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## 'Cats Kick Off Season Against Familiar Foe

AUGUST 25TH 2011 BY UNKNOWN

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*By Andrew Cato, ShowMe Times Sports Editor*

During the fall, Friday nights in small-town America usually result in quite an electric atmosphere. The scene will be no different at 7:00 tonight in Charles Bland Stadium when the 'Cats kick off the 2011 season.

The Bearcats have been hard at work all summer preparing for this night. Summer weightlifting and conditioning sessions, camps, the newly-approved 'contact days', and two-a-days in the heat of early August - but all of it will come full-circle when the 'Cats open the season against a familiar foe: the Ste. Genevieve Dragons.

The 'Cats are used to meeting Ste. Gen at the beginning of the season, and are becoming more accustomed to getting another go-round with the Dragons at the start of the 'second season': the MSHSAA State Playoffs.

Ste. Gen had the upper hand the first time they faced the 'Cats last year, handing DHS a 41-25 road loss to start the 2010 season, but the 'Cats were able to knock off the Dragons when they met at DHS in the first round of the playoffs.

Head coach Aaron Pixley has done nothing but talk up the Dragons, and rightfully so: coach Bob Stolzer's squad is loaded with returning starters, including quarterback Brendan Weiler.

“That’s what makes them so tough, they didn’t really lose anything,” Pixley said.  
“They’re one of the best teams on our schedule, probably the best, and we have to play them week one.”

Pixley and Stolzer are two of the longest-tenured coaches in Southeast Missouri - Stolzer has been at Ste. Gen since 1989, and has led the Dragons to the State Championship Game twice, including a win in 1992 - and their squads are both the favorites in their respective districts.

The ‘Cats and the Dragons are also both ranked in the top 15 of the preseason statewide sportswriter’s poll. Dexter cracked the top 10, squeezing in at No. 9 in the state, with the Dragons clocking in at No. 12.

Dexter comes into the game fresh off a solid showing in their preseason jamboree; the ‘Cats had a few players with slight dings last week, but no serious injuries are plaguing them this week. The stage is set for an outstanding contest between two of the best teams in Southeast Missouri tonight.

The final preparations have been made. The last bit of game tape has been analyzed. Coaches have thrown in their game plan. All that’s left is for the ‘Cats to take the field, and with a unified effort, hopefully come out on top.

“They are a very good football team and they are going to be a tough task,” Pixley said.  
“We’ve got to play tough and we’ve just got to keep playing hard and stay together. If we stay together and play hard we’ll have a chance.”

**Photo Above:**

*Head coach Aaron Pixley goes over the game with quarterback Cody Stevens during last week's jamboree.*

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*The ‘Cats are set to kick off their 2011 campaign at 7:00 p.m. Friday night. If you’re in town, head down to Charles Bland Stadium to catch this game - it looks like it’s going to be a great one! If you can’t go, make sure to check our **Facebook** or **Twitter** page for updates on the score of the game!*

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