

Battle spartans

There's a new school in town and they're called the Spartans. Welcome the newest member to Missouri High School Football, and the fourth football school to the Columbia area, the Muriel Williams Battle Spartans. This will be Battle's inaugural season of football as the school officially opened its doors in 2013. This will be an odd season all around because most schools begin their program with one or two years of junior varsity ball before moving into a full varsity schedule, but Battle decided to jump right in with a pieced together schedule that features a rare seven home games. Battle will be unable to participate in the State Playoffs/Districts this season because this is the second year of a two-year cycle. Head Coach Justin Conyers and his staff head into this rookie season with a young squad since there will be no senior class this year at Battle. He believes that by next season they will be moved up to Class 5 because of the additional class next year.

Since this is the Spartans first year there really are no returning starters, but coach has provided some names of some players who he thinks will be big factors in the team initial success. There is a group of juniors who will be counted on to get things started off on the right foot. Junior Marshall Willingham (5-11, 195) will show up on both sides of the ball plus all special teams. On offense he will use his strength at the running back spot. Coach describes him as the "Stron-

Class: 4

Conference: Independent

Head Coach: Justin Conyers

Years at School: First

Record at School: 0-0

Offensive Starters Returning: NA

Defensive Starters Returning: NA

Total Returning Lettermen: NA

2012 Overall Record: NA

gest Spartan football player." Also in the running back rotation will be junior Nash Sutherlin (5-10, 170). He is an explosive runner who can break a long run at any time. The other junior in the backfield is AJ Jones (6-0, 205) at the fullback spot. He will use his physical, bruising style to lead the way for the ball carrier or get the hard yards up the middle when his number is called. At the tight end spot look for junior Chandler Anderson (6-1, 200). "Chandler is strong and physical at the point of attack on both sides of the ball," states coach Conyers. Also in the mix at tight end is big and physical sophomore Jerion Nelson (6-2, 220). Without a senior class to lean on we know the Spartans will be young and nothing illustrates this more than playing a freshman at the quarterback spot, Brevin Tyler (5-10, 155) is projected to be the starter in the Spartans Pistol attack. He is very talented and has good potential, but there are bound to be some growing pains, especially in the early part of the season. Another freshman is destined to become one of Tyler's favorite targets (Four years together you know). Javon McQuitty (6-1, 155) will line up at one of the wide receiver spots.

The offense is counting on him to be a big play maker for them. "Look for Battle to establish the run game early on," stated Coach Conyers about his offense. "There will be a rotation of 3 backs to carry the load, with each bringing a different dynamic to the game. The pass game will complement the run game nicely with a group of young receivers who are looking to make big plays when they get the opportunity."

On the defensive side of the ball, the Spartans will employ a 3-4 alignment. Many of the players will be playing both ways because of depth concerns this

season. At linebacker Marshall Willingham and AJ Jones will man the inside spots while Jerion Nelson will join them at outside linebacker. Coach re-states how physical these players are and that they play at a fast pace. In the secondary look for Nash Sutherlin to patrol and Chandler Anderson will bring his physical presence to the defensive end spot. "Battle's defense is fast and prides itself on getting to the football," states Coach Conyers. "The odd front defense looks to create movement against its opponents and cause problems in their blocking schemes. Forcing turnovers is a big part of the defensive play for the Spartans." Personnel-wise the Spartan biggest question marks are along the offensive and defensive lines where the coaches are hoping that good competition brings out the best starters.

"We are preparing the same way each week that we would if we had the opportunity to compete for a state championship," said coach. "Our athletes will be prepared for each game and will compete the best we can week in and week out and leave everything we have on the field. We feel like we have something to prove even though the expectations are low for us in our inaugural season."

Battle's schedule features matchups against some distant schools, but some highlights include a week 2 showdown with Hannibal, Week 6 against a strong Class 2 team, South Callaway and a rejuvenated Class 5 power Jackson in week 7. All of those games are at home of course. It should be fun to watch Battle as they build their program from the ground up.

Pigskin's Pick: 4-5

Battle Spartans 2013 Schedule

August

30 East Kansas City Home

September

6 Hannibal Home

13 Butler Away

20 Carnahan Home

28 Gateway Tech Home

October

4 South Callaway Home

11 Jackson Home

19 Normal Comm W. III Home

25 Troy Away

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