

going forward. We don't return a lot of starters but have a lot of guys who have been in the program and will contribute this year. The senior group is a real positive bunch of guys who are high energy, they get along well together. They showed a lot of camaraderie when we went on senior retreat. And we hope that spills over into a successful season. I know they will represent Fairhope and the fans well and with a lot of class."

The Pirates have only three returning starters on offense and two of those are on the line.

"And that's a good thing," Carter said. "It's always good to have that experience up front. Of course, we were hard hit in our skilled areas. Riley

Leonard is at Duke and will possibly start, Raimone Bradley moved on to Mississippi Gulf Coast. He made a lot of big plays for us. Both of them will be missed."

On defense Carter is looking to safety Blayne Myrick who also plays receiver and caught two touchdown passes in the playoff game last year. Myrick has an offer to play at UNA. On special teams Carter will depend again on senior all-purpose kicker/punter Luke Freer who has an offer to play at West Point.

"We are kind of a work in progress on the defensive side of the ball," he added. "So, we may just figure it out as we go."

At quarterback, Carter expects junior Caden Creel who understudied

Leonard to be ready this season.

"Caden and Riley worked closely together. Caden was our goal-line quarterback and got a lot of reps last year. He had a great spring and he's ready. He can throw and run. He's more that multi-faceted quarterback, so he presents different challenges to defend."

Creel's ties to Fairhope football lineage run deep, Carter added. "Caden is the great grandson of W. C. Majors for whom our field is named and we're excited to get going."

The Pirates open their 2021 season on the road at Spanish Fort High on Aug. 20. They will host Andalusia Aug. 27 for their first home game at W.C. Majors Field.

# The Pride looking to make 2021 a season of success on and off the field

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**  
tony@gulfcoastmedia.com

**FOLEY** — The Foley Lions head coach Deric Scott knows his team has what it takes for a turn toward more wins than losses. Although FHS did not notch a victory until winning two of their last three games, coach Scott liked what he saw in terms of improvement in 2020. And he believes Foley High is ready for a return to the powerhouse days of the 'Blue and Gold.' The Lions battled, but went 0-6, but kept battling and won 2-7 two of the final three games with both victories over Class 7A, Region 1 foes Mary Montgomery and Alma Bryant.

"I try to build our own reputation," he said. "But also tie back into our past success. The guys understand that and understand they are part of something that has been good



## Foley head coach Deric Scott

in the past. We talk about that tradition. I don't try and beat them over the head with it, but I do want them to know that we have a long track record of success in football and they can bring it back. But it's going to take work and effort on all our parts."

Scott brings in a traditional record of leading winning programs including a Class 6A state

runner-up red-map trophy at Vigor.

He said one of the keys to more wins is fielding a strong, consistent offensive line that helps create positive yardage and moving the chains downfield. In 2020, he started four O-linemen who had never played before but improved down the stretch.

"They played a lot of snaps last year and, as

*"Taking over in this type of pandemic was the most challenging thing I have done in my coaching career ... I was proud of how that was handled, but it was difficult on all of us."*

## DERIC SCOTT

Head coach

the season went on, they played better and better, so we hope that will be a strength," he said. "The offensive line got a lot of snaps last year and we hope that experience will be a big help for us this season."

In spite of the slow start, he was especially pleased with the strong closing effort. Especially while dealing with the COVID situation all season long.

"Last year was a kind of trial-by-fire," Scott said. "Taking over in this type of pandemic was the most challenging thing I have done in my coaching career. We spent more time protecting our guys from a medical standpoint than we did on other things. With protocols changing daily we had to stay on top of that and prepare for football. And I was proud of how that was handled, but it was difficult on all

of us."

Scott added that he's also looking for continuing improvement in key areas, particularly at offensive line. Last year he had only one of five starters who had previous OL experience. The Lions have eight players returning on offense and five on defense.

"Now we have an opportunity to go out on the field and right that by going out there and putting it on display and showing what we are capable of doing. And, do it every single time we go out there. Last year was hard, but I was excited with what we were able to do in a season with so much turmoil. We won two of our last three games and we were playing with great energy. The way we played in those games was encouraging. Guys were flying to the ball with energy and making plays."

# Hudspeth will lead Dolphins after success on the college level

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**  
tony@gulfcoastmedia.com

**GULF SHORES** — Mark Hudspeth will field his first team this season as the head coach of the Gulf Shores Dolphins after noted success as a head coach at the college level where he led his teams to four conference titles.

He is also bringing in assistants and coordinators with major collegiate resumes.

At offensive coordinator for the 'Phins will be Kenny Edenfield (former coach at South Alabama) and at defensive coordinator will be Brian Van

Gorder, a former Auburn DC with stints at Notre Dame and Bowling Green as well.

Since moving up to play in what many consider the toughest region in Class 6A (Region 1), the Dolphins have not had a winning season since 2013. That season Gulf Shores went 8-3 and made the playoffs when they were led by then head coach Ben Blackmon, now at Spanish Fort.

Hudspeth hopes to lead the Dolphins to the postseason right away or as soon as possible, but standing in the way are the usual suspects:

Leopards (Blount), Spartans (Saraland), Toros (Spanish Fort) and Yellow Jackets (McGill-Toolen Catholic) that have dominated the top four playoff positions in recent years.

Hudspeth also said that heralded sophomore running back Ronnie Royal, a recent transfer from Alexandria, will be ready to play against neighboring rival, 5A Elberta on Aug. 20. Royal was named MaxPreps' national freshman of the year in 2020. Hudspeth added that Royal can add some offensive punch to the Dolphins' attack and can go both ways if needed.

"He is a guy who can go all day long," Hudspeth said of Royal. "His tank is never empty. He'll also play corner. He can play receiver. He can do it all."

Royal took home the honors as the nation's top freshman last season after totaling 2,853 yards and 35 touchdowns. On defense, he registered 57 tackles and a pick-six. As an eighth grader he gained more than 1,200 yards on the ground.

After the season opener at Class 5A Elberta, the 'Phins hit the road to Spanish Fort for their first 2021 clash with a 6A, Region 1 rival.



TONY WHITEHEAD / STAFF PHOTOS

**Gulf Shores head coach Mark Hudspeth**

# Makos hope to make their mark in tough Region 1 field

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**  
tony@gulfcoastmedia.com

**ORANGE BEACH** — Orange Beach High head coach Chase Smith and his Makos kick off their sophomore season as a varsity program.

With just two seniors this season, Smith said one of the most promising improvements he is seeing is a higher "Football IQ" on and off the field. He is also happy with his players' development and acceptance of what he calls, "relentless standards" that they will rely on for real progress from the weight room to the field.

He added that overall the 2021 Makos are not quite where he wants them to be yet, but that his expectations are very high.

"We may never reach all of those expectations fully, but we are continually chasing those ex-



**Orange Beach head coach Chase Smith**

pectations," he said. "The effort is there and with that I'm certainly pleased. We all had to deal with the ramifications of COVID, but I think we progressed since then at a fairly-rapid rate."

Smith said his players did a good job of learning his terminology, philosophy and approach to setting goals. He added that he was proud of his players for pulling together and showing maturity

*'We may never reach all of those expectations fully, but we are continually chasing those expectations. The effort is there and with that I'm certainly pleased. We all had to deal with the ramifications of COVID, but I think we progressed since then at a fairly-rapid rate.'*

## **CHASE SMITH**

Head coach

through the setbacks of 2020 from not only the pandemic, but Hurricane Sally's damper on their progress as well.

"I'm so proud of all our kids and how they handled all of that. They could have used those things as excuses, but they never did. I saw a lot of young players come up and lead. And there is no manual for how to build a program and dang sure no book that says: Here's

how to run a program and deal with a national pandemic as well as hurricanes and tornados."

He also said his players showed a lot of grit and maturity.

"It was challenging, but the kids were super resilient. So, as a coach you set these standards for them and trust them. They took it on and made a lot of progress in the weight room and on the field and I think their hard work

will pay off this fall."

OBHS finished 2020 with a 3-6 record, one of which included a COVID-related forfeit from Greene County. Their regular-season victories came over longtime football strongholds in J.F. Shields and Washington County — both programs that regularly make the post-season playoffs.

The Makos open at home against Shields on Aug. 20.

For the latest news and updates visit **GulfCoastNewsToday.com**

# The Hub City players, coaches intent on 2021 post-season slot

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**  
tony@gulfcoastmedia.com

**ROBERTSDALE** — Golden Bears head football coach Kyle Stanford said his team had a good spring camp and benefitted from getting a full slate of off-season work in. Going into his third year at RHS in one of -- if not the -- most competitive of AHSAA's regions in the state, coach Stanford hopes to improve on the Bears' 4-5 overall record of last season.

After he came in for his first season at RHS in June of 2019 and because of COVID issues last spring, he said it was good to finally get back to a more normal spring-training schedule. "Although this will be my third season, it feels kind of like the second because when COVID hit and I don't see the kids for five months and we were not able to do as much



TONY WHITEHEAD / STAFF PHOTOS

## Robertsdale head coach Kyle Stanford

as we hoped to," he said. "But this spring was our first full spring training camp and I feel like we made some really good gains and are ready to get back to it this summer. We made great gains in the weight room, made great gains in our culture

and in our expectations for our football team. And I think those expectations area lot higher than they were when I took this job. But I cannot say enough about the kids buying in and their work ethic and the community support as well as the commitment

that they have shown."

He added that one of his important goals is to see his upperclassmen, especially the senior class make it to the playoffs.

"There is nobody who deserves to get into the playoffs and have a winning season more than this senior class," he said. "They have gone through I think three coaches in their four years, they've gone through COVID and they have gone through a hurricane (Sally) and they have never wavered. Of course, I want it for the community as well, for my family and the coaching staff. But these kids have worked so hard and they deserve the opportunity."

Stanford added that he believes they can do it this season, but it will be hard.

"Yes, we do play in the toughest region in football. But I think our offense will give us a bet-

ter chance of staying in winning more games. Our defense will match up better against some of the more dynamic offenses we will face and give us a better chance to win."

He also said to beat out any of the recent top four teams and make the post-season won't be easy.

"You have to beat one of the big dogs and we know that won't be easy. We will have to play perfect football and it's no secret our numbers are not as high and we have a lot of kids we play both ways. So, I can't guarantee we'll make it to the playoffs but we're going to have a chance in every game because our kids have bought into this system and they give their all every day."

The Bears' offense will also be more multiple with a wider variety of formation this year with more options and weapons to utilize. Se-

nior running back Tavan Curry said his teammates believe this will be their year to play beyond the regular season.

"It's not just me, but my teammates all believe we can get to the playoffs I think my strength for the team is to just do my part and get those three yards every time I touch the ball. Keep the other team's defense on the field and our defense off and rested."

On the Bears' defensive side Stanford said to expect more aggressive play with major leadership from senior strong safety Jay Racine, who also plays offense at wing back.

The Golden Bears open the 2021 season Aug. 20 at long-standing rival Foley. Robertsdale's first home game will be with Class 5A Elberta on Aug. 27 and their first 6A Region 1 contest will be with visiting Citronelle.

# 2019, 2020 6A state runner-up Toros look to return to do it one better in 2021

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**  
tony@gulfcoastmedia.com

**SPANISH FORT** — After back-to-back, 'Red-Map' state-runner-up trophies, the Toros hope to get back to the 6A title game again, but this time bring home the Blue-Map championship model.

With seven starters on offense and six on defense from last year returning, Spanish Fort expects to contend for another Region 1 title as well.

The Toros' head coach Ben Blackmon expects senior leaders like running back Johnny Morris and offensive lineman Ty Bennett (both three-year starters going into 2021) to be a big part of reaching that goal.

"Johnny is the rock of our program," Blackmon said. "We knew he was



## Spanish Fort head coach Ben Blackmon

going to be special when he came in as a freshman."

Also back on "The Hill" will be Spanish Fort quarterback Brendon Byrd who continues to grow more confident and skilled as the Toros' 2021

season gets ready to kick off.

"Brendon has the 'it factor,'" Blackmon said. "He got better and better and better as the year went on. He has also grown tremendously. His work ethic, his drive, his deter-

mination to win and he's a great teammate which may be intangibles that you can't measure, but that all comes together to make him a better player and us a better team."

Going into his seventh season at Spanish Fort, Blackmon has led the Toros to at least the third-round of the 6A state playoffs year and 67 total wins. One of those was his first state championship there in 2015.

The Toros had the lead in the fourth quarter of both games before falling late to Oxford and Pinson Valley. Blackmon said those kinds of losses sting, but they can also be very motivating.

"That has kind of been our real motivation, our driving force this year. It's 'Commit to Finish,'" he said. "We feel like we

made successful runs the last two years, but we need to learn how to finish and close it out. It's not so much how you start but how you finish."

He added that he was glad to have several starters returning this year, most of them seniors. But he was also happy to have some talented players step into those vacancies on both sides of the ball.

"And it's exciting as a coach to get to see some of those guys get out there on Friday nights and see how they do and how they grow," he said. "We really feel good about having guys with so much playoff experience coming back. Counting the playoffs, these guys have gotten almost an extra season of experience in just the last two seasons."

Another factor in their

success he believes is time and repetition.

"There are times when you have to say as a coach that something just isn't working here and we need to make a change. But also, there are times when you have to be patient and say, 'They are young, just give them time and the more reps, the better. And then you just kind of start figuring it out and it works and build from there.'"

Spanish Fort kicks off with a visit from Eastern Shore interclass rival, Class 7A Fairhope in a non-region match up on Aug. 20. The Toros then travel to 5A powerhouse St. Paul's Aug. 27 before their first Region 1 contest hosting Blackmon's former team, the Gulf Shores Dolphins on Sept. 3.

# Snook Christian football program continues to build

By JOHN UNDERWOOD  
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FOLEY — Heading into his fourth varsity season as head varsity football coach/athletic director for the Snook Christian Academy Eagles, Keith Smith is looking to continue to build on his young program.

The Eagles are looking to bounce back after re-booting the varsity program in 2020. After starting with just a seven-game season in 2020, the Eagles managed to play just four games, having one game cancelled because of Hurricane Sally, then were forced to forfeit their last two games because of COVID concerns. SCA finished 1-5 last season.

“We had some pretty lopsided losses and looking at the scoreboard it might be hard to see, but I spent a lot of time looking at film and I see where our team is improving, both offensively and defensively,” Smith said.

The Eagles only win of the season came on what would be their last game on the field, topping Meadowview Christian 22-18 in a come-from-behind, Homecoming win Oct. 8 at Elberta High School.

“There were definitely a lot of positives from that game that we can build on,” Smith said. “We’re a young team and a young program. We had a couple of opportunities to extend our lead, but we weren’t able to and got behind, but I’m proud of our players. They came up big when we needed them to and that’s the strength of our team. We have a group of guys that have a really strong work ethic and don’t quit. I’m really excited about this upcoming season.”

Athletic director Bob Gabel is also the team’s strength coach, Smith



JOHN UNDERWOOD / STAFF PHOTO

## Head Coach Keith Smith works with backs and receivers during summer workouts at Snook Christian Academy.

said, and he has had the team working hard on strength conditioning in the offseason.

In all the Eagles roster includes 25 players, 15 of those are ninth grade and above, including four seniors and eight juniors.

“Our numbers are the best we’ve had in the five years of our program so far,” Smith said, “and that’s definitely something positive that we can build on.”

“I’m really excited about our leadership this year, especially with our junior class, some of whom have been with our program from the beginning,” Smith said. “It’s important for us as a young squad to be able to build our program and encourage these young players that if they don’t give up and keep working, success will come.”

Senior leaders for the Eagles include:

- Chase Boehm, who will fill positions at receiver, running back, defensive back, outside linebacker and defensive end. “He served as a captain for our junior high team a couple of years ago who is returning to us this year. He’s a versatile player and will fill many posi-

tions for us.”

- Tyler Koen, will fill positions as a slot receiver, as well as outside linebacker and possibly on the defensive line. “He was a first-year player last year. He is not big physically, but has a big heart and has good quickness.”
- Brody Long, will fill positions as a tight end and defensive back. “Brady was a two-way starter for us last year and did a great job. He does a lot to help his teammates on and off the field.”
- Tae Lyle, a receiver who can also play defensive end but wound up starting last year at noseguard. “He moved to our area last year and has been a great addition.”

Leadership for the Eagles will also come from an experienced junior class, Smith said, many of whom have been with the program since the beginning or near the beginning of the program, including:

- Philip Butts. “He is very smart and a very hard worker, a good leader that can fill just about every position

on the field. He will start at either middle linebacker or strong linebacker on defense. Offensively, he will play at every skilled position including fullback, quarterback, tight-end and receiver.”

- Robert Dunn, will fill the starting quarterback position for the Eagles. “He can play a number of positions on defense but we want to keep him as fresh as possible as our signal caller. He did a great job for us last year in that position. He is a very good passer, good ball handler and makes good decisions with the football.”
- Hayden Joiner, starting center, may also see action offensively at fullback, and will likely start on defense at defensive end or linebacker. “Hayden is a great leader and a great person, and should play a huge role on our 2021 team.”
- Sam French. “Should be an anchor on both our defensive and offensive lines. He is a great young man with good size. He has been in our program since 2018.”

Other junior leaders include Elijah Krob, receiver and defensive back, a first year player with “a lot of potential,” Smith said; Tommy McKee, offensive and defensive line, who suffered a fracture in his arm last pre-season but played the entire season anyway, “if healthy Tommy could be a dominant player on both sides of the line of scrimmage. He is a great young man, great leader and has good size.”

Another junior prospect is Kendrick Koen, who suffered an ankle injury in the first game that just never would heal. He had ankle surgery on June 24 and is making good progress, Smith said, but it is unclear whether or not he will be able to play this year.

“When healthy, he is an outstanding fullback and linebacker,” Smith said. “He is a great athlete and we’re hoping he will be able to contribute for us this year.”

Rounding out leaders on the varsity squad are sophomore Corbin Hall, who will fill halfback and receiver slots on offense and possibly safety and outside linebacker on defense, and freshmen Matthew LaFrenier, offensive and defensive line, Aiden Reynolds, receiver and defensive back, and Kyle Votaw, offensive and defensive line.

“Corbin is the fastest man on the team and has been with us since the very beginning in 2017,” Smith said. “If we can keep him at safety on defense, we know that nobody will be able to get behind us.”

The Eagles will also be looking at a core group of seven eighth graders, who will provide leadership for the future of the program, including Landon Butler, receiver and defensive back, Josh Gabel, quarterback, tight-end and several positions

on defense; Chase Joiner, receiver and offensive line; Cameron Kyles, defensive back and slot receiver; Landon McDonald, offensive line, full-back, defensive line and linebacker; Trevior Solorzano, quarterback and receiver, defensive back; and Dallas Wyatt, offensive and defensive line.

A trio of sixth graders will also contribute for the Eagles, including Jackson Jaye, offensive and defensive line; Gabriel Koeler, offensive and defensive line; and Lukas Merchant, receiver and defensive back.

Smith will be assisted this year by Lester Smith, quarterbacks; Eric Whittle, offensive line; Ben Coxwell, defensive coordinator; Jonathan Beason, defensive line; and David Williams, defensive backs.

“We get great support from our Principal Thad Butts, Athletic Director Bob Gabel, Booster Club President Dallas Wyatt; our cheerleaders and their sponsors Christy Uteg and Jessica Beason,” Smith said. “Our numbers are moving in the right direction and we want to be more competitive.”

While Smith said he has no specific expectations as to wins and losses for the season, his biggest goal is just to see continued improvement as the season progresses.

“I think you have to be realistic, but at the same time you don’t want to limit the hopes and dreams of these young players,” he said. “The greatest thing about starting a new season is that everybody is 0 and 0 and the skies the limit on where you can go from here. My goal at the beginning of the season is always to win every game and bring home a state championship. We are not quite there with this program yet, but we’ll see.”

# FAIRHOPE PIRATES

## 2021



### 2021 FAIRHOPE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 20	Spanish Fort	AWAY
Aug. 27	Andalusia	HOME
Sept. 3	Daphne	HOME
Sept. 10	Foley	HOME
Sept. 17	Open	
Sept. 24	Davidson	HOME
Oct. 1	Mary G. Montgomery	HOME
Oct. 8	Theodore	AWAY
Oct. 15	Baker (Mobile)	HOME
Oct. 22	Alma Bryant	AWAY
Oct. 28	Murphy	AWAY

NOTE: Some open dates and others may be rescheduled. Visit school websites for updates.



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## Lions

# OLEY FOOTBALL



## 2021 FOLEY HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 20	Robertsdale	HOME
Aug. 26	Murphy	AWAY
Sept. 3	Baker (Mobile)	HOME
Sept. 10	Fairhope	AWAY
Sept. 17	Daphne	HOME
Sept. 24	Baldwin County	HOME
Oct. 1	Open	
Oct. 8	Davidson (Mobile)	HOME
Oct. 15	Mary G. Montgomery	HOME
Oct. 22	Theodore	AWAY
Oct. 29	Alma Bryant	AWAY

NOTE: Some open dates and others may be rescheduled. Visit school websites for updates.

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# 2021 GULF SHORES DOLPHINS



## 2021 GULF SHORES HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 21	Elberta	AWAY
Aug. 27	Brookwood	HOME
Sept. 3	Spanish Fort	AWAY
Sept. 10	McGill-Toolen	AWAY
Sept. 17	Robertsdale	AWAY
Sept. 24	Open	
Oct. 1	Citronelle	AWAY
Oct. 8	Saraland	AWAY
Oct. 15	Baldwin County	HOME
Oct. 22	Blount	HOME
Oct. 29	Satsuma	HOME

NOTE: Some open dates and others may be rescheduled. Visit school websites for updates.



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# MAKOS



## 2021

### ORANGE BEACH HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 20	J.F. Shields	HOME
Aug. 27	Fruitdale	AWAY
Sept. 3	Leroy	AWAY
Sept. 10	Clark County (Grove Hill)	HOME
Sept. 17	Green County	HOME
Sept. 24	Central Coosa	HOME
Oct. 1	Open	
Oct. 8	Washington County (Chatom)	HOME
Oct. 15	J.U. Blacksher	AWAY
Oct. 22	St. Luke's Episcopal	AWAY
Oct. 29	Verbena	AWAY

NOTE: Some open dates and others may be rescheduled. Visit school websites for updates.



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# ORANGE BEACH HIGH SCHOOL





# Cardinals begin new program phase with Rivers calling the signals

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**

tony@gulfcoastmedia.com

**FAIRHOPE** — When still active NFL quarterback Phillip Rivers was named head coach-in-waiting at St. Michael Catholic, he wasn't planning on cleaning out his locker for a few more professional seasons. But after the 2020 season he decided the time was right. And he's feeling better about the decision as kickoff time nears.

"I feel settled in now," Rivers said. "Early on, I didn't know these boys. But, shoot, since March 15, we've been going pretty good. We've had a full spring and almost a full summer now. You build some relationships. You build trust. You get to know who they are and their personalities and how they work. You know their strong suits, and that allows you to communicate and have a better rapport in that environment and get to be what we want to be. But, it's been fun. We're all getting excited."

This will be the fourth



TONY WHITEHEAD / STAFF PHOTOS

## St. Michael's head coach Phillip Rivers

year of varsity play for SMC which has not posted a winning-season record yet. Fielding 15 seniors this year, the Class 4A Cardinals took on 7A Alma Bryant's Hurricanes in their scrimmage and Rivers got a chance to see his new team in action.

"We wanted to see our kids compete and that was the biggest thing to take away," he said. "It was kind of a controlled scrimmage, but the main thing was seeing them

compete and play hard. It gave us a boost to close out the spring and a boost for the summer. We have been coaching off of the tape from that. One thing I liked is that we hung in there with confidence and scrapped. But we also realized that there is a lot we need to improve on."

Although he's a rookie coach with a wealth of real-time knowledge of the game, Rivers will have a great tutor in high-school sideline leadership from his father and high

school coach Steve Rivers. His brother Stephen will coach wide receivers. This will be the fourth year of varsity play for Saint Michael Catholic. The Cardinals new coach declined to make any predictions, except that they would be a team that's fun to watch and also be competitive.

"We will have a chance to win every Friday," he said. "Obviously, any team anywhere can say that, but I believe we will have a chance to win every Friday night. There will not be any Friday nights where we travel somewhere and think, 'we won't have a chance.'

"Now, I'm also realistic and know that there are some teams out there that are way more established and all that, but we will have a chance on Friday night and that is all we can ask for."

The now former professional player also said one big adjustment was going from having practice plans handed to him to preparing them himself.

"Now guys ask, 'Hey coach, what are we doing

for practice?' There have been all kinds of little things to get used to like that. I've enjoyed all of them. I haven't had a moment where it's been: 'Man, I wish I was playing,'" Rivers said. "I haven't had that moment yet. I may have it as the season gets closer. I have not had it, I think, because I've had this task at hand. I'm kind of in the same boat. I'm in the locker room every day. I'm in the weight room every day."

He added that the overall transition is going smoothly and he is enjoying what he is doing.

"And one of the reasons is that it's not just the football part. It's much more. When you get to know these young men, you then care about the whole person, the spiritual, emotional, physical, all of it. I want them to be as strong as they can be, spiritually grow as much as they can, thrive emotionally, be confident, healthy. And then, help send them off to whatever that next phase may be. And if it's playing more football, then good. If it's

us winning the region, great. But it's way bigger than that. And that is what I get excited about."

Rivers said he is staying in touch with NFL players and coaches he was close to.

"I will miss it, but I'm thankful the transition has been what it has been."

He played in the NFL for 16 seasons and was named a Pro Bowl selection eight times as a quarterback with the Chargers. He was the NFL Comeback Player of the year in 2013. He completed 4,908 passes in 7,591 attempts for 59,271 yards (64.7 percent), 397 touchdowns, 198 interceptions for a 95.1 passer rating.

The Cardinals are scheduled for an Aug. 20 jamboree at Mobile Christian School in Cottage Hill. SMCHS will kick off their regular season at home with a Thursday night game hosting McIntosh at Fairhope Municipal Stadium (Volanta Park) on Aug. 26. Visit [StMichaelCHS.org](http://StMichaelCHS.org) for updates throughout the 2021 season.

# Hudspeth and Rivers take different approaches in coaching new teams

By **MICHAEL HANICH**

Sports Analysis

**DAPHNE** — One of the biggest signs of High School Football season approaching is the annual Baldwin County High School Football Media Day this past Monday. Eleven high-profile teams from Baldwin County have their coaches and two of their star players step up to the podium as we get a first look into the new 2021 season. Among the 11 coaches that stepped up to the podium, two of them are first-year head coaches for their teams.

Gulf Shores High

School hired a coach that knows how to develop a program that could not win multiple games. Coach Mark Hudspeth has had a strong coaching career building up a program like the North Alabama Lions, the Louisiana Ragin' Cajuns, and the Austin Peay Governors into consistent championship contenders. Hudspeth has won four different conference titles while coaching in the collegiate ranks.

Hudspeth will be a head coach at the high school level for the first time since 1997, when he was the head coach of Winston Academy in Mis-

issippi for two years. The players for the Dolphins feel like Hudspeth brings an intense but electrifying energy to the team. This is an area that coach Hudspeth brings to his new team. Coach Hudspeth has developed football teams that were considered one of the worst teams in their respective league.

The Dolphins feel confident in the talent they have returning and the new players they have brought in. Gulf Shores has brought the 2020 National Freshman of the Year in running back Ronnie Royal. Gulf Shores is a team coach Hudspeth

feels that they can compete for a winning season with the end goal being a state championship.

Coach Hudspeth is not the only high-profile football personality starting as a head coach in Baldwin County this season. Former Los Angeles Charger and Indianapolis Colts quarterback Phillip Rivers made his debut at the Baldwin County Football Media Days as the new head coach of the St. Michael Cardinals. Not long after he retired from the NFL, Rivers decided to coach for the Cardinals. He could have gone to be an assistant coach at any level or help in the de-

velopment of his former Chargers or Colts. Rivers, instead, wanted to focus on the shaping of high school players.

With St. Michael still being a relatively new program, there is still much work to be done for them to compete for a regional title. Rivers has reiterated that it is important to win the plays and win the games before being played through the effective art of studying the art of football. Rivers has said the biggest adjustment in this offseason with the team is the execution and simplification of every play and measure of football.

Rivers was one of the

smartest quarterbacks in the NFL while he played. He hopes he can bring that same type of mentality and drive into St. Michael. The nine-time Pro Bowler has been a starting quarterback for most of his football career since 1994. This season will be the first time he is on the sidelines. In media days, Rivers said about not being out there in spring training, "it felt weird going out there for warm-ups without a helmet."

Both Hudspeth and Rivers will have the final preparations before starting their first fall camp as head coaches for their new teams in a few weeks.

## AHSAA CHAMPIONSHIP PLAY INTERRUPTION POLICY

This policy, adopted by the AHSAA Central Board of Control, will be followed when championship play is interrupted or threatened by public health/safety concerns, acts of God or other uncontrollable and unforeseen circumstances. Necessary decisions concerning any circumstances that are not covered by this policy will be

left to the discretion of the AHSAA administrative staff and the Central Board of Control.

This policy shall be observed for all AHSAA-sponsored championship playoff events.

1. In the event of school closings within two calendar days of scheduled playoff contests, the AHSAA administrative staff, in

collaboration with the Central Board and playoff event personnel, will attempt to delay or re-schedule the playoff contests without adversely affecting the next round of the playoff schedule. Any part of a revised schedule may need modification.

*NOTE: For purposes of this policy, "closure," "closed" or "school clos-*

*ing" shall mean that the local authorities of the interruption cause or Board of Education/Governing Board has cancelled all high school classes and school-sponsored extra-curricular activities for a minimum of one calendar day due to a specific concern.*

2. Two-team contests: Postponed contests must be re-scheduled on the

next available date unless the next round of the playoff is adversely affected. The failure of a team to participate would result in a forfeit.

3. Multi-team events: If a revised schedule adversely affects the next round, the event may be played according to the original schedule. The failure of a team or individuals to participate

would result in a forfeit.

4. In the event that schools remain open, participants and teams shall be expected to play the contests on the scheduled dates.

5. Information on any changes regarding AHSAA playoff scheduling will be posted on the home page of the AHSAA website AHSAA.com.

## COMPETITIVE BALANCE FACTOR USING 2-YEAR DATA

1. A 1.35 enrollment multiplier will be calculated for all private schools.

2. A sports specific competitive balance factor will be implemented when a private school's sports team meets the threshold on the championship data

from the previous two years. This data would be derived using data only from the current classification the sports team is placed in.

• Points are earned by sport based on the team's overall finish each year over the two years in the

current classification alignment. • Round of 16: 0.5 points • Quarterfinal (5-8 finish): 1 point • Semifinal (3-4 finish): 2 points • Final (1-2 finish): 4 points Competitive Balance Factor Points to level up one class Single Sports Football, Volleyball, Golf, Base-

ball, Softball, Wrestling More than 4 Coed Basketball, Soccer, Swim, Tennis, XC, ID Track, OD Track, Bowling More than 7 Once the CBF is implemented To stay in current class To level down one class Single Sports Football, Volleyball, Golf, Baseball, Softball,

Wrestling 1 to 4 points Less than 1 point Coed Basketball, Soccer, Swim, Tennis, XC, ID Track, OD Track, Bowling 2 to 7 points Less than 2 points

• No ceiling: A team could potentially raise one class/division every classification period.

• Teams that moved up according to the balance factor may level down only one class/division in the next classification period but may never drop below the 1.35 multiplier. • Single teams in co-ed classifications will use the Single Sport balance factor

## Ferguson, Shoquist receive "Making A Difference" Awards at AHSAA 2021 Coaches' Awards Banquet

AHSAA.com

MONTGOMERY — Seven individuals were recognized Friday night at the AHSAA's 25th annual AHSAA Championship Coaches' Awards Banquet as recipients of the prestigious "Making A Difference" Award as the 2021 AHSAA Summer Conference concluded at the Montgomery Renaissance Hotel and Convention Center.

The banquet also kicked off the 100th anniversary of the AHSAA, which was organized in 2021. The AHSAA, which unveiled its official "100th Anniversary" logo, plans to honor the anniversary with special events during the upcoming year.

The week-long conference, which attracted more than 4,000 administrators, coaches and other support personnel from AHSAA member schools to Montgomery, was hosted by the Alabama



SUBMITTED PHOTO

**Bayside Academy's Director of Football Operations Phil Lazenby, Athletic Director of the Year Jamie Ferguson, and Assistant to the Athletic Director Mark Lasseter are pictured at the AHSAA's Coaches Championship Awards Banquet on July 23.**

High School Athletic Directors & Coaches Association (AHSADCA). It included 14 North-South all-star competitions during the week — for

the sports of baseball, softball, boys' and girls' soccer, boys' and girls' basketball, boys' and girls' cross country, volleyball, football, and for

the first time boys' and girls' tennis and golf. The South beat the North in the 25th North-South volleyball all-star match 25-22, 25-22, 25-22 to close

out all-star play Thursday night.

The highlight of Friday's Championship Coaches' banquet was the "Making A Differ-

ence" Award recognition, however, now in its ninth year. One AHSAA member school coach, administrator or contributor was honored in each classification for their contributions to their schools and communities that help change lives in daily in a positive way.

The recipients were: track, football, softball and girls' basketball coach Anthony Edwards, Loachapoka High School (1A); baseball coach Matt Kennedy, Westbrook Christian High School (2A); head football coach Ryan Hall of Oakman High School (3A); girls' basketball coach Eddie Bullock, Anniston High School (4A); volunteer head track coach Chris Bashaw, Guntersville High School (5A); soccer coach Joe Webb, Mountain Brook High School (6A); retiring volleyball coach and former Fair-

# South Sweeps North in All-Star Volleyball 3-0

Ella Broadhead of Bayside Academy named South MVP

AHSAA.com

MONTGOMERY — The South All-Stars earned the key points when needed Thursday and downed the North All-Stars 3-0 to claim the 2021 North-South All-Star Volleyball match to close out the All-Star Sports Week

competition.

The South won 25-22, 25-22, 25-22 – leading early in each set and then coming from behind late to win for the ninth time in the AHSADCA all-star series. The North still holds the edge 14-9.

Both teams battled nip-and-tuck early on before Thompson's Madison Touhey stepped behind to the server's line and served five straight points — three on aces — to give the South a 22-21 lead. The North tied the

set at 22-22 before the South rallied to close out with three straight points to take a 1-0 lead 25-22. The final point was delivered by St. Paul's Episcopal's Rachel Bell with an excellent placement at the net.

Oak Mountain's Kathryn Smith had three straight serves that helped the South battle from a 21-19 deficit to a 22-21 lead and Thompson's Touhey closed out the second set with a kill and 25-22 win to push the

South lead to 2-0.

South MVP Ella Broadhead of Bayside Academy was dominant throughout the match finishing with 14 kills. Lillie Casey of Auburn 10 kills and setter Kathryn Smith of Oak Mountain had 15 assists and Thompson's Madison Touhey had 14. Each player also had three service aces. Alexia Cole of McGill-Toolen Catholic had five digs and Jayni Thompson of Oak Mountain had four.

North MVP Rya McK-

innon of Hoover had seven kills and six digs, Audrey Rothman of Spain Park had eight kills, eight digs and three service aces. Greer Golden of Mountain Brook added seven kills and three service aces. Lawrence County setter Anna Hutto had a match-high 17 assists. The North had nine service aces overall, and the South had six.

Coaches for the South were Meredith Donald of St. Luke's Episcopal and

Kim Moncrief of Elmore County. North coaches were Ryan Roberson of Brooks and Andrew Murphy of Central-Florence.

## AVBCA HOF CLASS RECOGNIZED

During a brief intermission in the North-South Volleyball All-Star match Thursday, seven individuals were recognized by the Alabama Volleyball Coaches Association as members of its second AVBCA Hall of Fame Class.

# Bayside head coach Ann Schilling goes for 35th consecutive playoff appearance and 30th AHSAA championship overall

BaysideAcademy.org

DAPHNE — With their 19th straight AHSAA State Championship on Oct. 28, 2020, Bayside Academy captured the national record for most consecutive state championships and the national record for most state championships (29) overall. Bayside is the first school in Alabama High School Athletic Association history to win state titles in the 1A, 2A, 3A, 4A, and 5A classifications.

## About the Coach

Bayside head coach Ann Schilling is a Hall of Famer volleyball skipper who ranks in the top three nationally in career wins. She has more than 1,500 wins at Bayside Academy and has led the Lady Admirals to the state playoffs all 33 years of her coaching career. In nearly each of the 34 seasons that Coach Schilling has been coaching at Bayside, the Lady Admirals have also been one of the top two teams in the state (26 state championships and 4 runner-up finishes since 1987).



TONY WHITEHEAD / STAFF PHOTO

Although Schilling is extremely modest about her accomplishments, she is renowned for her coaching ability and has been recognized nationally for her talent and the legacy she has built at Bayside. She has been named as Coach of the Year almost every year for the past twenty years in multiple categories: Six times as the Alabama High School Volleyball All-Star Coach (1993, 1995, 1996, 1998, 2003, and 2008), four times as the Birmingham

News State Coach of the Year (1992, 2000, 2007, and 2011) and four times as the Press Register Super 12 Coach of the Year (1998, 2000, 2002, and 2011).

She was the 2009 Prep Volleyball Co-National Coach of the Year and the 2011 National Federation of High Schools' National Coach of the Year. In 2018, Coach Schilling was inducted into the Alabama High School Athletic Association Hall of Fame. She received her degree

in physical education from Auburn University after she played for and studied under legendary 'Dirty Dozen' head coach Becky Dickinson at McGill-Toolen Catholic in Mobile.

Last season, The Admirals won their 19th consecutive state title after defeating West Point 3-0 (25-17, 25-7, 25-10). In 2020 the Admirals went undefeated at home (31-0) as Schilling led them to a 52-4 overall record and an undefeated AHSAA



SUBMITTED PHOTO

## Bayside Academy volleyball coach Ann Schilling

league run. In fact, the Admirals play above their divisional school size (Class 3A) to compensate for competitive-balance rules. They played in Class 4A in 2019, Class 5A last season and will compete in 5A again this year.

According to MaX-Preps.com Bayside's varsity leads the national average in every offensive and defensive category: attacking, serving, blocking, digging, ball handling and serve receiving.

**KILLS PER SET:** 12.3

**TOTAL BLOCKS:** 193

**DIGS PER SET:** 18.1

**SERVING ACES:** 546

**ACES PER SET:** 3.9

**DIGS:** 2,533

In Class 6A, Spanish Fort made it to the semifinals in 2020 after back-back state championships in 2018 and 2019 under head coach Gretchen Boykin. She also led the Toros to the 6A state Blue Map trophy in 2015.

# VOLLEYBALL RULES CHANGES

**4-1-4 (NEW):** Allows the use of a molded protective face mask made of hard material during play.

**Rationale:** Creates consistency with other NFHS rules codes.

**7-1-1; 7-1-1 PENALTIES; 7-1-1 PENALTIES**

**2 (NEW); 9-9-1a (NEW);**

**10-3-7b:** Eliminates the

loss of rally/point penalty

for failure to submit the

team roster during the

prematch conference and

replaces the penalty with

an unnecessary delay (ad-

ministrative yellow card).

**Rationale:** Eliminates

the double penalty for

a late roster and an in-

correct roster before the

start of the match.

**7-1-4a(1) & (2) NEW:**

Allows a team to correct a

submitted lineup if it lists

a libero number that no

team member is wearing.

**Rationale:** Creates

consistency in allowing

the correction of a clerical

error (listing a number

that no team member

is wearing) on the lineup

for a starting position and

the libero position.

**12-2-6:** Establishes that

a yellow card issued for

unsporting conduct to

the head coach, assistant

coach(es) or team bench

will no longer require

the head coach to remain

seated, while maintaining

that a red unsporting

conduct card will require the head coach to remain seated for the remainder of the match.

**Rationale:** Creates a penalty progression by allowing an official to warn a head coach with a yellow unsporting conduct card without requiring the coach to remain seated for the remainder of the match.

**Official Signal #15:**

Establishes that an official will rotate their forearms around each other with closed hands to signal substitution.

**Rationale:** Aligns with current trends of the sport.

## 2020-21 VOLLEYBALL MAJOR EDITORIAL CHANGES

**4-2-1e:** Removes language referencing the size restrictions of mascots and/or school names placed on the uniform sleeve as a part of the 2019-20 uniform rules changes.

**10-3-6b, 10-3-6c, 10-3-6**

**NOTE (NEW):** Clarifies

the order of priority for

an exceptional substi-

tution for an injured/ill

player aligning the lan-

guage with Rule 10-4-3b.

## 2020-21 Volleyball Editorial Changes

5-4-3c(22); 5-4-4b, c; 5-5-

3b(20); 9-7 PENALTIES 3;

Rule 9 Unnecessary Delay

Chart (NEW)

## 2020-21 Volleyball Points of Emphasis

1. Bench Behavior/ Sportsmanship
2. Management of Non-Team Personnel
3. Officials' Communication
4. Uniform Bottom Compliance

## Volleyball Rules Interpretations - 2021-22

By NFHS ON JULY 28, 2021

*Publisher's Note: The National Federation of State High School Associations is the only source of official high school interpretations. They do not set aside nor modify any rule. They are made and published by the NFHS in response to situations presented.*

*Dr. Karissa L. Niehoff, Publisher, NFHS Publications © 2021*

## 2021-22 NFHS Volleyball Rules Book Correction:

(Underlining shows additions; strikethrough shows deletions.) Page 69, HOW TO USE THE SIGNALS: 15. Substitution: Two short whistles, rotate open hands forearms around each other with closed hands at shoulder height two times.

**SITUATION 1:** During the pre-match conference, the R2 reminds the head coaches that team rosters are due. The head coach

of Team B is unable to provide a roster for submission. The R2 notifies the head coach that an unnecessary delay (administrative yellow card) will be assessed at the start of set No. 1. The coach submits the roster before the 10-minute mark. With two minutes remaining in the pre-match warm-up, the head coach of Team B fails to submit a lineup. The R2 notifies the head coach that a subsequent unnecessary delay (administrative red card) will be assessed at the start of set No. 1 and a loss of rally/point will be awarded to Team A. The lineup is submitted before the end of the warm-up period.

**RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The roster is due at the pre-match conference. If the roster is not submitted, an unnecessary delay is assessed to the coach. The head coach has until two minutes remain in the pre-match warm-up to submit a lineup. If the lineup has not been submitted by the two-minute mark an unnecessary delay penalty is issued. Since an unnecessary delay was already issued for the late roster (administrative yellow card), the subsequent unnecessary delay for the late lineup will result in an administrative red card. The R2 should notify the scorer

to record each YUD/RUD in the comments section at the bottom of the scoresheet and award a penalty point to Team A. Unnecessary delay cards do not carry over from set to set. Officials shall utilize preventative officiating by proactively communicating with coaches regarding roster and lineup deadlines to avoid multiple penalties before the start of the match and between sets. (7-1-1 PENALTIES, 7-1-4 PENALTIES)

**SITUATION 2:** During the pre-match conference, the R2 reminds the head coaches that team rosters are due. The head coach of Team B is unable to provide a roster for submission. The R2 notifies the head coach that an unnecessary delay (administrative yellow card) will be assessed at the start of set No. 1. The coach submits the roster before the 10-minute mark. With two minutes remaining in the pre-match warm-up, the head coach of Team B fails to submit a lineup. The R2 notifies the head coach that a subsequent unnecessary delay (administrative red card) will be assessed at the start of set No. 1 and a loss of rally/point will be awarded to Team A. The head coach of Team B fails to submit a lineup by the end of the timed pre-match warmup.

The R2 notifies the head coach that an additional subsequent unnecessary delay (administrative red card) will be assessed at the start of the set and an additional point will be awarded to Team A. The coach provides the R2 with a lineup well after the buzzer has sounded.

**RULING:** Correct procedure. **COMMENT:** The roster is due at the pre-match conference. If the roster is not submitted, an unnecessary delay (administrative yellow card) is assessed to the coach. The head coach has until two minutes remain in the pre-match warm-up to submit a lineup. If the lineup has not been submitted by the two-minute mark and again by the end of the timed pre-match warm-up, subsequent unnecessary delay penalties result. The R2 should notify the scorer to record each YUD/RUD in the Comments section at the bottom of the scoresheet and award penalty points to Team A. Unnecessary delay cards do not carry over from set to set. Officials shall utilize preventative officiating by proactively communicating with coaches regarding roster and lineup deadlines to avoid multiple penalties before the start of the match and between sets. (7-1-1 PENALTIES, 7-1-4 PENALTIES)



## Fairhope Volleyball 2021

FAIRHOPE — Pirates head coach Lacey Stejskal is excited about upcoming season.

“I am really looking forward to this season,” the former Fairhope player and grad said.

“We have a great group of girls who aren’t afraid to put in the work and make coaching fun. Each and every one of them can play multiple positions giving us a variety of looks.”

# ROBERTSDALE GOLDEN BEARS



## 2021

### ROBERTSDALE HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 20	Foley	AWAY
Aug. 27	Elberta	HOME
Sept. 3	Citronelle	HOME
Sept. 10	Spanish Fort	AWAY
Sept. 17	Gulf Shores	HOME
Sept. 24	St. Michael Catholic	AWAY
Oct. 1	Blount	AWAY
Oct. 7	McGill-Toolen	HOME
Oct. 15	Saraland	HOME
Oct. 22	Baldwin County	AWAY
Oct. 29	Open	

NOTE: Some open dates and others may be rescheduled. Visit school websites for updates.



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**EAGLES**



**2021 SNOOK CHRISTIAN ACADEMY  
FOOTBALL SCHEDULE**

Aug. 27	Rocky Bayou	AWAY
Sept. 3	Jackson Academy	AWAY
Sept. 10	Pickens Academy	HOME
Sept. 17	Cornerstone Christian	AWAY
Sept. 24	St. Patrick	HOME
Oct. 1	Wilcox Academy (Camden)	HOME
Oct. 8	Meadowview Christian	AWAY
Oct. 15	Sparta Academy	AWAY
Oct. 22	South Choctaw Academy	HOME

NOTE: Some open dates and others may be rescheduled. Visit school websites for updates.

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swaimlaw@gulftel.com

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# SPANISH FORT FOOTBALL



## 2021

### SPANISH FORT HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 20	Fairhope	HOME
Aug. 27	St. Paul's Episcopal	AWAY
Sept. 3	Gulf Shores	HOME
Sept. 10	Robertsdale	HOME
Sept. 17	Baldwin County	AWAY
Sept. 24	Open	
Oct. 1	Saraland	HOME
Oct. 8	Blount	AWAY
Oct. 15	Citronelle	HOME
Oct. 22	McGill-Toolen	HOME
Oct. 29	Daphne	AWAY

NOTE: Some open dates and others may be rescheduled. Visit school websites for updates.

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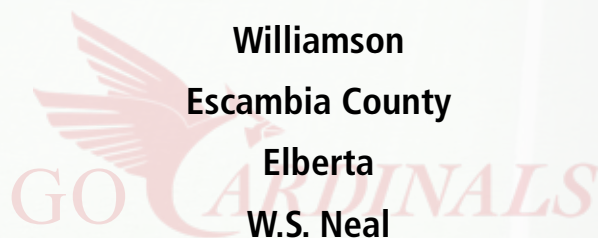
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## 2021 ST. MICHAEL CARDINALS FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Aug. 20	Jamboree at Mobile Christian	AWAY
Aug. 26	McIntosh	HOME
Sept. 2	Jackson	HOME
Sept. 10	Williamson	AWAY
Sept. 17	Escambia County	HOME
Sept. 24	Elberta	HOME
Oct. 1	W.S. Neal	AWAY
Oct. 8	Mobile Christian	AWAY
Oct. 14	Lighthouse Christian	HOME
Oct. 22	Vigor (Prichard)	HOME
Oct. 29	Millry	AWAY

NOTE: Some open dates and others may be rescheduled. Visit school websites for updates.




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# Snook Lady Eagles excited about upcoming season

By JOHN UNDERWOOD  
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FOLEY — Snook Christian Academy Lady Eagles head volleyball coach Stephanie Garris said she is looking forward to the upcoming seasons for the varsity and junior high teams.

“I’m really excited about our varsity team because we have two seniors this year and a really strong upper class that is going to provide great leadership for our team,” Garris said. “And I’m really excited about our junior high team because we have a lot of young players, and if we can keep them together and continue to progress with them over the next few years, they are going



JOHN UNDERWOOD / STAFF PHOTO

**Snook Christian Academy head volleyball coach Stephanie Garris works with young players during summer workouts at the school.**

to give us a lot of depth for the future.”

Senior Lexi Parker will lead the Lady Eagles squad from the middle position, said Garris, who enters her fifth year as

head coach for SCA.

“She has a super strong serve and just a great leader for our team with the best attitude and work ethic,” Garris said. “She just has a conta-

gious positive attitude that the other players feed off of.”

Senior Gabby Wilcox is joining the team this year as a first-year player, Garris said, and will pro-

vide strong leadership as a front row hitter.

“She is doing a great job learning the system and has great potential to be a leader for our team,” Garris said. “I’m really looking forward to great things from her.”

The Lady Eagles will also welcome Hannah Bartl to the staff as an assistant coach and will serve as head coach for the junior high team.

“She has a strong volleyball background and I’m really looking forward to working with her to build our team,” Garris said. Bonnie Coxwell serves as an assistant coach as well.

Garris said she is hoping to build on the successes of last year’s team.

“I think we did really

well last year,” she said. “We had some players who were not able to compete in the playoffs because of COVID restrictions, so we didn’t finish as strong as I would have liked, but overall I think we are very strong coming into this season and I’m looking forward to a great year.”

While the Lady Eagles did not have a finalized schedule as of July 22, they are tentatively looking to kick things off on Aug. 22, with plans to play their home matches at Summerdale School.

“We weren’t able to use the facilities last year, so had to play all of our games on the road,” Garris said. “I am looking forward to having a home court this year.”

## 2021 SMALL SCHOOL CROSS COUNTRY CHAMPIONSHIPS

# Annual event to be held in Southeast for first time this season

MILESPLIT.COM

For years, the only team national championship of high school cross country has been held in Portland, Oregon. That’s about to change. This fall, the small schools will have an opportunity to compete in their own national championship of cross country.

Lubbock Sports (Lubbock, Texas) will be hosting the inaugural national championship for

small-school high school cross country on November 20 of this year.

Small schools are defined as schools with less than 1000 students in enrollment. 8th graders may compete if their state association allows them to compete but will result in a 1.25 multiplier being applied to the school enrollment. Enrollments used will be the same as used to assign school to classifications in their

respective states. Only athletes fully eligible to compete in their home states through the entire season will be allowed to represent their teams.

Teams will be required to organize and compete under club, not school, names.

There will be at least one division, but the meet will likely divide into two divisions—one for larger small schools and one for smaller. The meet will also include open

courses for athletes beyond the usual scoring seven from each school.

The meet will be held on the cross-course at Lubbock Christian University. The course is a championship-quality course, having already hosted multiple high school and collegiate championship meets. The start line and first several hundred meters easily accommodate 300 competitors. The overwhelming majority of the

course is Bermuda grass, with no hard surface.

During the COVID year of 2020, the Lubbock Christian course hosted a smaller postseason high school cross country meet (LINK) that became the springboard for the planning for a national championship meet.

Teams will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Lubbock is a city of approximately 250,000 with a large number of available hotel

rooms, both in the host city and in surrounding communities. Lubbock has an airport with commercial flights from a variety of locations. More expansive air transportation opportunities may be accessed through the Dallas-Ft. Worth airport.

Registration has not yet opened for the event, but watch the meet page on MileSplit.com for further information and updates.

## CENTRAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL SAINTS

**Panhandle Christian Conference Tournament dates and locations for 2021-22**

**EAST VOLLEYBALL:** Oct. 15-16 at Emmanuel Christian

**WEST VOLLEYBALL:** Oct. 15-16 at South Baldwin Christian

**SOCCER PLAYOFFS 1ST ROUND:** Oct. 15-16 at Higher Seed Team

**VOLLEYBALL / JV FINAL:** Oct. 22-23 at Aletheia Christian

**SOCCER FINAL FOUR:** Oct.

22-23 at Aletheia Christian

**EAST BASKETBALL REGIONALS:** Feb. 11-12 at LEAD Academy

**WEST BASKETBALL REGIONALS:** Feb. 11-12 at Lighthouse Baptist

**BASKETBALL FINALS / JV FINALS:** Feb. 18-19 at Pensacola Christian College

**EAST BASEBALL REGIONAL:** April 29-30 at LEAD Academy

**WEST BASEBALL REGIONAL:** April 29-30 at PCA

**SOFTBALL FINALS:** May 6-7 at Central Christian School in Loxley

**BASEBALL FINALS:** May 3, 6-7 at Central Christian School in Loxley

**ANNUAL MEETING:** At Mama

Lou’s in Robertsedale, May 13, 2022 beginning at 11 a.m.

Visit CCSSaints.com and/or PanhandleChristianConference.com for 2021 fall sports (Soccer and Volleyball) schedules and more information.

# High-School Cross Country schedules set for AHSAA Alabama Runners

## Bayside Invite's starters gun kicks off 2021 local races in Baldwin County

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**  
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DAPHNE — Bayside Academy's annual invitational is set for Aug. 21 according to Al.MileSplit.

com. Foley High and Bayside host the next scheduled events on Aug. 26. The Foley Lions' Gulf Coast Series Race No. 1 and the Admirals Twilight Invite are slated for that date. Visit Al.MileSplit.com for details. The Gulf Coast Series is still open for team registration.

The Aug. 21, 3-Kilometer time trial "Invite" race at Bayside Academy will use the following race

schedule:  
• Boys 3K - 6:45 a.m.  
• Girls 3K - 7:05 a.m.

### Invited schools:

- Bayshore Christian School (accepted)
- Bayside Academy (host)
- Daphne High School (accepted)
- Fairhope High School

The next local race set is the annual Mobile Challenge of Champions on Sept. 4 at Langan Park.

The first of four races (Open and Invitational divisions) will start at 8 a.m.

Foley High will host their second Gulf Coast Series Race on Sept. 23. The Daphne Invitational at Historical Blakely State Park, north of Spanish Fort (Hwy. 225) is scheduled for Sept. 25.

The Gulf Coast Series Championship is slated for Oct. 12. The next scheduled event in Baldwin County is the AHSAA

Section 1 qualifying meets for 4A, 6A and 7A classifications hosted by Baldwin County High at Bay Minette's Bicentennial Park.

The top four teams in each class will qualify to move on as will the top six individuals not on a section qualifiers' team.

### Statewide 2021 Playoff dates

Week Before Meet:  
Entry Deadline

**OCT. 28-30:** Section Meets  
**NOV. 6:** State Meet (Moulton)

### Dates Allowed:

**VARSITY:** 10

**JH/MIDDLE:** 8

Be sure to visit Al.MileSplit.com for updates and statewide events as well as individual school websites for more information and possible schedule changes.

# St. Michael Catholic cross-country/track and field readies for 2021-22

## First race is set for Aug. 26 at county rival Bayside Academy's annual Twilight event

By **TONY WHITEHEAD**  
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FAIRHOPE — SMCHS Cardinals cross-country coach Shannon Blythe said both her boys and girls teams need some rebuilding due to graduation, but a talent-laden roster is ready to step up this fall for their 2021 season.

"I lost a lot of seniors last year on both the boys and girls sides," she said. "We are going

## St. Michael Catholic High's cross-country schedule for fall 2021

Check school websites and AHSAA.COM for schedule updates, cancellations

- AUG. 26:** Admiral Twilight Invite - Bayside
- SEPT. 4:** Mobile Challenge of Champions - Langan Park
- \*\*SEPT. 11:** Chickasaw Trails invite, Oakville \*\*
- SEPT. 25:** Daphne Invitational at Historic Blakely Park
- OCT. 2:** TR Miller - Brewton
- OCT. 9:** Faith Academy Boardwalk Challenge - Mobile
- OCT. 16:** Baldwin County Championship
- OCT. 28:** AHSAA Sectionals
- NOV. 6:** AHSAA State Championship

to have a time trial on Aug. 20 to determine our varsity/JV roster. We were blessed and didn't miss a race last year due

to COVID. We certainly went in with the mindset that every race could be our last, and we tried to make the most of every



PHOTO COURTESY ST. MICHAEL CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL

### SMCHS Cardinals XC team 2021 get in some midsummer training in Fairhope.

single one. It certainly taught all of us to have an attitude of gratitude."

Blythe added that she is still extremely excited about the upcoming campaign.

"While I have lost a wealth of talent, I have other runners that are completely new to the sport that I am very excited about or returning runners that are really showing a great amount of promise."

On the boys' side, in addition to returning veteran Tripp Miller, she is looking forward to seeing how Patrick Andrews, Oliver Hemby, Ryan Lankford, Henry Dirmeyer, Jonah Calvary and Louis

Murphy do this season.

"There are many more in the mix, and they have all been training hard all summer," she said. "It's going to be tough to determine the top 10."

The Cardinals' potential outlook is very similar on the girls' side.

"Even though I lost three extremely strong and talented runners, I have several that have really stepped up as well as some new runners that I can't wait to see perform," she said. "Izzy Garriz has been working extremely hard, and I believe she will be my top female runner this year. My captain, Elena Volmer is returning from

an injury that prevented her from training and competing at her peak last year. And she is looking very strong as well. I have several new runners that are primed to really make some heads turn as well."

She also gave much credit for the level of accomplishment for the cross-country program in a short period since the school's opening to St. Michael's previous coach.

"Mr. Jon Hall, demanded a level of excellence and dedication that I hope we have continued. All signs point to a promising and successful season."



# BANQUET

CONTINUED FROM 18

hope High player Nancy Shoquist, Mary Montgomery High School (7A).

Jamie Ferguson of Bay-side Academy in Daphne was honored by the AHSADCA as the AHSAA 2021 Athletic Director of the Year, and Blount High School football coach and athletic director Lev Holly received AHSADCA Past President's Award.

House Majority Leader state legislator Nathaniel Ledbetter was the keynote speaker at Friday's awards banquet recognized 115 state championship coaches who led teams to state titles in the AHSAA's championship programs in 2020-21 as well as honoring several others for outstanding service or accomplishment. AHSAA Assistant Director Jamie Lee also served as emcee.

"We had an outstanding week of professional

development, all-star competition and a lot of old-fashioned catching up with old friends," said AHSAA Executive Director Alvin Briggs, who oversaw his first Summer Conference in his new position since replacing Steve Savarese, who retired after 14 years in the executive director seat on June 30. Briggs, who joined the AHSAA in 2011, served as Director of the Alabama High School Athletic Directors and Coaches Association (AHSADCA) before moving into the Associate Executive Director role at the AHSAA in 2019. He began his duties as Executive Director officially on July 1.

"We are so proud of all our member schools," Briggs added. "Despite the COVID 19 Pandemic challenges facing our state and nation, we were able to start our schools on time, completed all our seasons and championships on time as member schools worked

hard to provide the safest environment possible. They bought in to the best practices and safety guidelines outlined by the AHSAA and its Medical Advisory Committee and the Alabama Department of Health. As Mr. Savarese pointed out many times, we think it would our schools' and communities' finest hour."

A total of 76 AHSAA member high schools earned at least one state championship in 2020-21. Class 6A Mountain Brook won four state titles during the 2020-21 school year to lead the AHSAA. The Spartans posted championships in boys' basketball, volleyball, girls' tennis and boys' golf. Class 7A Hewitt-Trussville, Hoover, Huntsville and Vestavia Hills won three state championships each, Class 3A Providence Christian and Montgomery Academy also won three apiece.

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