



# **Experience and line depth, new 6-foot-7 quarterback, will guide Warriors**

by John Hough, Sports Writer  
August 9 2018 5:35 AM



**HARDIN** - The Calhoun Warriors pride themselves on running the triple-option.

It's an offensive system that's led to back-to-back state championships from 1993-1994, and several playoff runs and conference championships. However, rumors were circling in the offseason that head coach Aaron Elmore and his staff were looking to go in a new direction and open up a passing game.

"Will there be some new looks? Probably. We have the ability to do that this year," Elmore said.

Ultimately at the end of the day, the Warriors will still be running the triple-option, which has led to continued success for decades.

“We’re going to stick with the option. We’re never going to change who we are,” Elmore said. “It’s an ingrained mindset that we’re grinders, and we have to be able to run the ball first.”

In the modern era of football, more and more high school football programs around the country are willing to throw out their playbook, start from scratch and implement a spread offense. However, Calhoun has other ideas and so does most of Class 1A schools in Illinois. Year after year, teams who are run-heavy end up holding the state championship trophy.

Elmore enters his sixth season as the head coach at his alma mater and has been an essential figure of turning fortunes around for the Warriors. After two losing seasons in 2013 and 2014, Calhoun has made the playoffs for three consecutive years and expectations are looking at another appearance and then some.

“It’s being consistent and developing a mindset, and I think we have it at this point. We’re trying to take it to the next level. We’ve had some things that held us back. Last year we had huge injuries, but that’s part of the game. We feel like we can play with anybody on any given night,” Elmore said. “We got some guys that have a lot of experience that are very well seasoned football players that are the type of guys that’ll run through brick walls.”

Going into last season, Calhoun didn’t have any defensive linemen returning and few on offense. This year their strength will lie in the trenches. They’ll have three full-time starters back as well on offense while some returning second stringers who played a lot due to injuries will step into starting roles too.

The defensive line boasts three-year starter A.J. Hillen (6-1) who led the Warriors in tackles last year. Brad Rose (6-5), Trenton Buchanan (6-0), Cory Baalman, and Derek Camp (6-1) round out the front four. At linebacker, there will be the senior three-year starting duo of Trey Hart and Cody LaMarsh who tallied 54 and 48 tackles respectively last season.

“We’re pretty deep at the line play. We have a really good sophomore group too, linemen wise,” Elmore said. “That’s probably going to be the strength for our team starting off, which is always important when you’re trying to defeat the teams in the WIVC.”

Graduation hit the Warriors hard at the running back position losing their top three carriers, Scout White, Cole Lammy, Jacob Watters and quarterback Ty Bick.

Replacing Bick is six-foot-seven sophomore Corey Nelson. He already has varsity experience starting as a freshman starting on the basketball and baseball teams. Likely a star in the making in those sports, while for football the future is bright for Nelson as well. A left-handed quarterback, Nelson has a tall, slender frame that should mix in well with his ability to read defenses and locate his receivers to go with his natural athleticism.

“He is a unique individual with his size, athleticism, and his smarts. His ability to do things offensively is uncommon here throwing the ball. He’s going to be a unique athlete for the next three years for sure,” Elmore said about Nelson. “We’re definitely going to be able to , which gives us a new wrinkle. There’s no doubt about it. People aren’t going to be able to load the box all the time against us because we’ll be able to throw it over their heads.”

The two top receivers for the Warriors return. Hillen led Calhoun with 12 receptions, 196 yards and five touchdowns at tight end in 2017. Hart was right behind him with ten receptions and 193 yards.

With a good foundation on both sides of the ball in the trenches and a triple-option offense that will have the ability to keep teams off-balance with a new quarterback, Calhoun has realistic expectations to challenge for the WIVC South title and play a game in week 10 and beyond.

“We’re going to be very competitive,” Elmore said about his team. “I think we’ll be able to play with just about anybody in the conference on both sides. You can never take anything for granted in the WIVC. You can lose to anybody.”









