

# More experienced lineup should bode well for Wildcats' run production this season

With Cats' top producers returning to lineup, GCHS expected to be more explosive in 2022

By **BRAD CROWE**  
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*Herald Staff*

The Wildcats weren't a power-house offensive team a year ago, averaging just under four runs per game. But, they found ways to compete each time out and ended the year having played in 13 games decided by two runs or less.

The Cats had zero games where they produced double-digit runs, but also allowed 10-or-more runs only once during the season. With several heavy hitters returning to the Wildcats' batting order for the 2022 season, including five of the team's six highest batting averages from a season ago, GCHS hopes to provide a lot more run support for the pitching staff. With a nice balance of power, efficiency and experience throughout the lineup, Greene County baseball fans have good reason to expect they will do just that.

Head Coach Nick Chatham feels good about their lineup as well. Chatham said first-year assistant coach and hitting instructor Josh Banashak has made an immediate impact and believes his hitters will get stronger as the year progresses as they get more at-bats against top-tier pitching. "One of the things about playing the type of teams we face in non-region play is that we see a lot of quality pitching. Our guys have held their own thus far and even when we haven't gotten big hits, our guys have learned from it and gotten better."

The first four names on the early-season batting order are each returning members of last season's All-District squad. Junior Collin Pipkins, who boasted a team-high batting average of .280 with 12 runs and 10 RBIs during his sophomore campaign appears to have secured the leadoff role. Through the seven games heading into this week, Pipkins had posted a .375 batting average with four runs scored and three RBIs.

Senior Jace Lott, who posted a .221 batting average with nine RBIs and a pair of runs a year ago, is a lock at the No. 2 spot on the lineup. Lott said he believes that while he and



Photo by Brad Crowe / Herald Staff

GCHS Head Coach Nick Chatham taps knuckles with Jonathan Nicholson to acknowledge the junior's effort after he had slid safely into third base during opening day action at Lucedale. Nicholson, one of several multi-sport student athletes on the GCHS roster this season, is part of an athletic and experienced lineup Chatham has put together in his sixth season as the Wildcats' head coach.

his team didn't light up the scoreboard a year ago, they were able to shake off a little rust from the season lost to COVID in 2020.

"COVID hit a lot of us younger guys hard when they cut our 2020 season short because it (cost us) a lot of at-bats that could've given us more experience going into last season," Lott explained. "I definitely think hitting took the most work for us because we struggled badly at the plate, and you can't replicate live at-bats."

A fifth of the way through 2022, Lott's words are ringing true as he is proving to be a tough out for opposing teams. Coming out of the George

County game this past Saturday Lott was leading the lineup with 10 hits, a .417 batting average and a .481 on base percentage.

Batting third will be the Wildcats' returning home runs leader, junior Phillip Herring, who blasted four homers and produced eight runs, 17 RBIs and a .256 batting average as a sophomore. The slugger had not 'gone yard' entering this week, but was swinging the bat pretty well even though his average at the plate didn't reflect it.

Chatham said he and his staff are highly impressed by the swift development of their junior class, having seen Herring and Pipkins step up

Have a Great  
*Sophomore*  
YEAR

PEYTON

Love,  
Mama  
&  
Daddy

GO WILDCATS

Good Luck

WILDCATS  
& LADY CATS!

Cary E. Williams

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GREAT THINGS

whether in business or on the playing fields,  
are rarely accomplished by one person or a single player.  
The most amazing accomplishments come  
when individuals work together as a team!

BEST OF LUCK

Wildcats

OUR TEAM wishes you the  
very best this season  
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JONATHAN

GOOD LUCK  
*this Season!*

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JUNIOR YEAR

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DADDY, MAMA, MELANIE & DREW