2019 HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PREVIEW

FABIAN TORRES
Rio Hondo Bobcats

CAYLEB KLOSTERMANN
Lyford Bulldogs

JOHN DANIEL GONALEZ
San Benito Greyhounds

DAVID TORRES
Harlingen South Hawks

JAIME GALVAN
Harlingen High Cardinals
2019 Area District Predictions

THE PANEL

Bryan READ
News Director

Mark MOLINA
Staff Writer

Kevin NARRO
Staff Writer

Stefan MODRICH
Staff Writer

Roy HESS
Staff Writer

THE PICKS

DISTRICT 32-6A
- San Benito
- Brownsville Hanna
- Harlingen High
- Harlingen South
- Los Fresnos
- Brownsville Rivera

DISTRICT 31-6A
- Edinburg Vela
- Weslaco High
- Weslaco East
- Edinburg
- Edinburg Economedes
- Brownsville

DISTRICT 16-5A DIVISION II
- Sharyland High
- Sharyland Pioneer
- Mercedes
- Edcouch-Elsa
- Roma
- Valley View
- Laredo Cigarroa

DISTRICT 16-4A DIVISION I
- La Feria
- Kingsville King
- Zapata
- Grulla
- Hidalgo

DISTRICT 16-4A DIVISION II
- Port Isabel
- Raymondville
- Rio Hondo
- Progreso

DISTRICT 16-3A DIVISION I
- George West
- Lyford
- Aransas Pass
- San Diego
- Bishop
- Mathis
- Santa Gertrudis
- Falfurrias

DISTRICT 16-3A DIVISION II
- Odem
- C.C. London
- Santa Rosa
- Hebronville
- Taft
- Monte Alto
- Banquete

DISTRICT 16-2A DIVISION I
- Refugio
- Three Rivers
- Ben Bolt
- Santa Maria
- Freer

CONTACT US

STAFF WRITERS
Mark Molina, Kevin Narro, Stefan Modrich, Roy Hess

PHOTOGRAPHY
Kevin Narro, Mark Molina, Miguel Roberts, Stefan Modrich

DESIGN
Bryan Read

MARK MOLINA
956-982-6663
mmolina@brownsvilleherald.com
On Twitter @MMolina0521

KEVIN NARRO
956-430-6255
knarro@valleystar.com
On Twitter @Narro88

STEFAN MODRICH
956-430-6285
smodrich@brownsvilleherald.com
On Twitter @StefanJModrich

ROY HESS
956-430-6214
rhess@brownsvilleherald.com
On Twitter @HessRgehess

BRYAN READ
956-430-6214
bread@brownsvilleherald.com
On Twitter @BReadSports

PREVIEW CONTRIBUTORS

BRYAN READ

STAFF WRITERS
Mark Molina, Kevin Narro, Stefan Modrich, Roy Hess

PHOTOGRAPHY
Kevin Narro, Mark Molina, Miguel Roberts, Stefan Modrich

DESIGN
Bryan Read
WHAT WE DO BEST IS SAVE YOU MONEY!

Thank you for voting us Best Furniture Store.
We appreciate your continued support!

JANO'S FURNITURE SHOWROOMS
FURNITURE • APPLIANCES • ELECTRONICS • BEDDING

1017 W. HARRISON | HARLINGEN, TEXAS | (956) 425-4411
294 E. HIDALGO | RAYMONDVILLE, TEXAS | (956) 689-3039
Galvan, Cardinals ready to roll after playoff return

Cardinals expect work in strength, conditioning to help

By KEVIN NARRO
Staff Writer

The Harlingen High Cardinals restored balance in the football world last season by making the playoffs, proving that 2017 was an anomaly.

While 2017 was an odd year — Harlingen High missed the playoffs for the first time under Manny Gomez — the 2019 Cards are looking at making the postseason once again.

Big Red certainly has the firepower in play for not only a playoff run but a district title. The Cardinals have had a strong camp and have shown some balance on both sides of the ball.

Gomez's bread and butter is strength and conditioning, and it is something in which the program takes a lot of pride. That is one thing that stood out to Gomez throughout the course of camp.

“For one thing it is our strength and conditioning that we put in, and it has shown since the first day of camp,” Gomez said. “After that is simply the chemistry that we can build from now till our first game, and every team in the nation right now is trying to build that chemistry.”

With senior quarterback Jaime Galvan back, the Cards will have an opportunity to play for the district crown. Galvan is arguably one of the Rio Grande Valley's best and has game-breaking ability with his arm and legs.

While there may have been a question as to who would carry the workload for the Cardinals' offense, fellow senior Rayden Berry probably had the strongest camp on the offensive side of the ball. Through the air, look for Jaime's younger brother, Justin, who looks to be the top target in the passing game.

Defensively the Cardinals will look to linebackers Gabriel Martinez and Ezvyn Zuniga to anchor the defense.

CARDINALS AT A GLANCE

COACH: Manny Gomez
COACHING STAFF: Offensive coordinator Edward Ledesma, defensive coordinator Rey Deleon, Scott Swinnea, Bobby Lucio, Clayton Creators, Johnny Guillen, Mando Gonzalez, Gus Gonzalez, Mike Aguilar, Kevin Ledesma
2018 RECORD: 5-5, 3-2 District 32-6A, bi-district finalist
RETURNING STARTERS (Off./Def.): 4/4
PLAYERS TO WATCH: Jaime Galvan, Rayden Berry, Justin Galvan, Pedro Luna, Gabriel Martinez, Ezvyn Zuniga, Noah Cruz.
Texas Southmost College offers the first two years toward a bachelor’s degree, along with career and technical education, college preparatory studies to prepare students for college-level work, workforce training, and continuing education.

Most Affordable College in the Rio Grande Valley

(956) 295-3600
TSC.EDU
Just reaching postseason not enough for ’19 Hawks

Mix of seniors, sophomores adding speed to South roster

By KEVIN NARRO
Staff Writer

The 2018 Harlingen South Hawks broke ground and made the playoffs for the first time since the 2014 season. The 2019 Hawks are expecting nothing less.

Under fourth-year coach Brian Ricci, South is in position to have one of its strongest seasons in his tenure. While the team is on board with the system, the one thing that will make a difference will be the players’ speed.

“You will see some speed on the offense this year, we will be quicker,” Ricci said. “We are going to have some young kids. Our roster is senior-sophomore heavy, so we will have a good mix, and I’m looking at the seniors and expecting them to show them how it is done.”

“My first year here we had some speed, but they were all seniors. So since then, this is the most speed we have had, and that is what excites me. I think speed wins, and you will see us with a lot more speed and have playmakers, and that is what we are asking them to do, is make plays.”

David Torres is back under center for the Hawks and is a three-year starter. Torres, who recovered from a shoulder injury during the offseason, is 100 percent healthy and ready to lead the Hawks’ offense.

Torres will look to fellow senior Brady Bennett to provide soft hands and a big frame at 6 feet, 3 inches tall. Complementing Bennett will be speedster Jonadam Bustamante, who is looking for a breakout season.

In the backfield, the Hawks will use a back-by-committee approach with Orlando Muniz, Israel Vasquez and Marcos Gonzales.

“David is back and had a great...
Falcons searching for some redemption after rough year

Los Fresnos to lean on 12 returners, subvarsity players to run new attack

By MARK MOLINA
Staff Writer

The 2018 football season was an unwelcome change of pace for the Los Fresnos Falcons and coach Patrick Brown. Not only did the Falcons endure multiple injuries during the non-district part of the schedule, but they ended the season 3-7 and found themselves out of the playoffs for the first time in 14 years.

Now begins the long road back, and Brown and company will attempt to morph a crop of 12 returning lettermen and talented subvarsity players from one year ago into a playoff team.

“We return three true starters that have played more than 10 games on defense and two, maybe three, that have played some on offense,” Brown said. “The rest were either backup or freshmen players. We're very untested, but we're looking forward to seeing what this crop of young men can do.”

For the Falcons, this season will be a new start on offense as Brown hopes the flexbone will cater to his players' skills.

That was something the spread didn't do last season for players like then-freshman quarterback Matthew Padilla, who was thrust into the starting spot when original starter Sergio Martinez went down with an injury.

“I don't feel like I put our kids in the best position to win,” Brown said. “I put (Padilla) in a terrible position trying to run the offense we had last year. We had a lot of meetings as coaches and decided to fully invest in this flexbone offense.”

One thing remains the same, and that is fourth-year varsity wideout Nico Valencia is still the top option, as the flexbone will give the senior many chances to touch the ball playing what Brown refers to as a hybrid running back/slot receiver.

“I feel like the coaches have done a good job working with the tools that we have,” Valencia said. “We have a different group of players with different abilities, and we're going to use that to our advantage.”

SEE FALCONS ★ 19
‘Hounds hoping to sniff out another successful run

Silva, Castilleja aim to lead way as young players fill key roles

By KEVIN NARRO
Staff Writer

During the past two seasons, San Benito has been one of the last teams standing in the Rio Grande Valley.

In fact, the Greyhounds have reached the third round of the playoffs two straight seasons, and there is plenty of reason to believe they can keep that momentum going.

While San Benito did lose a few key names, including quarterback Jacob Cavazos, linebackers AJ Garcia and Albert Mercado, and defensive back Nick Castaneda, the ‘Hounds simply dug into their back pocket and reloaded for 2019.

The Greyhounds will hand the keys of the offense to senior QB Smiley Silva, whose nifty style is similar to that of Cavazos. Silva, like Cavazos, will enter his senior year as a first-year starter. Silva will have a firm grasp of the offense under second-year offensive coordinator Steve Marroquin.

“We are getting there, to where we want to be,” San Benito coach Dan Gomez said. “The younger kids don’t have a choice, you either sink or swim in our program, and we push the kids hard and they have a good understanding on what the expectations are.”

One key piece returning will be junior running back Kyler Castilleja, who had a breakout season in 2018. He finished second on the team in rushing with 852 yards on 131 carries, and also finished second with 12 rushing touchdowns.

“The offense is doing well and, like I said, we put out those expectations and we are going to coach out the details, we won’t take anything for granted,” Gomez said. “We will harp on being perfect and getting to where we want to be. Everyone pushes each other to be better and the kids had a strong offseason.”

‘HOUNDS AT A GLANCE

COACH: Dan Gomez
ASSISTANTS: OC Steve Marroquin, DC Johnny Garza, William Huerta, Jimmy Young, Felipe Rodriguez, Chris Mojica, Omar Gonzalez, Judson Savage, Richard Garza, Javier Villareal, Jeromi Harris, Greg Blanco

2018 RECORD: 8-5, 4-1 District 32-6A, regional semifinalist

RETURNING STARTERS (Off./Def.): 4/4

PLAYERS TO WATCH: Smiley Silva, Kyler Castilleja, John Daniel Gonzalez, Jon Elizondo, Hector Avalos, Tony Torres, Juan Constante

SEE GREYHOUNDS ★ 19

PHOTOS BY KEVIN NARRO/VALLEY MORNING STAR
# 2019 Varsity Football Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEK</th>
<th>DAY</th>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>OPPONENT</th>
<th>SITE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>8/30/2019</td>
<td>CC Calallen “Parent’s Night”</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>9/5/2019</td>
<td>Victoria West @ Calallen</td>
<td>Away</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Thursday</td>
<td>9/12/2019</td>
<td>PSJA High</td>
<td>Away</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>9/21/2019</td>
<td>Laredo United</td>
<td>Away</td>
<td>7:00 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Saturday</td>
<td>9/28/2019</td>
<td>Midland Lee</td>
<td>Away</td>
<td>11:00 AM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
<td>10/4/2019</td>
<td>Open</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>10/11/2019</td>
<td>*Harlingen High</td>
<td>Away</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>10/18/2019</td>
<td>*Harlingen South “MS FB Night”</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>10/25/2019</td>
<td>*B’Ville Hanna</td>
<td>Away</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>11/1/2019</td>
<td>*B’Ville Rivera “Homecoming”</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Friday</td>
<td>11/8/2019</td>
<td>*Los Fresnos</td>
<td>Away</td>
<td>7:30 PM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes District Games

Athletic Director / Head Football Coach: Dan Gomez
SBHS Principal: Isabel Solis
SBCISD Superintendent:: Dr. Nate Carman
La Feria motivated after reaching regional semifinal

Returning players on offense, defense are reasons for optimism

By KEVIN NARRO
Staff Writer

The La Feria Lions arguably are one of the Rio Grande Valley’s top sub-6A teams.

La Feria enters the season with plenty of familiar faces and motivation after last year’s loss in the third round of the playoffs.

The Lions did lose some key pieces to the puzzle due to graduation, including two of their best wideouts in Noah Conde and Darius Hernandez. They do return senior quarterback Dorian Hernandez, who is looking to be one of the Valley’s top signal callers. Hernandez will look to Caleb Flores in the passing game and will have a two-headed monster out of the backfield in juniors Angel Garcia and Avishai Dickerson.

One other key part to the offense is the offensive line. The Lions return all five starters from last season, and they will look to give Hernandez and company plenty of room to operate.

While the offense retooled and is expected to have no problem with its up-tempo style, the defense will look to make some noise, too, most notably in the secondary.

“This senior group is a close-knit group to begin with, and you can see the camaraderie,” Lions coach Oscar Salinas said. “We have all of our secondary back from last year, and they all have the experience. We have just one safety that doesn’t have experience, but he did get some playing time. However, that will be our strength until we get our linebackers up to speed.”

With the chemistry tied in with what La Feria has coming back on defense, it is a recipe for success. The secondary

LIONS AT A GLANCE

COACH: Oscar Salinas
ASSISTANTS: Co-OCs Dario Sanchez and Evie Sanchez, DC Donny Flores, Darrell Guerra, Joe Vela, Rolie Gonzalez, Jaime Acuna, Rey Trevino, Jaime Guerra, Vince Vento, Vince Shoemaker, Angel Martinez
2018 RECORD: 11-2, 4-0 District 16-4A Division I, regional semifinalist
RETURNING STARTERS (Off./Def.): 9/7
PLAYERS TO WATCH: Dorian Hernandez, Jaden Torres, Dereck Perez, Caleb Flores, Evan Avila, Isiah Vento, Jose Lugo
returns corner Evan Avila, who has had a strong camp. Playing opposite of him will be Isiah Vento.
Bobcats rebuilding on the fly as 2019 season starts

Rio Hondo working to get newer players up to speed quickly

By KEVIN NARRO
Staff Writer

The Rio Hondo Bobcats will be a team on a mission in 2019. While Rio Hondo is not in a complete rebuild mode, it does have its work cut out for it this fall.

The ‘Cats have had some of their biggest names come through the program during the past few seasons, and this year the Bobcats will need to replace pieces on the offense, including quarterback Josiah Ortega, wideouts Frank Hernandez and Cross Gonzalez, and running back Danny Vasquez.

While the reinforcements are in place in Rio Hondo, it is just a matter of the youngs getting up to speed at the varsity level.

“I think this year as a whole, everyone is trying to catch up. We are a little bit stronger on defense because we have some older guys on that side of the ball,” Rio Hondo coach Rocky James said. “On offense, we are going to play with a lot of sophomores, which is fine, they are a very talented group.”

Highlighting the sophomore group is quarterback Zachariah Rios. Along with Rios will be Jonah Ortega, Ethan Reyna and Ismael Rodriguez.

The Bobcats have just two returning starters on offense and four returning on defense. Rio Hondo is hoping the sophomore group can continue to build on a strong summer in which it reached the state 7-on-7 tournament.

“I think we just lack experience when it comes to going against varsity teams,” James said. “They did a great job at the freshman level, but that is freshman. Now the kids need to step up and really gain some experience, and our scrimmages will really give us a strong look to where we will be at. And we start the

BOBCATS AT A GLANCE

COACH: Rocky James
ASSISTANTS: OC Victor Sauceda, DC Brett Esparza, Sergio Gonzalez, David Zuniga, Mike Garza, Andy Alvarez, Mike Alvarez, Andrew Carmona, Tuffy Calderon, Mario Rodriguez, Candido Ochoa.
2018 RECORD: 9-2, 2-1 District 16-4A Division II, area finalist
RETURNING STARTERS (Off./Def.): 2/4
PLAYERS TO WATCH: Zachariah Rios, Jonah Ortega, Ethan Reyna, Ismael Rodriguez, Joey Ortega, Sam Villines, Matt Trevino, Derek Castellanos
The Port Isabel Tarpons see a lot of positives ahead of them during Jason Strunk’s second year as their coach.

Strunk came in relatively late one year ago as a June hire, and it took a little while for the Tarpons to settle into his system. They ended the 2018 season as a much better team than they started, but still had only a 4-6 record to show for it.

“We’re not happy with 4-6,” Strunk said during preseason workouts earlier this month.

The players want a better showing, too. With seven starters back on offense and eight returning on defense, the Tarpons’ high expectations seem justified.

“It was a struggle last year when he came because we didn’t know anything (about his system),” said senior outside linebacker Luis Bustamante, a 6-foot, 210-pounder who is a three-year starter.

“This year (on the first day of practice), we just came out here and ran every play, and we looked sharp.

“It would mean a lot my senior year for us to go deep in the playoffs,” Bustamante added. “It would be really exciting to experience the second round or the third round. It would be really fun, and I believe we can do it. We’re looking better, and we’re looking forward to having a good season this year.”

Besides Bustamante, other returning starters from the defense include safety Jake Pinkerton (sr., 5-8, 160), ends Edgar Orduna (sr., 5-10, 225) and Roger Schaertl (sr., 6-2, 205), inside linebacker Zaid Calderon (sr., 5-9, 190), and cornerbacks Angel Nino (jr., 5-7, 150), Michael Perez (sr., 5-7, 150) and Will Camacho (jr., 5-7, 145).

“We’re going to be a solid defense,” Bustamante said. “A lot of the players are strong, and they know what they’re doing. Some of them are young, but they’ll get there. It’s going to take a little time, but I think we’ll be a good defense.”

The seven starters back on offense are wide receiver Mac Strunk (sr., 5-11, 175), tackle Luis Suarez (sr., 6-0, 215), guards Andrew Gallardo (jr., 5-11, 280) and Fabian Oceguera (jr., 5-9, 230), running backs Adrian Nino (jr., 5-7, 150), Brayan Medina (sr., 5-7, 145) and Jordan Camacho (jr., 5-9, 155).

Port Isabel Tarpons players, above, hold their helmets high during a practice Aug. 14 in Port Isabel. The Tarpons are returning 15 starters from a team that ended 2018 on a high note.

TARPONS AT A GLANCE

COACH: Jason Strunk
2018 RECORD: 4-6, bi-district round
RETURNING STARTERS (Off./Def.): 7/8
PLAYERS TO WATCH: OLB Luis Bustamante (sr., 6-0, 210), RB Brayan Medina (sr., 5-7, 145), S Jake Pinkerton (sr., 5-8, 160), MLB Zaid Calderon (sr., 5-9, 190)

SEE TARPONS ★ 21

GAME DAY SPECIAL

20% off meal with ticket stub on evening of home game
712 N 77 Sunshine Strip #30, Harlingen, TX
(956) 622-3066
https://www.classicsbarandgrill.com/
*Does NOT include alcohol*
Defending district champ
’Kats adding new pieces

Raymondville seeks back-to-back titles in 16-4A Division II

By KEVIN NARRO
Staff Writer

The Raymondville Bearkats enter the new season with a little extra motivation. Raymondville won District 16-4A Division II last year with a 3-0 record and has plenty of weapons returning this fall.

The ’Kats did lose some key names in quarterback Jacob Posas, running back Marcus Capetillo, linebacker Noe Zombrano and defensive back Deion Castillo, though.

“We had a big senior group graduate last year, but we are also fortunate to have another big senior group this year,” Raymondville coach Frank Cantu said. “We also have a big junior group, them and the seniors will fill in the holes, and we don’t want to miss a beat. We just want to keep playing as well as we did last year.”

Raymondville did not have to look far for a signal caller with Jarod Cavazos around. The freshman QB is slated to begin his high school career and will have plenty of savvy veterans around him to help his transfer to the varsity level.

Cavazos will have two of the Rio Grande Valley’s top targets in senior Justin Cantu and junior Zaraivion Armendarez. During the summer, Cavazos used the 7-on-7 league as a way to build chemistry with his new offense.

With Capetillo graduated, Raymondville will look to use Armendarez in multiple ways to get him the ball. Armendarez provides speed and the ability to make defenders miss in space. Cantu, meanwhile, provides size and is a possession-type wideout.

“We have a lot of guys that are back and have experience,” Armendarez said.

“We won’t miss a beat. We have pieces back on offense. Both Justin and I have been wanting to play together since we were in junior high, and now that we have that chance we are going to be ready for it.”

BEARKATS AT A GLANCE

COACH: Frank Cantu
ASSISTANTS: N/A
2018 RECORD: 9-2, 3-0 District 16-4A Division II, area finalist
RETURNING STARTERS (Off./Def.): 5/5
PLAYERS TO WATCH: Zaraivion Armendarez, Jarod Cavazos, Thomas Zombrano, Justin Cantu, Dylan Ramirez, Saul Garcia

SEE BEARKATS ★ 21
The Lyford Bulldogs return multiple pieces to the puzzle in 2019. Lyford is now in Year 3 of the Israel Gonzalez era. Under Gonzalez, the Bulldogs have reached the playoffs each season, and that doesn’t look to change this fall.

“We are going to preach the little details and make sure these guys are here on time, and make sure these guys become quality men,” Gonzalez said. “Wins produce themselves when you teach these kids the small details, and that is what we preach. They do all the right things in the classroom and on the field.”

The Bulldogs went an impressive 5-2 in district play last season but bowed out of the playoffs in the bi-district round with a 16-14 loss to San Antonio Cole.

Returning to the Lyford lineup will be junior quarterback Cayleb Klostermann. The junior signal caller is in the best shape of his career and has had a strong camp. Klostermann will have the help of wideout Abel Gonzalez and running back Devon Mendoza.

“The offense is bringing back six guys, and three of them will be along the offensive line,” Gonzalez said. “We started six sophomores last year, and we finished second in our district but it showed the tenacity of that group, and I think that group is hungry and they realize their potential. We are expecting big things this year, and we are going to let the chips fall where they may.”

Defensively, Jaime Guerra will be the new defensive coordinator for the ’Dogs. Two-way player John Hernandez is back to anchor the defensive line. Along with Klostermann, Austin Contreras, John Hernandez, and Devin Mendoza.

Gonzalez will be Austin Contreras on the defensive line.

“We are going to get after it on defense,” Gonzalez said. “We don’t have

**BULDOGS AT A GLANCE**

**COACH:** Israel Gonzalez  
**ASSISTANTS:** OC Douglas Ames, DC Jaime Guerra, Eleazar Esquivel, Pete Garcia, Joey Rios, Marty Rocha, Monty Woodall, Victor Rubalcaba  
**2018 RECORD:** 7-4, 5-2 District 16-3A Division I, bi-district finalist  
**RETURNING STARTERS (Off./Def.):** 8/5  
**PLAYERS TO WATCH:** Abel Gonzalez, Cayleb Klostermann, Austin Contreras, John Hernandez, Devon Mendoza

Lyford Bulldogs quarterback Cayleb Klostermann, above, throws a pass during a scrimmage against Rio Hondo on Friday in Lyford. Coach Israel Gonzalez, left, watches over his players during a recent workout.
For the 2019 Marine Military Academy Leathernecks, it will be the same song, different verse. The team has some pieces back this season, but like every year, MMA will have to regroup and adjust.

Fourth-year coach Ric Medill has improved the program during the past few seasons. In 2016, MMA went 2-6, in 2017 they improved to 6-4 and in 2018 MMA went 4-5-1. Despite taking a minor step back, Medill is confident in what the Leathernecks have coming back and what they have to build around this fall. Of the 28 kids on the roster, 10 are returning from last year’s team.

“We are in our first few days of camp, and we are still waiting on about 20 kids to come to camp,” Medill said. “A lot of the kids don’t come to camp, they will come on the first day of registration, so we have a bunch of kids coming that we know will be coming.”

One of those returning will be senior quarterback Jack Dalton. The senior QB — who also plays point guard for the basketball team — returns under center after taking over the starting job midway through last season. This year will be his first full year as the starter.

“Jack came in midseason, he also plays basketball for us, and he came on at wide receiver for us at first until we moved him to quarterback,” Medill said.

Teaming up with Dalton will be John Cambo and newly added Mason Nava, who recently played at McAllen High and will bring some experience to MMA. On the defensive side of the ball, senior Brian Pritchard will anchor the defense. Pritchard is a four-year letterman and also will line up at fullback.

Pritchard is from Denver, Colo., and is hoping to get into West Point after graduation, but for now Pritchard is just focused on football and winning.

**LEATHERNECKS AT A GLANCE**

**COACH:** Ric Medill  
**ASSISTANTS:** N/A  
**2018 RECORD:** 4-5-1  
**RETURNING STARTERS (Off./Def.):** 5/5  
**PLAYERS TO WATCH:** Jack Dalton, Mason Nava, Brian Pritchard, John Cambo

Marine Military Academy quarterback Jack Dalton, above, throws a pass and coach Ric Medill, left, instructs a player during a recent practice at MMA.
Quartbacks compete to earn Warriors’ starting job

Ruiz, Lara battle in preseason after also playing last season

By KEVIN NARRO
Staff Writer

The Santa Rosa Warriors, a playoff team one year ago, have some questions to address at the quarterback position in 2019.

Santa Rosa has a position battle between senior Jose Ruiz and junior Reese Lara. Both have playing experience and shared time under center last season. With Ruiz and Lara displaying plenty of athleticism, the backup quarterback likely will play a skill position, giving the Warriors plenty of firepower when adding in wideouts Mike Bermea and R.J Vera.

“(Ruiz and Lara) both did a good job last year, and they fed off of each other,” Warriors coach Hector Ayala said. “They are pushing each other right now and I told both of them I would like for one of them to win it, and I think that will help make the team better. Right now it is open, and they are showing it and pushing each other.”

Senior right tackle Adam Cavasos is the lone returner and will lead the way for junior Jose Diaz-Mendez. The junior will have some big shoes to fill with Ryan Mesa gone to graduation.

On the defensive side of the ball, the Warriors will have a strong corps of linebackers in J.J. Mendoza, Brave Mendoza, Sergio Lopez and Bobby Saldivar. Anchoring the defensive line will be four-year letterman and defensive tackle Guillermo Vasquez.

“This is our last ride, and this is my last ride,” Vasquez said. “We want to make it count and we all put in work over the offseason. We are going to be running a 3-4 defense, and we are expecting some big things. We are going to hit hard and make plays.”

The Warriors went 5-6 overall last year

WARRIORS AT A GLANCE

COACH: Hector Ayala
ASSISTANTS: DC Pablo De Los Santos, Juan Trevino, Victor Espinoza, Lin Fuentes, Oscar Gonzalez, Jacob Borjas, Carlos Nieto, Raul Ochoa, Rey Villalon
2018 RECORD: 5-6, 3-3 District 16-3A Division II, bi-district finalist
RETURNING STARTERS (Off./Def.): 6/6
PLAYERS TO WATCH: Adam Cavasos, Mike Bermea, Ethan De la Garza, J.J Mendoza, Bobby Saldivar, Brave Munoz, Jose Diaz-Mendez, Sergio Lopez, Guillermo Vasquez, Jose Ruiz, Reese Lara
**FALCONS**  
FROM 7

Joining Valencia on offense will be fellow senior Elian Gonzalez at receiver and junior Chris Resendiz at running back. Padilla returns under center after playing well down the stretch last year as a freshman, but he could be challenged by junior Adrian Longoria.

As for the defense, it is once again expected to be solid and help keep the Falcons in games despite being inexperienced on the varsity level.

Leading the way will be linebackers Leeroy Rivera, Cameron Rivera and Alonso Requena, as well as defensive returners along the offensive line.

“Right now, we are feeling good. Some days we have off days, but we are picking it up and it feels great to have the pads on,” Elizondo said. “(Coach Gomez’s) message to us was simple, to not be afraid and to keep grinding, and the outcome will be there when we put in the work.”

“Smiley is doing a good job. We as a defense are motivating each other to be ready for Friday nights.”

**GREYHOUNDS**  
FROM 8

The Greyhounds will have a tough road through the non-district portion of the schedule, with games against Midland Lee, Corpus Christi Calallen and Laredo United.

Senior offensive lineman Jon Elizondo is no stranger to the playoffs or district titles. Elizondo is one of two returners along the offensive line.

“Right now, we are feeling good. Some days we have off days, but we are picking it up and it feels great to have the pads on,” Elizondo said. “(Coach Gomez’s) message to us was simple, to not be afraid and to keep grinding, and the outcome will be there when we put in the work.”

“Smiley is doing a good job. We as a defense are motivating each other to be ready for Friday nights.”

**LIONS**  
FROM 10

Also, senior free safety Jaden Torres will look to have an impact and be a key part in the Lions’ speedy secondary.

La Feria’s question is at the linebacker position after losing Robert Fraga and Jacob Garza, who were mainstays on the defense last season.

“Right now we are feeling great, and we feel we haven’t skipped a beat,” Torres said. “We feel we are better than last year. Our expectations this year are to win games and to not let anyone beat us. We want to make it back to the playoffs and for us to just do our thing.”

**CARDINALS**  
FROM 4

Along the defensive line, Pedro Luna and Noah Cruz hope to bring the pressure up front.

“We have a lot of chemistry this year,” Zuniga said. “The senior and sophomore group are real tight, and what helped us this year is the younger guys from the freshman campus. We have been able to have that big brother effect on them, we have shown them the ropes. I’m just excited to get out there and play football. These guys are my brothers.”

**HAWKS**  
FROM 6

summer. He worked his butt off,” Ricci said. “He is a three-year starter, we threw him in there as a sophomore, so he has plenty of experience. With the running backs, we will take it by committee with the idea to keep our backs fresh.”

One question the Hawks will need to address is the fullback position. South lost three-year starter Cristian Cortez to graduation this past spring.

“Right now we are trying to find a fullback,” Ricci said. “We will be looking at that position. It is hard to replace a three-year starter like Cristian. However, that is what we are looking at, on who will fill that spot.”
Cougars hope to see same results from new coach

Santa Maria has reached the playoffs two straight seasons

By MARK MOLINA
Staff Writer

The Santa Maria Cougars are shooting for a third straight playoff season and are doing so with a new coach in Israel Gracia.

The mission this season will be to not only improve on a 4-7 record last season but to finish high enough in District 16-2A Division I to avoid the Region IV heavy hitters in bi-district, where the Cougars have been outscored 137-0 during the past two seasons. The Cougars return 14 starters this season and will rely heavily on a defense full of potential playmakers to lead the way.

“We have a good senior ballclub that came back from last year,” Gracia said. “We have about 14 or 15 guys that are working hard. The strength is going to be our defense. We're bringing back about eight guys on that side. They did a pretty good job, but that's the excitement.”

Santa Maria's defense will feature the brother linebacker tandem of Marcos and Gus Sandoval. Gracia is excited about the duo and believes it will be anchoring the defense this season. Up front, the Cougars will look to senior defensive tackle Juaquin Sosa and defensive end Rudy Flores to create pressure.

“I don't think many people are going to be getting past us on the defensive line,” Flores said. “Our secondary is getting a lot better, and our linebackers are the real deadly weapons. Our linebackers are dogs. They see the ball and they go for it.”

On offense, the Cougars still look to the ground game first, but Gracia is looking to spread it out this season and believes he has the skill players at receiver to make that a reality.

At quarterback, Gracia is excited about the returning Jesse Ortiz, but Nathaniel Rodriguez looks like a viable option, too, as he is a bigger quarterback with a strong, accurate arm.

Santa Maria Cougars quarterback Jesse Ortiz, above, hands off the ball to a teammate during Tuesday’s practice. Cougars lineman Juaquin Sosa, left, waits for the snap.

COUGARS AT A GLANCE

COACH: Israel Gracia
ASSISTANTS: OC Cris Cavazos, DC Sergio Nunez, Amos Salas, Jose Guzman, Felix Cantu, Mishak Rivas
2018 RECORD: 4-6, bi-district finalist
RETURNING STARTERS (Off./Def.): 5/9
PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR/DB Albert Villarreal (Sr., 5-7, 140), LB Marcos Sandoval (Sr., 5-10, 195), TE/DE Rudy Flores (Jr., 6-0, 220), OL/DL Juaquin Sosa (Sr., 5-10, 220)
**TARPONS**

FROM 13

Medina led the PI. ground game last year along with graduated quarterback Cesar Aguilera. Medina finished with approximately 1,300 yards rushing.

“We’re pleased with not only the quantity of athletes we have, but the quality of our athletes, too,” Jason Strunk said. “What stands out to me is their toughness. They’re resilient and they work hard. They’ve picked up our offensive and defensive systems quickly. They’ve bought into it, and they bleed blue. These players bleed Tarpon blue. I haven’t experienced that (strong loyalty to a program) anywhere else in Texas.”

Replacing Aguilera at QB is Joey Kriegerbaum (jr., 6-1, 170), who started every game on the junior varsity for the Tarpons last season.

“Joey has come up through the system, and he had a good summer,” the Port Isabel coach said. “He’s throwing the ball well. We’re also going to have a solid run game that he can lean on. We have a lot of vertical threats (at receiver) with speed. We have 15 guys running 4.7 (seconds) or lower (in the 40-yard dash), so we have some speed.

“Joey is deceptive,” Jason Strunk added. “He can sit in the pocket and throw or he can get out the back door (by scrambling). He’s an athlete. He’s going to be all right (as the starter).”

Pinkerton is enthusiastic about the play of the defense, where he’s played since the end of his sophomore season.

“Everyone knows his job better (this year),” the safety said. “We don’t have people running all over the place (not knowing what to do). We have good linebackers such as Luis and Zaid, who are keeping our opponents in check.

“We’re hoping to go as far as we can in the playoffs,” Pinkerton added. “I see us going at least a couple rounds.”

Added teammate Calderon, who also has played on the varsity since the end of his sophomore year, “I’d mean a lot to bring back Port Isabel’s winning tradition. It’d be a privilege to be a part of that. We’re just ready to go out and get the District (16-4A Division II) title and go deep in the playoffs.”

The Tarpons open the regular season at 7:30 p.m. Friday in Brownsville against the Porter Cowboys at Sams Memorial Stadium.

**BOBCATS**

FROM 12

regular season with a 6A school, so we will see where we are right off the bat.”

On defense, the Bobcats will rely on their two leaders, linebacker Joey Ortega and hybrid defender Sam Villines. Junior Matt Trevino will line up next to Ortega at the linebacker position.

“Both of those kids are very good athletes,” James said of Ortega and Villines. “Joey is an all-state linebacker and Sam is coming into his own, and they are both teachers out there on the field for me and they know what to expect. The experience is on the defensive side of the ball.”

**BEARKATS**

FROM 14

The ’Kats understand that the target is on their back moreso this season than the past. Raymondville has enough vets on the team to make another run at the district title and the postseason.

“We know we have teams coming for us, especially because we won the district last year,” Armendarez said. “With Jarod it will be different, but I believe we have what it takes to win again.

“It starts now. We need to continue to work each week and get better. It doesn’t matter what happens early in the season, we just need to keep working and get better each week.”

**LEATHERNECKS**

FROM 16

“I’m excited to get back on the field. I have played all over the place, but my main positions are at fullback and linebacker,” Pritchard said. “Last year was good but it was a tough season, but we got through it and this year we are hoping to win some games.”

The Leathernecks are implementing a new system on both sides of the ball, but Medill sees it as an opportunity for his club with new faces on offense and defense.

“Here at MMA, every year is different. We as coaches try and put our kids in the best place we know,” Medill said. “Some years we think we can run the ball, and we see what we can work with come August. Sometimes we get in a group of receivers, so we look to throw the ball and open it up. We hope to have a little bit of both so we won’t be one-dimensional. Once we get in the rest of the kids, we will see what we have to work with.”

**WARRIORS**

FROM 18

and went 3-3 in district play. Santa Rosa did qualify for the playoffs but lost 35-14 in the bi-district round to Poth. The Warriors will open their season Friday at home against Lyford.

**BULLDOGS**

FROM 15

the biggest guys, but we play aggressive and will bring some heat from different angles to make sure we can cause some havoc in the backfield so we can give relief to our secondary.

The Bulldogs begin their season Friday at home against Mercedes.

**COUGARS**

FROM 20

Bernie Castellanos and Giovanni Diaz return on the outside. Albert Villarreal will lineup as an inside wide receiver and double as the teams’ safety.

Sophomore running back Erick Castellanos will share carries with Gus Sandoval, and Flores and Sosa will play along the offensive line as well.

**AREA TEAM GLANCES**

**MERCEDES TIGERS**

COACH: Roger Adame Jr., 6th year

2018 RECORD: 5-6, bi-district qualifier

RETURNING STARTERS (OFF/DEF): 11

RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: 28

PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Josiah Cantu; LB Brandon Adame; DB Ramiro Ortiz; FB Sonny Vela

2019 OUTLOOK: The Tigers return 16 starters from last year’s bi-district qualifying team, giving Mercedes an edge on the competition when it comes to experience playing at the varsity level. A-4-2 district record helped the Tigers capture the third seed, but Mercedes is chasing more in 2019. Receivers Cantu and Rincon give Mercedes a solid 1-2 punch in their spread attack. As a sophomore, Cantu had 780 yards, six receiving touchdowns and made two house calls on kickoffs returns for TDs. When they’re not doing damage, running back Sonny Vela (80 rushing yards, 7 TDs) will get to work running behind tackle Aubrey Elizondo and center Zelo Gutierrez. Linebacker Adame was named last year’s Defensive Newcomer of the Year as he’s coming off a season with 76 tackles, 18 tackles for loss, seven sacks and three interceptions. Shuffling Things down in the secondary is Ortiz, a lengthy defensive back who led the Tigers with six interceptions and 91 tackles a season ago. Mercedes’ losses came at the hands of Sharyland High and Sharyland Pioneer in district play, but this year, the Tigers have hopes of winning the 16-5A DI title.

**LOS FRESNOS FALCONS**

COACH: Patrick Brown

ASSISTANTS: OC Leigh McWhorter, DC Jose Horner, Lawrence Ellison, Brent Blackman, Doug Dahlberg, Greg Pena, Jaime Vela, Rene Morales, Ruben Rocha, Patrick Inskrip, Jesus Garza

2018 RECORD: 5-7

RETURNING STARTERS (OFF/DEF): 9

RETURNING LETTERWINNERS: 32

PLAYERS TO WATCH: WR Nico Valencia (Sr., 6-1, 180), LB Leonor Guerrero (Sr., 5-9, 220), WR Ellen Gonzalez (Sr., 5-2, 165), DE Genero Alvarez (6-2, 236)

“I like the change to a spread offense,” Castellanos said. “It gives us a better chance to move the ball down the field. It’ll give running backs a better chance because we’re throwing the ball to the outside.”
2019 RIO GRANDE VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL SCHEDULE

Week 1
Thursday, Aug. 29
Non-District
Sharyland High at Brownsville Pace, 7 p.m.
Brownsville Brangs, Brownsville Veterans Memorial, 7:30 p.m.
Edinburg Vela at Laredo United, 7 p.m.

Friday, Aug. 30
Non-District
Harlingen High at Sharyland Pioneer, 7:30 p.m.
Edinburg High at Edinburg South, 7:30 p.m.
Corpus Christi Calallen at San Benito, 7:30 p.m.
Brownsville St. Joseph at Los Fresnos, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Sept. 1
Non-District
Veterans Memorial at Brownsville Pace, 7 p.m.

Week 2
Thursday, Sept. 5
District 16-5A Division I
Brownsville Porter at Brownsville Pace, 7 p.m.

Week 3
Thursday, Sept. 12
District 16-5A Division I
Mission Veterans Memorial at Brownsville Veterans Memorial, 7 p.m.

Non-District
Harlingen South at McAllen High, 7 p.m.
San Benito at Brownsville St. Joseph, 7 p.m.
La Joya Juarez-Lincoln at Edinburg High, 7 p.m.

Brownsville Hanna at Amarillo Tassos, 7 p.m.

Friday, Sept. 21
Non-District
Veterans Memorial at Brownsville Pace, 7 p.m.

Week 4
Thursday, Sept. 19
District 16-5A Division I
Brownsville Porter at Brownsville Pace, 7 p.m.

Week 5
Thursday, Sept. 26
District 30-6A
McAllen High at McAllen Rowe, 7:30 p.m.
La Joya Juarez-Lincoln at PSJA North, 7:30 p.m.

District 16-5A Division I
Brownsville Lopez at Donna North, 7:30 p.m.

Non-District
Brownsville Hanna at Amarillo Tassos, 7 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 11
District 32-6A
San Benito at Harlingen High, 7:30 p.m.
Harlingen South at Los Fresnos, 7:30 p.m.
Brownsville Riveras at Brownsville Hanna, 7:30 p.m.

Progreso at Rio Hondo, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 19
Saturday, Sept. 22

Week 6
Thursday, Oct. 17
District 32-6A
Weslaco Economedes at Brownsville Riveras, 7 p.m.

District 31-6A
Weslaco Economedes at Weslaco East, 7 p.m.

District 30-6A
PSJA High at McAllen Rowe, 7:30 p.m.

Non-District
La Joya Palmview at PSJA Southwest, 7:30 p.m.

Friday, Oct. 25
District 32-6A
Harlingen High at Los Fresnos, 7:30 p.m.
Brownsville Riveras at Brownsville Hanna, 7:30 p.m.

Week 7
Thursday, Oct. 24
District 32-6A
Rio Grande City at PSJA South, 6 p.m.

District 16-3A Division II
Corpus Christi London at Santa Rosa, 7:30 p.m.

District 31-6A
Weslaco High at Edcouch-Elsa, 7:30 p.m.

District 30-6A
Los Fresnos at Odessa Permian, 7 p.m.

Non-District
La Feria at Valley High, 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 2
District 32-6A
Mission High at PSJA North, 7:30 p.m.

Week 8
Thursday, Nov. 7
District 32-6A
Los Fresnos at Brownsville Riveras, 7 p.m.

District 31-6A
Weslaco Economedes at Weslaco East, 7 p.m.

District 30-6A
PSJA High at McAllen Rowe, 7:30 p.m.

Non-District
La Joya Palmview at PSJA Southwest, 7 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 8
District 32-6A
Brownsville Hanna at Harlingen High, 7:30 p.m.

Progreso at Santa Maria, 7:30 p.m.
Port Isabel at Grulla, 7:30 p.m.
Brownsville St. Joseph at Hidalgo, 7:30 p.m.

Week 9
Thursday, Nov. 14
District 32-6A
Weslaco Economedes at Edinburg Vela, 7 p.m.

District 30-6A
Brownsville Lopez at Brownsville City, 7:30 p.m.

Non-District
Brownsville Hanna at Amarillo Tassos, 7 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 15
District 32-6A
Los Fresnos at Brownsville Hanna, 7:30 p.m.

Progreso at Rio Hondo, 7:30 p.m.

Week 10
Thursday, Nov. 21
District 32-6A
Brownsville Lopez at Brownsville City, 7:30 p.m.

District 30-6A
Brownsville Hanna at Amarillo Tassos, 7 p.m.

Non-District
Brownsville Hanna at Amarillo Tassos, 7 p.m.

Friday, Nov. 22
District 32-6A
Brownsville Hanna at Amarillo Tassos, 7 p.m.

Progreso at Rio Hondo, 7:30 p.m.

Week 11
Thursday, Nov. 28
District 32-6A
Edinburg High at Brownsville Riveras, 7:30 p.m.

District 30-6A
La Joya High at McAllen Rowe, 7:30 p.m.

Non-District
La Feria at Rio Hondo, 7:30 p.m.

TAPPS
Corpus Christi St. Joseph at Brownsville St. Joseph, 7 p.m.

Saturday, Nov. 3
District 32-6A
Brownsville Riveras at Brownsville Hanna, 7 p.m.

Non-District
La Feria at Rio Hondo, 7:30 p.m.

TAPPS
Corpus Christi St. Joseph at Brownsville St. Joseph, 7 p.m.

Wednesday, August 28, 2019
High School Football
24 HOURS

Valley Baptist Pediatric Emergency Room

The **ONLY** hospital-based dedicated Pediatric Emergency Room in Cameron and Willacy County!

Our Pediatric ER team treats a wide range of medical concerns, including:

- Colds, flu, croup, and other infections
- Diarrhea, vomiting, stomach pain
- Sprains and broken bones
- Chronic illnesses, such as asthma

If your child needs to be admitted to the hospital, you can count on the hospital’s Pediatric Unit as well as Neonatal and Pediatric Intensive Care Units.

**OPEN 24 HOURS**

Valley Baptist Medical Center
Harlingen
Pediatric Emergency Room

2101 Pease Street, Harlingen, TX 78550
For more information, visit [ValleyBaptist.net](http://ValleyBaptist.net)
Boswell Elliff Ford wishes everyone a safe & great football season.