

# 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

### 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



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 goal 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.