

CHS' Jackson, Knox going to EMCC

BY ADAM MINICHINO (contact)
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When Bubba Davis has established the Columbus High School football program as a winner, he can look back on the 2009 season and thank Chris Jackson and Rickey Knox.

Although the Falcons missed out on their goal this season of making the playoffs, Davis knows Jackson and Knox played integral roles in helping the Falcons turn the corner.

“They were our best two senior players this year,” Davis said. “They did a great job for us. They were here with us for two years and came a long way. They both got stronger and learned a lot of football. Like I told them, they were a big part of helping us to get to the point where we are ready to turn this thing around. A lot of the things they did are going to benefit the younger kids.”

The leadership Jackson and Knox showed this season is one reason both players will continue their football careers at the next level. The CHS standouts made it official Wednesday when they signed scholarships to play football for coach Buddy Stephens at East Mississippi Community College.

Jackson, a 5-foot-9, 175-pound linebacker, led the team with 115 total tackles (61 solo). He also had two sacks, and two pass breakups.

Knox, a 6-2, 270-pound right tackle, averaged out with a 90 percent blocking grade this season, which was one of the best on the team.

“Chris was probably our vocal leader,” Davis said. “He played real fast because he has a lot of speed. He was strong. He wasn’t big, but pound for pound he is one of the stronger kids we had.

“Rickey is big and strong. He made us a little more solid up front just because of his size and power. We are just proud for them. Coach (Jim) Hamilton and coach (James) Richardson both helped them a lot.”

Jackson played two years on the varsity football team at Columbus High. He said associate head coach William Jones contacted his mother a couple of weeks ago and said that he would like to have him visit the campus. Jones picked Jackson up at school the next day and took him to Scooba. He gave a verbal commitment the same day.

“I wasn’t expecting (the call from my mother),” Jackson said. “I didn’t know what she was calling about.”

Even though the call might have been unexpected, Jackson said he would sign with a school to play football. He just didn’t know where that school would be.

Now that his plans are set, Jackson said he is going to make the most of the opportunity, whether it be on offense, possibly at running back, or on defense (linebacker or secondary).<P

“I have been striving for (a scholarship for a long time), and I never had a down point or a time I didn’t think I was going to make it,” Jackson said. “I always have been positive. I want to make the best out of everything.”

Knox said his recruiting process went just as quickly. He said he visited the Scooba campus last week and committed the same day.

“The coaches are very good coaches, and you can tell they are strict and will get on you,” Knox said. “They are real down to earth people. For a junior college, they have the best facilities, and they have a very good program set up down there.”

Knox said he will have to get stronger and work on his footwork to make the transition to EMCC.

Stephens said Knox should have plenty of chances to earn playing time. The Lions graduated all five of their starting offensive linemen and two backups. He feels Knox and New Hope High’s Ryan Hollivay each will have an opportunity to be in the mix to see action on the line and Jackson will have the same chance somewhere.

“Hollivay and Knox two very, very good off linemen,” Stephens said. “We feel like those are diamonds in the rough. We think they’re going to be outstanding Division I linemen if they come in and do what they’re supposed to.

“Chris Jackson is going to come in and be an impact guy, especially on special teams. We think with him getting after it a little he will get into the mix on the depth chart (on defense).”

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