

Chambers On His Way To Ferrum

Written by Mike Kelly
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Watauga High senior Kyle Chambers finally made thing official on a rainy Wednesday afternoon in the WHS Media Center. Chambers, who became WHS' first 1,000-yard rusher in four years last fall, will play college football this season at Ferrum College, a Division III school in Ferrum, Va., and a member of the USA South Conference. And Chambers will be joining

a football program that is highly successful at the Division III level. The Panthers were 7-3 last season 6-1 in league play.

"I'm real excited about this opportunity," he said. "I've wanted to play college football since I was a little kid. They have a very good program, and I'm glad they thought enough of me to make me a part of their program."

And Chambers had his suitors during the recruiting process. Mars Hill, Wingate, UNC-Pembroke, Baldwin-Wallace (Ohio), Washington & Lee University, Emory & Henry, Whittenbury (Ohio), Methodist, Liberty and the University of the Cumberland were among the schools that showed an interest in Chambers. But Ferrum won out in the end, thanks to running backs coach Chris Warren.

"And that was the selling point for Kyle," said WHS coach Tim Pruitt. "Kyle and his family really feel Ferrum is a good fit for him. It's a Division III school and it will give him an honest chance to earn some playing time as a freshman and possibly even a starting spot. Their running backs coach (Warren) is a former NFL running back, and he really connected with Kyle on his visit." Warren played in the National Football League for the Seattle Seahawks for ten years. He was a three-time All-Pro selection, and Warren is also a Ferrum alum.

"You can't beat what he brings to the table as a running backs coach," Chambers said. "I'm learning from one of the best. He told me that I had a chance to play a lot as a freshman, and he'll make me a better player. I really like their style. They play a spread offense like we did here at Watauga. They have a good system with their running backs, and I get to play for a three-time Pro Bowler. It was a good fit for me."

And Chambers was Warren-like last season as he rambled for 1,402 yards and 17 touchdowns. He was the first 1,000-yard rusher at WHS since Eric Breitenstein in 2007. Breitenstein is a red-shirt senior at Wofford College, and one of the top running backs in the country in the Football Championship Series.

"My teammates and my coaches had a lot to do with it," he said. "I couldn't have done it without them. But I really put in the work last off season. I really wanted to have a big senior, especially after I got injured late in my junior year. It was a scary situation, but I bounced back from it." Chambers suffered a neck injury late in his junior year. But the WHS senior came back with a vengeance last season. After he was held to minus three yards rushing in a season-opening loss to A.C. Reynolds, Chambers broke through by gaining 120 yards and scored twice in a 32-14 win against Ashe County the following week.

"Kyle is a gifted athlete," Pruitt said. "He's fast, he's strong, but he really worked at it. When we finished our spring activities last spring, Kyle finished first in four of those five activities. And he didn't rest on his laurels. He really led our guys by example. He took that challenge and did a great job for us. He was the first one in the weight room, and the last one to leave. He's a quiet leader, and he had a great season."

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And Chambers isn't one to shy away from hard work. He's willing to put in the time, especially in the weight room.

"I passed up hanging out with the guys last summer," he said. "I just dedicated myself to working out. I was aware of Eric Breitenstein when I got here. He's a great player and someone to look up to. I got to meet him at a camp here, and his work ethic was real impressive. He's constantly talking about his work ethic, and he's always putting in the work. He's a blue collar guy. it really motivated me."

Chambers wants to major in sports management at Ferrum. His goal is to be a weight-lifting coach or a fitness instructor. And while he praises Breitenstein about his work ethic, Chambers isn't too far behind. Weightlifting, working out, devoting his time to bettering his skills has become a daily routine.

"I just love working out, and I love playing football," he said. "I'm not afraid to put in the hard work. My older brother got me into weightlifting when I was in the sixth grade. And I just haven't put it down since. And it's paid off with this opportunity. I just have to keep working at what I love doing. My goal is to just keep getting better."

And that's bad news for opposing teams.