

GCHS aiming for consistency as Prentiss takes the reins as coordinator

New coach, new scheme and lots of new faces for GCHS defense

By STAN CALDWELL and RUSSELL TURNER

As the 2022 football season gets underway, the Greene County Wildcats find themselves in an all too familiar situation on defense. That's right, the Wildcats are rebuilding once again.

GCHS enjoyed several years of consistency with former defensive coordinator Jacob Aycock, but since Aycock left to take the same position at Poplarville, the Wildcats have had to adjust to a new defensive coordinator each year. They hope, however, they have found a longterm answer among the hometown ranks this season as county native Caleb Prentiss takes over the reins.

The turnover at the defensive coordinator position is one that Head Coach Mike King was not expecting to deal with in the offseason once again. However, he said he could not be happier that Prentiss accepted the challenge.

"Coach Prentiss has come in and challenged our guys on the field and in the weight room, while at the same time holding them accountable for how they handle themselves off the field," King said. "He brings the right balance of making them do right, while also bringing that toughness on the field."

"He has a way of relating to our kids that is one of the best things he brings to the table."

Prentiss is a former Greene

County standout himself. He first joined the Wildcat coaching staff as offensive line coach in 2012 and has held down a few different roles with the Wildcats over the years. He was not a part of the Wildcat coaching staff last season, but says he could not be happier to be back this year.

Under Prentiss, the Wildcats will go back to a 4-3 defense, which the program employed during King's previous tenure at Greene County.

"All the teams we've had here before had some success with that defense," King said. "It seems like it fits the kind of kids we have here."

"We'll be inexperienced, but I expect our defense to come on pretty quick once those guys gel, because we have some really good athletes on the defensive side of the ball."

Coaches are really high on sophomore middle linebacker Jairon Brown, a player they expect to develop into a top producer on the Wildcat defense.

"He reads guards really well," said King. "And I know it's a cliché, but he's got a nose for the football. He's usually at the right place, where he's supposed to be."

Prentiss agreed.

"We put alot on him as a sophomore, but he has responded well," Prentiss said. "He is smart and has remained positive even though we took some lumps in the jamboree and season opener. He played well in both games and we expect big things from him this year and in the future."

Rounding out the linebacker group will be senior Zane Denson, junior Gavin Green and sophomore Landon Green.

Denson has not played varsity football at GCHS, but has been a bright spot since joining the program. Prentiss said he is a player that has proven he is willing to do whatever he needs to do to help the team, as



Photo by SHAE ROGERS - Herald Contributor

Sophomore middle linebacker Jairon Brown is shown (Above) tackling the Vancleave quarterback for a loss in last Friday's matchup. Also shown are sophomore Levi Erkhart (65), senior Luke Barfield (13), junior Treyvon Cooper (4) and senior Zane Denson.

demonstrated at Vancleave when he stepped over to defensive end.

Gavin Green did not play last year and could not be with the team in spring practice, but Prentiss said the junior worked on his own to get stronger in the offseason and has been another pleasant surprise.

Landon Green saw playing time as a freshman for GCHS and coaches are hoping he will have a breakout year as a sophomore.

Another sophomore the Wildcats are counting on for stops is defensive tackle Tony McLeod. On the edge, expect senior Luke Barfield to play a major role on defense for Greene County.

"We're very excited about Tony McLeod on the interior of our defensive line," said King. "Luke Barfield is one of our team leaders, someone who does things the right way and gives 100 percent all the time, in practice and in games."

McLeod was not available for the opener at Vancleave due a non-football medical issue, but will be back with the team this week. His absence definitely hurt

against the Bulldogs, but may have been a blessing in disguise.

"We had to shuffle a lot of guys around to try to cover for Tony being unavailable," Prentiss said. "We had some guys playing different positions and we struggled lining up properly at times, but hopefully we grow from that."

"We had two offensive linemen, Trey Snell and Levi Erkhart, that came over and helped bail us out. We

See DEFENSE / Pg 11-B

Have a GREAT Sophomore YEAR

Annah-Bryce

WE LOVE YOU!
Daddy, Mama, Asher, Anderson & Avery



Photo by SHAE ROGERS - Herald Contributor

Greene County junior Bryson 'B.J.' Johnson will likely have his biggest impact for the Wildcats this season with the ball in his hands. However, Johnson is also an experienced defensive back and will be called upon to play on the defensive side of the ball from time-to-time in 2022 as well. He is shown her (12) coming up to cut off Vancleave's quarterback near the line of scrimmage in last week's matchup with the Bulldogs.

As Your Chancery Court Judge I Promise to be FAIR & IMPARTIAL....

But that doesn't apply when our Wildcats take the field

LET'S GO CATS!

Have A Great Season.

Judge D. Neil Harris

Chancellor - Mississippi's 16th Judicial District

Proudly Serving the People of Jackson, George & Greene Counties