

# survival of THE FITTEST

Young players step up to help varsity football overcome injuries

With sweaty palms, freshman Coey Watson anxiously took his place on the field as the starting quarterback. “My biggest challenge this year was going from a JV player to a varsity starter. It was hard because I knew I had to step up and lead the team,” Watson said.

Watson had to fill in for the position following senior Zack Buchan’s hand injury in the first official game of the season against Forsyth Central. This was just one of many injuries that overwhelmed the team throughout the season; however, the Tigers were able to rise above the obstacles that were thrown at them. Over the course of the season, players were rearranged, spots were filled, and leaders were born. Watson threw for 1,091 passing yards and 13 touchdowns, and he rushed for 181 yards.

“Coey did really well. We had a lot of freshmen and sophomores step up like [sophomores] Luke Martin and Nick Murphy,” senior Dalton Edwards said. Martin led the Tigers with 170 overall tackles, and Murphy was second to Edwards in receiving touchdowns for the team.

Although hopes were high for the team as players continued to step up, the Tigers’

injuries were followed by a series of losses. “It was disappointing,” Edwards said, “They were close games. We just didn’t execute the game plan really well.”

Despite loss, the Tigers remained optimistic in hopes of things eventually coming back together. “Coach Lee always says, ‘this is a big game because it’s the next one,’” Murphy said. “Even though we lose sometimes, you develop a love for the game, and you never want to stop playing.”

“You face real-life situations on the field. There’s a winner and loser, and that’s how life is. You win sometimes and lose sometimes,” Martin said. Finally, the Tigers’ opportunity struck against Franklin, and they claimed their first victory with a 25-7 win over the Lions. “We put it all together that game. The way we won was just amazing,” Martin said.

The team’s season ended with a 28-0 win over Johnson. “We actually played a whole game instead of just one half. Also, it was a good way for the seniors to end,” Watson said. Through the challenges and disappointment, the Tigers rose above defeat and finished their season strong.