



Above Hunter Blalock (11) awaits the result of the play.

EXCEEDING EXPECTATIONS

page | Taylor Dancer & Courtney Ragsdale

An overtime win in the season's opener set the tone for the next 15 games that would exceed everyone's expectations.

In the player's first debut of the season, the team was held scoreless for the majority of the game. A touchdown with 1:24 left in the fourth quarter led to a competition in overtime. After a blocked field goal attempt, the Jaguars were given one last chance to take the ball down the field. Cale Nation (10) was able to bring the team a victory with his game-winning kick. While they fell short of winning their next two games against Brandon and Oxford, the Jaguars came with a fire to win their next game. They pulled through with a nail-biting win at South Panola. They went on to tie with West Monroe and faced a difficult loss against Clinton. The following week, the team had an exciting win on homecoming night to start their eight game win streak that led them to a heartbreaking loss in the North State Championship. The Jaguars shocked the polls and proved that they belonged in the conversation with the other 6A leaders when they upset No. 2 Warren Central while facing their homecoming crowd. Four more wins in their regular season games would lead the team to playoffs where they beat Columbus at home. They then traveled to Tupelo and ended Tupelo's undefeated season. This win led the Jaguars to the North State Championship where they faced Clinton again.

"The season went beyond my expectations. It's hard to have three different coaches in three years. I think my teammates and I did a good job of overcoming that and proving people wrong," Braden Boykin (12) said. With the big wins, there were also tough losses. Gabe Short (12) said he dealt with adversity each game, but he did not let it get

to him. Short's mindset led him to score four touchdowns for his last high school game in front of 10,000 fans, and he said it was a moment that he will never forget. The senior players were proud that they improved a six win season their sophomore year to a 10 win season their last year, but they all agreed that they had the potential to win the State Championship title.

When the clock struck zero at the North State Champion game in Clinton stadium, silence fell among the Jaguar family. Tears streamed down the faces of students, players, and coaches, when they realized it was all over. "It took a lot of time for me to process the fact that this was the last high school football game I would attend as a senior. Although it ended on a loss, I was more than happy with the outcome of the season because of how much effort I saw each player put into each game," Patrick Geary (12) said. Geary, along with other students, packed the student section each game. Whether the student section was tropical themed or a white out, it never lacked in support of the Jaguars.

"We have the best student section in the state," Hunter Blalock (11) said.

After the team's last huddle, Head Coach Anthony Hart said he was proud of his players and his first year as a Jaguar. "Madison Central to me is one of the premier places in Mississippi, and when you are given the opportunity you have to decide if that is what you want to do as a coach," Hart said. Hart has started preparing the team for next season, and he hopes to exceed what the team did this past year.

"The best thing about playing for Madison Central is having the **city on your back**. It makes you want to play your best for your friends and family." -Tay Berry (12)