



2022 Fall

FOOTBALL PREVIEW



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Season schedule preview



Football season begins in South Florida

Drive by Okeechobee High School and you can already hear the sounds of football season beginning.

The crash of pads as the football team practices, the Brahman Band going through the paces of their halftime show. As summer fades and fall begins, high school football is back again.

The Brahmans are looking to bounce back from their 1-7 season last year. Bad weather and a few covid cancellations never let the team get into a rhythm. But the team looks ready to hit the ground running in 2022.

Okeechobee has senior Michael Burgarelli back under center again. Burgarelli has been a good scrambler for the Brahmans during his time with the team. Leonides Castellanos looked impressive during Okeechobee's Midnight Madness scrimmage, breaking out the biggest runs of the night. Cariss Johns has been another effective runner on the ground for Okeechobee.

Many of those Brahmans taking the field this season got to see a former Brahman achieve the ultimate goal a few months ago: being drafted into the NFL. Okeechobee's Evan Neal was drafted by the New York Giants in the first round of the draft. Inside his jacket that night, Neal had an illustration of Lake Okeechobee. He wanted people to know where he was from, and he wanted his people back home to know he was representing them.

It had to be inspiring for the kids in purple and gold today to see someone who used to wear the same jersey walk across the stage at the NFL Draft. Many of the current Brahmans were in attendance at a draft party held in Okeechobee.

Now the current Brahmans will start to build their legacy. Nothing is written in stone. An underdog can upset a guaranteed playoff team. It all comes down to those four quarters where anything can happen.

Players were all smiles on the Brahman sideline as they blowout the Glades Day Gators.



2022 Fall FOOTBALL PREVIEW

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Head coach B.J. Pryor speaks to Brahman players before a game.

Okeechobee Brahman excited heading into new season

The Okeechobee Brahman will kick off their 2022 season with a new head coach, their third in as many years.

Earlier in 2022, Okeechobee High School hired B.J. Pryor as the new head coach for their football team. Pryor has 26 years of coaching experience in every level of the sport, including 12 high school state playoff runs and a state championship.

“I always tell the kids that I don’t worry about the winning and losing,” explained Pryor. “I care about the kids’ character. And so far, we have good, high quality kids.”

Most recently, Pryor coached at Ovilla Christian in Red Oak, Texas. Ovilla Christian competed in a six man league, a modified version of football with fewer players played

by schools with smaller enrollments. Pryor helped a young Ovilla team with only three seniors reach a 3-8 record in 2019. The team would go on to have six players named to the 2019 Texas Independent School Coaches Association All-State football team.

But while the head coach is new, everything else in the Brahman football program – from the assistant coaches to the players – remains the same. In fact, it was defensive coordinator Jeff Whitlock who coached the team during the Brahman’s spring game against Glades Day in May of 2022.

Okeechobee won that game in a 48-7

blowout.

Whitlock runs a summer camp in Okeechobee called Men of Distinction that many of the Brahman players participate in.

“Men of Distinction is not just about football,” said Whitlock. “We spend time every day speaking life to these young men. A lot of the young men that come through our football program come from single parent households. And not all of them have had great examples of what a man is. That is the purpose of MOD. To raise the quality of the young men that come to our program and allow them to know what it means to be a

» Continued on page 6

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good man.”

Brahman coaches took 23 players to the Down And Dirty Lineman Camp at Webber International University over the summer. That number of players attending the camp is a record for the football team.

Last season Okeechobee finished with a 1-7 record. The Brahmans had trouble getting into a rhythm last year, partly due to a few things that were out of their control. Okeechobee experienced a two-week layoff in the middle of their season after inclement weather forced them to cancel their game against Frostproof on Sept. 10. The very next week the Brahmans were set to face Archbishop McCarthy, but then a covid exposure on that team saw that game canceled as well.

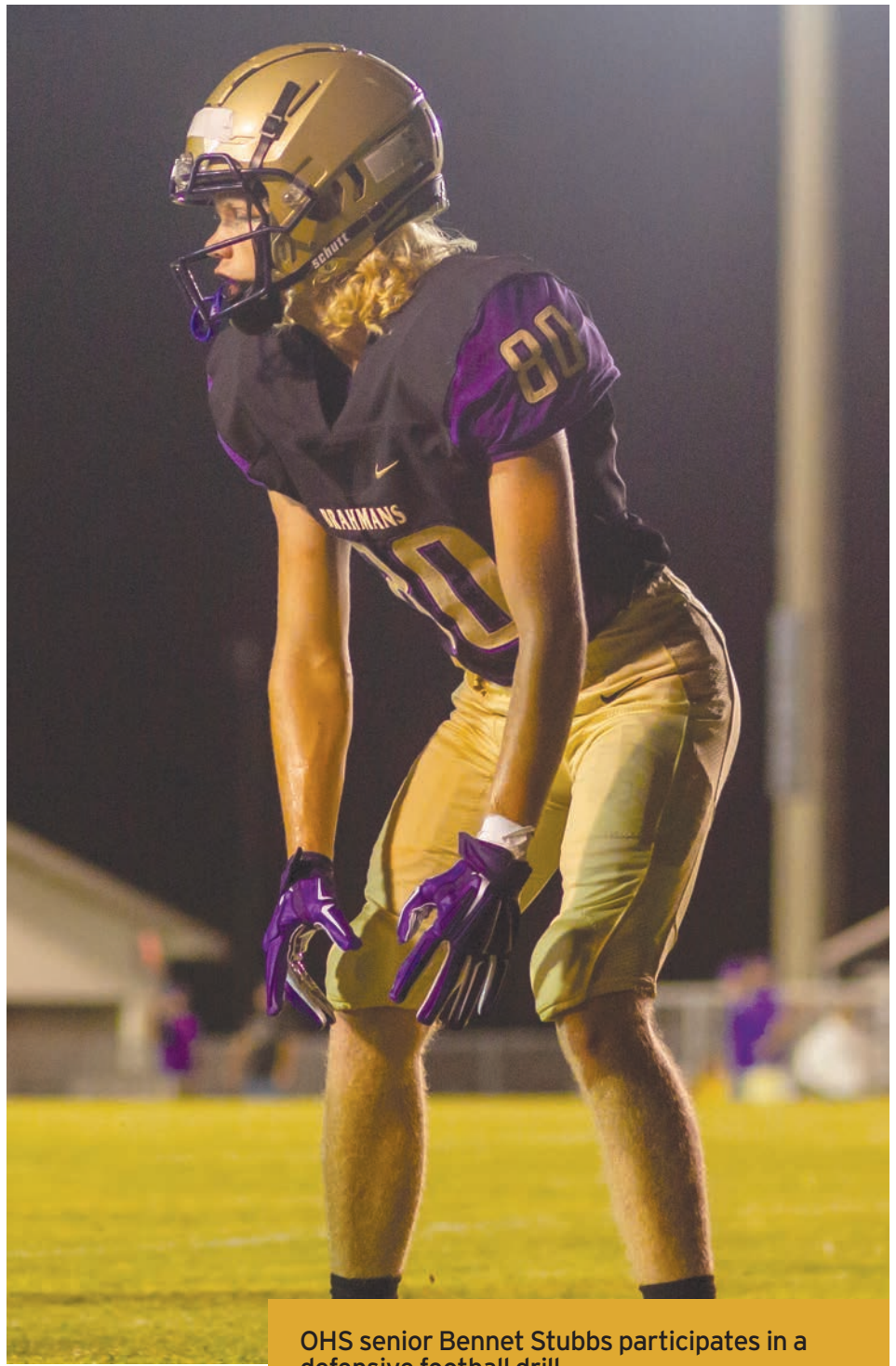
That lack of consistent reps and game experience was evident on the field for the young Brahman squad last year, but the team made strides later in the season. In the next to last game on Oct. 29, the Brahmans defeated the Suncoast Chargers 29-13.

Coach Pryor had his players out and about during the summer, meeting various community members and business leaders. He also says he’s been impressed with the support the team has received after the first parent meeting this summer.

“I want the people in the community to know that wearing a Brahman football helmet is more than just playing football,” said Pryor.

“We have a pretty good squad of young people,” continued Pryor. “I think we have some talent in a lot of places. Our coaches are excited. It’s going well, better than I thought it would. And the community is stepping up.”

“ I want people in the community to know that wearing a Brahman football helmet is more than just playing football ”
- Coach Pryor



OHS senior Bennet Stubbs participates in a defensive football drill.

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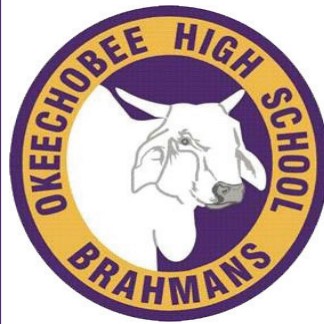
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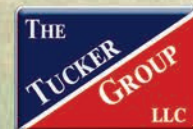


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Okeechobee County Sheriff Noel Stephens takes a moment to show his support by posing for a picture with the 2022 Brahman football team. [Photo Courtesy Okeechobee County Sheriff's Office]



The Brahman football team were among the attendees at the 2022 NFL Draft watch party to cheer on former Brahman Evan Neal. When Neal was selected by the New York Giants with the sixth pick in the draft, the Brahmans gave him an ecstatic ovation.



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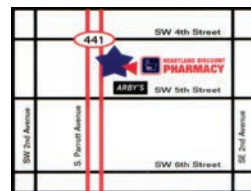
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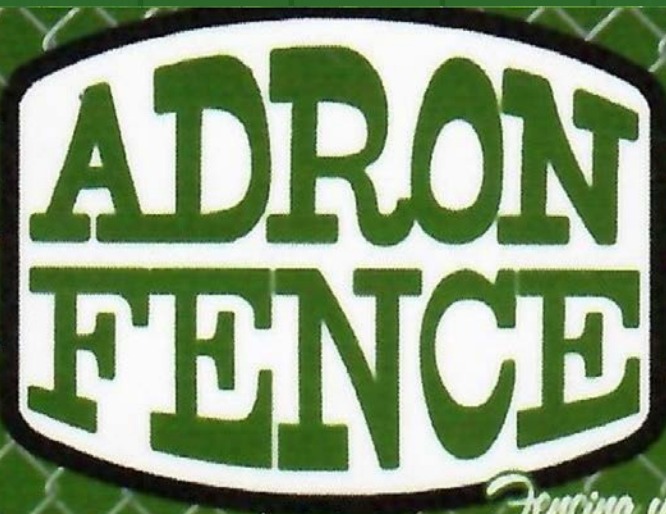


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Varsity Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Site	Time
8/19/22	Jupiter - <i>Kickoff Classic</i>	HOME	6:30
8/26/22	Desoto	HOME	7:00
9/2/22	Ft. Pierce Central	Away	7:00
9/9/22	Frostproof	Away	7:30
9/16/22	Archbishop McCarthy - GO GOLD	HOME	7:00
9/30/22	Westwood - Homecoming	HOME	7:00
10/7/22	Immokalee	Away	7:00
10/14/22	Port St. Lucie - Pink Out	HOME	7:00
10/21/22	Lake Placid	Away	7:30
10/28/22	Sebring	Away	7:30
11/4/22	Clewiston - Sr Night	HOME	7:00

OHS opponents breakdown

Lake Okeechobee News sports reporter Richard Marion gives a preview of the football season.

DeSoto County

The Brahms open their season at home against the DeSoto County Bulldogs on August 26 at 7 p.m. The DeSoto football program went through a rebuild after going winless during the 2020 season. But head coach Sam Holland managed to secure a 6-3 record last year as an independent school. The Bulldogs are back in district play this year. The Bulldogs will have a long drive making the trip from Arcadia to Okeechobee, which could play a factor on gameday. The two programs are in a similar position. Both are looking to rebound, and starting their season off with a win would go a long way in helping that happen. The two teams are evenly matched, but the home crowd at OHS can help tip the scale the Brahms' way.



See Page 14 for the rest of the OHS football team's opponents

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JV Football Schedule

Date	Opponent	Site	Time
8/25/22	Clewiston	HOME	6:00
9/8/22	Ft. Pierce Central	HOME	6:00
9/14/22	Jensen Beach	Away	6:00
9/22/22	Lake Placid	Away	7:00
10/6/22	Sebastian River	HOME	6:00
10/13/22	Clewiston	Away	7:00
10/20/22	Sebring	HOME	6:00



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OHS Brahman Band one of the best around the lake

Gamedays at Okeechobee High School during football season are special. And one of the most underrated but crucial aspects of that gameday experience is the OHS Brahman Band.

The Brahman Band is one of the largest organizations on campus at OHS, and that fact becomes exceedingly clear on gamedays. The band has an entire section of the massive concrete home stands reserved for them, with the group looking more like a college band than one at a small high school in rural Florida.

Look hard enough and you'll even see the players, coaches and parents on the opposing sidelines dancing and bobbing along to the Brahman fight songs.

The Brahman Band is coming off a season last year that saw them make history. Last year's OHS Brahman Band finished fifth in the state in class 5A at the Florida Marching Band Championships. This was the first time in school history that the OHS Brahman Band made a finals appearance.

"Much of the success from last year goes directly to the students," said Band director Clint LaFlam. "Coming out of a missed marching season due to COVID, the band members were ready to turn the page and create an amazing marching experience. Another key factor was the show design and musical choices for the show "TOXIC." We decided to try something new last year and saw huge success. Using familiar music but doing it at a highly competitive level definitely put us on the map within the top competitive marching bands in the state."

So what makes the band at OHS so successful? One factor is the consistency

that LaFlam brings as a director. LaFlam is going on his sixteenth year as director. That time has helped create the culture of the band program on and off the field/stage.

"Since day one, I have wanted to make this program one of the best things on the OHS campus," explained LaFlam. "I want the community to appreciate what these students do every year."

That kind of consistency is hard to find in any other program. Other schools in the area have seen director turn over year after year, with band directors leaving the profession or trying to find the next best school to work at.

"Okeechobee is where I belong," said LaFlam. "It hasn't always been easy, but we are making magic happen regardless. I am excited for a new school and facility since we have outgrown the current band room years ago. By the time the school is built, we project to have a huge band close to 200 members."

Following up their "Toxic" halftime show from last season, the Brahman Band is working on an act titled "Catch Me If You Can." Musical selections for this year include: "Gangsta's Paradise" by Coolio, "The Pink Panther theme" by Henry Mancini, "Smooth Criminal" by Michael Jackson and Alien Ant Farm, "Wanted Dead or Alive" by Bon Jovi, and "Hide and Seek" by Imogen Heap. LaFlam says the show will have lots of color and energy and will portray a great storyline on the field.



“ Since day one, I have wanted to make this program one of the best things on the OHS campus. ”
- Clint LaFlam



OHS opponents breakdown

Fort Pierce Central

Okeechobee's first road game of the year will be against the Fort Pierce Central Cobras on Sept. 2 at 7 p.m. Last season the Cobras gave the Brahms everything they could handle and then some, with Fort Pierce taking a 48-6 win. The Okeechobee offense just couldn't get in a rhythm and two blocked punts returned for touchdowns buried them early. The Brahms will need to be detail orientated in this matchup. The Cobras won't make it easy, so Okeechobee will have to limit mistakes to not hurt their chances.



Frostproof

Okeechobee stays on the road for their third game, traveling to take on Frostproof on Sept. 9 at 7:30 p.m. The game is another rematch from last season. The Brahms were originally scheduled to face Frostproof in the third game of the season last year as well. But inclement weather forced the game to be rescheduled. Then a positive covid case forced Okeechobee's fourth game to be canceled. So when the Brahms finally got back on the field to face Frostproof, they had been out of action for over two weeks. That rust was evident as the Brahms fell 28-0. Fingers crossed, the weather cooperates this year and the Brahms are able to give Frostproof their best shot.



Archbishop McCarthy

The Brahms are back home in Okeechobee for their fourth game, hosting Archbishop McCarthy at 7 p.m. on Sept. 16. Archbishop, like Okeechobee, has a new head coach this year. Dino Mangiero was picked to lead the program back in February following the retirement of longtime coach Byron Walker. Mangiero spent six seasons in the NFL with the Kansas City Chiefs and Seattle Seahawks as a defensive lineman. Archbishop went to the playoffs last year, but were blown out by another Lake Okeechobee team, the Clewiston Tigers.



Fort Pierce Westwood

Okeechobee's Homecoming game will be against the Fort Pierce Westwood Panthers on Sept. 30 at 7 p.m. Start brainstorming ideas for those Homecoming floats now. After the Brahms celebrate with their annual bonfire tradition, the Panthers will make the trip to Okeechobee. The Panthers went 0-9 last season, but in 2020 when they last faced the Brahms, they were able to get a narrow 19-12 win.



Immokalee

The Brahms will travel to take on Immokalee on Oct. 7 at 7 p.m. Immokalee is in the process of a rebuild. Last season the team had to drop out of their classification and play as an independent due to a lack of players. James Delgado took over head coaching duties following last season and Immokalee hired LaBelle's Chris Siner as their new athletic director.



Port St. Lucie

The Brahms host the Port St. Lucie Jaguars on Oct. 14 at 7 p.m. The Jaguars and Brahms have traded wins and losses over the last two years. They beat Okeechobee 34-7 last season. But the Brahms took a 27-7 win the year prior. Last year the Jaguars won their district for the first time in over three decades, and they are bringing back many of the key players from that team.



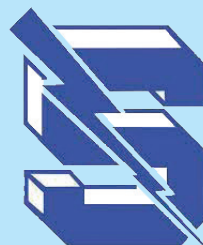
Lake Placid

The Lake Placid Dragons will host the Okeechobee Brahms at 7:30 p.m. on Oct. 21. The Dragons went 4-7 last year. Both programs should be evenly matched. Both have talented players at the skill positions. For the Dragons, that would be Keveun Mason, a shifty, fast running back who already has a few college offers.



Sebring

Okeechobee's last road game of the regular season will be against the Sebring Blue Streaks on Oct. 28 at 7:30 p.m. Sebring, in many ways, represents what Okeechobee would like to build itself into. Head coach LaVaar Scott built the rural school into a force to be reckoned with, winning a district championship and earning a trip to the State Final Four last year. Before that, no Sebring team had been past the regional semifinals.



Clewiston

Okeechobee closes the regular season on Nov. 4 at 7 p.m. at home against their old Lake Okeechobee rivals, the Clewiston Tigers. The game will also serve as senior night for the Brahms. And look, there's no getting around it: the Tigers have dominated this rivalry. Old timers around Okeechobee have countless stories of getting pushed around by Clewiston in their days. And the Tigers have continued their streak of dominance in recent years. But when the odds are stacked against you, that just makes the victory that much sweeter.



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