



Varsity Wildcats

The 2020 Greene County High School varsity squad is comprised of (Seated, L-R) Ethan Roberts, Gannon Henderson, Jacob Caver, Parker Errington, Jace Lott, Keaton Hollinghead, Braden Brewer, (Kneeling) Phillip Herring, Caleb Stanford, Woodard Eubanks, Cole Hillman, Garrett Henderson, Camereon Dunnam, Caymon Floore, Jackson Dueitt, (Standing) Peyton Roberts, Kade Kittrell, Drake Henderson, Conner West, Malachi Graham, Bradley Snyder and Dylan Miller.

Photo by Russell Turner / Herald Editor



Expectations

"We believe we are now to a point where we should expect to win every game we play. Other teams expect us to battle them, no matter who that team is."

That should be particularly true this season with a good core of experienced players coming back, including six seniors. Drake Henderson, Peyton Roberts, Dylan Miller, Malachi Graham and Kade Kittrell played huge roles for GCHS a year ago and are back for their senior seasons. Soccer standout Bradley Snyder was a solid contributor as well as a junior and Chatham expects him to play an even bigger role this season. Names like Conner West, Brayden Brewer and Jace Lott might not be quite as familiar, yet, but Chatham says they are among a group of underclassmen who will be counted on to help GCHS reach its lofty goals for 2020.

"We are hoping that this good group of experienced seniors will help bring along and compliment the young core of players that we will also be counting on this year," Chatham said. "There could be times this year where we have five sophomores on the field at once."

Schedule is no easy ride for the Cats

While the Cats may have been underestimated by opponents in the past, that isn't likely in 2020. Add that fact to the difficulty of the non-region schedule Chatham has put together and the quality of their opponents in Region 7-4A, and it is easy to see the Cats will have their hands full reaching the goals they set heading into the campaign.

So far, the Cats have looked the part. They kicked off 2020 with wins over Richton and Laurel in scrimmage action at home two weekends ago. Rains have impacted the scheduling, but Chatham picked up a previously unscheduled game with perennial power Petal and came away with a 2-0 win over the Panthers at PRCC in Poplarville last Friday. They followed that with wins over Natchez and Columbia on Saturday to get out to a 3-0 start to the regular season.

"Getting the win over Petal was big for us to give us some momentum," Chatham said.

"But, it wasn't a shock. I think it shows that we are at a point where we expect to win those types of games."

The Cats were set to play George County at home on Tuesday and have a rematch Friday in Lucedale. They will follow that with matchups against Citronelle, Perry Central, East Central, Vancleave and Bay High before ever getting into region play.

Those are some key tests for the Wildcats, because once region play kicks off on March 17 against Purvis, the gloves really come off.

"We play in one of the toughest districts in the state of Mississippi," Chatham said. "I really feel like our division is solid top to bottom. You could probably ask any coach in our district and they would agree that whoever finishes last in our district could finish first in most other districts."

"I, however, enjoy playing in a tough district. It gets us battle tested for the playoffs, and I think our division being so tough played a huge role in us going deep in the playoffs last year."

Getting out of region play and back into the playoffs is no given with the likes of Purvis, Forrest

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County, Poplarville and Sumrall in the way, but the Cats expect to not only compete for a playoff berth, but also compete for the region's top seed. As far as preparing for the playoffs, sprinkling in non-region games with the likes of West Jones, Oak Grove, Pascagoula and West Marion in the second half of the season will make certain the Cats aren't intimidated by lineups they expect to face in the postseason.

But, even with high expectations, Chatham knows not to get the cart before the horse and will work to keep his team focused on one game at a time. If the Cats can do that, and stay healthy along the way, things should get interesting around Scott Bray Field in April and May.

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