

HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL PREVIEW

Get ready for an inside look at the hard-hitting talent
Katy ISD football teams will bring to the field this season

Written by Ashley Lancaster | Select photography by Craig Moseley

For coaches and student-athletes, the preparation and sacrifice that it takes to accomplish a winning season begin long before Katyites start to fill the stands each fall. Find out what makes each and every high school football program unique, what their strengths are, and how they plan to stand out against fierce competition in pursuit of gridiron glory.

Cinco Ranch

The Cougar football program plans to continue its tradition of hard work this season, and as always, strives for the ultimate prize in high school football. "Our goal is to represent the Cinco Ranch community with pride and to make positive progress that will have us playing football the Saturday before Christmas," says head coach Don Clayton. It's not an unachievable feat, considering their playoff record and some of the raw talent lined up for the 2015 to 2016 season.

Two of the breakout players to watch this year are linebacker Dami Ilesanmi and tight end Corey Rau. "Ilesanmi is a tremendous player with great intensity, and Rau is a two-year starter that has a chance to be dynamic," says Clayton.

Fans can expect a great game every week. "We stand out in this district because we absolutely refuse to lose," says Russell Morrison, starting quarterback for the team. As for challenges, Morrison believes that if they can solidify the offensive line, they will be unstoppable against any opponent.

Katy

As seven-time state champions and 14-time regional champs, Katy High School football is synonymous with excellence. Head athletic coordinator and football coach, Gary Joseph, makes sure it doesn't go to his players' heads.

"One of the biggest characteristics we stress to our players is appreciation. Players need to remember that playing football is an opportunity that some people don't get. We teach appreciation of parents, for the opportunities they've been given, and for the chance to play Katy football," says Joseph. Wide receiver and two-year starter JoVanni Stewart has learned the importance of leadership from the Tiger program. "The expectations are very high, but it's good for us. It builds

the kind of character we are going to need later on in life," says Stewart.

One challenge that they will need to overcome this season is getting experience on the offense to create depth within their team. The Tigers' main focus is to carry their momentum through to the end of the season and all the way to the state championship.

Mayde Creek

The Mayde Creek Rams always have an advantage when it comes to pride and school spirit. "One of our biggest fans is Dr. Cazilda Steele, our principal. Her enthusiasm leads the way for our students in what team spirit looks like," says Coach Mike Rabe. The Rams' main goal this season is to bring the playoffs back to Mayde Creek, and the coaching staff is confident that they have the manpower and heart to do just that.

One of the players expected to stand out this season is senior running back Donovan Lee. "He is one of our fastest players, fits naturally into the Rams' offensive scheme, and has great vision and acceleration," says Rabe.

With a new approach to winning, the Rams are confident that their biggest strength is that the other schools will not know what to expect. Senior forward safety Chris Patton thrives on the expectation, "I love that we are considered the underdog in every game."

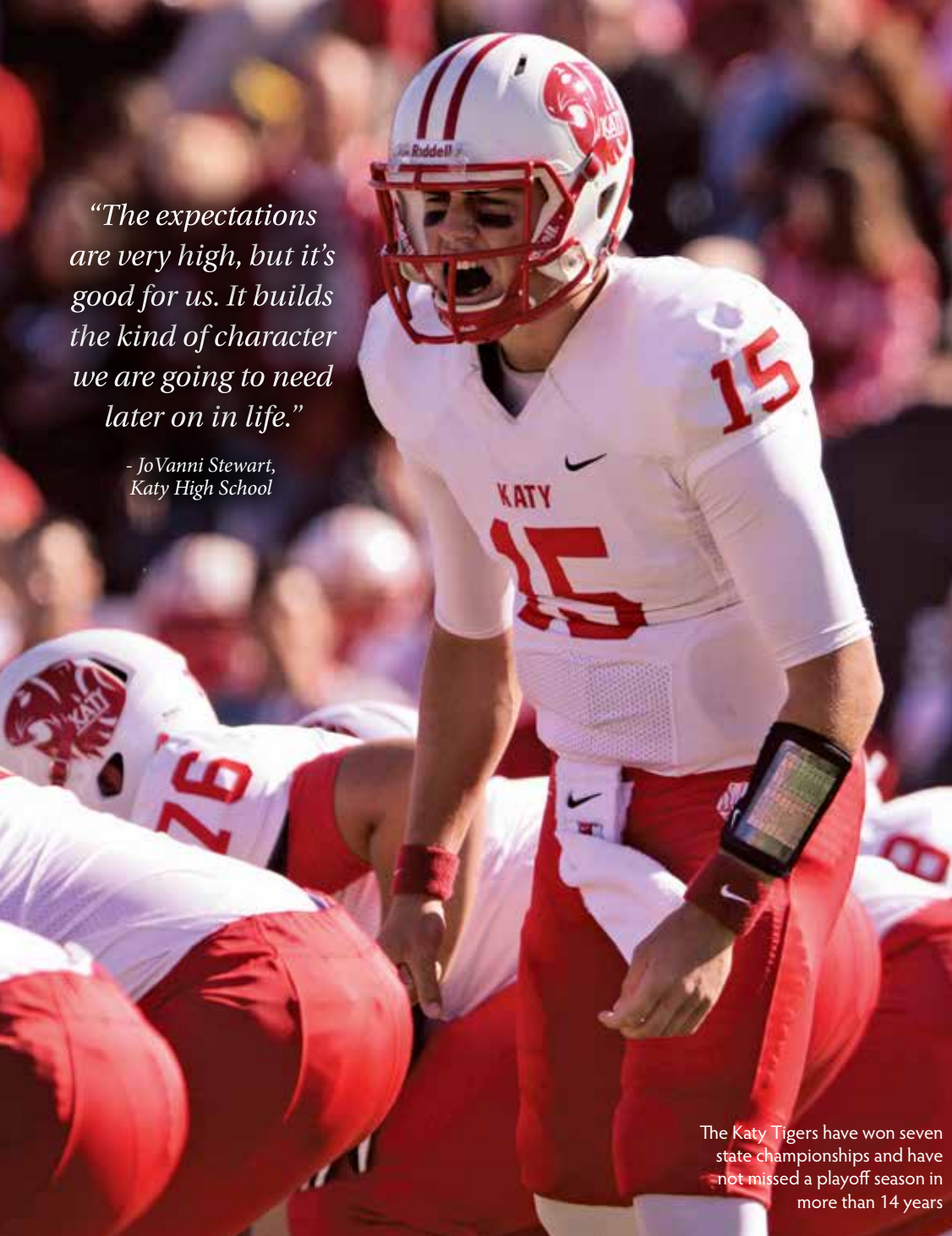
Morton Ranch

For the Mavericks, it's all about the running game. With an average 9.9 yards per carry in 2014, their best record yet, it's not surprising.

"We're a running team and we play that strength," says Dave Meadows, athletic director and head football coach at Morton Ranch High School. "We've always led the district in rushing yards and we love to run options." The Mavericks' running game is amplified with the presence of wide receiver Aaron Solomon and running back Dartavious Dixon, the leading rusher last season with a total 1,010 yards.

"The expectations are very high, but it's good for us. It builds the kind of character we are going to need later on in life."

*- JoVanni Stewart,
Katy High School*



The Katy Tigers have won seven state championships and have not missed a playoff season in more than 14 years

The Mayde Creek Rams are excited to see how Coach Rabe's new approach to football benefits them this season

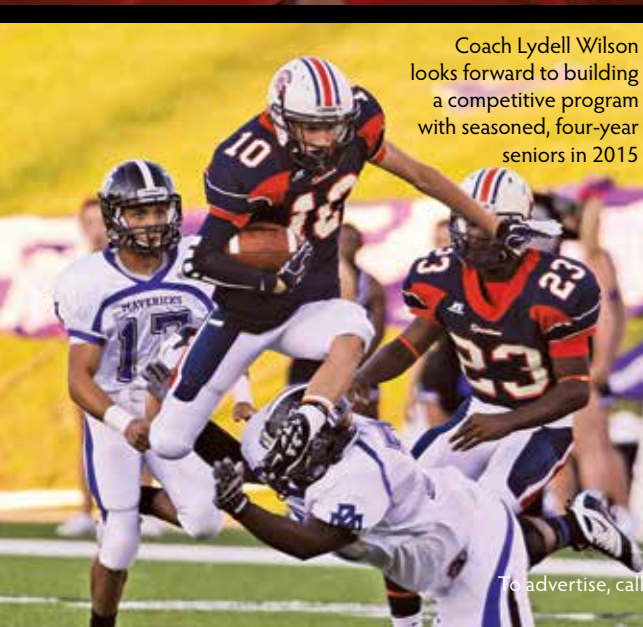


Mustang fans can expect Taylor to play well in clutch situations this fall

Photo by Diana L. Porter



Coach Lydell Wilson looks forward to building a competitive program with seasoned, four-year seniors in 2015



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With all the talent Morton Ranch has stacked up, good football is guaranteed, but that's not all that the fans can look forward to.

"Our team's biggest strength is our chemistry. Everyone understands that you must fight for the man beside you and push through. If it wasn't for teamwork, we wouldn't be able to win games. I see us going far this season," says junior quarterback Nic Hernandez.

Seven Lakes

Head coach Lydell Wilson highly anticipates seeing the Spartans take the field with four-year veterans for the first time in the school's 10-year history this fall. "We are still trying to create traditions that we will pass down to future Spartans, and one of them is a winning season."

Senior wide receiver Brian Moore believes that the experience they have gained in four years gives them a greater advantage on the field. He also speaks highly of his teammate, quarterback Cameron Thomas. "He has incredible athleticism and gives it his all on the offensive side. Our team is looking forward to watching him at quarterback this season," Moore says.

The bond between the team and coaching staff is palpable and will help them stay in sync this season. The Seven Lakes Spartans strive to be better every day and to show fans that they are a playoff team.

Taylor

Coach Trey Herrmann saw the Mustangs establish a habit of playing well in clutch positions last season and wants to continue that momentum this year.

"This is a tough district to play in. Each week is a dog fight, and we have a group of young men who have worked very hard in the off-season and that will play out during games," says Herrmann.

Two players that the Mustang coaches have noticed are wide receiver Jacob Yohr and defensive lineman Max Wright. Yohr has the ability to lead the team offensively, and Wright inspires the other players to work harder with each game.

At the end of the day, Taylor's main goal is to improve every week and to be the most physical team on the field.

Tompkins

As the new school on the block, the Falcons are on fire to prove themselves this season. Senior linebacker and fullback Brady Stephens declares that the other programs in the district should "fear the falcon."

The team has a balanced and achievable mindset for the road ahead. "We look forward to each and every game equally, and take it one game at a time. We know that in order to succeed we will have to remain strong mentally in order to overcome opponents that have the advantage of physical size," says Stephens.



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Coach Tony Tademy and the Tompkins coaching staff have seen the players bond and believes that it gives them an edge. Two players that will be indispensable this year are safety and wide receiver Hayden Smith and running back Avery Williams. According to Tademy, Smith is a great tackler who makes tons of important plays during clutch situations. Williams has the kind of explosive speed that will be hard to compete with.

Smith feels like their defensive game is their strength. "We have a strong defense that can carry the team and motivate us on the offense. Our running game isn't too shabby either," he adds.

In all, the Falcons want to show their fans and Katy ISD that they are a contender by improving each game. Stephens says, "We have a bigger heart than any other team in the district because we have to prove ourselves to the rest of the district. We're ready to do that." KM



ASHLEY LANCASTER is an editorial coordinator for Katy Magazine and can't wait to watch her brother and cousin play for the Tigers this fall.

TEAM TRADITIONS

Cinco Ranch

The team will watch previous game films and movies like *Gladiator* to get pumped.

Katy

The "Flying Tiger" is a Katy tradition in which a player is tossed into the air and caught by his teammates.

Mayde Creek

The Rams crank up-tempo music sessions in the locker room.

Morton Ranch

The players will gather around and recite a chant that reinforces their "can't be beat, won't be beat" mentality.

Seven Lakes

Spartans spend time together off the field to build a stronger bond.

Taylor

"Do it again" is the motto of Taylor High School football.

Tompkins

The team takes turns hosting dinners at a player's house.



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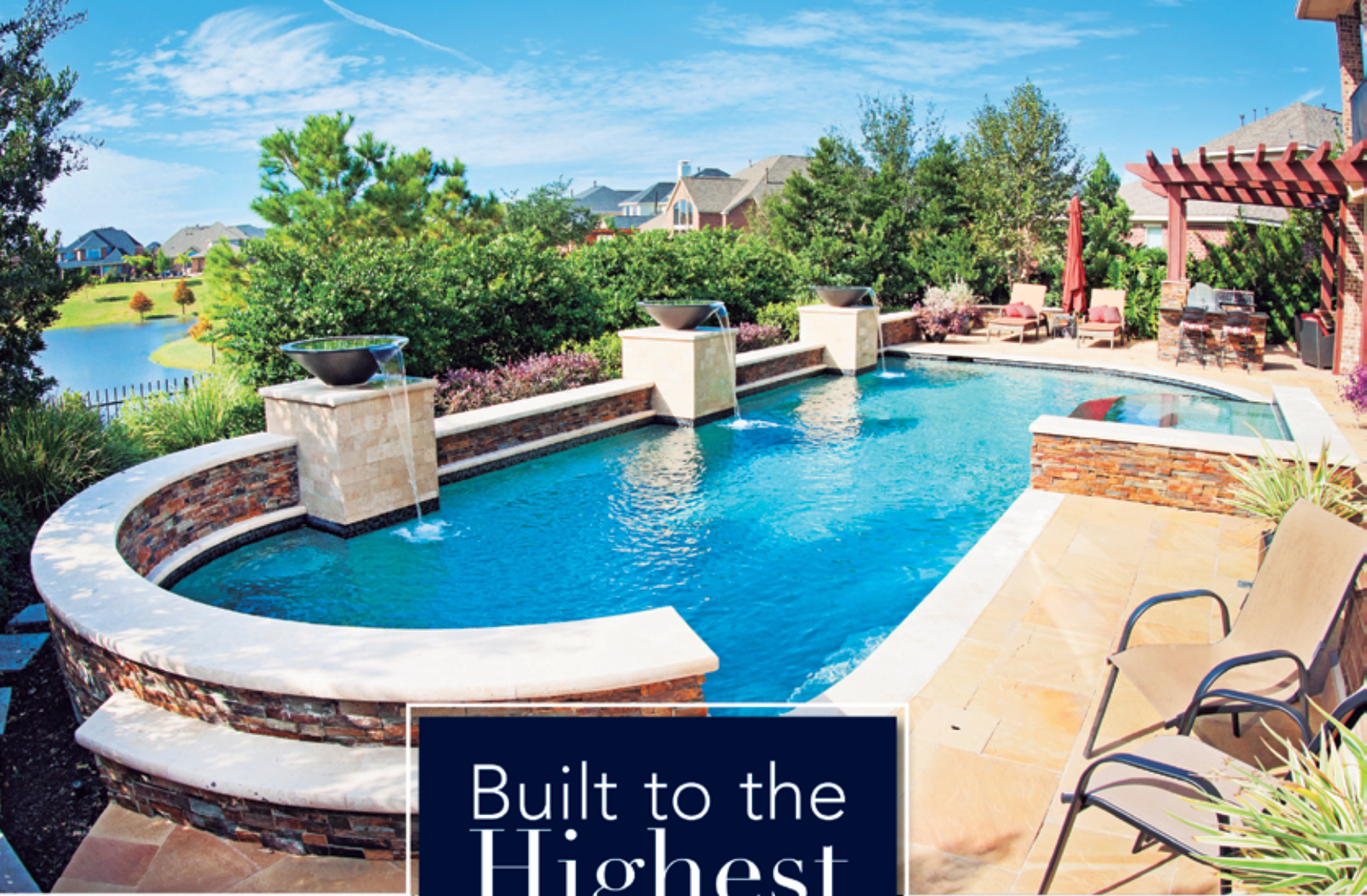
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