

FOOTBALL SPOTLIGHT - 2018

More weapons on offense, but lack of experience an issue once again

Coaches like talent level, but key parts of offense untested entering 2018

By **RUSSELL TURNER**
Herald Staff

There wasn't a lot of star-power on the offensive unit Mike King inherited in his first year as the head coach at GCHS. There were some really good athletes and some potential, but there was nothing on paper that suggested Greene County was a team that would average 30 points per game en route to 11 wins.

Nobody bothered to tell the GCHS coaches and players they were expected to be that prolific, or they chose to ignore the chatter. Either way, the 2017 Wildcats were hungry for success and bought into their coaching staff's plan. The end result was first-year quarterback Derrick Grice having a sensational year, putting up over 3,200 total yards, despite having never taken a varsity snap prior to the season opener. Players like Tagg Creech and Kyemonte Walker had stellar seasons too and drew praise for the way they played the game.

But, those players are no longer suiting up for the Wildcats and King entered the offseason once again with a lot of holes to fill and uncertainty at several key positions.

For the second year in a row, King will be dealing with a first-year quarterback with zero varsity experience. But as was the case with Grice, King is confident in the player he has under center.

Junior Jacob Mitchell joined the team for spring drills and quickly earned the starting nod. King says Mitchell is a well-rounded athlete with no glaring weaknesses as the Cats' signal caller.

"He has a good arm, gets rid of the ball quickly in passing situations, is mobile and intelligent, and makes good decisions with the ball," King said. "He has great field vision and one of the

things that I like the most is that when he misses with a pass, he typically throws it where nobody is going to catch it."

"He has been tough on himself, because in his mind he isn't progressing as quickly as he believes he should, but from my perspective he is well ahead. Jacob really understands what we are trying to do, understands the scheme and is a natural leader and a team guy."

Mitchell played well in the opener. He did have an interception returned for a touchdown, but that pass was on target and was picked off after bouncing off the receiver's pads. He finished with 152 yards and a TD on 22-of-32 passing and also had 35 yards rushing on 11 carries.

Backing up Mitchell at quarterback are junior Drake Henderson, who had a huge game at receiver in the opener, and freshman Connor West. King says Henderson has good size and raw athleticism, but his arm strength is what really makes him stand out. West, King added, is a "real up-and-comer" with a lot of upside. He will get a lot of reps on the JV squad and be a sideline signal caller, which will help grow his knowledge of the scheme and should help with his overall development.

Establishing the running game in 2017 took some time, but King anticipates that phase of the game to stronger overall right out of the gate.

Senior Santez Campbell is a big reason for that optimism. King says Campbell is the first true tailback he has had at Greene County, but also has the best ball skills on the team, which provides a lot of options as King feels comfortable using him in the running game and as a receiver out of the backfield.

"Santez added weight and muscle in the offseason," King said. "His skill set and ability to do a lot of things well will help take some of the pressure off Jacob."

Campbell definitely looked the part early against West Lauderdale when he broke loose for a 61-yard TD run on the very first play from scrimmage. The second tailback on the depth chart, senior Que Washam, also looked solid at times against West Lauderdale. Washam starts at slot back, but is

See OFFENSE
Page 6B

"It worries me that we have three guys on the starting unit that have never taken a varsity snap, but I still feel good about what this group can be."

ROTCH DUNGAN
GCHS Offensive Coordinator



Photo by Russell Turner / Herald Editor

GCHS junior quarterback Jacob Mitchell is shown pulling away from a defender during practice earlier this month. Mitchell is one of several key pieces on the Wildcat offense that show a lot of promise, but lack experience.



PROUD OF OUR WILDCATS

For all **INDUSTRIAL, COMMERCIAL**
or **RESIDENTIAL** Needs

Work Hard,
Play Hard
& Have A
GREAT
Season
WILDCATS!

Universal Services' mission is to provide quality services in a safe, reliable and environmentally sound manner. We strive to be the partner of choice by utilizing a team of professionals who work together to safely complete projects on time, while managing costs and exceeding our customers' expectations.

Quality Doesn't Cost... IT PAYS!




Ryan & Lana
Dobbins, Owners

(601) 394-4510

www.universalservicesms.com

1241 Hwy 63 N • Leakesville

Good Luck this season!



I ZAYAH

B R E E Z E

LOVE, Mama, Daddy & Krim