

Battle of Tigers in Fayetteville

by Bill Evans

For years Douglas County became familiar in its role as the favorite to win almost every Friday night.

Those days have changed. With its talent level down, the Tigers are suddenly the underdog much of the time. But that hasn't stopped DCHS coach John Oglesby from scheduling talented opponents.

Following non-region losses against Whitewater and Carrollton, DCHS begins its Region 5-AAAA schedule with a crossover game at Fayette County (1-1).

“They are probably the most improved team in our region. Last season we beat them at home, but they were very, very young,” said Oglesby. “It would take a tremendous effort for us to beat them tonight.”



Oglesby said his team never gave up in its one-sided loss at Carrollton last weekend.

“We won't see a better team than Carrollton all season. Now, we'll face better individual athletes, but Carrollton is the real deal in Class AAA,” added Oglesby.

Tonight's game is huge for the Tigers. As a crossover opponent, the game counts just like any sub-region game. And with games against Banneker and Mays next on the DCHS schedule, the Tigers need a win in the worst way.

Oglesby says that Fayette's win over Stockbridge and tough 27-20 loss against a physical Houston County club, proves just how much Fayette has improved.

Offensively, Fayette runs a spread offense, and throws the ball a lot, according to Oglesby. In fact, Fayette will likely put the ball in the air more times than DCHS.

“Their quarterback is good and they have some athletic receivers,” added Oglesby. “Our secondary will be tested and their play will be a key to the outcome.”

Offensively, DCHS has sputtered in its first two games.

“I look for improvement this week. From top to bottom and at every position we have had a good

week of practice,” said Oglesby. “Our offense has to grow up and become more consistent. We need for that to happen, and we need it now.”

DCHS just isn’t as athletic as it has been in the past.

“Most teams we play will be bigger and faster,” said the coach. “We must execute to be competitive.”

After two games, the DC defense is ahead of its offense.

“Our defense is better, but our offense hasn’t proved that yet,” he added.

Chapel Hill and Lithia Springs are the lone county squads playing at home tonight. Chapel Hill hosts Morrow in a 4-AAAAA contest, while Lithia Springs faces McIntosh in a 5-AAAA crossover battle.

Chapel Hill fans might not normally get excited about playing a lower-ranked team from Clayton county, but tonight is one of four home games on the Panthers 10-game regular-season schedule.

Last season CHHS was forced to host Lovejoy, following structural problems at 12-Oaks Stadium in Clayton county. That gave the Panthers six home games last fall.

“I guess if people want to see us play, they better come out Friday (tonight),” said Chapel Hill coach Chris Parker.

The matchup could be interesting, at least for awhile.

Offensively Morrow runs from a spread offense and likes to throw the football.

“They’ll run from some empty sets, have some good athletes and like to throw the ball around,” said Parker. “They have a lot of good guys that they want to get in open space.”

Defensively, the Mustangs use a 4-3 defense.

Chapel Hill might try to shake things up a bit on offense.

The Panthers might run a few plays from a Wildcat offense, which has become popular on both the high school and college level.

Lithia Springs will be missing nine starters against McIntosh.

With only some 24 healthy players left on its roster, the Lions can’t afford any more injuries.

“Thank goodness we only have to play 11 guys. I told them that they are not allowed to get tired or injured,” said Lions coach Steve Horton.

Both teams run a spread offense and a 3-5 defense.

“It should be an even game,” said Horton. “We just have to find ways to win. It would be a great time for some young kids to step up.”

Lithia’s defense will certainly be tested. The Chiefs’ offensive attack features two quarterbacks - one a righthander and the other a lefty.

“They are both good and we’ve got to get pressure on them,” said Horton. “Sometimes, they don’t do a great job protecting them.”

Alexander coach Kenny Palmer hopes for another good crowd to follow him and the Cougars to Sandy Creek.

“The fans followed us [last week at Northgate], and I’m really pleased with that,” said Palmer. “We haven’t had that in a while but the fans really came out and supported us.”

Sandy Creek is ranked No. 6 in the state AAAA ranking by one poll.

Sandy Creek features running back Rajion Neal and three other highly recruited players. Neal has committed to Mississippi State, while defensive back Isaiah Johnson (Georgia Tech), defensive end Lacy Coleman (Louisville) and receiver Jarrett Davis (Louisville) are also headed to Saturday afternoon appearances.

Alexander counters with a high-power spread attack, led by sophomore quarterback Dempsey Abernathy. The solid Cougar defense is coming off a good effort against Northgate.