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SPOTLIGHT 2022

Lady Cats feature young, but tested and talented lineup

GCHS looks to have roster to compete for region title repeat and more in 2022

By **BRAD CROWE & RUSSELL TURNER**
Herald Staff

For Greene County softball, the 2022 season comes with several unique storylines. It could be called a season of firsts, with head coach Tyler Barham and his wife Mia having welcomed their first-born daughter Blayke to their team a couple months prior. It could be called a season of new beginnings, as the team begins competition in a newly aligned region against several new rivals. But don't call it a rebuilding season for the Lady Cats, who

are retaking the field with a roster that's loaded with talent and ambition, eager to maintain the momentum amassed in 2021 and take their program to new heights and achievements. "I told our girls that this isn't a rebuilding year for us. It's a reloading year," Barham said. "This year's team returns six players who started in playoff games." "The younger players received tons of experience, both from a playing standpoint or an emotional standpoint." Last spring, the Lady Cats bid farewell to their former region rivals on a high note as Region 7-4A champions, finishing the season with a 16-5 overall record and a 7-1 record in region play. Their postseason run, however, was cut much shorter than they had hoped, as they dropped a best-of-three series to Florence in the team's first

playoff appearance since 2016. GCHS also said farewell to five valuable seniors who graduated last May. That leaves some big holes to fill, with two returning seniors and a host of talented, and now experienced, underclassmen, Barham has every reason to feel confident heading into the heart of the season. And, having a group that remembers both the sweet taste of success and the bitter taste of their final defeat, doesn't hurt either. "I believe it's only propelled this program, leaving our girls hungry to get back to where they finished last year," Barham said. Competition is well underway for the Lady Cats, who are taking on a tough non-district schedule featuring the types of competition Barham hopes will put his team to the test before reaching the region portion of their schedule. The

Lady Cats claimed a pair of wins over Forrest County Agricultural and Gautier dur-

ing their first week of action. A shutout pitching performance from junior Taylor

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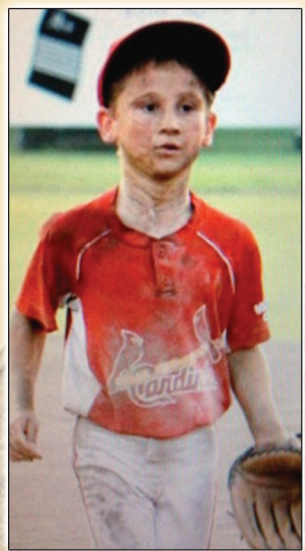
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