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HUSTLE AND TENACITY GUIDE DECATUR CENTRAL STANDOUTS BRENT AND BRANDON LEDFORD

By Kristen Fuhs-Wells
Photos by Ron Wise

Brent and **Brandon Ledford** are the kind of student-athletes every principal, teacher and coach seeks. The multiple-sport athletes excel inside and outside the classroom at **Decatur Central High School** —in everything from calculus and physics to football, baseball and basketball.

Brent, a senior, and Brandon, a junior, have grown up playing sports together, enjoying the competition and camaraderie. And although both are known for their hustle and tenacity, they've both developed their own on-field weapons.

Brandon is the offensive minded brother — the starting quarterback for the Hawks' football team and the

point guard for the basketball team.

"I fit those positions well," Brandon said. "I want to take everything on my shoulders. If we win, we win as a team. But if we lose, it's on me. I'm not afraid. I'm just out there competing."

Brent, on the other hand, led the defense for the football team as the starting free safety, plays catcher for the baseball team (he helped lead them to a state championship title last spring) and although he hasn't played basketball since his freshman year, he hopes to strengthen the defense there, too.

"I just want to do everything I possibly can in my senior year," Brent said. "It's the last time I'll get this chance, and I think I can contribute in a leadership role and on the defense."



Basketball coach **Dave Oberle** agreed. He liked what he saw in Brent's work ethic and hustle during tryouts and with only two other seniors on the team, and no returning starters, he knew Brent's athletic leadership would be valuable.

"Brent is someone we'll ask to get in there and lock somebody down," Oberle said. "He'll come off the bench and give us that fire we need



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— he has that type of mentality. He's an excellent student, ranked very high in his class, and he's had great athletic years in baseball and football — basically he's a really aggressive overachiever. From a coaching standpoint, he's someone you long to have on your team."

Brandon is one of the few returning lettermen as the sixth man from last year's hoops squad which set a

school record for victories. But if anyone can help rebuild this team, it's the Ledford brothers.

"I've been coaching for 37 years, and I can honestly say Brandon is the hardest working kid I've ever coached," Oberle said. "He's a very good basketball player, but he's 5'9", so he has to play that way. All the other coaches marvel at how hard he plays. Size is not a matter to him. I'm hoping some of that rubs off on our younger players."

But it's not just their athletic work ethic that the Decatur Central coaches hope rub off on other players, it's their attitude toward academics as well.

"The good thing about sports is that you can focus for a little awhile and get away from schoolwork," Brent said. "Then, when you get home, spend one to two more hours every day, do some work even if the test is in a couple of weeks. But

if you do your work in advance, then you have tons of extra time to spend with friends."

Brandon agreed. He believes getting priorities straight at the beginning of the day by asking teachers for help before school is key.

"Sports keep me from bad influences," he said. "They keep my grades up; they motivate me, and help me excel on the court. I want people to look at me and think I'm a good athlete and a good student."

Both Ledfords are interested in pursuing sports at the collegiate level. Perhaps even at the same school. But they're also very interested in the medical field. Brandon wants to be a pharmacist, and hopes to play football and basketball in college. Brent wants to play football in college and major in chemistry or biology and go to medical school to become an anesthesiologist.

"Sports might not be long-term," Brent said. "We might grow out of it. But at least we have our education."

For now though, the brothers are focused on the tasks at hand: a winning record, and a shot at the conference championship.

"I think we'll surprise some teams this year," said Brandon. "We might not be the best shooting team, but teams will know that we're going to hustle and play excellent defense." •

