

Jackets will spend lot of time in mountains

By TODD HAGANS
Editor of The Record

Although Bessemer City enjoys play this season in the 1-A ranks, the Jackets will still face some tough competition on the gridiron.

Five of the six Southern Foothills teams will play football this season - Highland Tech in Gastonia begins varsity action next fall. That means there's only four conference games and a handful of non-conference tilts on the roster.

With Bessemer City playing four 1-A schools, two 2-A teams, three 3-A units and one private independent, the road ahead could be a challenge for Mike Crawford and staff.

The Jackets open on August 31 at Chase, a team that BC tangled

with as a member of the Southern Piedmont. Usually touted as a playoff contender, Chase missed out on post-season action in 2000 as Lincolnton downed the Trojans 33-30, thus claiming rights to the SPC's second berth.

Chase, which finished last year at 6-4 overall and 3-3 in the SPC, should pack its usual powerful punch as a member of the new Midwest 2-A.

BC entertains another member of the Midwest 2-A on September 7 as West Lincoln's Rebels come to Dixon Stadium for the home opener. BC and West Lincoln put on a dramatic shows when these two met as SPC contenders, with the Rebels gaining the slight edge in several close contests.

Both BC and West are young teams, but the Jackets may have the needed power in Deontae Davis and Jermaine Gamble to pick-up the early season win over the Rebels who also face a tough season. And too, the home-field advantage could work to Bessemer City's favor.

East Gaston's Warriors come to Dixon Stadium on September 14. Last year among the 4-A ranks, the Warriors went 1-10, but should be improved this season.

BC faces another former 4-A team on September 21 as the Jackets go to Gastonia to tangle with Hunter Huss. The Huskies - led by five-year coach Steve Gardner - recorded a 3-7 mark in 2000, with the three wins coming in conference action.

In a special non-conference affair, Cherryville welcomes Bessemer City to Rudisill Stadium on September 28 for a clash of western Gaston rivals. Last year in Rudisill, Cherryville managed the 39-24 victory, but when these two teams meet,

anything is possible.

Bessemer City will see probably its toughest competition of the season on October 5 as Charlotte Country Day comes to town. Country Day went 13-1 in 2000, falling to Ravenscroft 28-9 in the state independent league championship. Country Day is no stranger to championship football as the Buccaneers have won nine private school titles since 1974.

East Lincoln's Mustangs come to Dixon on October 12. The Mustangs went 9-2 in 2000, and although the team has seen a shuffle in coaches, expectations are high for East as they play in the Big South 3-A with six other Gaston schools.

Bessemer City opens Southern Foothills play on October 19 in Columbus against Polk County. Coach Jeff Wilson hopes his Wolverines can be competitive in the new league, but says that 2001 could be an off year for Polk County.

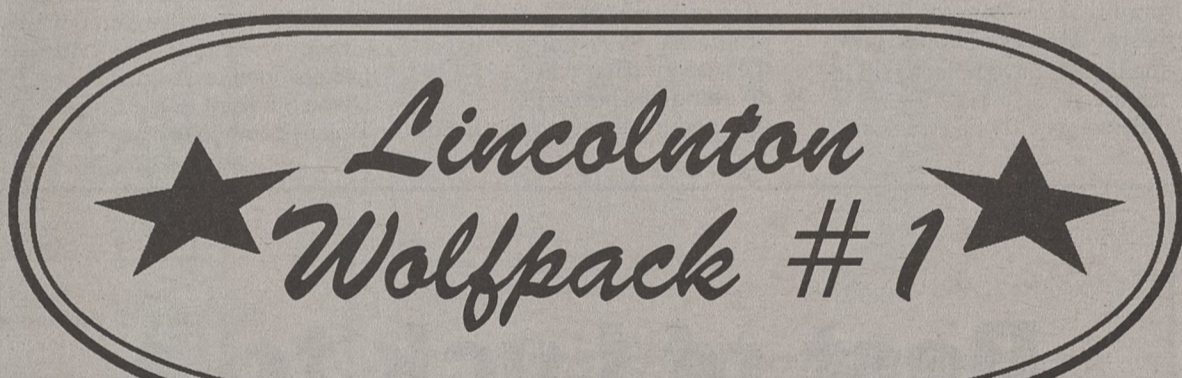
Southern Foothills play continues on October 26 as Tom Brown's Maiden Blue Devils come to Dixon Stadium. Like in the SPC, the Devils should again be a handful for Bessemer City and the other SFC foes. Maiden was 10-1 in 2000 and was ranked third among 1-A powers in the post-season coaches and media poll.

Bessemer City heads back to the mountains on November 2 when they play the Bearcats of Hendersonville. Maiden and Hendersonville are predicted to be the SFC powers. The Henderson boys recorded a 9-1 mark last year under head coach B.J. Laughter and ranked right behind Maiden in fourth place in that post-season poll.

See Jackets, Page 9



Bessemer City assistant coach Larry Boone runs plays with the Jackets' offensive line during a recent practice at Bessemer City High School.



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