



Photo Courtesy of John Sims Studios

# Senior Wildcats ...

Members of the Wildcats' senior class have experienced good times and bad on the football field, but are hoping to end their high school playing careers with a bang. Shown (L-R) are Nick Jimmerson, Que Washam, Drake Walley, Santez Campbell, Eli Smith, Alex 'A.J.' Magee, Hayden West, Noah Mitchell, Garrett West, Blake Daughdrill, Weston McLeod, Jared Platt, Wylee Allen, Josh Cook, Jo'Vontre Higgins, Darby Ledet and Kevin Dortch.



## Expectations

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elevated since Coach Ainsworth set the standard back in the late 90s and we knew that coming in."

Apparently, this group of Wildcats wants to see that standard be the norm once again. King says the attitudes and effort have been very good and he is excited about what he is seeing from the GCHS student athletes.

"Eighty-plus kids turned out for every session we had this summer - 8 a.m., three days a week," King said. "This county is so spread out and all of our players don't have vehicles, so for us to have that many players to make it a priority to get here and be a part of that makes us feel really proud."

"We got a lot of work in this summer, both in the weight room and on the field. And, I expect that to make a difference. It's a big deal to be able to get guys stronger and build confidence."

Despite all that, the 2018 season could not have gotten off to a much worse start. After scoring on a 61-yard run on the very first play from scrimmage Friday night at Collinsville, things started going down hill for GCHS. They lost one of their top players to injury in the first quarter and never got their offense back in gear. The end result was a 25-14 loss to West Lauderdale and a lot of questions moving forward.

"We had a couple of plays were the difference in the game," King said. "And, when we lost Garrett (West), with all he does for our offense, we just didn't have an answer for getting any consistency on that side of the ball."

"It was a tough loss, but there were some bright spots. The players never quit, they kept playing hard. We just have to regroup, and depending on what we find out on Garrett, take a good look at who we are as a team and get ready for the next challenge."

That next challenge comes this Friday when the Cats travel



Photos by Shelley Mitchell / Herald Contributor



Offensive coordinator and offensive line coach Rotch Dungan is shown (Above) talking to members of his O-line unit during a break in action against West Lauderdale last Friday. The GCHS coaches expect some growing pains with an inexperienced group in the trenches, but like the competition among players and the depth in the group. Shown (Inset) is senior Garrett West being assisted off the field after an injury against the Knights. The extent of the injury was not clear at press time, but losing the versatile player would be a huge early blow to the Cats' offense.

to Lucedale for the Battle for the Bell. And, with adversity already staring the team in the face, West's comments when asked about the start of the season last week seem fitting. "It's a great feeling to have teammates that have been through it all together," West said. "We have worked really hard and bonded as a group through the summer and fall

camp and feel like we are ready to see what this season holds." Overcoming obstacles and playing hard despite the circumstances was a huge key to the Wildcats' success in King's first year. Whether they can harness that same approach this year, particularly over the next several weeks, will be huge in determining how far the Wildcats can go this year.

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