

2025

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL
PREVIEW

THE DOMINION POST

AUGUST 21, 2025 SECTION C



HAWKS

BRODY KEHLER - RB
UNIVERSITY HIGH SCHOOL



KNIGHTS

SLATON MANKO - QB
PRESTON HIGH SCHOOL



UNIVERSITY HIGH

Hawks have depth, experience in 2025



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

University High receiver Hayden George (11) goes up for a catch last season against Buckhannon-Upshur.

UHS 2025 SCHEDULE

AUG. 29	at Musselman, 7 p.m.
SEPT. 5	PARKERSBURG SOUTH , 7 p.m.
SEPT. 12	at Buckhannon-Upshur, 7 p.m.
SEPT. 19	at Wheeling Park, 7 p.m.
SEPT. 26	FAIRMONT SENIOR , 7 p.m.
OCT. 3	at Butler (Pa.), 7 p.m.
OCT. 10	CONNELLSVILLE (Pa.), 7 p.m.
OCT. 17	SPRING MILLS , 7 p.m.
OCT. 24	at Preston, 7 p.m.
OCT. 31	MORGANTOWN , 7 p.m.
NOV. 7	OPEN

** Home games in caps

2024 RESULTS (4-7)

SEPT. 6	L	at Parkersburg South, 49-20
SEPT. 13	W	vs. Buckhannon-Upshur, 49-0
SEPT. 20	L	vs. Wheeling Park, 35-22
SEPT. 27	L	at Fairmont Senior, 49-7
OCT. 4	W	vs. Butler (Pa.), 17-13
OCT. 11	W	at Connellsville (Pa.), 31-13
OCT. 18	L	at Spring Mills, 34-6
OCT. 25	W	vs. Preston, 42-35
NOV. 1	L	at Morgantown, 49-7
NOV. 8	L	vs. Oak Hill, 34-28
NOV. 23	L	at Huntington, 56-28

UHS plans to benefit with new offensive coordinator, older players

BY ERIC HERTER
For The Dominion Post

As a math teacher, Eric Snyder is good at solving problems.

It was only natural for him to look at the 2024 University High School football team and realize there were problems to solve.

Snyder, in his second year at the helm of the Hawks’ program, made changes following a 4-7 season that saw UHS drop a first-round playoff contest to Huntington.

“During the season last year, you don’t really have time to think about what is going on,” Snyder said. “In the offseason, you can think about what is going on. We have to fix things so we can win more games.”

One of the big fixes for the Hawks is just going to be that they are a year older. Last year, UHS relied heavily on its sophomore and freshmen class. In 2025, those kids are all bigger, stronger, and faster. UHS only lost three starters from a year ago as well.

Snyder has also made changes to his coaching staff. Last season, Snyder was the offensive coordinator. This year, he has turned those reins over to former WVU assistant coach Dustin Lawless who has a wealth of experience at the college and high school level and was also a Marine. Justin Hensley is going to be the defensive coordinator this year for the Hawks.

“This is the first time since 2008 that I haven’t had a coordinator position as far as varsity goes,” Snyder said. “It’s different, I’m trying to see where I fit in myself. I am overseeing and floating around and making sure that I touch base with all the different positions of



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

Eric Snyder enters his second season as University High’s head coach, but has relinquished his duties as offensive coordinator.

the ball.”

Another problem for UHS last year was at quarterback where injuries and some inconsistent play forced Snyder into playing three different signal callers. Snyder said he is hopeful that good health with the improvement of senior Jack Byrer and junior Harrison Helbig will allow senior Glenn Brown to stay at wide receiver.

Currently Byrer and Helbig are battling for the starting position, and Snyder said it is a close battle between those two in deciding who will be behind center on Aug. 29 when the Hawks open at Musselman.

UHS did find a playmaker at running back in 2024 as Brody Kehler led the team in rushing as a freshman. Marcos Kniska will also see some time in the offensive backfield as he adds some thunder to Kehler’s lightning.

“Brody is bigger, and he is faster,” Snyder said.

“He has really focused on football in the offseason after winning a state title as a wrestler. I think he is going to be very dynamic for us.”

The offensive line returns three players with experience Ayden Downey, a senior, is back at center while fellow senior Ryder Hastings will play left guard and sophomore Luke Padula is back at right tackle. They are joined by freshman Keenan Brown at right guard and junior left tackle Luke Braham who has grown out of his wide receiver position at 6-foot-6 and 245 pounds.

“I really feel like we are a completely different team than we were last year,” Downey said. “I think our coaching staff really has us locked in for this year. We have been putting in the work and I think we are going to be a lot better this year.”

Glenn Brown is back at wide receiver after spend-

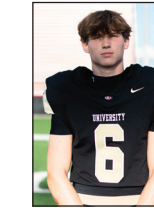
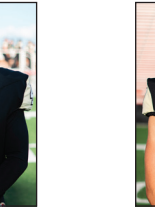
SEE **HAWKS**, PAGE 5



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

University High’s Kaleil Lewis (80) is one of three returning starters in what expects to be a deep receiving corps for the Hawks this season.

THE SENIORS

 Preston Kerns	 Marcos Kniska	 Toby White	 Glenn Brown	 Aydan Downey
 Khalil Coleman	 Madan Mayle	 Logan Deel	 Ryder Hastings	
 Roman Konchesky	 Buck Jones	 Jack Byrer	 Jace Torres	
 Amir Lewis	 Jimmy Gregg	 Easton Runyan	 Kayden Coles	



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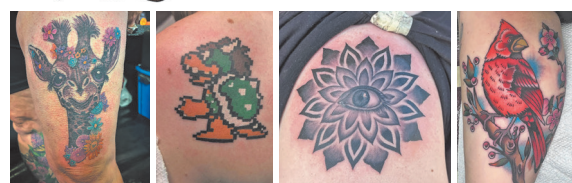
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From limbo to shock to development



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

Marcos Kniska (27) is a three-year starter at University High and was named Class AAAA honorable mention all-state last season.

Marcos Kniska was forced to adjust on the fly, now a leader at UHS

BY ERIC HERTER
For The Dominion Post

A lot can happen in three years. University High School senior Marcos Kniska knows that all too well. It was three years ago that he was preparing for his sophomore football season at Trinity Christian. The night before the first practice, three years ago, the Warriors program decided not to play football. That decision put Kniska in limbo with a sport he was growing to love. “I knew the coach over there, Jason White, and he had a tough decision to make,” UHS head coach Eric Snyder said of that day in 2022. “Coach White knew that if they had one practice and then folded later in the year, those players would be stuck at Trinity without a football team. He made the decision the night before that first practice to give the kids a chance to go to a different school and play.” Kniska and his family live in the UHS school district. That first year, his sophomore season, he was allowed to play football for the Hawks while still attending Trinity. Flash forward three years and Kniska is one of the top linebackers in the state. He is a senior and attends UHS. “I really didn’t know what I was going to do three years ago,” Kniska said. “Coach White had some connections with coach Snyder, and he messaged him about me. I took coach White’s advice about playing football at UHS.” It has turned out to be some



The Dominion Post file photo

Marcos Kniska reacts after making a play during his freshman season at Trinity.

of the best advice Kniska ever received and also a great fit for the UHS football team. Last year, as a junior, Kniska earned Class AAAA honorable mention all-state honors. Since his move from Trinity to UHS, Kniska has been a three-year starter on defense, and he also provides some

thunder in the Hawks’ offensive backfield as a change of pace running back. “It was a big shock that first day of practice (three years ago),” Kniska said. “I saw all those kids and I loved it. There was a lot more time for competition and I thought that made me a much better player.”

One thing that wasn’t a shock for Kniska is that he was able to produce right away even after jumping up to Class AAAA football. He said he was confident in his ability, and he knew after the first day of practice that he belonged on the field. Snyder said he wasn’t surprised that Kniska was able to

produce right away. The work ethic and skills were there from day one. “He wasn’t the strongest guy or the fastest guy on the field, but he was very clever with how he approached things,” Snyder said. “He had a really good base from working with

SEE **KNISKA**, PAGE 9

3 PLAYERS TO WATCH

- Brody Kehler (RB, Soph.):** Kehler was the leading rusher for UHS last season with 103 carries for 469 yards and seven touchdowns. After winning state titles in wrestling and track, Kehler will return in 2025, destined to match his success in other sports. Expect to hear his name early and often.
- Kaleil Lewis (WR, Jr.):** Lewis, like Kehler, is also a tri-sport athlete and performed very well on the basketball court and track for the Hawks. He caught 28 passes in 2024 for 217 yards and a score. Lewis is just one of a number of wideouts at the Hawks’ disposal.
- Marcos Kniska (LB, Sr.):** Kniska has made a name for himself since stepping on the field on Baker’s Ridge. With a cerebral approach, Kniska is one of the smarter players in the state and leads the UHS defense both vocally and by example. If the Hawks’ defense wants to be successful, Kniska will be one of the reasons it happens.



HAWKS

FROM PAGE 2

ing time at quarterback last year. He is joined by Kaleil Lewis, a 6-4 junior, who has big play ability along with Luke Byrer, Kyle Weaver and Hayden George. “We have five or six guys that we can rely on at wide receiver,” Snyder said. “We have a nice ro-

tation with some excellent depth.” On defense, Kniska anchors a defense from his linebacker position that struggled at times last year after allowing 33.4 points per game. “We are going to work more as a unit,” Kniska said. “We are taking it personally on defense and we have a whole new intensity.” Braham is back on the

defensive line after missing most of last season along with Padula and Gavin Stone. Keenan Brown will also join the defensive front as a freshman. There is also some depth with Waylon Fowler and Deuce Williams in the mix at defensive tackle. Joining Kniska at linebacker is Downey along with Jaedyn Katchur and Roman Konchesky.

The defensive backfield includes Katchur seeing some time along with many of the wide receivers and Kehler. Khalil Coleman is back on the team and will see time as a defensive back after not playing last season. George is also back after leading the team in interceptions. “We are going to shock a lot of people this year,” Kniska said. “I am confi-

dent about that.” Special teams are going to be a strength for the Hawks as senior punter Jimmy Gregg has committed to play at Syracuse, Brady Goodenow will handle the kicking duties and Braham is the long snapper. “Jimmy is an athlete back there,” Snyder said. “He’s fast, you don’t see that too much, but he can run, and he’s gotten

stronger. You look at him and think he should play linebacker, but I would like to keep my job and if I get my Division I punter hurt playing defense it would be trouble.” University opens its season on the road with a 7 p.m. contest against Musselman on Aug. 29. The Hawks home schedule kicks off on Sept. 5 when they host Parkersburg South.

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PRESTON HIGH

Knights excited to show off improvement



Cassidy Roark/The Dominion Post

Preston receiver Aiden Schmidl returns after catching 15 passes for 445 yards last season.

PHS has strength in backfield, offensive line

BY MICHAEL GRIFFITH

MGriffith@DominionPost.com

KINGWOOD -- There may not be another team coming off of a 3-7 season that is more excited to get back out on the field this year than Preston High.

Despite the record last season, the Knights showed significant competitiveness week in and week out. Two of their losses came by one touchdown and the three wins they earned were against solid opponents in East Fairmont, Robert C. Byrd, and Buckhannon-Upshur.

Returning senior quarterback Slaton Manko was one of the breakout stars around the state in 2024 and leads the Knights once again for their 2025 campaign. Manko individually amassed over 2,100 yards of total offense and 27 total touchdowns last season. Against East Fairmont, Manko tallied over 500 yards and four touchdowns in a 48-20 domination of the Bees.

Manko, along with some of the other returning players that head coach Mark Deep and his staff are excited about, is entering the season exuding confidence. His head coach says that resonates throughout the team, and it all starts with his senior signal-caller.

"I think the whole community is excited for this season to start," Deep said. "It goes through the whole team. Everything really starts with Slaton, with his confidence and what he did last year.



The Dominion Post file photo

Preston head coach Mark Deep is entering his fifth season with the Knights.

His attitude resonates through the roster, and it gives the rest of the kids a bit of a boost when they see him playing as hard as he does. We are eager to see where our line is at, also. We had only one senior and a bunch of underclassmen. This season, we have a senior and a bunch of juniors, and our starting center is returning after missing last season."

Junior Brayden Miller missed last season and will return in the middle of the offensive line for Manko and the PHS offense. Juniors Max Huggins, Jayden Liven-good, and Hayden Cole join Miller, along with the lone senior up front, Gavin Martin.

Senior Hunter Lewellen and junior Blake Jennings will see most of the carries in the backfield, but Manko can also

use his legs effectively. Lewellan is currently recovering from a small injury but should return for the Knights' Week 1 opener against Hampshire.

"We are talented in many different areas and can take advantage of an all-around game," Deep said. "First and foremost, we have to control the line of scrimmage. That's where the game starts. We have some weapons out there, and we believe that as these guys gain more experience each week, they will be a force at the skill positions."

Senior Aiden Schmidl returns after a successful junior campaign with 15 catches for 445 yards in seven games last season. He averaged 29.7 yards per catch, and 15 of his receptions went for touchdowns. Kash Jenkins and Easton Hayes will also be options for Manko.

Sophomore Malik Powell picked up a small injury during camp but aims to be back for the Knights as soon as possible.

The Knights begin the 2025 calendar with three consecutive games on the road. They'll travel to Hampshire County in week one, aiming to avenge a 41-34, double overtime defeat last season in Kingwood.

Two trips to Marion County follow in weeks two and three as PHS visits North Marion and Fairmont Senior.

The Knights will welcome Robert C. Byrd to Kingwood for the home-opener on September 19 before traveling the short trip back down I-79 to visit East Fairmont.

Three straight home contests begin in October, as Beckley, Bridgeport and University High visit PHS. The Knights close on the road at Buckhannon on Halloween, then at home against Elkins on Nov. 7.

"It's a daunting schedule," Deep said. "We have to be ready every game and every play. I think we will be more competitive than we were last season. Hampshire in the first week is a big one for us. Then we play two really tough teams in North Marion and Fairmont Senior. There's no time for us to hit the brakes whatsoever, and we need to be focused every single week."

PHS 2025 SCHEDULE

AUG. 29 at Hampshire, 7 p.m.
SEPT. 5 at North Marion, 7 p.m.
SEPT. 11 at Fairmont Senior, 7 p.m.
SEPT. 19 ROBERT C. BYRD, 7 p.m.
SEPT. 26 at East Fairmont, 7 p.m.
OCT. 3 WOODROW WILSON, 7 p.m.
OCT. 10 OPEN
OCT. 17 BRIDGEPORT, 7 p.m.
OCT. 24 UNIVERSITY, 7 p.m.
OCT. 31 at Buckhannon-Upshur, 7 p.m.
NOV. 7 ELKINS, 7 p.m.

** Home games in caps

2024 RESULTS (3-7)

AUG. 30 L vs. Hampshire, 41-34 (2OT)
SEPT. 6 L vs. North Marion, 41-7
SEPT. 13 L vs. Fairmont Senior, 48-3
SEPT. 20 W at Robert C. Byrd, 28-7
SEPT. 26 W vs. East Fairmont, 48-20
OCT. 4 L at Woodrow Wilson, 35-7
OCT. 18 L at Bridgeport, 57-7
OCT. 25 L at University, 42-35
NOV. 1 W vs. Buckhannon-Upshur, 47-7
NOV. 8 L at Philip Barbour, 49-28

THE SENIORS



Kash Jenkins



Joshua Hoover



Easton Hayes



Gavin Martin



Aiden Schmidl



Slaton Manko



Aiden Strawser



Hunter Lewellen



Michael Moore



Reed Davis



Matthew Larew



Ryder Kilkenny



Nathan Pingley



Cassidy Roark/The Dominion Post

Preston students cheer on the Knights in a game against Buckhannon-Upshur last season.

PHS football represents community pride

BY MICHAEL GRIFFITH

MGriffith@DominionPost.com

KINGWOOD -- It's 6:55 p.m. on a Friday evening in the fall.

Warmups are over. The marching band has played the National Anthem. Your team is ready to take the field in front of its home crowd that has filled the stadium and the student section, giving

you the prideful feeling of putting on the jersey and doing battle for your school, community, and county.

Players feel that rush of emotions every single play on a Friday night. But what about the other side of things? The fans, family, and friends who come out to support the team every Friday night? What does it mean to them

to have a team to support that represents an entire county?

That's exactly the feel in Kingwood at Preston High under the lights on Friday nights during the high school football season for the ones sitting in the stands.

Preston is the only high school in the county and it doesn't take long to understand just how much

all athletics mean to the ones who live there and support the school.

"I think athletics is one of those things that can truly bring a community together when it comes to high schools," long-time PHS supporter Rick Myers said. "It's such a wonderful thing to go out on Friday night on a

SEE **PRIDE**, PAGE 9

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Hunter Lewellen looks to make a difference at Preston

Senior looks to be healthy after injury issues

BY MICHAEL GRIFFITH
MGriffith@DominionPost.com

KINGWOOD – Every team has a player on the roster who opponents may forget to list on the scouting report, but who is a player that can single-handedly make the plays necessary to help his team win games every week.

That perfectly describes Preston High School football senior Hunter Lewellen, who returns in 2025 eager and prepared for a full season after only appearing in five games in 2024.

A contributor on both offense and defense, Lewellen carried the ball 17 times in the five games he appeared in, for 95 yards. He was the fifth-leading tackler on the team with 29, averaging 5.8 per game.

Lewellen approaches 2025 healthy and ready to elevate his role in positively impacting the team.

“My main focus this off-season was getting stronger, faster, and smarter on the field,” Lewellen said. “I worked on improving my conditioning, speed, and football IQ, so I can make a bigger impact this season. I want to help our team win, improve my stats a bit from last year, and set the tone



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

SEE PRESTON, PAGE 9 Preston High’s Hunter Lewellen (26) hauls in a reception against North Marion last season.

3 PLAYERS TO WATCH

Slaton Manko (QB, Sr.): Simply put, Manko is the top player to watch in 2025. If the Preston Knights want to win games, they need Manko to perform at an elite level, which is his capability. After 27 touchdowns and over 2,000 yards last season for PHS, Manko returns with a chip on his shoulder and a clear goal in mind.

Aiden Schmidl (WR, Sr.): Manko needs someone to throw the ball to to be successful and Schmidl is one of those guys who can help out. Schmidl caught 15 passes last season but went for 445 yards and four touchdowns, playing only seven games.

Hunter Lewellen (ATH, Sr.): Lewellan was arguably another breakout player for PHS in 2024. With contributions on offense and being the third-leading tackler on defense, Lewellan can be a player who will continue to get better and help the Knights win some games.



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Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

Preston High has one of the top quarterbacks in the state this season with senior Slaton Manko.

PRIDE

FROM PAGE 7

nice evening in September or October and see the bleachers full of people you know. You see all these kids you’ve watched grow up over the years. It’s great to see so many people in the community coming out to support the kids, regardless of the season’s progress. The individual towns in our county are divided, but the athletics at PHS is something that really can bring everyone together to rally around.”

With Preston County covering 653 square miles, it’s not uncommon for students who live on the edge of the county line to decide to go to school elsewhere, often Tucker County or a school in Monongalia County.

“It’s not always easy up here in Preston,” Chad Manko, father of PHS starting quarterback Slaton Manko, said. “That’s something I always try to remind Slaton and his friends and teammates. We face challenges that other schools and areas don’t encounter, such as the county’s size and having only one high school. These kids get to represent the high school, of course, but they also rep-

resent the entire county of Preston and everyone who lives here. That’s something we try to get every kid on board with. It’s like the old motto, ‘Play for the name on the front of the jersey and not the back.’”

Chad says he has seen a positive shift in the culture of Preston athletics in recent years.

“Really, with Slaton’s group and the ones behind them, they’ve really taken hold of the meaning of having a culture,” he said. “We’ve had our struggles in team sports because of numbers. It’s not often that a team we play against has fewer players on their sideline than we do. But that’s sort of become the identity of the program, and that’s just part of it. I think this is the first year in a while that our senior class is double-digits.”

The Knights open the 2025 campaign on the road in the opening three weeks of the season. Still, you can bet that despite being away from home, the PHS supporters will travel well and be there for their team and waiting for Week 4 when the Knights take the field in Kingwood for their home opener on September 19 against Robert C. Byrd.

PRESTON

FROM PAGE 8

for the younger guys on how to prepare the right way.”

As one of an experienced group of seniors, Hunter says leading by example is what he feels is his best trait.

“I lead by example,” he said. “I’m going to show up every day ready to go, ready to get to work, and push my teammates to match that effort and that energy. I’m vocal when I need to be, but I also think it’s important to let your work speak for itself at times.”

Lewellen had been battling a minor injury coming into camp, but has

been fully cleared for contact and is working his way back into game shape.

“I’ve been focusing on conditioning and explosiveness,” he said. “I’ll gradually increase my contact work in practice so that I’m ready to go 100 percent when it matters most. I’m most excited to play my senior year with my brothers and make memories we will never forget, especially under the Friday night lights.”

“We need to stay disciplined, trust each other, and execute every single play,” he continued. If we play as one unit, I truly feel that we can beat anyone that we come up against.”

KNISKA

FROM PAGE 5

coach White. We just fine tuned some things at UHS.”

This season, Kniska is expected to anchor a UHS defense that struggled at times last season. The Hawks allowed 33.4 points per game last year on their way to a 4-7 record and a first-round exit in the state playoffs.

Snyder said Kniska has become a more vocal leader for the Hawks so far in 2025.

“Last year, I still wasn’t very familiar with everyone on the team,” Kniska, who also sports a 4.6 GPA, said. “I see more opportunities to be a leader this year. I am trying to be more vocal.”

Kniska has also turned his focus to playing just football after spending his first two years playing soccer, basketball, baseball, and track while also enrolled at Trinity.

He also is focused on playing at the next level. While he currently does not have any scholarship offers, he has been in contact with Davidson and some Ivy League schools including Penn, Cornell, and Brown. He said his goal is to play Division I football at a good academic institution where he hopes to study finance.

The move to attending UHS has also afforded Kniska the chance at taking more Advanced Placement courses. He took six of those during his junior year and has plans on taking more this year – including Snyder’s AP Calculus class.

“I have only heard good things about him as a student,” Snyder said. “I wouldn’t expect anything different. He’s a phenomenal kid to coach. He challenges his teammates out there and makes them tougher mentally – he really is a good leader.”

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MCS Student Attendance Requirements 2025-26

Monongalia County Schools values student success, and regular student attendance is the foundation of an exceptional education. Regular Attendance is defined as being physically present at least 95% of the time, engaged in the educational process. Even excused absences keep a student out of school and unengaged with learning, so excused absences do count against Regular Attendance. Be aware that a parent or guardian note for excused absence must specify a valid excused absence reason listed in the MCS attendance policy 5200.

The following excused absence reasons are summarized from state code (<https://code.wvlegislature.gov/18-8-4>) and MCS Policy 5200 (<https://go.boarddocs.com/wv/mono/Board.nsf/Public>)

- Absences that result from school-approved curricular/co-curricular activities; failure of the bus to run/hazardous conditions, SAT Plan, IEP or 504 Plan, and other Board-approved excused absences
- Personal illness or injury of the student*
- Personal illness or injury of the student’s parent, guardian, custodian, or family member, with a reasonable explanation for the student’s absence caused by the illness or injury in the family*
- Medical or dental appointment with valid written excuse from physician or dentist
- Documented chronic medical condition or disability that may require multiple or regular absences
- Participation in homebound or hospital instruction due to an illness or injury or other extraordinary circumstance that warrants home or hospital confinement
- Documented disabilities consisting of any mental or physical impairments documented annually with a valid physician’s approved and reviewed quarterly by the SAT, IEP or 504 team
- Calamity, such as a fire or flood*
- Death in the family*
- Judicial obligation or court appearance involving the student with official documentation
- Military requirement for students enlisted or enlisting in the military with official documentation
- Observation of a religious holiday or attendance at approved religious instruction
- Contagious or parasite conditions: contact the school nurse

*When absence notes are submitted by a parent or guardian, without additional documentation from a qualified professional, excused absences are limited to a total of ten (10) for the entire school year. If the student’s absences exceed two (2) days, the absences shall be unexcused unless written verification from a physician supports a longer time period.

Unexcused Absences: Any absence not specifically included in the definition of an excused absence will be unexcused. This includes out of school suspension and students unable to attend school due to not having the required immunizations. At the secondary level, class periods missed will count as an appropriate fraction of the day and will be used when calculating the total number of days absent.

Make-up Work: Any absence results in missing learning, and it is not possible to fully make up for missed time and engagement. However, students will have the opportunity to make up graded work missed due to absence. Students will have 2 days per day of absence to submit make-up work, up to a maximum of 6 days from the student’s return to school. Teachers may, at their discretion, extend the deadline for make-up work beyond 6 days. Students are expected to work with their teachers if more time is needed. When possible, students should obtain make-up work prior to their absence.

Tardiness: Monongalia County believes that preventing student tardiness is very important and will serve students well throughout student and work life. Helping students acquire the habit of promptness requires positive preventive measures as well as appropriate consequences. Therefore, each student is responsible for addressing reasonable prevention of student tardiness. Unexcused tardies will also be used when determining total unexcused absences as follows: Elementary/Middle/High School: Five tardies equal one day of absence

Homebound: Absences incurred during homebound schooling will be assessed as follows: For each day of homebound schooling that is an unexcused absence 2.5 days of absence will be assessed to the student.

Academic Recovery Days: To encourage Regular Attendance and to provide academic assistance to students who will benefit from it, one day of each semester will be designated as an academic recovery day at each high school. These days will be immediately before or after the student comprehensive exam days for that semester. Students may be exempted from physical attendance on academic recovery days if they meet both qualifications:

- 1) They have Regular Attendance for that semester (5 or less days, excused or unexcused); and
- 2) They have a grade of C or better in each class.

Exempt students will be recorded as “Elsewhere” for attendance purposes, or may decide to attend to improve their grades or learning.

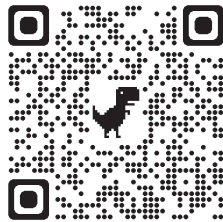
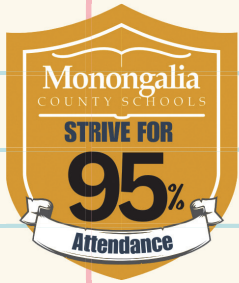
On academic recovery days, students will engage in one or more of the following, at their teachers’ discretion:

- Completing make-up assignments for grade and content recovery;
- Completing additional projects or assignments to fill knowledge gaps;
- Reviewing for comprehensive exams;
- Other activities of academic value.

***Chronic absenteeism** – missing 10 percent or more of school days due to absence for any reason – excused, unexcused absences and suspensions - can translate into students having difficulty learning to read by the third grade, achieving in middle school, and graduating from high school. (Attendance Works) As a result, Monongalia County Schools is committed to reducing student absences for any reason. Students missing more than 18 days (out of 180 school days) are chronically absent and are at high risk of negative educational outcomes. Students should strive to miss less than 5 percent (9 out of 180 school days) to best prepare them for academic and social success.

The full policy can be read at <http://boe.mono.k12.wv.us/>.

Please take the time to read this policy in its entirety.
Should questions arise, please direct them to the
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Teddy Stewart,
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2025

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL
PREVIEW

THE DOMINION POST

AUGUST 21, 2025 SECTION D



MADDOX TWIGG - QB
MORGANTOWN HIGH SCHOOL



CALEB HALL - RB
CLAY-BATTELLE HIGH SCHOOL



MORGANTOWN HIGH

MHS on a fresh start after quarterfinal run



Benjamin Powell

MHS running back Rhys Wells breaks free against Martinsburg last season.

Mohigans sport a mix of experience, youth in 2025

BY MICHAEL GRIFFITH

MGriffith@DominionPost.com

The Morgantown High football team saw its 2024 season end in the Class AAAA quarterfinals to state runner-up Spring Mills, 14-7, and while the loss is something his team could use as motivation coming into 2025, head coach Sean Biser says the game isn't something he's even brought up to his team since the defeat.

"Honestly, we haven't really talked about last year," Biser said. "I don't know that we've brought it up one time, because all those guys graduated. This team is a whole new team, a new make-up. In all my experiences, one thing I've learned is that every year is different.

Every team has its own personality. Last year was last year, and we have to worry about this group and how they're going to progress as a team."

MHS has a senior class of 20 players with some returning starters. Biser says something that excites him about his team the most is the mix of veterans with some up-and-coming players who have emerged in the summer.

"We've got some very talented kids," he said. "We have some size up front, and the best part is we have competition, especially on the defensive side of the ball. Everybody has different skill sets as well. Some guys may have a little more speed or be a little stronger, but the biggest thing is that they can

make plays. You've got to be able to make plays."

One of the players who will be looked upon to be a playmaker for the Mohigans is sophomore quarterback Maddox Twigg.

Twigg missed half of last season with an injury and played in a two-quarterback system, but he enters 2025 healthy and has solidified himself as QB1 on Wilson Avenue.

Twigg picked up his first Division I offer from Marshall over the summer and could be one of the breakout stars of 2025 in the state.

"In the past, the teams I've coached haven't always had a guy who could go back and sling it 25 times a game," Biser said. "And maybe we did, but we didn't have the wide-

outs to match. I think you need to assess the talent at your disposal and see what you do. Now, I think we are a little bit of both. With Maddox back there, we can spread the field a little more and do some more things with our of-

SEE FRESH, PAGE 3

MHS 2025 SCHEDULE

AUG. 28	PARKERSBURG , 7 p.m.
SEPT. 5	at Jefferson , 7 p.m.
SEPT. 12	HEDGESVILLE , 7 p.m.
SEPT. 19	at Connellsville (Pa.) , 7 p.m.
SEPT. 26	SPRING MILLS , 7 p.m.
OCT. 3	at Wheeling Park , 7 p.m.
OCT. 10	at Martinsburg , 7 p.m.
OCT. 17	PARKERSBURG SOUTH , 7 p.m.
OCT. 24	OPEN
OCT. 31	at University , 7 p.m.
NOV. 7	MUSSELMAN , 7 p.m.

** Home games in caps

2024 RESULTS (8-4)

AUG. 30	W	at Parkersburg , 24-13
SEPT. 6	L	vs. Bridgeport , 49-0
SEPT. 14	W	at South Charleston , 63-0
SEPT. 20	W	vs. Connellsville (Pa.) , 21-7
SEPT. 27	W	vs. Buckhannon-Upshur , 49-6
OCT. 4	L	at Wheeling Park , 14-7
OCT. 11	L	vs. Martinsburg , 51-14
OCT. 18	W	at Parkersburg South , 28-14
OCT. 25	W	at Hedgesville , 45-7
NOV. 1	W	vs. University , 49-7
NOV. 22	W	vs. Woodrow Wilson , 35-10
NOV. 29	L	at Spring Mills , 14-7

THE SENIORS



Zaiiden Lockett



Jacob Woodall



Owen Young



Waylon Colistra



Keltin Blunt



Donovin Arrowsmith



Greyson Prutlipac



Brayden Parks



Teon Scott Jr.



Blake Buffington



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Isaiah Thompson



Carsin Lawhun



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The Dominion Post file photo

Sean Biser enters his sixth season as Morgantown High's head coach. He led the Mohigans to the second round of the state playoffs last season.

Cooper does a little of everything for the Mohigans



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

Morgantown High’s Carter Cooper (right) attempts to break a tackle against Connellsville (Pa.) last season.

He’s a shutdown corner, return specialist and Mohigans’ leading receiver

BY MICHAEL GRIFFITH
MGriffith@DominionPost.com

Morgantown High senior Carter Cooper could best be described as somewhat of a Swiss-Army Knife for the Mohigans on the gridiron.

Serving in all three phases of the game a season ago, Cooper, a senior, returns this season for MHS after an impactful and productive junior campaign that culminated in second-team all-state defensive honors for defensive back in Class AAAA.

He finished 2024 fifth on the team in total tackles (54), with 23 of them coming solo, earning an interception and forcing a fumble. Cooper only allowed receivers he defended to catch four passes last season.

During the offseason, Carter says his focus was on doing the little things right to get better over time.

“This offseason was all about getting stronger and faster, and getting interest from colleges through camp workouts,” Cooper said. “What excites me most about this year is that it’s my senior season, and while I accomplished the goals I set during the offseason, I’m not satisfied whatsoever.”

On top of his defensive efforts for the Mohigans last season, Cooper was just as productive on the offensive side of the ball as the team’s leading receiver and returner on special teams.

Cooper caught 20 of the



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

SEE **COOPER**, PAGE 5 Morgantown’s Carter Cooper was a second-team all-state selection last season.

3 PLAYERS TO WATCH

Maddox Twigg (QB, Soph.): Twigg will lead the way for the offense in 2025 and should make a ton of noise this season. The Mohigans will adapt their offense to fit Twigg’s style of play, as he touts a strong and accurate arm. Twigg will contend for a first-team all-state and could possibly be a player of the year candidate.

Isaiah Thompson (RB, Sr.): Thompson was the third-leading rusher last season for MHS. Thompson carried the ball 63 times for 241 yards and five touchdowns. He will likely see his carries double this year, and he has the speed and vision to make an impact.

Zaiden Lockett (ATH, Sr.): Lockett is a name that has been gaining traction each year since he joined the Mohigans’ program. He caught only eight passes in 2024, but totaled 204 yards and four touchdowns. Lockett also carried the ball six times for 43 yards. Defensively, he was fourth on the team in tackles (55) and can be one of the better shutdown defensive backs.



FRESH

FROM PAGE 2

fense.”

Twigg will have a number of receivers at his disposal, such as Carter Cooper and Keltin Blunt. Cooper was a second-team all-state selection in Class AAAA in 2024.

“We obviously bring back some great experience with guys like Carter Cooper,” Biser said. “But some of the younger guys have really shown what they can do. Owen Young, Tanzer George, and Bren-

dan McCutcheon are a few of those guys who have stepped up. In the backfield, we have Isaiah Thompson, who has some playing experience but is now having to step up into a bigger role.”

Thompson was third on the team for rushing attempts in 2024, and will be joined by Rhys Wells and Zaiden Lockett in the backfield.

The Mohigans also return an experienced line on the offensive and defensive sides. Seniors Blake Buffington (6’2,

270), Ze’von Shipman (6’1, 290), and Brayden Parks (6’4, 325) lead the way up front. Fellow senior Drew Stahara (6’3, 245) and junior Konnor Mott (6’4, 315) round out the experience in the trenches.

“That’s where football starts. We like to modernize it today, but you can’t play football if you’re not physical,” Biser said. “And then it comes down to fundamentals. Doing the little things right to make the larger goals attainable. Finishing blocks, coming off the ball, pad level, all

those things. It all starts up front, and you’ve got to win up front to be successful on the football field.”

MHS will open its 2025 journey, at Pony Lewis Field, to welcome Parkersburg at 7 p.m. on Aug. 28. It’s the annual WVS-SAC Kickoff Game presented by the West Virginia Army National Guard.

The Mohigans will get their first taste of life in the EPAC with a road trip to Jefferson in week two, before returning home to host Hedgesville.

MHS will host Spring

Mills on September 26 to avenge last season’s quarterfinal defeat.

Biser and crew will travel across town to Baker’s Ridge on Halloween for the Mohawk Bowl, aiming to capture their fifth in a row, before closing the regular season with Musselman in Morgantown.

“It’s a brutal schedule,” Biser said. “You don’t look at one team on that schedule and think we have it easy whatsoever. Realistically, we could start the year 5-0, or we

could start the year 0-5, or 1-4. I think the move was necessary to play more teams in that area, particularly to compete against schools in Quad-A. Along with those EPAC schools, you throw in Wheeling Park and Parkersburg and Parkersburg South, it’s going to be a tough grind every week, and we need to be prepared for a season where we can’t stop to take a breath or exhale, we have to keep pushing and keep that mentality of staying focused.”



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'TO BE HONEST, I FELT LIKE I CAME UP SHORT OF WHAT I WAS CAPABLE OF LAST YEAR, BOTH ON AND OFF THE FIELD.'

Ze'von Shipman
Morgantown High defensive lineman

In the trenches: Shipman an anchor on MHS D-line

BY MICHAEL GRIFFITH
MGriffith@DominionPost.com

In modern football, our focus is often on the players with the ball in their hands every single snap, like the quarterback, running back, and wide receivers, as they are the ones providing the scoring and most of the highlight plays we all love so much.

But what about the guys up front? The ones in the trenches whose job it is to simply move the person across from them out of the way for those players making a highlight throw, catch, or run. Or the ones whose job is to stop those players? Those are the players who are often forgotten about when the band is playing the fight song after a touchdown.

Morgantown High School defensive lineman Ze'veon Shipman is making sure he makes enough noise up front for everyone to take notice.

A returning senior captain in 2025 after earning an all-state Honorable Mention for Class AAAA last season, Shipman will be a key piece of the defensive puzzle for the MHS line.

While many players focus on getting faster and stronger in the offseason, Shipman wanted to focus on more technical aspects of his game.

“My main focus this offseason was my footwork,” he said. “Making sure I’m balanced and improving my pass-rushing is something I’m working on as well. Getting to the quarterback more will be big for our defense. I believe this team has the potential to bring home a state title as long as we keep putting in hard work every day and strive for perfection.”

The 6-foot-1, 280-pounder finished seventh in total tackles for MHS last season with 44. Eight of those came as a tackle-for-loss to go along with a sack and a fumble recovery, committing only one penalty all season.

"To be honest, I felt like I came up short of what I was capable of last year, both on and off the field," Shipman said. "This year, my key to success is to

COOPER

FROM PAGE 3

team's total 56 passes last season, for 299 yards and a touchdown. He returned 17 kickoffs for 366 yards for an average of 21.5 per return. He averaged 13.4 yards, returning 19 punts for 256 yards.

After his offseason pro-

A full-page photograph of a football player in a red jersey with the number 50, in a three-point stance on a field. The jersey has "MORGANTOWN" and the number 50 on it. The player is wearing white gloves and is looking directly at the camera. The background shows a blurred stadium with red seats.

Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

Morgantown High defensive lineman Ze'von Shipman had 44 tackles last season and eight tackle for losses.

remain hungry and to never let myself become content with anything. My goal is to be the most dominant player in the state and aim to break the MHS sack record.”

The changing landscape of the Mohigans' schedule with the transi-

tion to the Eastern Panhandle Athletic Conference (EPAC) is something Shipman says is more than welcome.

"I'm excited to play all of the teams on our schedule," he said. "As long as we play to our ability, I know we are able

to as a team, I truly know that we cannot lose, no matter who is on the other side of the ball."

Another senior leader on an experienced MHS roster, Shipman, embraces the responsibility weighing on his shoulders.

"I know I'm one of

those players who sets the standard and leads by example," he said. "I hold my teammates accountable if they skip a rep, miss a tackle or an assignment, etc., and I hold myself to those same expectations. At the end of the day, football is a team

sport, and the only way to reach your goals is to have great communication and chemistry both on and off the field. If we stick to who we are and work hard every single day, game, and play, we can accomplish our goals this season."

gression, Cooper could be a dangerous threat on special teams for MHS opponents who kick to him.

"I ended up maxing my bench press at 305 and my fastest 40-time at camp was 4.5," he said. "I also received a few offers and some close attention from several other schools, so the pressure is off a little on that side of things."

I can stick to focusing on doing what I need to do to help my team win games.”

Cooper has been a member of the varsity squad for MHS for the past two seasons, and says that experience gives him even more confidence heading into his senior year as a leader of the team.

“Last season, I think

I came into it knowing what to expect for the most part,” he said. “This year will be year number three, and now I’m a senior and shouldn’t have many surprises. I know what to expect, even playing some new teams this season.”

On a roster with a heavy senior-class presence, Cooper says he be-

believes the Mohigans have what they need to be successful this season and reach their goals.

"We have a ton of experience at all the positions," he said. "We just need to stay focused on the task at hand and leave it all on the field every single game. As I enter my senior season, I am expected to lead both

vocally and by example, both on and off the field. I have a couple of goals this year, including earning defensive and offensive recognition, which I know can only be achieved by not taking days off. Overall, I want to help my team have a successful season and a promising postseason.”

A photograph of a plate of spaghetti topped with a thick, red meat sauce. In the background, a can of Peroni beer is visible. The image is part of a promotional advertisement for Muriale's Italian Kitchen.



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Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post
Clay-Battelle defenders gang up on a Weirton Madonna ballcarrier last season.



Cassidy Roark/The Dominion Post
Clay-Battelle running back Caleb Hall (left) rushes the ball against Tygarts Valley last season.



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CEE-BEES!

CLAY-BATTELLE

Cee-Bees putting right pieces in right places



Clay-Battelle defensive back Tysen Price (11) makes a stop against Hancock (Md.) last season.

C-B has more depth, athletes to start 2025

BY MARK SCHRAF
For The Dominion Post

BLACKSVILLE – When it comes to prioritizing the development of a high school football team, Clay-Battelle’s second-year head coach Aaron LaPoe learned a valuable lesson during a coaching clinic this off-season.

“Players, formations, plays’ – in that order,” he smiled during the Cee-Bees’ media day. “It felt like it took us – me ,

really – about half the season to correctly evaluate our players’ talents and get them in the right situations for them to be the most successful. I think coaches can get obsessed with dreaming up new plays and forget to focus on getting players where they need to be. With a full year in place, there are definitely fewer questions about personnel this year, and that’s a good thing.”

And that includes an

infusion of talent from former rival Hundred, whose school was recently consolidated, and LaPoe has been especially appreciative of how smooth the transition has been.

“Zero issues,” he smiled, “And that’s a tribute to all the kids. I give them all the credit in the world, because having your school consolidated is hard, a very abrupt, tough change to navigate. But they’ve all stepped in

and have been receptive and open to everything we’ve asked of them, because I think they’re cut from the same cloth, you know? We’re all from the same part of the state, so the culture is similar for sure.

“And right from the beginning,” he continued, “our senior leaders, especially Braden Ponceroff and first-team all-state standout Kooper Statler, have realized that these are good athletes, good

football players that can help us win. We saw that during the four 7-on-7 competitions we did this summer, a lot more than usual. It helped us evaluate and come together as a team. And with 29 kids out this season, we need all the able-bodied good football players we can find. We’re all Cee-Bees at this point, for sure.”

Now that the coaching staff has a solid handle on their players – described as a group by La-

Poe as “historically fast for Clay-Battelle, at every position on the field” – the next challenge has been to determine what offensive and defensive schemes to concentrate on installing and perfecting this year.

“Last year, we wanted to run an offense that featured the fullback and tight end, but we couldn’t fill those positions,” LaPoe admitted. “Now we can, and with our team

SEE RIGHT, PAGE 8



Aaron LaPoe is heading into his second season as Clay-Battelle’s head coach after going 5-5 in his first season.

THE SENIORS



Cameron Mercer



Colt Sandy



Jaxon Huggins



Tre Huggins



Braden Ponceroff



Kooper Statler



Tyler Sleeth



Cooper Peyton



Colton Cheney



Tysen Price



Josh Wilson

C-B 2025 SCHEDULE

AUG. 29 at Cameron, 7 p.m.
SEPT. 5 FRONTIER (Ohio), 7 p.m.
SEPT. 12 VALLEY WETZEL, 7 p.m.
SEPT. 19 OPEN
SEPT. 26 at Gilmer County, 7 p.m.
OCT. 3 MEADOW BRIDGE, 7 p.m.
OCT. 10 at Richwood, 7 p.m.
OCT. 17 RIVER VIEW, 7 p.m.
OCT. 24 SHERMAN, 7 p.m.
OCT. 31 OAK GLEN, 7 p.m.
NOV. 7 MAGNOLIA, 7 p.m.

** Home games in caps

2024 RESULTS (5-5)

AUG. 30 W vs. Hundred, 44-6
SEPT. 6 L vs. Madonna, 28-8
SEPT. 13 L at Valley Wetzel, 33-7
SEPT. 20 W vs. Trinity, forfeit
SEPT. 27 L vs. Tygarts Valley, 13-12
OCT. 4 W vs. Hancock (Md.), 41-13
OCT. 11 W at Meadow Bridge, 34-28
OCT. 18 L vs. Cameron, 47-0
OCT. 25 W at Beallsville (Ohio), 49-6
NOV. 8 L at Magnolia, 14-12



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New (old?) position, same leader



The Dominion Post file photo

Clay-Battelle’s Braden Ponceroff (right) is moving back to receiver this season after playing quarterback in 2024.

Ponceroff still a C-B commander after switching back to WR from QB

BY MARK SCHRAF
The Dominion Post

BLACKSVILLE – A high school football team is a family. And every family needs good leadership, and the right kind of leadership to fulfil its potential.

In senior receiver Braden Ponceroff, Clay-Battelle head coach Aaron LaPoe knows he’s got a great leader who instinctively knows the right way to lead.

“When I was his age,” the former C-B standout running back admitted, “my concept of leadership was, ‘I will lift so much weights and work out so hard in the offseason that I will be able to break 11 tackles on every carry and tote the whole team on my back on every play.’ Kind of messed up, right? I wish now that I had then what comes naturally to Braden, because I swear he leads this team like a Fortune 500 CEO.”

When asked for examples, LaPoe lit up, quickly ticking off several vital contributions Ponceroff has made both on and off the field.

“This offseason, Braden, who has eluded for a receiver, has worked out with dedication, putting on at least 15 pounds of muscle,” he said, “But, he also found a way to bring a pile of teammates with him every time. He’s made sure kids got rides, and he doesn’t just pound away at his own routine. He helps the younger guys with their technique, encouraging and including them. That is so important for the culture of a team, and it’s second nature with him. Same thing with incorporating the new players we’ve inherited from Hundred (after its consolidation). He welcomed those kids into our family immediately, made sure



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

Braden Ponceroff said he is looking forward to playing receiver again after starting last season as the Cee-Bees quarterback.

they became Cee-Bees right away, and it has helped our team tremendously.

“He also has been willing to sacrifice and be receptive to whatever we’ve asked of him,” LaPoe continued. “Last year, we asked him to play quarterback, even though that wasn’t

really a position he had experience with or interest in. But he’s such a smart kid, who always knows every position’s assignment on every play, and he’s such a great athlete, so it was an obvious move to make that change.”

Ponceroff’s response?

“‘Sure, coach - whatever it takes to win,’” the senior standout recalled. “I hadn’t really thought about QB before – playing wide receiver has always been my passion – but you do what’s needed to help the team win. I’m glad I’m back at receiver this year, but I know for sure

that playing quarterback has really helped me understand the offense as a whole and my position in particular. I have a much better concept of catch zones and catch windows and route running and timing in the passing game. I feel like it’s really helped me improve as a football player as well as improving our offense as a unit.”

When asked about his leadership role with the influx of new players, Ponceroff typically focused on the ultimate goal – winning games.

“We knew these guys were talented athletes,” he said of the Hundred transfers, “from playing against them – they beat us my sophomore year, and always played us tough – and it’s been an easy transition to welcome them in as brothers. And they’ve quickly been learning our system, plus a couple guys have stepped up and volunteered to switch positions to fill needs. That’s the kind of team-first approach that we want to always have at Clay-Battelle, and it’s just huge for us.”

Ponceroff sees staying healthy and execution as keys to the Cee-Bees success this season.

“We are so fast on defense, it’s really hard to beat them in practice,” he laughed. “But that’s a good thing for our offense, because we hopefully can translate those tough practice reps into positive results in games. Our coaching staff schemes plays and installs them in practices to prepare us for Friday nights, and with the talent we have in place, I see no reason why we can’t go far.”

I can’t believe I’m a senior already,” he concluded with a smile, “so we want to make this year special and become the best team we can be. And I think we can be pretty good.”

3

PLAYERS
TO
WATCH

Kooper Statler (OL/DL, Sr.): Statler earned his way onto the Class A all-state first-team defense last season with his spectacular effort for the Cee-Bees. With a more experienced roster of players like Statler this season, the Cee-Bees can make some noise. Statler will be one of the main components if that happens.

Braden Ponceroff (WR, Sr.): Ponceroff began 2024 as the starting quarterback for C-B, but after returning from an injury, he switched to wideout and impacted the game even more.

Corey Coen (QB, Jr.): Coen took over under center for Ponceroff and earned the right to stay as the starter after strong performances down the stretch. Coen had a productive offseason and should build on his 2024 campaign.



RIGHT

FROM PAGE 7

speed and skill position talent, we are optimistic about what we can accomplish. Speed is such an essential weapon. On defense you can prevent teams from turning the

corner on you when running wide, and basically pursuit of the ball is the key. Offensively, we hope to be able to leverage the Calebs (Hall and Snodgrass) in the running attack and Ponce and our other receivers to spread the ball around and make defenses have to choose

what to stop. Actually, for us, the ‘spread offense’ is finding a way to ‘spread’ the ball around and get every playmaker a chance to make an impact. It’s a good problem to have, for sure.”

So, as the 2025 season approaches, the goals for the Cee-Bees remain as

always – with a bit of a scheduling twist.

“I think we have a playoff-ready schedule in place this year,” LaPoe insisted. “We have two Class AA teams, plus other playoff teams, plus Cameron, who lost in the State title game. We have seven home

games as well, which is a big advantage for us. There is no doubt that our schedule will challenge us this season, and whether we win or lose games – which is often something that is beyond your control – how we respond to those challenges will define our season. If

we confront and battle hard, if we stand up and fight as a team, I think we have every chance to make the playoffs, host some games, and make it to Charleston. That is our goal, and it will always be our goal as long as I’m here, and we are ready to get after it.”

GAMES TO WATCH

Road to state playoffs go through these key matchups

BY MICHAEL GRIFFITH
MGriffith@DominionPost.com

New and old opponents await our area schools in 2025, and I have a few matchups that stand out amongst the rest on the upcoming schedule. From Week 1 road trips to the Mohawk Bowl on Halloween, there's plenty of action in store for the upcoming WV prep football season.

August 29, 2025:
Clay-Battelle at Cameron

You may wonder why this game is on my radar, given that Cameron was the state runner-up last year and has held the upper hand in the series recently. However, I believe Clay-Battelle can still turn this game into a win for the team, even if they lose. In previous seasons, the Cee-Bees and Dragons typically scheduled their game towards the end of the season, or even the final regular season game. This season, the two sides will square off in Week 1, and it could go a long way for second-year head coach Aaron LaPoe and his players. If they demonstrate their competitive spirit and talent as a unit, this game could serve as an early wake-up call for the boys in Blacksville, setting the tone for the entirety of 2025, regardless of the outcome.

September 5, 2025:
Morgantown at Jefferson

Week 2 will present Morgantown with its first taste of regular EPAC competition with a road trip to visit an always-talented Jefferson squad. MHS should be coming off a win against Parkersburg from Week 1 and



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post

Morgantown High celebrated a 49-7 victory against rival University High last season.

will have an early test to show what kind of noise they can make in 2025.

September 5, 2025:
University vs. Parkersburg South

The University Hawks will welcome Parkersburg South to Baker's Ridge in Week 2 in a matchup that will be one to watch out for. Both teams are looking to have bounce-back seasons after having a record of 4-7 (UHS) and 6-6 (Parkersburg South), and this game is one each will have circled on the whiteboard in the locker room.

The Hawks can generate some positive momentum early with a victory.

October 3, 2025:
Clay-Battelle vs. Meadow Bridge

Last season, the Cee-Bees marched into Meadow Bridge and walked away with an upset victory on the road against the No. 8-ranked Class A team. That makes this matchup in Blacksville one of the most important games on the schedule for LaPoe and his players, and if they can pick up a victory to carry

momentum into the latter half of the schedule, which seems to be slightly more favorable for C-B.

October 3, 2025:
Morgantown vs. Wheeling Park

In most sports, Morgantown and Wheeling Park are going to be an intense matchup. That may not be truer for another sport this season as it is for football. Wheeling Park returns record-breaking running back Brennan Wack and quarterback Jay Bordas this season. Wack was a first-team Class AAAA all-state se-

lection after rushing for over 2,000 yards in 2025, and the matchup between the MHS defensive line and the Wheeling Park front will be one to be locked in on. The winner of this game could snatch some huge momentum heading into the second half of the schedule in the chase for playoff security.

October 3, 2025:
Preston vs. Woodrow Wilson

As Preston returns to Class AAAA and chases the playoffs, this is one of those games that the

Knights will have the chance to prove they belong. Woodrow Wilson was defeated by Morgantown in the opening round of the Class AAAA playoffs last season, but is talented and can put points on the board quickly. The Knights will enjoy this game at home this season and have the opportunity to win a game that many won't expect them to.

October 24, 2025:
University at Preston

Last season, Preston visited Baker's Ridge and nearly returned to Kingwood with a massive victory over University. The Hawks eventually prevailed in a 42-35 instant classic, but not before the Knights pushed them to their absolute limits. That result alone makes this game a must-watch. It could also go a long way when it comes to the Class AAAA playoff picture.

October 31, 2025:
Mohawk Bowl (Morgantown at University)

Morgantown has held the upper hand in the Mohawk Bowl in recent years. Winners of the last three matchups, the Mohigans will head back to Baker's Ridge to try and capture their fourth straight Mohawk Bowl trophy. I expect both teams to contend for spots in the top-8 of the Class AAAA playoffs, and the winner of this game could very well end up winning the opportunity to host a game in the opening round. It's always one to watch, but the 2025 Mohawk Bowl could end up being one of the best we've seen in a while.

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