

Lions battle to stay in playoff race

Injuries add challenges to overcome

BY RACHEL HILL
Copy Editor

With a playoff spot now secured, the football team looks to advance one game at a time, no matter the obstacles that stand in the way.

The Lions will travel to Ranger tonight for the regular season finale.

"The injuries we have had this season have caused more problems than just a spot needing to be filled," Senior Michael Cotter said. "It is a huge morale loss when a teammate goes down."

Cotter feels there is still work to be done.

"Currently, we are playing at about 80 percent of our

capability," Cotter said. "If we want to beat the teams like Seagraves and Bremond, we are going to have to pick up the intensity levels on both sides of the ball. This starts with the seniors."

Senior Caleb Masters sees one of his jobs on the team as a motivator.

"As a senior, it's my job to help encourage my teammates and lower classmen to work hard to make each other better," Masters said, "With everyone working hard and doing their job, I have no doubt we will be rewarded with a great season."

The team has suffered multiple knee injuries, along with a shoulder and hamstring injury.

"Dax Neece and Roman Fuentes have really stepped up defensively," Cotter said. "Several offensive linemen have filled the gaps on offense as well."

Masters, who injured his



Senior Caleb Masters cuts away from a Cross Plains defender during a 35-0 victory. Masters returned after suffering early season injuries. The Lions clinched another district championship despite being several players short. PHOTO BY CURRY WILSON

knee and hamstring, has gotten back on the field to finish his senior year.

"It feels good to finally be back in the sport I love," Masters said. "Being out so long has taught me not to take things for granted, and every time I step out onto the field, I give it my all and just enjoy the game."

Although he is still gaining strength from his injuries, Masters has not limited his drive.

"Injuries are going to happen; it's just a part of football," Masters said. "After being out for so long, I'm more excited than ever to step out on the field and play, and I have no worries about my previous setbacks."

The goals are high for this

year's team.

"My personal goal is just to play my heart out every game and leave it all on the field," Cotter said. "Our long term goal, of course, is to take it one win further and clench the state title, but we must take it one game at a time."

Masters said the team must stay focused.

"Our first goal is to win a district championship," Masters said. "We are taking things one step at a time and planning on getting through district undefeated. Ultimately, our goal is to win a state title."

Junior Hunter Owen agrees.

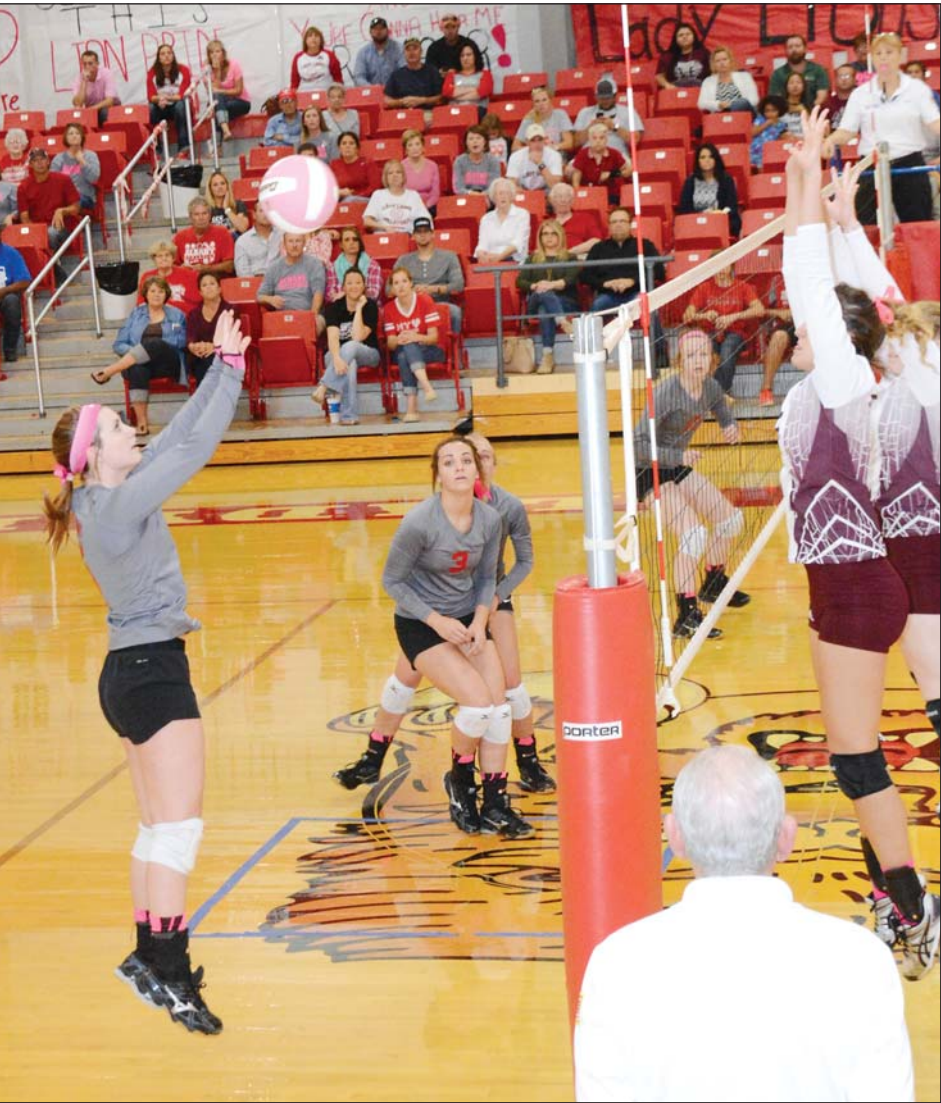
"Personal stats don't mean anything to me," Owen said, "I would rather my team win than for me to have 50 or more tackles in a game. The goals for everyone is to take it one win further, and we all have a job we must do to make it happen."

With a season record of 8-1 and a district record of 4-0, the Lions continue to rack up wins in hopes of a long playoff run.

FOR THE RECORD:

ALBANY LION FOOTBALL 4-0	
Baird	W 48-6
Cross Plains	W 35-0
Perrin Whitt	W 48-0
Santo	W 61-0

Lady Lions finish second in district



Senior Tobin Nall tips the ball over the net during a district game vs Hawley. The Lady Lions finished runner-up in district and earned a spot in the playoffs. PHOTO BY MICHAEL COTTER

Team moves into playoffs behind Hawley

BY MICHAEL COTTER
Sports Editor

The Lady Lion volleyball team played through district to earn themselves a playoff spot as the district runner-up.

"When we were sitting 8-1 with three district games left, we had two goals," head volleyball coach Kim Hill said. "We wanted to beat Hawley and earn a spot in the playoffs."

Although the team didn't quite meet all the goals, they still played well.

"We are doing very well and I'm excited to see how the rest of the season will go," senior Kelsey Tollett said. "For the most part, our district wasn't challenging. Even though we lost to Hawley, we know we have the talent to beat them if we meet up with them again."

While the losses to Hawley were tough, they taught the team important things.

"They are a really good hitting team," Hill said. "Not only are they tall, but they can hit from anywhere on

the court. They helped us in improving our blocking and returning."

Despite playing well in district and in the first round of the playoffs, the girls still have room for improvement.

"We still have a consistency issue," Hill said. "A lot of times we struggle with our mistakes and we let the

negative emotions get to us. We need to do a better job of recovering and moving on to the next volley."

The team needs improvement in practice as well as the games.

"We need to work on our energy and serves in practice," sophomore Lindsay Lucas said. "We get really streaky sometimes, and when we are off, we are

FOR THE RECORD:

LADY LION VOLLEYBALL 10-2	
Knox City	W 23-25, 25-20, 25-16, 25-19
Woodson	W 25-15, 25-8, 25-14
Benjamin	W 25-14, 25-10, 25-14
Hawley	L 16-25, 10-25, 21-25
Moran	W 25-9, 25-23, 25-12
Munday	W 25-14, 25-5, 25-12
Knox City	W 25-14, 25-22, 13-25, 25-17
Woodson	W 25-6, 25-7, 25-16
Benjamin	W 25-11, 25-21, 25-11
Hawley	L 20-25, 18-25, 12-25
Moran	W 25-5, 25-12, 27-7
Munday	W 25-20, 25-17, 25-17

really off."

Even though the girls have things to work on, they do many things well.

"This year the team is very unselfish," Hill said. "Even though we have players who can set and spike very well, our best asset is our unity."

Despite just playing well together as a team, the girls also developed a good in-game mentality.

"We have a 'kill ball' mentality," Tollett said. "Our goal is to keep high intensity, keep our heads up, and shake off mistakes when we make them."

Being an underclassman on varsity can always be intimidating.

"At first, I was nervous all the time," Lucas said. "However, the upperclassman are really sweet and made me feel like a part of the team. They are really good examples."

The girls were frustrated with another loss to Hawley, but decided to focus their energy on the play-offs.

"We were so close to pushing over the hump and winning those first couple sets," junior Rachel Hill said. "We just need to finish every play."

The girls played Petrolia in the bi-district round on Tuesday, hoping to advance to the area game. Results were not available at press time.

Basketball prepares for new season

Workouts begin despite playoff conflicts

BY BRIAN HAMILTON
Staff Writer

Lion and Lady Lion basketball teams are both bringing back experienced players this season hoping to improve last year's record and battle for the district championships.

The Lion basketball squad is set to begin Nov. 24 against the Trent Gorillas, but the team may well have to push their season opener back due to football playoffs.

Lady Lion basketball is set to start Nov. 3 with a three-way scrimmage against Throckmorton and Rising Star. However, there could be a conflict if the volleyball team is still in the playoffs.

"The girls had a 15-16 record last season," girl's

basketball coach Paul Johnston said.

"We missed the playoffs by coming in fourth in a tough district. With too many injuries, the ball just didn't bounce our way."

Though the Lady Lion's basketball team is coming off a 15-16 season from last year, narrowly missing a playoff appearance, the future is looking brighter, according to Johnston.

"We will fight for a district championship," Johnston said. "Our inside game will be one of the best in the district. With our experience, quickness and ability to score will be key to this team's success," Johnston said.

The Lion basketball team, however, is building from a positive season last year.

"We had a 15-5 record last season, claiming the district title and making it to the regional quarter-finals," boy's coach Ryder Peacock said.

A bright future lies in front of the Lions squad.

"We will have more experience on the court," Peacock said. "This will help for district and the playoffs. Plus, our athleticism helps put us at the top of our district title race."

The lone Lady Lion senior this year is Curry Wilson, who was the starting point guard last season.

"It's weird considering I've played with so many people for so long," Wilson said. "It feels like I'm the only one left."

Like most senior athletes, Wilson wants to end her career on a good note.

"I'm very excited for this season," she said. "I think we will have a better team than last year. Most of the girls are in offseason, so we were able to practice prior to the start of the season."

This year's Lady Lions are anxious for a new start, believing that they can compete for the gold ball.

"We have a good chance to win the district this year," junior Rachel Hill said. "Haskell lost a lot of good

players, while Anson will still be a good competitor for the title."

Boys' basketball got a taste of a district championship last season, and they do not want to let one slip away from them this year.

"With this being my last year, I want to go out with a bang," senior Michael Cotter said. "If we can play under control I think we have a good shot at claiming the title."

Lion basketball will have some advantages during this oncoming season.

"We were a younger team last year; and most of our guys coming back," Cotter said. "Our experience from last year will help this season's outcome greatly."

The Lions have set their goals high this season and plan to work to make them happen.

"We all want to go deep in the playoffs this year, and I think we have a really good chance," junior Jordan Pleasant said.

Junior Lexi Munden goes up for a block shot during practice. Both the girl's and boy's teams have begun their preparation for the new season. Unlike the boy's team, which is loaded with seniors, the girls only have one returning senior. They plan to build off last year's season and to improve.



Junior Lexi Munden goes up for a block shot during practice. Both the girl's and boy's teams have begun their preparation for the new season. Unlike the boy's team, which is loaded with seniors, the girls only have one returning senior. They plan to build off last year's season and to improve. PHOTO BY KYLEA GARDNER