

Team surprising doubters

maggie avalos | staff reporter

They only go at one speed, and that's full speed, so says defensive coordinator Bernie Luna about the varsity football team.

The team lost to the Chapin Huskies last Thursday 35-7, and is currently 3-2 overall and 2-1 in district. The team hosts the El Paso High Tigers Friday. Kick-off is at 7 p.m.

"We [the team] didn't come out ready to play [against Chapin]," Matthew Salazar, receiver and cornerback, said. "After being down 28-0 at halftime, we came back and kept fighting. This won't affect the way we will play, but it will remind us to stay humble and not take any other teams lightly. Our goal is not to lose again, and I think it's possible."

The loss was a wake-up call for the team.

"I do think being underestimated has affected the way we [the team] approached offseason and this season," all purpose player Odell Graham said. "We took it personally and tried to show we were better than everyone thought. We think of every game we win as payback."

Luna said he is aware that because of last year's 1-9 record, there are doubters.

"Our players know how good the team really is," he said. "There is a big change from last year, and it's coming from the players."

Graham also credits the turnaround to attitude.

"Although we're still playing a lot of underclassmen," Graham said, "we have 15 seniors, and they're showing a lot of leadership, maturity and accountability. They show up to the weight room on time, and they're on the field on time ready to practice."

Graham said as in past years, depth is an issue, but added players understand their roles on both sides of the ball, and most have experience.

"Our offense is more balanced," Graham said. "Many still play both



mikey provenghi|stampede

Senior middle linebacker Jacob Ramirez leads the Mustangs in a huddle after their 22-15 district win over Bowie Sept. 18. "I felt like we worked too hard to not get what we want," he said. "Beating Bowie was just one step closer to what we want, which is a district championship." Ramirez has played at the varsity level for three years. The team hosts El Paso High Friday.

ways, but we help them by getting them into better shape. Experience means they've gone through an actual game. The players have gone through the crowd noise and the atmosphere of Friday night lights. Having experience on varsity, they've been through these situations, and that means that less mistakes are made."

Four new coaches have been added to the staff. In addition to Luna, Dirk Patterson, an '09 campus grad, coaches the offensive line. Former UTEP football player Marcus Bagley is in charge of defensive tackles. Jaime Amezcaga coaches the receivers.

SYMBOLIC INCENTIVES

Given to the player who best holds the defensive unit together in a game



Given to the hardest hitter on offense in each game



Given to the offensive lineman who had the most cuts in a game

