

Eagles' Johnson entering 36<sup>th</sup> year of coaching

**By C.R. Cumbee**

**Staff Writer**

**Summerton**—When thinking about some of the longest working head football coaches in the state, it's easy to overlook someone in charge of a Class A program. But most haven't had the recent success that **Leonard Johnson** and the **Scott's Branch Eagles** have had.

Johnson began his coaching career 36 years ago and has made several stops along the way. Since taking over at Scott's Branch, he has turned the Eagles into one of the top programs in the smallest classification of schools, winning two of the last three state championships.

Most of his assistants are back for another year, including defensive coordinator **Ben Gibson**, defensive backs/running backs coach **Lamonte Curry**, offensive line coach **Clinton Bethune**, defensive ends coach **Steve Sisk**, and offensive line coach **Peter Huggins**.

"It's nice because you don't have to re-teach things over again. They know the system and the kids know what to expect from them so it makes things that much smoother," Johnson said.

In other sports, Curry is back as the baseball coach while **Ruth Coard** handles the volleyball and girls' basketball teams. Johnson does both the girls' and boys' track teams, **Steve Nelson** is boys' basketball, and **Emily DeAloia** is the softball coach.

"Our coaches have to work more closely than most others do because we share athletes. We only have about 250 kids in the school, half are males and the other half females. We try to encourage kids to participate in more than one thing. We're not a school where a kid can just specialize in one sport. We need them to come out in multiple sports," Johnson said.

New to the athletic department this year will be wrestling, headed up by Sisk.

"There are always some kids that I like to call 'tweeners' that aren't big enough to play football or aren't tall enough to play basketball. You want to have something that they can be involved in and I think wrestling is going to be a great addition to our program. Wrestling is Steve's passion so we got two things out of it. We filled a need and have a guy who has a passion for it that is going to build it up real well," Johnson said.