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SPECIAL EDITION



2021

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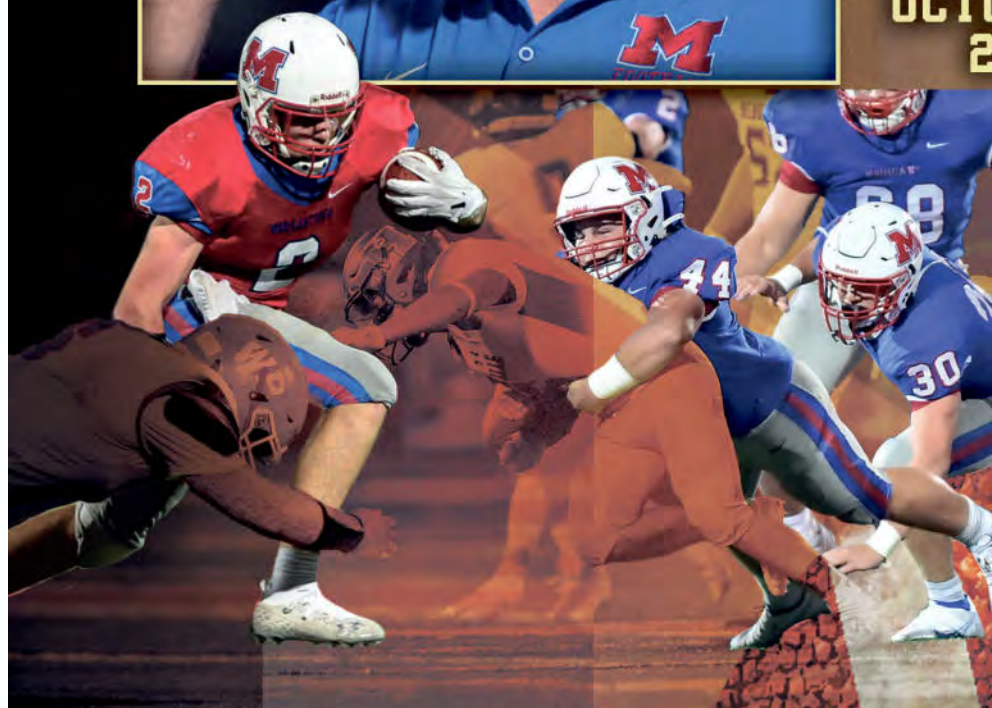
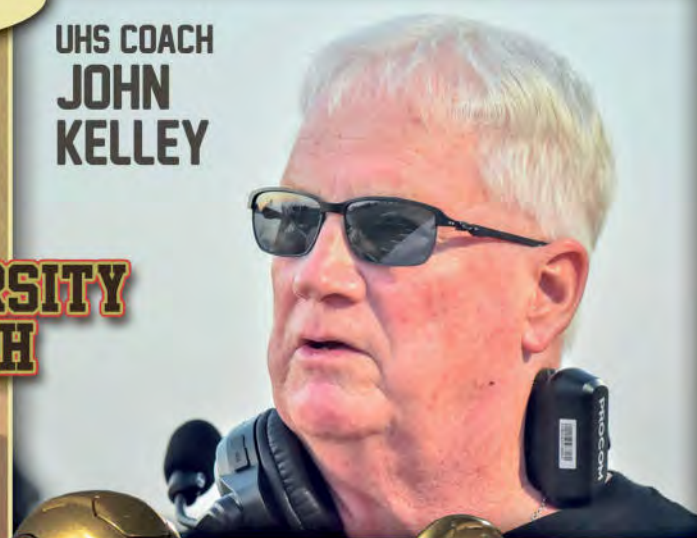
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Undefeated University, rising Morgantown set for showdown in 71st Mohawk Bowl

BY MATTHEW PEASLEE
Sports@DominionPost.com

The 71st edition of the Mohawk Bowl is just another game for the teams involved in this classic rivalry.

“We’re just going about our usual weekly prep,” University head coach John Kelley said. “We’re focusing on what we need to do.”

So is Morgantown. “We haven’t talked about this game before this week,” MHS head coach Sean Biser said. “But here it is and it’s the only game on our schedule. It’s all we’re focused on, rivalry or not, it’s just the next game.”

The Mohigans enter tonight’s game winners of the last three Mohawk Bowls, outscoring the Hawks 176-31 in those victories. Last year MHS beat UHS, 69-15.

“They humiliated us last year, but coach Biser was first class all the way,” Kelley said. “They probably could have scored 80 points on us.”

That was Biser’s first taste of the Mohawk Bowl in his first season leading the Mohigans. MHS scored early and often in that contest, racing to a 21-0 lead in the first few minutes. Deondre Crudup, who headed to Glenville State, and Caden Biser, who now plays at WVU, each scored three touchdowns.

In the all-time series, Morgantown leads University 55-12-3, with the series dating back to 1947.

“I haven’t brought it up, but I actually hope that taste is still in our kids’ mouths,” Kelley said. “We’re a better football team than we showed last year. But here’s the bottom line — you can’t use revenge as a motivator. Each year is different and you can’t prepare with (revenge) as your main focus.”

University remains undefeated (8-0) and checks in tied at No. 5 with Jefferson in the most recent WVSSAC Class AAA rankings. Last week, the Hawks trounced Preston 56-8. Chase

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William Wotring/The Dominion Post file photo

Morgantown players celebrate after winning last season’s Mohawk Bowl at Pony Lewis Field.



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UHS WR trio of Jackson, Clawges, Hammack make Hawks tough to defend

BY ERIC HERTER

Sports@DominionPost.com

Good things, they say, come in threes.

The original Star Wars trilogy, the Three Little Pigs and at University High's wide receiver triplets of Jaeden Hammack, Sage Clawges and Elija Jackson.

Those three wide receivers have accounted for 1,194 yards of total offense and 21 touchdowns. To put that into perspective, the Hawks (8-0) have thrown for just over 2,000 yards as a team and 27 touchdowns. So, it's safe to say that Friday's annual Mohawk Bowl will be tied to the success of the UHS wideouts.

"This is the ninth game of the year, and everybody thinks this is the greatest game. It's a wonderful event, but (Morgantown) is going to do their thing and we are going to do our thing," UHS head coach John Kelley said. "They are over there worried about how they are going to stop our receivers and we are over here worried about how we are going to stop their Wing-T."

Once again, the veteran coach puts things in perspective. There's no secret University's chances of its first win in this rivalry since 2017 is going to be tied to the ability to throw the ball with its three-pronged receiving attack.

Each one of them provides a different skill set and each one of them has had success this season.

Clawges, a junior, leads the team with 501 yards receiving. He's second on the team with eight touchdowns and uses his 6-foot-5 frame to make some amazing catches. He also admits being a stereotypical diva wide receiver.

"I like looking nice," Clawges said with a laugh. "I like winning more but looking nice is a big part of that."

Quarterback Chase Edwards said Clawges provides a great target with his frame and athleticism.

"If need be, I know I can throw the ball

anywhere and he will go up and get it," Edwards said.

The fastest among the trio is the senior, Jackson, who leads the team with nine touchdowns and 29 catches for 458 yards. He said he enjoys being the mentor to Clawges and Hammack.

"These are my sons," Jackson said. "I taught them how to play football. I taught them how to shake 'n bake and be shiftier on the field."

None of them may be shiftier than Hammack, a junior, who has 235 yards on 16 grabs with four touchdowns. He also has the best grasp of the offense according to offensive coordinator Eric Snyder and might be the most unselfish.

"If I don't get the ball, it just means someone else is getting a chance," Hammack said. "We can't get too high or too low, just have to worry about the next play."

That humble attitude comes across in all three receivers but don't let them fool anyone. They are very competitive and all three want the ball — on every play.

"They are all very skilled," Edwards said. "But on every single play, they are all telling me they are open and they're probably not wrong."

Kelley even goes as far as to call this the best group of receivers he has had during his 35-year career at UHS.

"I've never had this many who we can put out there and just say go ahead and double that guy, because we have others who are just as good," Kelley said. "That's why we have been successful this year, because any one of them can get the job done."

All three aspire of playing at the next level. Clawges already has an offer from West Liberty, Hammack has interest from Delaware State and Jackson has flown under the radar, but Kelley said he expects some college is going to get a steal.

Snyder, in his first year as the UHS offensive coordinator, said he knew there was talent at the wide receiver position when he took over. However, he didn't



Benjamin Powell/The Dominion Post photos



Jaeden Hammack

Sage Clawges

know it was at this level.

"They add that extra dimension that makes this work," Snyder said. "They can make people miss or make difficult catches. The fact is, we have multiple threats that can help us put six points on the board."

Of course, none of this works if the offense isn't clicking as entire unit. That means that the offensive line is blocking, Edwards is comfortable in the pocket and the receivers are running the correct route at the right time.

Much of that timing was developed over the summer when the receivers along with Edwards spent time at the field by themselves.

"I trust them," Edwards said. "That trust has to be there. They are a special group and that makes it easy on me."

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Elija Jackson

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MHS offensive line comes together with late surge

BY MATTHEW PEASLEE

Sports@DominionPost.com

A few months ago, a writer and former football player named Eric Dockett wrote an article for howtheyplay.com detailing the five hardest positions to play in football.

Two of the five — center and left tackle — are along the offensive line.

Morgantown head coach Sean Biser, a former offensive lineman himself, fully agrees with that notion.

“It’s the most difficult position on the field outside of quarterback, in my opinion,” Biser said.

In Dockett’s article, he says, “Sometimes linemen are asked to make blocks on players just as big and strong as they are. Other times, they must rely on their quickness to block much smaller, faster players. They use a range of strategies such as fold, trap and reach blocks. Sometimes they pull and clear the way for a running back on a sweep play.”

Basically, a lineman needs to not only know what he’s doing, but he also needs to know what the 10 guys lined up next to him are doing, plus have an idea of what the 11 guys on the other side of the line are

going to do, too.

Biser said the Mohigans offensive line group has been the most consistent unit on the field this season. The depth of MHS has had to come into play as the offense has battled injuries and some position changes.

The main rotation of offensive linemen includes Braylon Brown, Jaiden Evans, Nathan Hagan, Dyllan Haseleu, Dakoma Neal, Eli Stahara and Sammy Teets.

“The offensive line is the ultimate team within the team,” Biser said. “Those guys work as a unit and they have to know what each other is doing and thinking. They have to know the calls. You don’t just have one way to do things, depending on how the defensive line looks and changes up every play. Those guys have been very consistent for us all year. They work hard all the time.”

Biser said the Mohigans (4-4) have had to adjust their running game this season as a lot of players have touched the ball, but they’re also down to their fourth-string running back. They even moved Jarrett Lawrence, listed as a running back, under center taking snaps as the

SEE MHS, P-5



William Wotring/The Dominion Post file photo

Morgantown’s James Hoskins (3) celebrates with his offensive linemen after scoring against Hedgesville this season.

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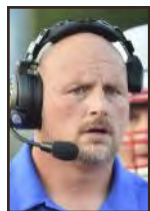
MOHAWK

FROM PAGE P-2

Edwards was 15 of 23 passing for 299 yards and four touchdowns, with Jaeden Hammack as the top receiver with five catches for 97 yards and a touchdown. Elija Jackson caught two touchdown passes as nine UHS players caught at least one pass from either Edwards or backup quarterback Luke Hudson.



John Kelley



Sean Biser

The University offense remained efficient racking up 20 first downs in only 18 minutes of possession. The defense was fierce, too, allowing just 2.1 yards per play against Preston.

"We need to keep doing what's been working for us all season," Kelley said. "We've had some good practices so far, but Morgantown does a lot of things well, too."

Morgantown (4-4) is No. 14 in the WVSSAC rankings. Last week, the Mohigans knocked off John Marshall 33-7 in Moundsville. A special teams recovery tilted the opening kickoff in the Mohigans' favor, leading by two touchdowns following their first two possessions. MHS was able to practically put it away in the second quarter on a 75-yard interception return for a touchdown.

"One phase of the game has to feed off another," Biser said. "A big stop or a forced turnover is a great momentum builder."

In the win, Caleb Nutter ran 17 times for 134 yards and a touchdown, Davon Eldridge ran three times for 16 yards and touchdown, and Jarrett Lawrence ran 12 times for 28 yards and

two touchdowns.

"They made a great move moving Lawrence to quarterback," Kelley said. "Having a quarterback that can run like he can is a great addition to the offense. It's like what they did last year with (Cam) Rice. I think that's what coach Biser wanted and they've been implementing that well over the past few games. That's opened things up for them."

The Mohigans forced and recovered two John Marshall fumbles a week ago. They enter the Mohawk Bowl winners of two-straight having beat Parkersburg South 21-7 on Oct. 15.

"We've had two good weeks because our kids have played really hard," Biser said. "They've practiced well all season and it's been paying off here late in the season. Each week we've just tried to correct our mistakes and get better. We've carried that into this week to prepare for University."

This will be the Hawk's first home game in about five weeks, and although rain is in the forecast and temperatures may drop into the low 50s, Kelley is expecting a big crowd. Last year's Mohawk Bowl wasn't quite the same because of limited attendance at Pony Lewis Field due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The entire community is welcome at Mylan Pharmaceuticals Stadium this season, Kelley said.

"There's a lot of good reasons to come to this football game, beyond just two great teams," Kelley said. "Two great bands, dedicated cheerleaders and support staff — two of the best schools in the state of West Virginia and a great community. Come out and support whoever you want to cheer for, but come out and be a part of something special for this part of our state."

Kickoff is set for 7:30 p.m.

TWEET @dompostsports

MHS

FROM PAGE P-4

quarterback. Lawrence only attempted three passes in last week's 33-7 win against John Marshall.

The Mohigans ran 51 times against the Monarchs, asserting their dominance from the classic Wing-T formation, showcasing their strong offensive line.

The Morgantown line checks in at an average of 6-foot-2 and 265 pounds.

"They are skilled athletes and I don't think they get enough recognition," Biser said. "They are the guys who selflessly put themselves on the line and sacrifice for the good of the team."

The fellowship the linemen feel with each other is also something to be celebrated. While there is friendly competition to earn a starting spot, there's also been months of forming friendships to ensure they're on the same page.

An open line of communication on and off the field pays dividends in the trenches.

"We're a band of brothers," said Stahara, a junior. "Each one of us is willing to step up to help our team win."

Roughly 2/3 of the Mohigans' players are underclassmen and that's the case along the offensive line, too.

"Getting to play this season and proving I can earn my spot has been great," said Brown, a sophomore. "We've been developing well together this season and it has paid off."

Biser has taken pride in this offensive line because he sees them playing with the same passion he played with as a prep standout at Keyser. Biser, a state champion in wrestling, started his collegiate career on the mat at West Liberty before transferring to WVU in the early 1990s to play football. Originally a walk-on, he eventually earned a scholarship and more playing time for the Mountaineers.

His first coaching job was with Potomac State, as the offensive line coach. He still had a passion for playing the game and had a few professional tryouts before latching on with a semi-pro team out of Charleston.

"No one knows who an offensive lineman is until something bad happens," Biser said. "In high school, you won't hear their names called on the PA system but you might hear something about them yelled from the stands — block somebody!"

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