

# Football team works to 'Complete the Sweep'

With victories over rivals Providence and New Albany, the Highlanders compete to take down Jeffersonville tonight



Brooke Miller/The Bagpiper

**HEAD COACH JAMES BRAGG** watches a play from the sideline during a game against Vincennes Lincoln on Friday, Sept. 6.

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As the visible heat rises from the turf on another blazing Friday night, the stands begin to fill up with parents, fans, and excited students for the first home rivalry game of the season. The Highlanders are preparing to play New Albany, but before the game begins the tensions

are nearly palpable between the two teams and their fans. Junior quarterback Tristan Polk leads his team out of the tunnel and the student section erupts while the band plays the school fight song in the background. The Highlanders gather around the 50-yard line and senior Calvin Brown hypes the team up for the biggest game of the season so far. As the night rolls on, the Highlanders breeze to a 50-13 victory over the Bulldogs and keep the prized "Rusty Anchor"

for a fourth straight year. The sweep is almost complete.

"We've made a lot of progress as the season has gone on. We only have to beat Jeff now and then we will have completed the sweep. We're really coming together and hope to keep the ball rolling in the next few weeks," said Polk.

With the season just beginning, there is already a seemingly contagious positive attitude that has spread across the team. The goal for everyone is to make a deep run into the postseason and take home the third sectional title in FC football history.

"Our expectations for this season are to have a winning season and to get another sectional for Floyd," said senior defensive end Seth Cook.

The team has been preparing hard for this upcoming season, and they are hoping it will show out on the gridiron. Their training in the weight room has been very different this past offseason, led by second-year strength and conditioning coach Donnie Gumble. The team is optimistic that his help in offseason training will pay off during the season.

"Our weight room with coach Gumble has been significantly different. We're doing a lot more speed and explosion stuff in there. Conditioning's been big for us," said Bragg.

In addition to improving as

a whole in practice and making changes across the team, individual improvements among players have also impacted the team's preparation.

"I've worked on hitting the short crossing routes and worked on my footwork since last year and I think those two are going to help me a lot throughout this season," said Polk.

Several players have also changed their positions on the field to help increase playing time and find spots that help better the team as a whole. While this changes the way the athletes prepare and practice, it gives the team a better chance to find success.

"My game has changed drastically due to the fact that

"We're all really hyped to play Jeff, it's probably one of the biggest games we'll play for the rest of the season, and we're all excited."

**Seth Cook**  
senior

I'm playing a new position this year (defensive end)," said junior Trace Richards. "I've focused on watching college and professional players at my position so I could learn the most I can about it."

While there are several returning seniors that are set to play integral parts on the team, juniors and younger players are

playing massive roles stepping up this year as well.

"This year we have a bunch of great athletes as well as a lot of young starters. Our juniors make up the majority of our linemen and we rely a lot on some younger kids in the backfield," said senior tackle Matthew Bolus.

The juniors enjoy playing up with the seniors because it gives them a boost and they are encouraged to work harder when playing with the senior leaders on the team. Having that opportunity also provides experience as leaders for future years.

"Our varsity is a good mix of juniors and seniors, so we really bond and learn to play with each other. We feed off of each other's energy," said Richards.

Although the preparation and offseason training has helped the team drastically in the first few games of the season, staying healthy is the number one priority. Without healthy athletes the team can not play at the level of expectations they have for themselves.

"Staying healthy is a critical element," said Bragg. "Right now we're kind of banged up. We lost [sophomore Luke] Medlock before the season even started. Calvin Brown's got a little injury going on with his leg. [senior Trace] Willman broke his hand. The key for us to be able to play deep in November is to stay healthy."

Regardless of the injury

plague that goes around every team when football season rolls around, the players still push themselves to give everything they have in practices and games so they can play to the best of their ability.

“The critical element for this team to have success is staying healthy through a long season and being prepared to go 100 percent for four quarters every Friday night. If we can do that, we should have major success this season,” said Cook.

This year, powerhouse Columbus East has been removed from FC’s sectional draw. In previous years, East has won the sectional and knocked Floyd out of the postseason nearly every year. This has presented a new optimistic atmosphere across the team and they are excited about having a legitimate chance to win another sectional title.

“The atmosphere has drastically changed because we knew East was good. I guess with East out of our sectional, it boosts our confidence,” said

Richards.

While Bragg notices the opportunity this year to make a deep postseason run, he acknowledges that playing in the postseason is always difficult considering the intensity of an elimination game.

“Regardless of who’s in front of you, you’ve got to win. Sectionals are very difficult to win, regardless of who’s in front of you. There’s Jeff, us [FC], New Albany, and Bedford, and it basically comes down to who’s healthy and who’s hitting their stride at the end of the season. All four of those places are very difficult to play at. We’re excited for the four team sectional, but right now we have to focus on where we are now and go from there,” said Bragg.

Winning a sectional title is far and away the biggest goal for the Highlanders. However, the team realizes that they also need to focus on winning week by week to maintain success and have that opportunity to win a sectional championship when the time comes around.

“We can’t get caught up in winning a sectional. Of course we want to win it, but we have to focus on what team is in front of us every week to be a successful team,” said Polk.

While the team has worked and trained all throughout the offseason, they still play for the common reason that is getting to play under the lights every Friday night.

Richards said, “I love playing on Friday nights when you’re out on the field and there’s a lot of people watching you so you have a chance to shine and do something great.”

Tonight, the stage is set. It is Homecoming night, and the Highlanders will play Jeffersonville to accomplish the next big goal of the season, “completing the sweep.” The team has a big opportunity tonight, and the excitement is unprecedented.

Cook said, “We’re all really hyped to play Jeff, it’s probably one of the biggest games we’ll play for the rest of the season, and we’re all excited.”



**SENIOR CALVIN BROWN** checks his position on the field during the game against Vincennes Lincoln.

## SCORECARD

**Editor’s Note:** All scores and records are as of the morning of Monday, Sept. 16.

### FOOTBALL

Last game- Win (50-14) vs. New Albany  
Next game- Tonight vs. Jeffersonville @ 7 p.m.

### GIRLS’ SOCCER

Last game- Win (3-0) @ Providence  
Next game- Tomorrow vs. Columbus East @ 5 p.m.

### BOYS’ CROSS COUNTRY

Last meet- 3rd overall @ Columbus North High School  
Next meet- Tomorrow vs. Bloomington South @ 10 a.m.

### GIRLS’ CROSS COUNTRY

Last meet- 3rd overall @ Columbus North High School  
Next meet- Tomorrow vs. Bloomington South @ 10 a.m.

### BOYS’ TENNIS

Last match- Win @ Silver Creek Invitational  
Next match- Tonight @ Homestead High School

### BOYS’ SOCCER

Last game- Win (2-1) @ Jeffersonville  
Next game- Tomorrow vs. Bloomington South @ 10 a.m.

Brooke Miller/The Bagpiper