

New song, familiar verse

Maiden team to beat in Southern Foothills 1A

By RONALD KISER
Sports Editor of The Eagle

The conference may be new, but as far as the pre-season favorite is concerned, it's the same old story.

Maiden's Blue Devils, coached by the legendary Tom Brown, will be heavily favored to walk off with top honors in the Southern Foothills 1-A circuit.

The Blue Devils could run into a bit of trouble in their October 12 trip to Hendersonville. The Bearcats could pose a problem with a number of vets off last year's playoff team.

Polk County also made the state playoffs last time, but coach Jeff Wilson lost 13 good seniors.

As for Cherryville's Ironmen and the Bessemer City Jackets, both teams are question marks and although both coaches expect better times, they probably won't have the fire power to challenge Maiden.

All five teams - Highland Tech of Gastonia is a sixth member, but won't play varsity football in 2001 - will be in post-season and most Southern Foothills coaches do not like that idea.

Like it or not, however, the 2001 season will continue at least one week later for all.

As for the schedule itself, that October 12 Maiden at Hendersonville tilt looms large on the horizon and then there are the November 9 tilts sending Polk County to Hendersonville and the 48th renewal of one of North Carolina's oldest rivalries - Cherryville verses Bessemer City.

Here's a preview of the Southern Foothills 1-A -

MAIDEN - Coach Tom Brown starts another year and his Blue Devils, bolstered by 17 good vets, are favored to grab the first Southern Foothills flag.

Big question here is to find a replacement for Shrine Bowl quarterback Grant Rembert. Another Rembert, this one J.R., and promising sophomore Logan Spake are top candidates for the job.

Omar Hayes, who ran for 400 yards last time, and Lamont Reid, who accounted for 500 yards, return as do three hefty 280-pound linemen. Senior Josh Canady and juniors Matt Isenhour and Derek Fox will be throwing their 280-pound frames around.

Center Jon Miller and junior tackle Dan Sipe are other mainstays. Maiden was 11-2 last

time and the Blue Devils will again be a power to be reckoned with in state 1-A playoffs.

HENDERSONVILLE - A total of 17 vets make the Bearcats a top threat.

Coach B.J. Laughter welcomes six starters back on each side of the football. The Bearcats, too, may be the biggest team in the Southern Foothills with four 220-plus linemen and a hard-running 225-pound fullback.

Brice Terry starts at tackle and he's 6'4" and 295 pounds. Nathan Thompson (230) and Kirron Wood (220) are also up front and at fullback is 225-pound Matt Menchaca. Running backs are vets Adam Brown and Cyone Simpson and coach Laughter also has a leader in Eric Smith (190) at tight end.

Hendersonville was 11-2 last season and it looks like another banner year for Laughter and the Bearcats.

POLK COUNTY - Jeff Wilson starts his fifth season with nine lettermen off last season's playoff squad. But 13 good seniors graduated and that hurts.

Top returners include quarterback Jordan Edwards, who hit on 61 of 97 passes last time for 652 yards and five TDs, and senior running back Robbie Petty, who accounted for 729 yards on 156 carries.

Receivers Jon Blatt - 26 catches for 310 yards - and Trey Miller, who accounted for 239 yards in receptions, also return along with a pair of 215-pound tackles - Jamie Marlowe and Allen McIntyre.

CHERRYVILLE - Steve Wilson starts his second season here and the Ironmen will again face a tough schedule that includes North Gaston, East Gaston, Hunter Huss, Bunker Hill, and of course, Maiden and Hendersonville.

Senior Shane Summer returns to the quarterback post with Kanawha Johnson set to run the football.

Travis Walls (240) and Chad Johnson (245) are big linemen and 200-pounder Adam Crane is back at tight end. Chris Craft, Blake Clary and all-conference Brooks Gardner are among the vets and kicker Justin Goins is there, too.

Bryan Burnette, Kenneth Harris, Chris Harris and running back Chase Corry are good looking newcomers.

BESSEMER CITY - Head coach Mike Crawford fields another young squad at Besse-

mer City, but the Yellow Jackets should be improved after last year's disappointing 0-10 mark.

Runningbacks Jermaine Gamble and Deontae Davis are expected to lead Bessemer City's offense. Gamble had 682 yards rushing last year on 140 carries and Davis 666 yards on 109 attempts.

Crawford has only three seniors on the team, therefore, a handful of juniors and sophomores will need to carry the load as Bessemer City faces a challenging pre-conference slate with Chase, Charlotte Country Day and East Lincoln on tap and tough contests with Southern Foothills foes Hendersonville and Maiden.

HIGHLAND TECH - The school out of Gastonia will field only a junior varsity football team in 2001, but come 2002 they'll be ready to romp. Coached by former West Lincoln and Clemson University player Lanny Ford, Highland will make itself known in the Southern Foothills circuit.

The Highland jayvees open at Cherryville August 30.

Predicted order of finish:

- 1 - Hendersonville
- 2 - Maiden
- 3 - Polk County
- 4 - Cherryville
- 5 - Bessemer City

SOUTHERN FOOTHILLS 1A CONFERENCE PRE-SEASON ALL-CONFERENCE TEAM

OFFENSE

POSITION	PLAYER	SCHOOL
TE	Adam Crane	Cherryville
WR	Jon Blatt	Polk County
OL	Derrick Fox	Maiden
OL	Daniel Sipe	Maiden
OL	Allen McIntyre	Polk
OL	Tim Paris	Hendersonville
OL	Kerron Ward	Hendersonville
QB	Jordan Edwards	Polk County
RB	Adam Brown	Hendersonville
RB	Matt Menchaca	Hendersonville
RB	Robbie Petty	Polk County
RB	Jermaine Gamble	Bessemer City
RB	Deontae Davis	Bessemer City

DEFENSE

DL	Eric Smith	Hendersonville
DL	Daniel Sipe	Maiden
DL	Sharone Simpson	Hendersonville
DL	Travis Walls	Cherryville
DL	Matt Isenhour	Maiden
LB	Jonathan Miller	Maiden
LB	Brooks Gardner	Cherryville
LB	David Burgess	Hendersonville
LB	Colt Love	Polk County
DB	Blake Ward	Hendersonville
DB	Lamar Reid	Maiden
DB	Brandon Moore	Polk County

PRE-SEASON PLAYER OF THE YEAR - Adam Brown, RB, Hendersonville.

PRE-SEASON ROOKIE OF THE YEAR - Daniel Littlejohn, Soph. RB, Polk County.

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