

# 21 Chelsea Seniors Sign to Play at The Next Level



BY LOYD MCINTOSH

If you need proof that Chelsea has some of the best student-athletes in the state, check out this statistic: In March, 21 student-athletes from Chelsea High School signed letters of intent to play sports at the next level. Beginning this fall, rosters of community colleges and universities from all over the Southeast will feature names of athletes who wore the Hornets jersey proudly and are ready for the next phase of their athletic careers.

Leading the way are a pair of players, Romello Cooper and Jackson Reynolds, who helped lead the Chelsea football team to six straight wins to open the 2024 season and earn a spot to the 6A playoffs.

Cooper, a 6 foot, 3 inch defensive end, will play college football locally at Samford University. Chelsea Head Football Coach Todd Cassity said Cooper is not only a great athlete, but an exceptional student as well and believes Cooper has the

potential to contribute immediately as the Bulldogs look to improve on a 4-7 record in 2024.

“He has really worked hard over the past four years to put himself into a position to be able to sign with Samford both on the field and in the classroom,” says Cassity. “He was probably one of our fastest players and was very strong in the weight room. He improved his pass rush over the past few years, and I expect Samford is excited to see that continuing to improve as they see him at the edge position.”

Cooper said he popped up on Samford’s radar screen after running the 40-yard dash in 4.53 seconds at a local football camp. The performance caught the attention of offensive line coach Shawn Bostick, who, Cooper says, offered him a scholarship almost immediately.

“After I did some individual drills, Coach Bostick came over to me and said, ‘You’ve got an offer from us,’” explains Cooper, adding that everything from Samford’s culture to the coaching



staff has been a perfect fit. "It felt like home to me."

Reynolds, a 6 foot, 2 inch, right tackle, signed with Maryville College, a small, private NCAA Division III in east Tennessee. Cassidy says Reynolds' desire to develop his skills will serve him well in Maryville.

"His character and work ethic to improve every year has been his key to being able to sign with Maryville," says Cassidy. "Jackson was a very good run blocker for us, as he had a great punch. He also had great feet to allow him to move well for an outside linebacker."

Among the other athletes signing with 4-year universities are Sydney Carroll and Lauren Buchanan. Carroll, a 6 foot, 2 inch senior currently playing first base and pitcher for the Hornets and a key player with the Hornets' softball team since the eighth grade, will take her skills to the Magnolia State post-graduation.

"I would like to announce that I have made a decision to continue my softball career at Mississippi State," announced Carroll on her X profile.

Carroll's accomplishments include leading the Hornets in home runs in 2022, 2023, and 2024, and was named to the AHSSA All-Metro First Team in 2024.

Buchanan, a 6 foot, 1 inch outside hitter on the Chelsea volleyball team, signed to play college for the Texas Tech Red Raiders.

"Lauren is an exceptional player that can do it all! She is a versatile attacker that can attack with aggression and hit shots. Lauren has strong leadership skills and is a great teammate," wrote Chelsea High School Volleyball Coach Jamie Gill on the recruiting website Field Level (fieldlevel.com). "We are so proud of you. Your hard work has paid off and we can't wait to see what you accomplish as a Red Raider. Wreck 'Em!"

Among the athletes choosing the junior college route is soccer player Harper Jones. A 5 foot, 9 inch midfielder, Jones will attend Wallace State, as the junior college looks to restart its men's soccer program after the program was discontinued in 2013 due to a lack of in-state competition.

Chelsea Head Soccer Coach Lee Miller said Jones' on-field toughness and leadership qualities will make him a valuable asset to the new Wallace State soccer team.

"Harper Jones has been a great player in our program. He's a hard-nosed competitor, a ball winner, a great distributor, and a leader," says Miller. "We are so proud of his hard work and development, and Wallace State is getting a top-quality young man and an excellent soccer player!"

Haley Trotter, a six foot power forward/shooting guard for the Chelsea girls' basketball team, signed to play for Shelton State Community College. Trotter was a leading force behind the Lady Hornets historic season, advancing to the AHSSAA 6A State Championship game in March. Trotter, the winner of multiple local and state awards including the Alabama Sports Writers Association First Team All-State, will join a Shelton State program that advanced to the 2024-25 NJCAA DI Women's Basketball National Championship game on April 1.



**Romello Cooper will play football at Samford.**

## CHHS athletes headed to play collegiate sports

- Sydney Carroll, Mississippi State softball
- Lauren Buchanan, Texas Tech volleyball
- Romello Cooper, Samford football
- Hannah Quick, track and cross-country at South Alabama
- Payton Hunsaker, Nicholls State baseball
- Paxton Stallings and Aiden Hughes, Coastal South Community College baseball
- Cade Mims, Georgia Highlands Community College baseball
- Chase Lackey, Gadsden State Community College baseball
- Mack Breazeale, Southern Union Community College baseball
- Katie Hopson and Emma Parmley, Marion Military Institute softball
- Alaysha Crews, Snead State Community College softball
- Juliette Edwards, Alabama-Huntsville track and cross country
- Conner Campbell, Lee University track and cross country
- Jackson Reynolds, Maryville College football
- Lila Willett, Pearl River Community College volleyball
- Harper Jones, Wallace State Community College soccer
- Harper Carter, Southern Union Community College soccer
- Haley Trotter, Shelton State Community College basketball
- Austin Jones, Covenant College, golf