



There's no shame in taking advantage of what you do well, especially if it gives everybody a chance to "eat".

It just took a little longer for Anthony King and his West Lowndes High School Panthers to acknowledge things work better when they run the Wing-T as opposed to a spread offense.

"We have always been good at the Wing-T," senior quarterback Jonivan Edwards said. "It is something we could always go back to. We tried to spread it out and it was something new we were trying. We didn't have to do that. We just needed a little bit

more time, but we don't have that much time, and when you lose a game, we have to go back to what we know."

King's decision to change offenses midway through the season has paved the way for West Lowndes (7-5) to make history. At 7 tonight, West Lowndes will try to write another chapter when it takes on Baldwyn (12-1) in the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) Class 1A North State title game.

The West Lowndes-Baldwyn winner will advance to take on the winner of tonight's game between Velma Jackson and Hollandale Simmons at 4 p.m. Friday, Dec. 6, at the University of Southern Mississippi's M.M. Roberts Stadium, which is also known as "The Rock".

A victory would help West Lowndes make what is believed to be the football program's first appearance in a state championship. Thanks to playoff victories against Tupelo Christian Prep, Strayhorn and Myrtle, West Lowndes is making what is believed to be the program's first appearance in the fourth round of the playoffs.

King opted to change offenses following back-to-back losses to North Pontotoc and Vardaman. The switch meant quarterback Kylan Ellis had to move to tight end and Edwards had to return to quarterback, the position he played in 2023.

Ellis said he hadn't played tight end prior to the position change and that he has tried to keep things simple by staying focused and humble.

“Anything to help the team and anything to make the team better,” Ellis said. “Once I switched from quarterback to tight end, we went on an undefeated streak.”

West Lowndes is riding a five-game winning streak in which it is winning by an average of 38 points per game. The offensive explosion has highlighted the Panthers’ versatility and speed as well as their size up front.

King praised the work of Alvin Jackson at center and the rest of the offensive line (Trence Robertson, Dallas Chamberlain, Jaraquist Cunningham and Eli Sanders). He also called Ellis and junior fullback Antonio Brown “unsung heroes”.

“If those guys didn’t buy into what we have done, it wouldn’t work,” King said. “Kylan started at quarterback, but his height made it hard for him to see over the line and he’s not quick like I like a quarterback to be, but we moved him to tight end and he is a real smart player and he can be a lead blocker.

“Those guys have been doing a great job blocking, and they want to play for each other and the offensive line takes pride in the skill players scoring. They have all bought into what we’re trying to do.”

All you need to do is ask senior running back Dekambi Evans-Smart, who is one of two 1,000-yard rushers (junior Jakylen Lucious is the other) on the team.

“I love my O line,” Evans-Smart said. “They play together and learn their blocking schemes right. This is the probably the best

o(ffensive) line I have ever played with. They know who to block, the schemes, who to block down on and they really take pride in it because they really like to see us score.”

Evans-Smart said the combination of him, Lucious, Edwards and Jaqualon Sharp allows the Panthers to keep fresh legs on the field every snap. He said the blend of power and speed is an ideal combination behind a strong offensive line that is continuing the Panthers’ recent trend of “bully ball”.

Last season, Gabriel Turner, Kylan Jordan and Travis Jones played key roles up front in helping West Lowndes advance to the third round of the Class 1A playoffs. A loss to Biggersville marked the third year in a row the eventual state champion ended West Lowndes’ season.

This season, the Panthers hope to flip the script by making sure everybody does their job. Some of those roles may not be flashy or get opportunities to score, but Brown doesn’t mind.

“It is just me doing me and making sure the guys eat and I do what I have to do,” Brown said.

After highlighting togetherness prior to the season as a key to his team’s success, King couldn’t be happier with how things have worked out.

“We were trying to do different things,” King said. “We were under center one minute and we tried to run the spread. We had success running the Wing-T and after a while people get tired of seeing it. But we had success with it, so we went back

and stuck with it. The guys are used to it. It seems basic, but we have had success with it.

“We had to get back to doing what we do, playing physical ball. It is a real simple system to run, but it is a hard system to stop if you block right, and right now we are blocking well.”