

COUGARS

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The response he received was uplifting and a clear sign that this team had no plans to repeat that 4-7 year. “Everyone said, Coach, we need to do something, the gym is better than nothing, so I went to the coaches and said, ‘They want to go, regardless of the weather and if we’re in the gym or not, and if they want to go, we’ve got to go,’” he said. “... We showed up at 6:30 a.m. Saturday morning on July 11 and got after it for about an hour, and then we

came and lifted for about an hour.” To this day, the response by his players is a source of pride for Jones. He said there’s no mincing words that last year was difficult on a number of fronts, but what people saw outside the football building and what they didn’t see inside of it would have changed perspective on the season. Jones said the hard times made the Cougars grow up last season. “Though it didn’t show it in wins and losses, I think there was a tremendous amount of things on the inside that we were very

proud of,” he said. “I don’t think there was any doubt that we got better throughout the season. I think there’s no doubt that in some of our losses was some of our best football games. We were just very thin when it came to depth and things like that, but your Ethan Mudds and your Jake Bratchers and those guys, they really had nice years regardless of the record. “For us to kind of handle the adversity that we did going through July and losing a couple of guys and then Kadin a couple of weeks into the season, I think for our guys, the initial

shock was evident at Barren County (a 43-0 loss) and that was probably our worst game of the year,” he said. “I don’t think we had much belief in ourselves and our teammates and what we were doing. Shortly after that I felt like the buy-in was through the roof, and I really think it set us up for the offseason that we’ve had this year. Those guys all of a sudden started working hard and the camaraderie was as high as it ever has been, and that bled right into one of the best summers and weight room sessions for a winter and spring that we’ve had for a long time.”

Now a new season has arrived with a matchup with heated rival Edmonson County in the annual Tobacco Bowl in Leitchfield Friday. Hanshaw is back in the program, and there are numerous established players and several up-and-coming standouts ready to get back to the Cougars' winning ways. “I’ll be honest, as a coach I’ve been part of some good teams and it wasn’t always fun to come to practice, and I’ve been a part of some not-so-good teams and you loved being here,” Jones said. “That group last year, you just loved being out

here and being around them. Last week (Aug. 7), Ethan Mudd was here on Friday night and sitting on the bench with them and they still come around, and a lot of them still check in with us, and to me that’s what high school football is all about. It’s not always wins and losses; it’s about those relationships and guys growing into young men.”

Jeff D’Alessio can be reached at jdalessio@thenewsenterprisec.com.

FOOTBALL

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strength and “just being a good teammate.” “On the line, you have to be a teammate,” he said. “You have to be one together, and for skill players it’s just different. You just have to all be intertwined on the line.” Jones said Whitman’s strength is one of his best

attributes as a lineman. “He has always wanted to be good and somebody who really devoted himself to working hard in the weight room,” he said. “Him and Maddox (Anderson) have kind of flip flopped back and forth over the last year of being our strongest guy in the weight room, and he has just an extremely hard work ethic with a great attitude and is a great kid. Very coachable, asks great questions; he’s more of a

cerebral guy when it comes to football because he wants to know why and how and the ins and outs on everything.” Whitman, 17, said he wants this year to be full of high moments and just “being with my teammates and having the best season that I can. There’s love, there’s friendship between us, and there’s a relationship

between all of us.” The season, once again, will be dedicated to his biggest fan. “I can only imagine going through that adversity at that age like he did, and I couldn’t imagine going through that right now at 42 and having to deal with it and going through high school and everything else,” Jones said. “He has handled

it as well as anyone could imagine, and he’s turned into a tremendous young man, a tremendous leader for us, and somebody that I’m proud to say is part of our program.”

Jeff D’Alessio can be reached at jdalessio@thenewsenterprisec.com.



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GRAYSON COUNTY

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