

Panthers

Continued from P2

A stingy defense led by Dustin Lasell kept the Panthers in most games last year. Lasell has moved on to East Central University where he is red shirting and looking to get in the mix next year.

The Panthers are looking to replace the man that made the defense so stingy.

"You can't replace Dustin Lasell," Foster said. "But, we are looking for Caleb Meave and Bo McKee to step up and have big year's."

Bo McKee was second on the team in tackles last year and will be one of the main defensive stoppers. McKee had 107 tackles last year second to only Lasell.

Caleb Meave is another player that is looking to make an impact for this team at linebacker. Meave has the size and speed to be a mainstay in the 4-3 defensive look.

R. Smith emerged late in the season last year as a player that teams were going to have to watch him. He has great potential and will be a force to be reckoned with the next three seasons.

There are a lot of names that can be thrown into the defensive backfield. Ethan Gilbert, Edgar Colmenares, Morales, Graham, Livingston and Gardner all

have experience in the secondary but the coaches are looking for the right combination to let players rest and not have to be on the field all night. Sophomores Dylan Norman, Tyler Richey and Derek Owens will all have the opportunity to play.

The Panthers missed out on the play-offs for a second straight year last year. With two of the top four teams from last year in 3A-2 moving down to class 2A, the door is wide open for the Panthers to jump back into the playoff hunt.

Gone from last year are Plainview and Sulphur, but the Panthers have added always tough Bethany who moves up from Class 2A and Northeast High School who moves down from 4A to their district.

Marlow and Purcell seem to be the front runners in the district this year. The third and fourth spot is a toss up for the remaining teams that include Pauls Valley, Bethany, Madill, Lone Grove, Northeast and Dickson.

"I think the district is going to be tough again with Bethany and Northeast coming in," Foster said. But, I like our chances of getting into the playoffs."

The Panthers open up Friday night at Newcastle.

— Mike Arie

John 14:6 **IWAY** John 14:6

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