

# **GIGANTIC STEP: Warriors make football playoffs in 2015, 2016 looks even brighter**

by John Hough, Sports Writer  
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**HARDIN** - It was five years since the **Calhoun Warriors** last reached the IHSA playoffs but for several in the Calhoun community, it had felt longer. But the 2015 Warriors barely made it in, which was a gigantic step. Now with a vast amount of returning players, the 2016 campaign has the makings to be a special one for Warrior nation and the players know it.

“The kids have worked very hard and they have high expectations for themselves. They’ve put a lot of time in,” **Calhoun coach head Aaron Elmore** said.

Coming off a 5-5 season and graduating seven seniors, the Warriors season objective is a simple one.

“Be better than we were last year and just continue to improve as a program. We didn’t change much because we basically have the same team as last year,” Elmore said. “It’s just a building process and trying to improve on where we were last year at this moment.”

The Warriors started out 2-0, but lost four out of their next five games and the season was heavily threatened with the failure of no playoffs.

“We kind of had a lull in the middle of the season, but then we improved and our main goal was to be playing our best football at the end of the year and I think we were.”

They defeated Routt Catholic 53-25 and then shocked the state with a 21-14 victory over the undefeated and state ranked, Brown County to advance to the playoffs.

Unfortunately the Warriors got the Arcola Purple Raiders, who went on to win the Class 1A state championship and made quick work of Calhoun. However, Elmore took it as a positive learning experience going forward.

“It was a great experience for our kids because they got to see who the state champs were and they got to realize what it’s like to play at that level. The main thing for them is to use it for themselves to excel this year.”

The same team as last year means that the Warriors are a year older and being a year older usually accumulates to a better season.

The offense has the potential to be one of the toughest to handle in the WIVC as the Warriors return just about everyone from the skilled positions to the trenches.

“We have lots of options and things we should be able to do this year,” Elmore said.

**Wes Klocke, Scout White, and Ty Bick** rushed for a combined 947 yards with nine touchdowns in the backfield.

At wide receiver **Tyler Webster and Easton Clarke** will be back. Webster led the team with 479 receiving yards and two touchdowns. **Jared Brackett, Clayton Ralston, and Klocke** will be rotated in every now and again as well.

The Warriors virtually have same offensive line as they had last season, including WIVC all-conference honoree, **Cody Gilman** (6'4", 280 lbs).

“They’ve all gotten bigger, faster, and stronger.”

However, Calhoun graduated three-year starting quarterback, Blake Booth, who dominated the stat sheet with 19 total touchdowns, 15 rushing, and 1,490 total yards. The position is currently voided.

“We’re not for sure yet. We have a couple of guys trying out for that position and we probably won’t know until after the soap game.”



The defense returns all but one starter that gave up an average of 29 points. They will be more experienced and athletic across the board and hope to carry over their form near the end of last season.

“Defensively we got better towards the end of the year for sure,” Elmore said. “There’s not a whole lot of changes except for the guys getting bigger, faster, and stronger.”

Klocke will be at middle linebacker and he led the team with 95 total tackles. Gilman and Rose were the leading tacklers on the defensive line with 53 and 33 total tackles respectively.

Week one will see Calhoun travel to sky blue country in Concord to visit the Triopia Trojans. The Warriors defeated them, 34-28 in a thrilling game in Calhoun and it could go either way again in two weeks time.

“They’re going to be a tough team. They return a couple of their skill kids and they’re going to be very difficult to beat going up there,” Elmore said. “We know we have to be better than we were last year when we played them.”

Calhoun has a veteran group with 16 seniors that have slowly seen progress during their time as Warriors. The Warriors were 2-7 in 2013 then one better victory the following year, and last season saw their first playoff appearance since 2010. They want to capitalize in their final season and take it as far as they can.

“We reached the goal of making the playoffs, but I think now we need to build upon that and just be better throughout the season so we can be better prepared,” Elmore said.

“Hopefully by the end of the season we’ll be playing our best football.”