

# Former Cats excelling at collegiate level

Multiple GC alums still competing on gridiron while working toward degrees

By RUSSELL TURNER  
Herald Staff

The amount of uncertainty surrounding college football has been just as bad, if not worse, than the fog around high school football.

Over 40 percent of all FBS teams and several major conferences have cancelled their 2020 fall football seasons. The Big Ten and the Pac-12 are the Power 5 conferences that have announced cancellations of their seasons, while mid-major conferences like the Mid-American Conference and Mountain West Conference have followed suit. All of the Power Five conferences, at a minimum, made major adjustments to their 2020 schedules, which in turn caused independent schools to scramble to find opponents to fill their schedules.

Mississippi's big three schools, Mississippi State, Ole Miss and Southern Miss, will all play this season, but the SWAC schools have postponed their seasons until spring. And, in the junior college ranks, the Mississippi Association of Community Colleges Conference has postponed the season until Oct. 1 and shortened the regular seasons of the state juco teams a six-game schedule, with divisional play only, and a playoff. One of the bigger shockers was the announcement from Scooba that powerhouse East Mississippi Community College would not compete in fall football this season due to concerns over Covid-19.

Those are big changes and will impact a host of former GCHS Wildcats continuing their educations while playing football. Four of those former players are at Pearl River Community College in Poplarville.

Returning starters Noah Mitchell and Hayden West are back for their sophomore seasons and are being joined by freshmen Josh Bolton and Eli Erkart on the Wildcat roster for new coach Seth Smith, formerly of East Central High School. Mitchell had a standout season in 2019 and entered this season as a JCGridiron.com Preseason All-American. Mitchell led the PRCC defense as a freshman with 92 tackles and three sacks and his 11.4 tackles-per-game ranked fourth in the country.

Mitchell had a breakout performance against No. 1 Gulf Coast, racking up 23 tackles against the eventual national champions.

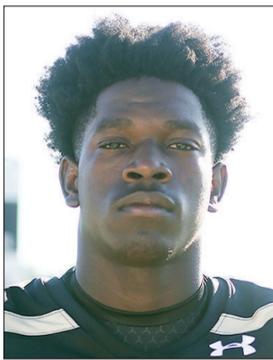
West had a big season for PRCC last year as well, starting every game for the Wildcats at center. He is looking to maintain that spot this year under new offensive coordinator David Chatham, who took over the position after the sudden departure of former Greene County coach Mike King who left GCHS for PRCC in December.

Bolton and Erkart join the PRCC squad after stellar careers at GCHS. They were both named to the All-

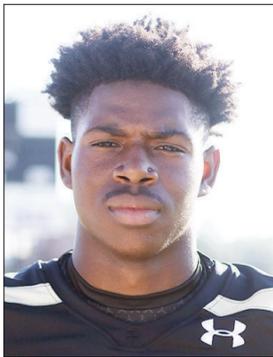


Photo Courtesy of Troy University Sports Information

Troy University junior guard Jordan Chapman is shown during a recent practice. The former Jones College standout is among several GCHS alumni standing out on college rosters this year.



**Anthony Blakely**  
Mississippi Valley State Univ.



**Fred McGee**  
Mississippi Valley State Univ.

Region team for the Region 7-4A Champs last year.

"Hayden and Eli are both battling for playing time on the offensive line," Chatham told the Herald. "They are working hard and learning our scheme."

"Josh is making strides on the defensive line and getting a lot of reps in camp. Noah is a leader on defense and we are looking forward to seeing what he does on the field this year. All of these guys fit our culture here at PRCC very well."

Several former Wildcats are also headed to 4-year schools after successful stints at the juco levels themselves over the past few seasons.

Former East Central Community College standouts Anthony Blakely and Fred McGee are now on the roster for Mississippi Valley State University Red Devils, who as part of the SWAC, will play their games in spring 2021. Blakely started all nine games for ECCC in 2019 and recorded 40 tackles, including 28 solo stops and six tackles for a loss. McGee was a regular starter in the defensive backfield for the Warriors and finished with two interceptions and 38 tackles.



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