

A group of football players in blue and maroon uniforms huddled together on a field. The players are wearing helmets and jerseys. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

FALL BALL 2023

Sports & Recreation

News • Teams • Players • Game Schedules • City Recreation News

Special Supplement to *The Planter* August 24 and *The Apopka Chief* August 25

Blue Darters looking to make breakthrough in state title game

The good news for the Apopka High School football team as it enters the 2023 season is that the Blue Darters have been in the state championship game three out of the past four seasons. The bad news is that the Darters are 0-3 in those contests.

In 2019, Apopka fell 21-20 to Miami Christopher Columbus with literally seconds left on the game clock after leading the Explorers by 13 points midway through the fourth period. In 2021, Venice was clearly the better team, downing the Blue Darters 35-7. Last season, there was another loss to Columbus, 16-13 in overtime.

During the COVID season of 2020, Apopka fell to Sanford Seminole 28-24 in a state semifinal game and the Seminoles went on to defeat Osceola in the state title game.

Most schools would love to have three championship-game losses or even three first-round playoff defeats, but for Apopka, it's not something that sits well and the Blue Darters are expecting another chance at making a strong playoff run in 2023.

Apopka head coach Jeff Rolson said losing in overtime last season is something he hated but not so much for himself, but for the players.

"I hate to lose. I hated it for them (Apopka players)," he said. "We had some kicking issues. We had some procedural issues in the kicking game. We had some sideline procedural issues with clock management, timeouts. And that's a disservice to our kids. It's disappointing. I hate to lose, but I could not step on the football field again ever and I'd be OK. I just want to give them the best. I enjoy them, so we want to give them the best opportunity."

Rolson was asked if he still hears talk about the way the 2022 state title game ended. "I don't hear about it," he said. "First of all, you're talking to a guy who has zero, no social media at all. What people say, I have no idea. If they want to talk to me, everybody's got my number or it's not hard to find. I'll talk to whoever wants to talk to me."

The Blue Darters begin the 2023 regular season today, Friday, August 25, with a road game at Ocoee. The Knights played Apopka close last season, losing 13-12. A rematch was nearly in the works for the state championship last season, but the Knights lost in the state semifinals to Columbus.

See DARTERS Page 3

Wekiva working toward third time to be the charm in playoffs

The 2023 season marks the third with Jeremiah Schwartz at the helm of the Wekiva Mustangs football team. Under Schwartz, the program has reached the strong potential to realize three times is a pattern stage. Three times being the three consecutive seasons Wekiva has continued to move forward under Schwartz's leadership.

As is often the case with a coach during the first season, personnel turnover among players and the coaching staff was way above the average number. The final record of 4-6 for the 2021 season was a step backward after 57-23 combined during the previous six seasons. More importantly, the Mustangs' streak of earning a berth into the FHSAA playoffs for six consecutive seasons came to an end.

Wekiva's record improved last season by one victory to 5-5. However, among the top 20 in the state and all classifications, strength of schedule propelled the

Mustangs into the playoffs. Eight opponents earned berths into the playoffs and nine won at least seven contests.

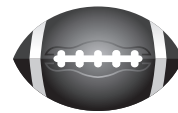
A big step was taken as far as the overall state of the program with the 2022 regular-season finale victory over the Apopka Blue Darters. Determined with seven seconds left, the victory over Apopka was Wekiva's only path into the playoffs. However, the foray into the playoffs was a one-and-done experience, losing to the Jones Tigers for the second time. The final score of 27-13 reflected the Tigers' systematic, relentlessly steady, and mistake-free performance.

"Obviously, the logical tangible goal each season is to take the next step beyond where the previous season ended," Schwartz said. "Every team wants to keep progressing. Otherwise why play? In the case of the 2023 season and Wekiva, the next step is also obvious, winning during

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2023 Apopka Blue Darters varsity football team



Darters: Team will depend on defense

Continued from page 2

During the annual media days event held in Orlando for teams from throughout Central Florida, Rolson and six of his players attended. The Apopka Chief spoke to two of the players, defensive lineman Lorenzo Payne and offensive lineman Ethan Korkes. Also attending from the Apopka football team were assistant coach Jett Davison, and

players Lorenzo Payne, Antwone Robinson, Tyson Davison, Malachi Davey, Ethan Korkes, and Isaac Knight.

“We play great defense. Apopka’s calling card is defense. I don’t expect that to change,” Rolson said. “We’ve got three really tough-to-handle defensive linemen. Linebacking corps? I’ve got two starters back and a kid who is a rising sophomore

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City of Apopka Recreation Division offers myriad oppportunities

The following was provided by and written by the Apopka Recreation Division

It's time to dust off the cleats as the city of Apopka Recreation Division welcomes you and your family back for another exciting fall season of athletic programming. However, the action does not stop at the fields alone! The Recreation Division is dedicated to providing the residents of Apopka with a variety of wholesome, innovative and environmentally diverse recreational programs, activities and facilities.

The City of Apopka truly is "Where the Fun Begins," and we look forward to seeing you. For further information regarding any of the programs or special events listed below, please call 407-703-1784 or visit us online at www.apopka.gov and look for the recreation link.

Online registration

Avoid long registration lines by registering online! Online registration is available for many of the programs offered by the City of Apopka Recreation Division. To register, please visit www.apopka.net, click on the "Register for a Recreation Programs button." You will then be taken to our new CivicRec site. Once you create your Username and family profile (please make certain to enter your birth dates) you will be able to "shop" for activities and pay online!

Athletics

The City of Apopka's Athletic Division offers youth and adult programs and leagues for all ages. Whether you are trying to re-kindle that athletic spirit from your high school days or introducing your youngster to a new sport, we have you covered! Sports teach life lessons such as teamwork, leadership, and hard work along with promoting a healthy lifestyle. We will see you on the fields!

Youth Soccer (Spring, Fall) @ Northwest Recreation

Youth soccer is offered for boys and girls ages 4-14.

The fees for these programs are \$110 for City Residents per season and \$140 for Non-City residents per season and includes a uniform.

Registration for the fall 2023 season is currently under way and will continue through August 14, 2023. Participants may register online by visiting www.apopka.gov or in person at the Northwest Recreation Complex located at 3710 Jason Dwelley Parkway, Apopka, 32712. The Northwest Recreation Complex front office is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Birth certificates are required at registration.

Come join the fun! Our youth soccer program had over 800 players last season!

The Spring 2024 soccer season registration will begin in December.

Youth Flag Football (winter) @ Northwest Recreation

Youth flag football is offered for boys and girls ages 5-14.

The fees for this program are \$110 for City Residents per season and \$140 for Non-City residents. Registration fee includes NFL team-branded reversible jersey and one NFL flag belt and flags.

Registration for the Winter 2024 season will start in October. Participants may register online by visiting www.apopka.gov or in person at the Northwest Recreation Complex located at 3710 Jason Dwelley Parkway, Apopka, 32712. The Northwest Recreation Complex front office is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Birth certificates are required at registration.

Adult Softball and Kickball

We offer several adult softball leagues throughout the year, including men's, women's, and co-ed. All leagues are sanctioned by the USSSA. First place teams will receive a trophy and a T-shirt; second place teams will receive a trophy. On Monday nights, we will also offer our adult co-ed kickball league. Softball and kickball teams are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Your team must have a completed registration form and have paid all necessary fees to be considered registered. There must be at least four registered teams for kickball in order to host the league. There will be no summer or winter seasons for kickball.

Games are held at the Northwest Recreation Complex, 3710 Jason Dwelley Parkway, Apopka, 32712

Adult softball program fee: \$405/team, Adult kickball program fee: \$250/team,

Please call Andrew Robinette at 407-703-1784 for registration information and league dates.

Adult Flag Football @ Alonzo Williams Park

We are launching a coed adult flag football league this winter! First place team in league play wins a T-shirt. First place team in playoffs wins a trophy. Teams are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Free Agents may call for registration. There must be at least four registered teams in order to host the league.

Fees: \$350/team for an 8-game season plus playoffs. \$35/individual for a free agent team.

Sign Ups: October 1

Call 407-703-1742 or email nharrington@apopka.net for more information.

Racquetball Court

The racquetball court at Kit Land

Nelson Park, 10 South Forest Avenue, is available for play by permit only. City of Apopka residents can purchase a six-month permit for \$100 and an annual permit for \$195, slightly higher fees apply for non-residents. For further information, please call 407-703-1642.

Tennis courts

Northwest Recreation Complex

The city has four tennis courts at the Northwest Recreation Complex, 3710 Jason Dwelley Parkway. Use of the tennis courts for walk-ups is free but limited to one hour. Court hours Monday through Friday are 7 a.m. to 9 p.m. Weekend hours are 7 a.m. to 5 p.m. Court fee is \$5 per hour. Courts can be reserved 72 hours in advance at Apopka.gov.

Other events

Facility and field rental

The Fran Carlton Center, the Apopka Community Center, and the picnic pavilions and athletic fields at the Northwest Recreation Complex are available for rental. Call us before you book your corporate seminar, wedding, family reunion, birthday party, or other special occasion. To rent the Fran Carlton Center or the Apopka Community Center, please call 407-703-1642. To reserve a picnic pavilion or athletic field at the Northwest Recreation Complex, please call 407-703-1784.

All rentals are booked on a first-come, first-served basis. A security deposit is required at some locations. Please call the numbers listed above for more detailed information.

Senior adult programming

The City of Apopka Recreation Division believes that leisure time and physical activity help to promote a healthier lifestyle within our senior adult community. With that

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2023 Apopka Blue Darters varsity football team roster

No.	Name	Pos.	No.	Name	Pos.	No.	Name	Pos.
			20	Tyler Dawson-Copely	QB	53	Michael Wells	K/P
1	Malachi Davey	DB	21	Julius Laster	DB	54	Ashton Sylvian	DL
2	Noah Morgan	WR	22	Jayden Safford	LB	55	Olritch Helaire	LB
3	Nathan Jenkins III	RB	23	Damar'eon Cawthon	WR	57	Hayden Kosicki	K/P
4	Lorenzo Payne	DL	24	Reggie McBride	RB	58	Ethan Korkes	OL
5	Myles Fieldings	DB	25	Jayden Burton	TE	59	Jordan Alvarez	OL
6	Kelvin Payne	WR	26	Christopher Clayton	DB	62	Darvin Pierre-Louis	OL
7	Akemi Caraballo	DB	29	Antwan Walsh	DB	68	Charvis Williams	OL
8	Henry Pickard	WR	30	Naithyn Peterson	DB	77	Carlos Paez	OL
9	Trey Muldrow	LB	31	Matthew Campbell	DL	78	Evan Ashford	OL
10	Isaac Knight	WR	32	Aiden Richardson	LB	84	Alexander Rossi	WR
11	Antwone Robinson	LB	33	Brandon Paul	LB	92	Kevin Roberts	DL
12	Tyson Davison	QB	34	Elijah Frazier	TE	95	Titus Martinez	DL
13	Camaran Barnes	TE	38	Eian Martinez	DL	96	Brandelle George	DL
14	Marcus Grant	DB	39	Julian Laster	LB	97	Elijah Henry	DL
15	Kingston Shaw	LB	44	Bryson Bowman	TE	98	Michael Cooper	DL
17	Jermaine Benyoun	WR	50	Emmanuel Denis	OL	99	Trevon Williams	DL
18	Jaylen Jenkins	WR	51	Delhart Courtney	OL			
19	Riley Burger	WR	52	Alex Wideman	DL			



**The Blue Darter Athletic Department
and Administrative Team**

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2023 Wekiva Mustangs varsity football team



FALL HEAD COACHES

-  Lenin.Vazquez@ocps.net
-  Kayla.Boose-Haywood@ocps.net
-  Alexander.Toj-Moody@ocps.net
-  Jeremiah.Rodriguez-Schwartz@ocps.net
-  Eric.McCall@ocps.net (B)
Darius.Ford@ocps.net (G)
-  Markeith.Williams@ocps.net
-  Heather.Lorenz@ocps.net



FOOTBALL FALL 2023 SEASON

- 8/18 @Pre-Season Classic - Gainesville Buchholz HS
- 8/25 @Olympia
- 9/1 @Ocoee
- 9/8 @Lake Minneola
- 9/14 West Orange
- 9/22 Lake Brantley HOMECOMING
- 9/29 @Edgewater *
- 10/6 First Baptist Academy of Naples
- 10/13 Horizon * SENIOR NIGHT
- 10/20 @Jones *
- 10/27 Bye
- 11/3 @Apopka
- 11/10 FHSAA – Class 3M – 1st Round Playoffs
- 11/17 FHSAA – Class 3M – 2nd Round Playoffs
- 11/24 FHSAA – Class 3M – 3rd Round Playoffs

- 8/19 Preseason Tourney
- 8/28 Mount Dora HS
- 8/30 @Deltona HS
- 9/5 @South Sumter HS
- 9/6 @Tri Match
- 9/12 Horizon HS
- 9/13 University OC
- 9/19 @Edgewater HS
- 9/21 Evans HS
- 9/27 @Cypress Creek HS
- 9/28 Boone HS
- 10/3 @Ocoee HS
- 10/5 @Mount Dora HS
- 10/6-7 @Breast Cancer Tourney
- 10/10 South Sumter HS
- 10/11 Deltona HS
- 10/12 @Dr. Phillips HS
- 10/16 Districts

WEKIVAMUSTANGS.COM



VOLLEYBALL FALL 2023 SEASON

2023 Wekiva Mustangs varsity football team roster

No.	Name	Grade	Pos.	16	Nathan Fritchley	11	K	54	Mhelakii Henriquez	11	OL
0	Sincere Edwards	12	ATH	17	Jaden Josephs	11	LB	55	James Mixon	12	OL
1	Ty'Ray Davis	12	QB	18	Marcus Campbell	11	DB	56	Shyne Love	12	OL
2	Anthony Gay	10	ATH	19	Sevenn Edwards	9	DB	57	Chase Edwards	12	OL/DL
3	Tyree Filius	12	RB	20	Michael Blackmon	10	RB	58	Brian Antoine	10	OL
4	Jabarri Smith	11	ATH	21	Jeffrey Woodson	12	DB	60	Mujahid Jefferson	10	DL/OL
5	Jeremy Benjamin	12	WR	22	Jaylen Barnes	11	LB	62	Phelps Coupet	10	OL
6	Joshua Bennett	12	WR	23	Tykevis Davis	9	DB	65	Maximus Dume	10	OL
7	Jameer Tyson	11	DB	24	Kalen Meadows	12	DB	68	Verell Prophete	12	OL
8	Jamarian Robinson	11	RB/WR	25	Tyrese Alexis	10	LB	72	Darrien Williams	12	OL
9	Jedon Smith	12	DB	26	Craig Mitchell	12	RB/DB	65	Shyne Love	10	C
10	Onrique Archie	9	QB	29	Devin Noel	11	LB	73	Feairius Smith	12	OL
11	Anthony Rosier	12	DL	30	Jordan Jones	9	DB	74	Brock Billings	12	OL
12	Omar Hayes	12	LB/DL	33	Travon Laster	10	LB	75	Derrius Gaint	12	OL
13	Michael Ellis	11	WR	35	Kyler Beard	11	LB/DL	80	Josh Garvin	9	WR
14	Greg Jones	12	DB	44	Cybryon Peoples	12	LB/DL	81	Xavier McMurren	11	WR
15	Zi'riek Roberts	10	LB	50	Xavier Stephens	12	DL/OL	82	Jaylon Clark	9	TE

Mustangs: Wekiva is looking to build on 2022's late-season success

Continued from page 2

the playoffs. Advancing past the first round of the playoffs is certainly a goal capable of achieving after earning a berth last season and with who is returning. Nor do I have a problem saying or proceeding into the season with the direction taken is predicated by the ambition of winning during the playoffs."

Overall state of the program moving forward grows out of the more specific ability to prepare for the upcoming season steadily improving first.

Then personnel turnover throughout the Mustangs' program is in general the most stable under Schwartz's leadership.

Players have only four years of eligibility at the high school level. So, addressing personnel turnover is almost always the first order of business during the offseason. Four of the five regular starting offensive linemen graduated last May. Most importantly, an heir apparent for the starting lineup hadn't emerged at all four of the positions when spring practice began. The offensive line was also the only position without an heir apparent entering spring practice.

"Earning the berth into the playoffs and winning during the playoffs starts with acclimating the new players to varsity level football during spring practice," Schwartz said. "Each player begins spring practice at

a different stage of the acclimation process. The pace of acclimation is also different.

"The process was that much more important with the need to replace four offensive linemen in our case. In general, the longer the process takes, the longer we don't replace the linemen. Furthermore, the amount of time before a team can move forward usually doesn't take as long when replacing one player even at four different positions."

Multiple formations and designs broadly described as a pro-style set offense will continue to be used by Wekiva. Set to one side of the quarterback, the one-back formation and the common concepts used within the spread is the package's centerpiece.

However, the returning offensive lineman not only possesses the trait most needed, but with the most experience possible. Mhelakii Henriquez brings the experience of starting all 12 contests (including preseason) last season to the center position. Brock Billings (left tackle), Shyne Love (left guard), James Mixon (right guard), and Chase Edwards (right tackle) make up the rest of the starting offensive line.

The spring practice game marked the start of the third season with Ty'Ray Davis under center. A winning record and efficient quarterbacking function hand-in-hand is apparent. Over the course of the

last two seasons, though, overall fortunes of the Mustangs and Davis' improvement as the quarterback have specifically been tied together. As a sophomore, Davis started half the contests, but the play was inconsistent. All 12 contests (including preseason) last season were started by Davis. From the beginning of his sophomore season (spring practice 2022), Davis has been the undisputed starting quarterback.

Davis has "improved by leaps and bounds due to several reasons," Schwartz said. "Gaining that first season of experience alone allowed for dramatic improvement. Then the passing game as a whole and Ty'Ray's individual play under center have clearly improved together. Passes are closer to the location intended and have more of a spiral form. Receivers have to adjust to the pass far less.

"Together examples, moving the ball inside the red zone via completed passes over 20 yards more than doubled between end of 2021 and start of 2022 seasons alone. The overall completion percentage rose significantly between end of 2021 and start of 2022 seasons. Then both statistics continued to significantly increase during the last year."

The biggest effect Davis' improvement had last season and even before the end was the connection developed with the other skilled players. Several plays grew

into big impact when needed from the connection last season.

None was more dramatic or held more weight than the final touchdown Wekiva scored during the 2022 regular season.

Davis completed a 10-yard touchdown pass to wide receiver Josh Bennett with seven seconds remaining against the Blue Darters. The specific credential needed for Wekiva to surge into the FHSAA Class 3M playoffs was the 20-14 victory over Class 4M state finalist Apopka. Upward move in the seedings gained from the victory was not limited from outside the playoffs to inside though. The Mustangs jumped over two teams in the seedings, from the fifth to third wild card and ninth to seventh overall for Class 3M Region 1.

The 2022 season even began with a demonstration between the skilled players. Davis launched what would eventually become a 70-yard touchdown pass on the first play from scrimmage in the preseason Kickoff Classic against Pinellas Park.

Davis completed 77-of-142 pass attempts, 54 percent for 1,410 yards, an average of 18 yards last season. A 99.2 quarterback rating was also compiled. The improvement played a central role in Wekiva winning one more contest. Thus, qualifying for the playoffs.

Players and in particular statistics are

See **MUSTANGS** Page 13

2023 Wekiva Mustangs varsity football schedule

Aug.	25	Olympia	A#
Sep.	1	Ocoee	A#
	8	Lake Minneola	A
	14	West Orange	H#
	22	Lake Brantley	H
	29	Edgewater	A*#
Oct.	6	Naples First Baptist Academy	H
	13	Horizon	H*#
	20	Jones	A*#
	27	Open	
Nov.	3	Apopka	A#

*-District 3M-3 game
 #-Metro Conference game
 West Orange game is on Thursday.
 Games begin at 7 p.m.
 Ticket prices: \$9 on gofan.co, plus \$1 convenience fee. Cash price at gate will be \$9.

2023 Apopka Blue Darters varsity football schedule

Aug.	25	Ocoee	A#
Sep.	1	West Orange	H#
	8	Dr. Phillips	A#
	15	Open	
	22	Edgewater	A#
	29	Seminole	A*
Oct.	6	Olympia	A#
	13	Lake Brantley	H*
	20	Lake Mary	H*
	26	Evans	A*#
Nov.	3	Wekiva	H#

*-District 4M-2 game
 #-Metro Conference game
 Ticket prices: \$9 on gofan.co, plus \$1 convenience fee. Cash price at gate will be \$9.
 Evans game is on Thursday.
 Games begin at 7 p.m.
 Games will be broadcast on FM94.9, AM950, TheAnswerOrlando.com, The Answer Orlando app.

Darters: QB expects to take big step

Continued from page 3

who is going to be a Power 5 kid. That's going to be a solid group. I've got DBs, two who are scholarship-type kids, at that level. A couple of other kids are pretty good. "The defense is pretty solid."

Rolson said he expects quarterback Tyson Davison, who started as a freshman in 2022, to take a huge step in leading the Blue Darters, much as he did throughout the season last year. In the 16-13 overtime loss to Miami Columbus in the Class 4M state title game in 2022, Davison led all runners with 142 rushing yards on just 13 carries. He had one long run of 61 yards that resulted in a touchdown for Apopka. Davison was also 5-of-9 for 52 yards through the air. Those aren't great numbers, but the Darters don't need fantastic passing numbers, just enough to keep the defenses honest.

"Our quarterback was a difference-maker in the playoffs (in 2022) and he's going to be pretty good," Rolson said. "His maturity and decision-making down the stretch. He had some big plays. He had his best game in the state title game – reading it, holding it, doing the things he's supposed to do. With a year of work; he went to the Manning Academy and is doing a bunch of stuff. We're always being in search of being able to throw the ball effectively at Apopka and that hasn't changed. We're going to keep working at that, but he can do it."

Overall, Rolson said he really enjoys being around his players and that they are his main motivation on the field. He also had some comments on the high numbers of players transferring from school to school. Historically, the Apopka High football team loses a lot more players via the transfer than come to the team – a lot more.

"We've got a good core group, good athletes. I think we've got the pieces. We could be markedly better this year but with the transfer portal around here, you don't know what you're going to run into," Rolson said. "Teams just load up and they've got this guy and that guy. At the end of the day, when we get down to crunch time, our home-grown, tough-as-nails group is going to be able to compete and beat most of those allstar groups

because they just have more heart."

Rolson elaborated on why the Blue Darters receive few players transferring to Apopka High.

"There are probably a couple of reasons. No. 1, we don't call people; we don't search for people. We do not recruit. I'm not saying other people do, but I'm saying it does not happen at Apopka. We ain't looking for kids. We coach what we got," the head coach said.

"At Apopka, you've got to wear a uniform that looks like everybody else. We're not about the swag and the drip. You're going to be a yes-sir, no-sir guy. You're going to be disciplined and we're going to be physical at practice.

Physicality, discipline, and being team guys – that's not for everybody, not for most. If that's not you, you can't play for us.

"When we go out there, we're not going to have earrings on. We're not going to have chains or shields and all that. We go by the rules and we're going to play."

I cannot express how much I love the previous three paragraphs, and trust me, Rolson was somewhat emotional when he was talking about the Apopka High football program. He runs a great program and one of which all AHS alumni and the Apopka community can be proud.

Defensive lineman Lorenzo Payne talked to me for a couple of minutes about the summer work and the upcoming season.

"I'm ready for the season. I'm excited. I've been getting a lot stronger. I've been getting bigger. I've gotten a little bit taller, too. Speed, hands, footwork, everything I could work on," Lorenzo said.

"I'm going to continue to do my job in everything I'm coached up on and I want to finish correctly by winning state."

Last year, Lorenzo had a great season, but like Davison at QB, Lorenzo had probably his best game in the state championship contest as he had four tackles and two of Apopka's five sacks. He said that he's expecting big things

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APOPKA HIGH SCHOOL & WEKIVA HIGH SCHOOL

MEET SOME OF THE FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS



Lyle Heinz
PRINCIPAL



Jennifer Korkes
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



Carol Morris
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



Kanishia West
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



Katherine Pickels
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



Jordan Walker
DEAN



Eddie Jenkins
DEAN



Ramon Reyes-Rosario
DEAN



Kristina Ramos
SAFE COORDINATOR



Demetria Richard
ACADEMIC COACH



Cynthia Anderson
ACADEMIC COACH



Dr. Kenisha Williams, PRINCIPAL



Kristen Joyner
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL



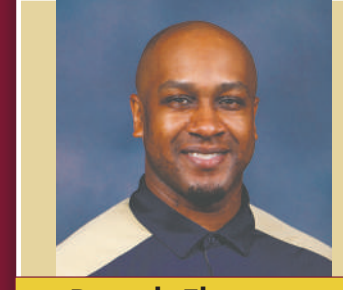
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ADMINISTRATIVE DEAN



Patrick Florence
ADMINISTRATIVE DEAN



Angela Griffin-Simmons
ADMINISTRATIVE DEAN



Corey Brinson
ADMINISTRATIVE DEAN



Cicily Morgan
TESTING COORDINATOR



Tami Martin
INSTRUCTIONAL COACH



Kayla Boose-Haywood
ESE DEAN



Tiquisha Williams
LEAD GUIDANCE COUNSELOR



Daniel Martinez
MATH COACH

FORMER BLUE DARTER TE
ROGER FRANKLIN WILLIAMS
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The Apopka Blue Darters tight ends and coach Dawson Shreiner.



The Apopka Blue Darters kickers and coach Deon Williams.

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City: Senior activities, dog park among the more popular things to do

Continued from page 4

in mind, the Fran Carlton Center, located at 11 North Forest Avenue, is proud to offer a variety of mid-morning activities, programs, and day trips designed especially for our senior adult members. Please call 407-703-1642 for further details.

Senior memberships

In order to participate in the various senior adult programs offered by the Apopka Recreation Department, you must first obtain a recreation membership. Membership fees are due each January and are good for a full calendar year. To purchase a membership, stop by the Fran Carlton Center located at 11 N. Forest Avenue, Apopka, 32703 or the Northwest Recreation Complex located at 3710 Jason Dwelley Parkway, Apopka, 32712, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Senior chair exercise class

Chair exercise classes meet every Tuesday and Thursday from 9-10 a.m. at the Fran Carlton Center in Apopka. These free classes are led by certified instructor, Kathryn Duncan.

Senior Zumba gold

Zumba especially for senior adults is offered every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9-10 a.m., at the Fran Carlton Center. Certified Zumba instructor Rosemary Zaldana will guide you through a series of fun, easy dances such as merengue, cha cha, flamenco, belly dance, reggae, salsa, and more. This “exercise in disguise” will leave you wondering whether it was a workout or a party. Prior dance experience is not required. There is no set class fee, but the instructor accepts donations. 407-703-1642.

Artist’s studio

Come join the fun with our adult painting club. Learn techniques in traditional

watercolor and acrylic and find your hidden artistic talent! This group meets on Tuesdays from 10:30 am -1 p.m. There is no set fee for this class; however, there are occasionally guest instructors that will charge a fee. You will be given a supply list at the first class you attend.

Social bridge

Every Wednesday we offer a social bridge group. The bridge is mid-level and new players are asked to sign up in advance to be sure the tables are even. The card group always welcomes new members; there is no need to sign up in advance for this group. Just show up! The bridge group meets at 10 a.m. at the Fran Carlton Center.

Crafts and chatter

Stop by for a morning of creativity at the Fran Carlton Center. Every Wednesday, from 10 a.m. to noon, our craft group meets to work on their projects, share ideas, and share conversation. If you are currently working on a project and can’t seem to find the time to finish it, or just want to get some new ideas, stop by and join in the fun.

Senior trips and movies

Each month, we offer our senior members exciting day trip opportunities to several local attractions and events. To name a few, we have visited DeLeon Springs, the Orlando Museum of Art, and have seen many Broadway productions at the Bob Carr Auditorium. In addition, we host a free movie every month at the Fran Carlton Center. Refreshments are provided so come join in the fun!

Senior pot luck lunch

Every month (usually on the last Thursday) we host a pot luck lunch just for our senior adult members, where we draw for door prizes, host guest speakers, and share in each other’s good cooking! This is a great way to acquaint yourself with our program so

why not join today? The cost is \$1 plus a covered dish to share.

Cards

Is held on Wednesdays from 10am -noon. This is a drop-in format so bring some friends or come alone and make some friends.

Other facilities

Doctors’ Dog Park

Hey, don’t bark up the wrong tree! The City of Apopka invites you and your four-legged friends to join us for a “howling” good time at Doctors’ Dog Park located off Highland Avenue behind Edward’s Field. This 750 ft. by 300 ft. dog park features water fountains, a pet shower, benches and, most importantly, plenty of space for “man’s best friend” to frolic and play. We hope to see you there!

For further information regarding the dog park, please call 407-703-1642 or www.apopka.gov.

The amphitheater is encircled with a wide, paved, and well-lit walkway, which provides an excellent location for vendor/display booths on either side.

Close by, there is a large, waterfront open-air pavilion that is also available for vendor or private rentals. The park has more than 1,500 paved parking spaces, and unpaved parking for overflow parking during high-volume events that provides around 3,000 additional spaces.

The amphitheater stage is equipped with two 400-amp hook ups or lighting and one 200 amp for audio systems. There are two private dressing rooms with handicap accessible restrooms and showers.

Please contact Carolyn Ray at 407-703-1809 for further details.

Facility Locations

Northwest Recreation Complex
3710 Jason Dwelley Parkway

Apopka, 32712
407-703-1784 (Phone)
407-703-1783 (Fax)

Fran Carlton Center
11 North Forest Avenue
Apopka, 32703
407-703-1741 (Phone)
407-703-1740 (Fax)

Billie Dean Community Center
225 M A Board St.
Apopka, 32703
407-703-1742 (Phone)
407-703-1740 (Fax)

Apopka Athletic Complex
797 Wells Avenue
Apopka, 32712
407-703-1784 (Phone)
407-703-1740 (Fax)

Apopka Community Center
519 S. Central Avenue
Apopka, 32703
407-703-1809 (Phone)
407-703-1740 (Fax)

Kit Land Nelson Park
10 South Forest Avenue
Apopka, 32703
407-703-1741 (Phone)
407-703-1740 (Fax)

Doctors’ Dog Park
21 North Highland Avenue
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407-703-1741 (Phone)
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Dream Lake Park
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Mustangs: Wekiva in District 3M-3 with Edgewater, Jones, Horizon

Continued from page 7

expected to improve from one season to the next. Most importantly for the Mustangs though, logic dictates that the number of plays with big impact should only increase as Davis progresses through a third season under center.

The rest of the starters at wide receiver are Anthony Gay (returning), Jamarian Robinson, and Michael Ellis. A combined total of 38 receptions, 590 yards, and 10 touchdowns return among the starting wide receivers.

Tyrea Fillius steps into the starting lineup after averaging 6.1 yards per carry on the ground as the second option last season.

Wekiva's choice of defensive scheme is the 4-3 or the more athletic version of the 4-2-5 with two high safeties.

Unlike the 4-3 formation, the sam or rover position (linebacker) in the 4-2-5 is called upon to cover in man, take on a pulling guard and rush the passer against a usually bigger offensive tackle. Several formations do not even assign a linebacker rover or sam responsibilities.

Creating pressure at the line of scrimmage by getting more players to the point of attack quicker than the offense is the cornerstone concept of the 4-2-5.

Speed and efficient movement between locations is accordingly the basic yet specific requirements under the umbrella of more athleticism for success. Also, unlike some defensive designs, redeploying personnel during the snap count and adjustment of coverage responsibilities while the play develops are also commonplace. Bigger linebackers take on the role of a defensive lineman. The bigger defensive backs take on the role of a linebacker.

Over the past two seasons, defensive lineman Sincere Edwards has been the face of the Mustangs' defense. Edwards was a starter as a freshman and has verbally committed to the Pittsburgh Panthers. Eighty-eight tackles and 16 sacks were recorded by Edwards last season. Last season also saw Edwards recovering two fumbles. Edwards lines up in all three defensive line positions and occasionally on offense as well.

A strong 1-2-3 punch from the defensive line is completed as well with the

return of Omar Hayes and Xavier Stephens while Anthony Rosier was added via transfer.

The entire rotation at the linebacker position will be new to the varsity team with transfer Tyrese Alexis and junior varsity call-up Jaylen Barnes earning starting roles.

Strong Safety Jabari Smith is the only member of the secondary returning. However, the experience of starting all 12 contests (including preseason) last season and as a freshman is also brought to the field by Smith. Employing a nickelback on every play and Jameer Tyson for Wekiva, within the design of the secondary's coverage is the main difference position-wise between the formations. Kalen Meadows as the free safety, Tykevis Davis as a cornerback and Greg Jones as the other cornerback move into starting roles with the secondary this season.

"Again, next overall step to be taken within the context of judging the 2023 season is obvious - winning during the playoffs," Schwartz said. "However, winning during the playoffs is the overall goal and the end result of the progress achieved before."

The Mustangs' character of everything but shying away from facing the best in the state continued during the spring practice game. Providing the opposition was the (Sanford) Seminole Seminoles.

"Expectation of Seminole forcing us to apply the progression achieved during the offseason toward winning was met," Schwartz said. "Most of what we wanted to gain from not just competing in a spring practice game but against the Seminoles was. We want to win every contest and time stepping onto the field, of course. Upping the level of play and staying competitive with a top-tier team for an entire contest was the priority though and achieved."

Seminole won by a final score of 28-21. However, only three quarters were played by the varsity teams. (Junior varsity played the fourth quarter).

"An offense doesn't put up 21 points in three quarters and the number improving compared to the previous season without the offensive line providing some solid blocking. If nothing else, compared to last season, the Mustangs' offensive line will be considerably deeper. Unlike last season we

also at least possess a couple of attributes which can compensate for skill level still developing (youth)."

Davis completed 13-of-27 passes for 207 yards and the two touchdowns.

"As much as Ty'Ray has improved and demonstrated tonight, more is possible," Schwartz said. "However, the emphasis is on the fine tuning of skills as opposed to developing the set. He has developed a skill set capable of making the big play when needed."

Six passes were caught by Bennett for a total of 122 yards.

"There was good," Schwartz said. "There was bad, with discipline as the catalyst. However, far more good than bad. The foundation upon which a top-tier team is built on continues to strengthen."

Results were of the most tangible nature this summer as Wekiva competed in four 7-on-7 camps. The Mustangs even claimed the Florida High School 7 vs. 7 Association State Series and University of South Florida championships. Wekiva specifically contended for each of the camp's championships participating in, though.

"Albeit much less intense than regular season contests, the championships were as much about demonstrating the state of the program as the victories themselves," Schwartz said. "No exhibitions competed in as preparation for the 2021 season were won. Victory over the West Orange Warriors during the 2022 offseason was a strong positive sign and tangible improvement in comparison. Programs evolve into the top tier of competition and build on the signature victory most importantly."

"However, evolving into the top-tier of competition and building on the signature victory is exactly that, far from the end all be all. A signature victory is inconsequential if the evolution and building on doesn't follow. The effort the program needs to put in to evolve and build on after is no less than when chasing the signature victory. We have proceeded this offseason with the mindset of the first signature victory (over the Blue Darters) as the start, but far from completing the work of becoming a top tier competitor."

The 2023 regular season schedule is made up of the Olympia Titans (away-Aug. 25), Ocoee Knights (away-Sept. 1), Lake

Minneola Hawks (away-Sept 8), West Orange Warriors (home-Sept. 14), Lake Brantley Patriots (home-Sept. 22), Edgewater Eagles (away-Sept 29), Naples First Baptist Academy Lions (home-Oct. 6), Horizon Hawks (home-Oct. 13), Jones Tigers (away-Oct. 20) and Apopka Blue Darters (away-Nov. 3).

Wekiva, Edgewater, Horizon, and Jones make up District 3M-3.

Every Metro Classification is made up of four regions across the state. There are then four districts in each region. The champion of each district earns an automatic berth into the playoffs. Four other berths of a wild card nature fill out the playoff field in each region.

Priority in the seedings is not given to the four district champions. Wild cards and overall seedings are decided according to the FHSAA power rankings. Pairing of teams are according to highest and lowest remaining seeds. Based on the team's records, the opponents' records and the opponents' opponents' records, a specific mathematical formula is used to calculate the power rankings. For example, the Eagles claimed the District 3M-3 championship and number one seed for Class 3M-Region 2 last season. However, the number two seed was earned by Jones instead of another district champion. Thus, the rematch with the Mustangs as the number seven seed was set.

"When evaluating Wekiva alone, progress has been steady and solid throughout the offseason," Schwartz said. "How does the pace of the progress compare to opponents is the question though. Are we progressing as fast as opponents? Opponents are practicing and preparing for the upcoming season just like us.

"Our best being better than most teams in itself isn't enough to win the number of contests needed for a playoff berth. We have to develop a best at least equal to the top tier teams, the lesson learned last season. Last season we earned the playoff berth because the strength of the schedule was top-20 in the state. Including eight contests against playoff teams, the record last season was 5-5. This season's opponents are almost all the same. Then the one different opponent was a state champion."



The Apopka Blue Darters wide receivers, coach A.B. Smith (l) and coach Eric Reding.



The Apopka Blue Darters linebackers with coach Dave Newell (l) and coach Jeff Rolson.



The Apopka Blue Darters defensive backs, coach Marcus Neeson (l) and coach Ty Parker.



The Apopka Blue Darters offensive backs with coaches (l-r), A.B. Smith, Jett Davison, and Rodney Hodges.

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The Apopka Blue Darters defensive line with coach Matt Anderson.



The Apopka Blue Darters offensive line with coaches, (l-r), Bill Caughell, Kelvin Joyner, and Max Olson.

Darters: Apopka will open regular season with game vs. Ocoee Knights

Continued from page 10

from the defensive line and is looking forward to having teammate Kevin Roberts line up beside him.

Roberts spent most of last season on the sideline but did make appearances late in the playoffs. Teammates can expect to hear more from Lorenzo this season. "I see myself as one of the top leaders on the team," he said.

Ethan Korkes returns as the center on the offensive line for the Blue Darters. This summer, Korkes and other offensive linemen have been working hard in the weightroom and agility drills.

"We've been working a lot on explosiveness. We've been working on power clean, snatch, a lot of Olympic movements," he said. "The O-line specifically, we've been working to improve on our pass game. We've been grinding out there every morning working on our footwork, trying to get faster."

Korkes said he's expecting good things from the guys up front this season. "The offensive line, we need to focus more on keeping our heads up, being aware of what's going on," he said.

"We have a lot of returning players this year, Evan Ashford and Charvis Williams. They're both strong. They're coming out this summer and we've been hitting it hard. We're technically sound so as long as we keep it together and focus on what we're doing, I think we're going

to do well."

He's also looking forward to greater things from the offense with quarterback Tyson Davison leading the way.

"I'm excited. Tyson is going to be something special. He's going into his sophomore year. In his freshman year, he took his team to the state championship," Ethan said.

"I love working with him. He's one of the best quarterbacks I've worked with."

Just before preseason practice officially started, the Blue Darters went for a weekend camp in Lake County with 63 players and several coaches making the trip.

The main idea for the camp, Rolson said, was to build team bonding, but also to work on installing part of the offense and defense that the Blue Darters will be running this season. Rolson said the goal on building camaraderie among the players and coaches was met.

"I think it was exactly what we hoped for," he said. "The kids had a great time. We competed in some stuff that was non-football and football. We played some paintball, did some tug-of-war, did some volleyball. We did a bunch of different stuff and the kids really had a great spirit, and had a great time. The food was good, and the fellowship time was good, so everything about it was spot-on. Everything about it was what we needed."

The players were divided up into several teams to compete with each other

in various sports and activities. Before the team left for the camp on July 28, they met at Apopka High School for a few hours of activities such as an obstacle course made up with such items as a football blocking chute, blocking bags, and track hurdles. Rolson said assistant coach Marcus Neeson was the idea guy behind many of the activities the players participated in over the weekend that lasted through midday on July 30.

Rolson said the idea for the camp came because he wasn't satisfied with the last Fellowship of Christian Athletes camp the team attended two years ago as not all of the teams attending have strong discipline in their programs and players getting together sometimes causes issues with other teams.

Plus, the football activities during FCA camps are not always done well, Rolson said.

"Not everybody manages their team well," he said. "Some people are out there thinking it's the Super Bowl. I don't think you have to go scrimmage other teams and I don't want to deal with drama from other teams; I just want our guys to bond and I think we have a special group. We're going to have adversity this year, no doubt, but we've got a special group of guys, and I'm not talking about talent, I'm just talking about good young men. They're Darters and they love the program. They're going to give what they have. It's a good group."

While Apopka has high-level

competition from several other Orange County schools and the Blue Darters have always been a disciplined program that doesn't necessarily attract top talent from players who are looking to transfer to another school.

"Here, if you want discipline, you'll play here. If need to be your own dude, you're going somewhere else and there are plenty of opportunities at winning programs around here that they can depart to."

The Blue Darters will open the regular season on the road at Ocoee on August 25. The first home game of the season will be on September 1 when Apopka hosts long-time rival West Orange.

The Blue Darters hit the road again on September 8 with a contest at Dr. Phillips. After a week off for the Blue Darters, Edgewater comes to Apopka's Roger Williams Field on September 22.

District 4M-2 play for Apopka begins at Seminole on September 29. The road trip continues the following week as Apopka will play at Olympia on October 6. Lake Brantley visits Apopka on October 13 and Lake Mary follows on October 20. Both of those are District 4M-2 contests.

Evans will host the Blue Darters on October 26 in the only Thursday game of the season and then the regular season will close on November 3, as the Darters will host hometown rival Wekiva.



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