

Schedule



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Being selected to represent their team as a game captain is a big honor for any GCHS Wildcat. Typically, game captains are selected by coaches as a reward for effort at practice, team leadership, etc. Shown walking out to participate in pregame instructions and the coin toss at Vancleave are (L-R) Luke Barfield, Trey Snell, Chad Rester, B.J. Johnson and Keenan Franks.

“They wore us down in the second half and kept their foot on our throats,” King said. “That’s what a good team does in that situation.”

The Wildcats had several opportunities to get back in the game in the final two quarters. A fumble deep in Vancleave territory ended one promising Wildcat possession. Then a 65-yard reception by freshman Jase Matthews was wasted as the Cats came up just short on long fourth-and-goal-to-go play. King kept the play alive with his legs and appeared to have found tight end Andrew Lott for a TD. But, while the senior came back to make a nice diving catch for the completion, he came down just inches outside the endzone to turn the ball over on downs. Two plays and several missed tackles later Vancleave’s sideline erupted with the big run by Peterson.

GCHS did not lie down, however, and put together a nice final drive to score. King and Matthews connected on a couple of big completions and sophomore Cole Helton hauled in a 2-yard TD pass to make the final score 49-20.

Cats have to build depth and experience, but can do so with plenty of football left to play

The matchup with Vancleave was part of the normal routine for Greene County, as the Wildcats have become accustomed to playing a tough early-season schedule. The rugged early-season gauntlet is meant to help GCHS get ready for what promises to be a difficult region race, with all five

teams in 8-4A having post-season ambitions.

That ‘process’ began when the Cats traveled to Columbia in mid-August for a jamboree matchup with the reigning 4A state champions. It continued against Vancleave.

With another 5A opponent coming up this Friday at George County and a pair of 6A schools in Hancock and St. Martin coming to Johnny Ainsworth Field the next two weeks there will likely be a few more tough lessons to learn. But, the Wildcats are hoping the lessons will come with a few wins as well.

They will host a solid Perry Central team on Sept. 23 for the final warm-up before starting region play.

“What I’ve learned is that if you can test yourself early, once you get into your region, it becomes a little easier,” said King. “But there can be some discouragement, some injuries.

“I mean, you always want to win every game you play, but when you play schools that have triple your enrollment, you have to frame it as, ‘this is making us better.’ Then in good years, you can beat some of those teams. So it’s a balancing act.”

The Wildcats’ rivals to the south dropped a 19-14 decision to Gulfport making the Rebels the only upcoming non-region opponent for the Wildcats to lose their opener. St. Martin, Hancock and Perry Central each had impressive wins to start the season with the Yellowjackets upending Stone County by a 20-13 margin and Hancock blowing past Pearl River Central in a 35-0 shutout. Over in New Augusta, Perry Central used its size along the offensive and defensive lines to roll up a 46-20 win over Richton. Northeast Jones, who the Cats will play later in the year

between the final two region games, defeated Northeast Lauderdale 17-7 in their opener last Friday.

The Wildcats open region play at home on Sept. 30 against Bay High a team with high expectations in 2022. That is followed by road games at Moss Point and Stone, then a non-region game at Northeast Jones before the season finale October 27 at home against Pass Christian.

The Pirates were the only Region 8-4A to claim a victory in their season opener, claiming a 56-20 win over Long Beach. Moss Point dropped a 12-23 decision to rival Pascagoula, while Bay fell to West Harrison by a 28-7 margin.

King said he has seen the results from other games, but doesn’t read a whole lot into them just one game into the season. So, despite just one win among region teams to start the 2022 campaign, King knows there are some tough matchups that lie ahead. He expects each of the region foes to get better as the season progresses, but maintains high hopes his team will as well and will not only be in a good position to get back to the post-season, but hopefully finish as one of, if not the region’s top team.

“It would be huge for us to

get a home playoff game,” said King. “The frustrating thing about my three years here before was the second-round curse. We won our first-round game all three years, but we just could not get past that second round.

“So, that’s the elephant in the room. Can we get out of the second round of the playoffs. We haven’t been able to do that the last few times we’ve made it to the playoffs. So that’s one of our milestone goals. But, first, we have to get there.”

That journey continued earlier this week when the Cats began preparations for week two of the season and a matchup with rival George County.

“We hope to be able to get some good weather and get in some good practices this week in preparation for George County,” King said. “It’s a big rivalry game and its important to the players, coaches and fans to come out and play well.”

“As coaches, we will be working to keep our guys focused and working hard, while trying to get them to stay away from the distractions, such as the social media banter, that go along with this type of game.”

The Rebels started their opener against Gulfport on Friday as part of a season opening double header at

2022 FOOTBALL SPOTLIGHT

Milner Stadium. Harrison Central and Oak Grove tangled in the first game, pushing the Admirals and Rebels to play into the early morning hours of Saturday.

The Rebels held a slim lead at halftime, but could not hold on for the win as they suffered some of the same early season issues as the Wildcats did in their loss.

George County is led offensively by highly-touted

sophomore quarterback Duece Knight. The youngster has talented playmakers around him, but Rebel offense goes through him. Defensively, the Rebels’ strength lies in a big and aggressive defensive front.

Game time is set for 7:30 p.m. Friday in Lucedale. Tickets are available on www.GoFan.co and will also be available at the gate for \$7.

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Photo by BRAD CROWE / Special to the Herald

Sophomore quarterback Coby King is shown picking up yardage against Columbia. The youngster had a big first-game for GCHS, throwing for 300 yards in his first varsity start.



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