

Knights' New Coaches

The Southerner takes a look at fall coaches new to Grady



ELIAS PODBER

Kate Carter: Cross Country
Academic Position: American Literature teacher

"I ran cross country in high school. I've kept it up through my entire life. I'm a runner, and that's all I do; it's my hobby, and I love to do it."



ELIAS PODBER

Daniel Stockdale: Softball
Academic Position: Physical Education teacher

"Our [the softball team's] expectations right now are just to show up, have fun and learn a little bit more about the game everyday."



ELIAS PODBER

Brittany-Dawn Baker: Cheerleading

Academic Position: Librarian

"[I want the girls] to be able to put out a full squad, and for the girls to enjoy themselves and pump up the crowd as much as they can."



MESHA RAINEY

Mesha Rainey: Cheerleading
Academic Position: Inman Middle School teacher

"I expect all the girls to come in ready and excited to learn, and they're cheerleaders, so we're expecting them to show high spirit and get everybody pumped up for the games."



KELLER RENTZ-BAKER

Andrew Miller: Volleyball
Community Coach

"We're a really scrappy team, which might not sound like a strength, but it's volleyball, so the point of the game is to keep the ball up in the air, and we do a good job of that."



KELLER RENTZ-BAKER

Elizabeth Washam: Cross Country
Academic Position: American Literature teacher

"My general goal for them is to be able to finish a race, not walk or even just walk a little bit, and feel really proud of themselves."

Cost of sports rises while diversity drops



For many, the constant shouting from the sidelines, the sleepy carpools and the post-game meals were an essential part of childhoods across the

BRAM MANSBACH

country. For some, they continued down that path, sticking with their respective sport through middle school, high school and even post graduation.

Sports, and the competition they bring, are sources of enjoyment and, in many cases in America, a way out for kids from bad neighborhoods or those who otherwise would not be able to attend college. In some ways, sports are seen as an equalizer, but a recent study from the Aspen Institute shows how far this is from the truth.

The study looked at research from the Sports & Fitness Industry Association and found that in 2018, only 38 percent of kids aged 6-12 played a team sport regularly. This is down from 45 percent in 2008. This drop in participation was due to cost, inconvenience and kids simply not having fun. With rising prices, many families are not able to pay the average of \$692 per year across all sports.

Given the growing stress for many students to get athletic scholarships, it seems that when an athlete turns out to not be exceptional, they believe it's no longer worth it to play. While winning is great, it's not the only thing that matters in sports. The idea of participating in a sport simply for enjoyment has become less prevalent as sports have become more and more expensive.

With registration costing parents upwards of \$1,800 for local soccer leagues, parents might as well find other ways for their kids to have fun. The sad truth is that from an economic standpoint, sports are not worth it for many parents who prefer to prioritize essentials as they raise their children.

Sports, to many, are a time filler, an activity forced upon you by your parents to get you active. But to me, sports have and always will hold a central place in my life. It took me gymnastics lessons, soccer games, batting practice, and endless games of knockout for me and my parents to figure out I was not an athlete.

I was always the last picked, and it seemed I had no enjoyable way to get my exercise. I would go home after school most days bored until my parents found a running club for kids in Piedmont Park. That single introduction after our first meeting had me hooked and now, in my senior year, I'm looking forward to the possibility of running past the high school level.

I can't guarantee sports will change your life, but the lessons learned from sports and the social connections for children are priceless. By no means am I saying to break the bank to pay the registration fees for your child's respective league, but in an age of rising obesity and seemingly lack of care for going outside, finding a method of exercise is going to start becoming increasingly important.

While there is a legitimacy in the business of youth athletics, the divide it has caused between the income status of families is too far. It does not make sense that children are not able to have the chance to fall in love with a sport because they cannot afford it. No child should feel that they have wasted potential because they could not pay for the equipment or afford their registration costs. The field that we play on should always be level, because without a fair game, there's no victory in the sports. □

Football team starts 1-2, strong work ethic

By MILLS RENTZ-BAKER

The Knights' football team has matched its win total from last year starting the season 1-2 after three games.

The team struggled in its first two games, losing 40-19 to North Atlanta and 35-7 to Woodward Academy, but bounced back with a win against Washington.

"It started out kind of slow for us; we had some losses, but we just got a win, so I'd say it's picking up speed now," senior running back Canaan Brant said following the victory.

A large contributor to the team's first two losses were the suspension of two players. Senior captain Alvin James and senior linebacker Trevion Snipes were ejected from the first game against North Atlanta after a fight early in the third quarter.

"The biggest thing was when we got two guys kicked out of a game, that's two starters that affect both sides of the ball," Knights' coach Kevin Clark said.

Those players were suspended for the Knights' second game against Woodward.

"That hurt because we were up against North Atlanta until they were kicked out, and I think we would've had a better

shot at Woodward if we had our guys," Brant said.

The suspensions meant the Knights needed to find replacements on a team that is already shorthanded.

"It made it harder because we had to change all the positions that they [those players] were in," senior wide receiver and captain Zach Maggard said.

The team has been affected by a lack of players, which has led to both positive and negative impacts. It made it hard to field a JV team; however, it has also helped the team keep its best players on the field at all times.

"It can hurt, and it can help. You can get tired pretty fast, but at the same time, every guy has a certain job and nobody has to come out when you have the guys you need out there," Brant said.

The team has struggled with small mistakes; however, it hopes to build on the momentum from its recent win.

"I think we have to focus on making plays because we had a lot of missed plays and dropped passes, and if we can do that, then we can have a good finish to the season," Maggard said.

The team has improved throughout the season as players are learning the schemes and



ELIAS PODBER

PEACE OUT: Junior receiver Nathaniel Wiggins scores the first touchdown for the Knights in the first half of the game against the North Atlanta Warriors on Aug. 23. The Knights lost 40-19 but beat Washington 19-18 on Sept. 6.

play calling.

"They actually understand our scheme, and what we are doing now," Clark said. "We're improving, so I think we'll be a lot more successful for the rest of this year."

This improvement started in the weight room during the offseason and culminated with a 19-18 win against Washington on Sept. 6 Clark said. After being outscored 75-26 in their first two games, the Knights

won a close one with Maggard catching the game-winning touchdown in the fourth quarter.

The Knights will try to exceed their win total from last year and start a win streak with their next game against Lithia Springs on Sept. 20 after a bye week.

"We just need to capitalize on our opportunities, and then we'll be set up to be pretty good," Brant said. □