

# WASHINGTON COUNTY BULLDOGS

## BROTHER'S TRIBUTE

*Elijah Johnston switches to No. 1 jersey, hoping some of the WCHS glory of his brother, Dane Howard, will rub off on him*

BY TOMMY HICKS  
tommyhicks@thecallnews.com

Playing football at Washington County High School is a family tradition for freshman Elijah Johnston. As such, he's making a switch this season in an effort to take more ownership of that tradition — he has turned in his jersey No. 12 that he wore last season as an eighth-grader for jersey No. 1, which his brother, Dane Howard, wore when he played for the Bulldogs.

It felt like the right thing to do, Johnston said.

"When he was a senior he wore No. 1 and helped lead his team to the state championship game and I wanted to wear No. 1 like he did and hopefully we'll be just as successful," Johnston said of the change. "I wore No. 12 last year and I'm trying something new this year."

"He played here and graduated in 2012-13, the first time Washington County made it to the state championship. He was the quarterback. I was eight or nine years old then. Now I'm getting up here in high school and trying to fill his shoes."

Asked what he remembered about those days when his brother was leading the offense, Johnston admitted he doesn't recall much about the games themselves, but there are some vivid memories. "I remember me and my little buddies catching those little footballs the cheerleaders throw and just running around and playing around the stadium."

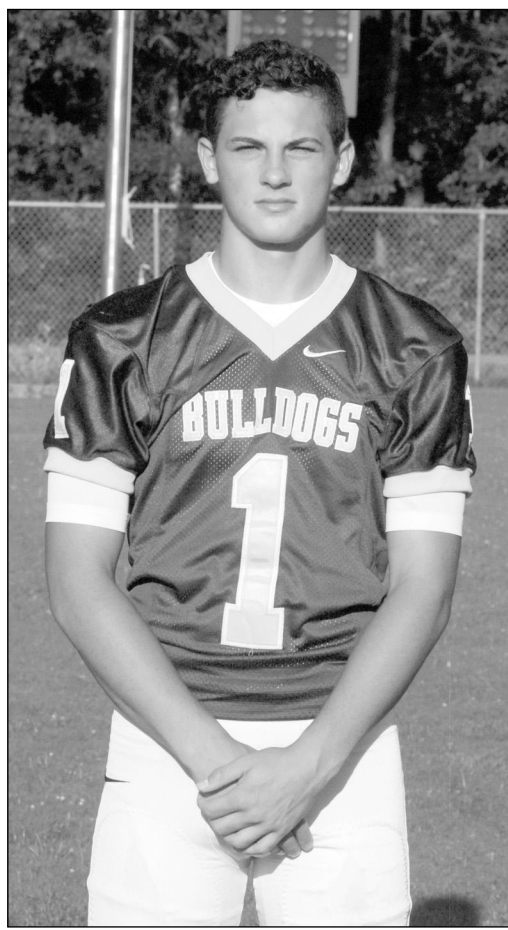
Now it's time for Johnston to create his own memories, at least that is the hope. He'll certainly get the opportunity to make plays for the Bulldogs this season as he will serve as the back-up quarterback to Cade Glass while starting at wide receiver on offense and at safety on defense.

"We don't have a team like last year, we've just got us," Johnston said. "We're going to play tough and we're going to play like Washington County is supposed to play. We're going to go out there and in the fourth quarter we're not going to let down, we're just going to go all out and play all four quarters."

"The way to make it happen is to put in the practice, put in the work in the weight room and not take anything for granted, just grind. If someone talks negative you just don't pay attention to it and put it behind you. Some people have said that we're going to be a horrible team this year, but we have put in plays, we've put in the practice, and I think it's going to be a successful year."

New head coach Devin Roberts has seen a lot from the freshman and he said he believes the future is bright for Johnston.

"Elijah is one who, with Cade's absence (in spring and early fall), he got a ton of reps at quarterback early on and in the (recent weeks) we've kind of moved him to use him at wide receiver," Roberts said. "When it comes to that skill player, he is probably our most game-ready guy at wide receiver and in the



Elijah Johnston

secondary. He has a chance to be special. For us to be able to put him out wide and have a threat out there (on offense), has made us a ton better.

"I think he's got a chance to be really special, and his level of commitment — he works so hard every day; he stays up here after workouts to study film and do some extra running and pulling sleds, anything he can do to get better he'll do it. ... I'm excited to be able to work with him over the next four years."

Johnston said he's excited to see what this year's team can do and he wants to be a big part of that plan.

"Last year I played safety some and started some. I made 68 tackles," he said. "And I'm going to play more offense this year. I feel like as a freshman, I have to perform just like the 12th-graders do. That's why I have to put more work in than the older players do."

"It is extra pressure, but I want to try and play college ball when I get older. I just want to help. If you're a ballplayer you can catch on to all of it. It's no problem."

He believes the players on this year's Washington County team have the proper approach to having a winning season, a season in which the team may be able to contend for the region crown and take its best shot in the Class 2A playoffs.

"The last few years in big games everybody got in arguments and such and I think that's why we lost," Johnston said. "This year, we're a family. If you play as a family good things are going to happen. Everything we do is as a family; if we win, we win as a family, and if we lose, we lose as a family."

## What's biggest about Carpenter is his heart

BY TOMMY HICKS  
tommyhicks@thecallnews.com

OK, so Logan Carpenter isn't the biggest offensive and defensive lineman in Washington County, nor on the Washington County High School roster for that matter. Nor is he the most gifted or dominating.

But as head coach Devin Roberts suggests, there aren't a lot of opponents who will enjoy their evening being matched up against the Bulldogs' senior, who plays much bigger than his physical measurements and creates more good plays simply by wanting to do so.

As such, Carpenter takes on an important role for the Bulldogs this season — a show-me leader who lets his actions speak for him. One of several returning starters along the offensive and defensive front, Carpenter and his buddies along those lines will determine much of WCHS's success, especially on offense, through their performances.

And Carpenter is good with that.

"Not really," he said when asked if there was extra pressure placed on the offensive linemen this season based on their experience and the fact many of the skill position players in the Dawgs' backfield will be new to those spots. "The only thing we've got to do is just stick to our tasks and just do what coach tell us and get it right in practice so we can get it right under the lights."

"Everybody is doubting us (the team) but we're going to break through I think."

Those thoughts come from a player with experience who is surrounded by teammates with whom he has played alongside for quite a while.

"We've been together for the past five years, all of us," Carpenter said of his offensive line mates. "We played JV ball together and we all grew up with each other. I think we're going to do all right."

"I think personally this team this year is better than last year, family-wise. We have come together better. If somebody gets down we say, 'It's all right, get back up, you've got another play coming up.' We're just there for each other."

That is especially true of Carpenter, according to Roberts.



Logan Carpenter

"To me, I think of him as a physical presence on the field," Roberts said. "Not physically, but the way he plays the game. He's got a very physical mentality, he's got a motor that doesn't stop and it's fun to watch a kid like that play who gives 100 percent, every play, every time."

A four-year member of the varsity team, Carpenter said he has worked hard since joining the team and can see how that effort has paid off for him now that he is entering his final season at WCHS.

"When I started I didn't think I was going to be able to play much, but coach (Reid) Utsey, he put a lot of work in with me and I just had to take it day by day and get better every day, just work every day."

Carpenter said he plans to continue that line of thinking this season, one he

hopes will be a big success for the Bulldogs.

"Everybody wants to play for a state championship," he said. "That's everybody's goal. My goal is just to have fun and go out there and bring everybody together and just let them have fun too; be there for them if they need it and just win, just win."


Can Washington County's offense, which will rely heavily on the rushing attack to take advantage of the experienced players up front, be the kind of offense that makes such goals a reality?

"It can be great if we put in the maximum effort by everybody," Carpenter said. "If everybody on the line does their job and everybody behind us does their job, we're going to be all right. We'll pass the test with flying colors. It will be great."

Customer Service from your Electric Cooperative: A Powerful Connection



Clarke-Washington Electric  
Membership Corporation

A Touchstone Energy Cooperative   
Since 1936



WASHINGTON  
COUNTY  
HOSPITAL

We wish  
all our teams a safe  
and successful season!

Quality Care, Close to Home

14600 St. Stephens Ave. • Chatom, AL 3518 • 251.847.2223

THE  
LAMBERT  
AGENCY, LLC



For All Your Insurance Needs



Logging • Mobile Homes • Personal • Commercial • Hunting Club Liability Home & Auto • Bonds  
Commercial Property • High Risk Welcome • ATVs • RV/Campers • Boats

GOOD LUCK TEAMS!

P: 251-847-3880 F: 251-847-6370  
16641 Jordan St. • Chatom, AL 36518

thelambertagency@millry.net, Owner: Jennifer Laurie Lambert