

Waters is a popular leader, on and off field

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HEBRON — Lakewood coach Jason Lee pointed out an impressive fact about senior offensive lineman-middle linebacker Mark Waters.

"We pick new captains every week, and he's the only one we've had selected for all five weeks," Lee said. "It's a lot of fun, getting to lead the team out and carry those flags," Waters said.

Not surprisingly, Waters was also crowned Homecoming king last Friday when the Lancers hosted Ontario.

"He does an amazing job," classmate and wideout-defensive back Brandon Allen said Monday, as Lakewood (0-5) began preparing for its "Battle of the Spikes" this Friday against visiting Heath (3-2). "He picks people up when they are down. He keeps people focused and knowing their role. I don't think I've ever seen him get mad. He's an amazing leader and probably the nicest guy I know."

"He's a program kid, a three-year starter, and he does things the right way, on and off the field," Lee said. "He's fast for a lineman. At the combine we hosted, he ran a 4.9 (40) which was the fastest of the linemen. And he's strong. He had a shoulder injury at the start of the season, but he's worked his way back."

The 5-foot-10, 200-pound Waters, who has received an offer from Ohio Wesleyan, also had 12 tackles against both Ontario and Bexley, games the Lancers led in the third quarter before the roof caved in. "We have a great defensive scheme, that sets the lineback-



Lakewood senior captain Mark Waters leads the Lancers onto the field for their Homecoming game against Ontario last Friday. MICHAEL LEHMKUHLE/THE ADVOCATE

ers up to make tackles," Waters said. "I try to lead as much as I can. I lead more by example, but can be vocal when I need to."

The Lancers, still a youthful team, are leaning on Waters and Allen for their leadership as they try to turn their season around.

"Brandon and Mark are probably our most consistent performers, rarely falling back under 70 percent when they're graded," Lee said. "It's not only leadership, it's production on the field."

"Brandon is a really big leader for us," Waters said. "He's a great wide receiver, a great defensive back, and all-around great player."

Allen and Waters are trying to set an example for a talented sophomore class already making its presence felt. Speedster Isaiah Mitchell caught six passes

for 87 yards and two scores against Ontario from classmate Adam Crawford, who completed 11-of-17 passes for 167 yards. Mitchell also returned a kickoff for a score and had a 67-yard TD run called back.

"We're trying to lead them up as much as we can, try to spread it out, keep them focused and make sure everyone knows what they're supposed to be doing," said Allen, who had six tackles and had a 47-yard kickoff return against Ontario. "Mitchell has amazing potential. A lot of them do. We want to make them leaders some day, and we're happy to put the work in for them."

"I think they're going to be a dominant senior class," Waters said.

Right now, this year's seniors are trying to get Lakewood into the win column, and it won't be easy in a Licking

Schedule, results

- Aug. 20: West M 37, **Lakewood 0**
- Aug. 27: Liberty Union 37, **Lakewood 0**
- Sept. 3: Fairfield Union 26, **Lakewood 12**
- Sept. 10: Bexley 26, **Lakewood 18**
- Sept. 17: Ontario 49, **Lakewood 19**
- Sept. 24: Heath
- Oct. 1: @Northridge
- Oct. 8: Newark Catholic
- Oct. 15: Johnstown
- Oct. 22: @Utica

County League-Cardinal Division opener where Heath is smarting from back-to-back losses.

"Ontario was two platoon and wore us down. We dressed 31 for the game, and they had 29 freshmen," Lee said. "Hopefully, we get (two-way lineman) Keegan Jacks back. He fills two big gaps for us. We want to get that Spike back to here. Last year, we scored first on them, and two years ago, we were up 7-0 at halftime."

"It's a fun rivalry game," Waters said. "Everyone is being pretty positive around here. We have a lot of opportunities, these next five games. If we can play well for four quarters, we can compete with most teams."

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