

Football Season Overview

In 2025, the Joel Barlow football team seeks to continue its streak of non-losing seasons dating back to 2016-17. Since head coach TJ Cavaliere got promoted from running backs and defensive backs coach in 2019-2020, the Falcons have only been under .500 for three weeks in his tenure. The first goal of this season, according to coach Cavaliere, was “to get win number one,” which the Falcons accomplished Friday, Sept. 12, defeating Tolland 30-6. Other goals for coach Cavaliere include “being consistent and being competitive week in and week out,” and hopefully making the playoffs.

Including Cavaliere, the staff consists of seven coaches. This will be Coach Cavaliere’s third year calling the defense. The offensive play-calling responsibilities will be in the hands of Will Norling. Coach Norling primarily works with the offensive line and helps with the defensive line, and vice versa, Mark Robinson is the defensive line coach who also assists with the offensive line. The “froshmore” coordinators are first-year coach Julien Schaad, in charge of the defense, and coach David Belcourt, responsible for the offense. Coach Belcourt also works with the defensive backs, linebackers, and B backs. The other new addition to the coaching staff is Kevin Lynch. Lynch is tasked with coaching the wide receivers and defensive backs. Lastly, Jason Gill will coach the A backs as well as the linebackers.

The four captains representing the 2025-2026 Joel Barlow football team are Jack Hall, Luke Bishop, Ben Noome, and Ben Zirulnik. Coach Cavaliere said they picked Jack Hall and Luke Bishop “right off the bat.” Cavaliere described Hall as the loud and boisterous leader, and Bishop as more of an emotional leader. It wasn’t until later in the summer that the team voted for Ben Noome and Ben Zirulnik to that position as well.

Noome, Zirulnik, and Jack Dellorusso are the core group of guys on the lines of scrimmage. The three veteran linemen bring a wealth of experience to the field and will be heavily relied upon to anchor the team’s success in the trenches. Coach Cavaliere said, “We have a couple of sophomores that are probably going to end up playing at least to some extent,” referring to the offensive and defensive line. At quarterback, expect to see Tyler Young or Keeler Pheeney. Young got the start against Tolland while Pheeney played wide receiver. In the backfield, Jack Hall and Kaden Holub will split reps at fullback, and Braylon Bennett will be playing A back. Defensively, players to note are Braylon Bennett and Luke Bishop in the secondary and Mike linebacker Sean Rinaldi. When asked what makes this team different, coach Cavaliere said, “This group we have guys who have played ... and they were on the state title team, but now they have to be the guys that are

the studs that carry the team, they can't be a periphery player ... they need to step up to be that role."

As mentioned above, the Falcons won their first regular-season game of the season, defeating Tolland 30-6. Ben Noome stood out, terrorizing the Tolland offensive line. At six foot nine, 290 pounds, he recorded ten tackles, three for a loss, and forced two fumbles, which Barlow recovered both. Offensively, Kaden Holub dominated the stat sheet. Holub totaled 147 scrimmage yards on 14 carries and one reception for two touchdowns.

Since the Tolland game, Barlow has suffered four consecutive losses to Notre Dame Prep, Northwest Catholic, Brookfield, and Pomperaug. The boys aim to get back in the win column on Saturday, Oct. 25, during the homecoming game against New Fairfield.