



Photo by Sophie Fernandes.

Featured: A FUTURE WITH FOOTBALL: Varsity running back JaQua Daniels and cornerback Rayshawn McCall, seniors, signed to play at Marshall University and Davidson College, respectively. "Growing up, (football) played a big role," McCall said. "I didn't realize it until high school--just teaching me toughness," McCall said.

WITH OR WITHOUT FOOTBALL

When the lights go out and the final season is over, football players at any level must find themselves outside of the sport.

STORY AND LAYOUT BY JOHANNA HALL
Sports Editor

Senior cornerback Rayshawn McCall began his quest to play college football during his freshman year at Clarke Central High School. Four years later, after receiving multiple offers from colleges, he made the decision to play for Davidson College.

"I liked college football. Me and my mother would always sit on the couch and Saturday mornings, all through Saturday, watching college football," McCall said. "I decided to go to Davidson because not only will I be playing Division 1 football, I will receive a rich education at a college that is built on trust, honesty and dedication."

Senior offensive lineman Anthony "Pop" Smith says he is working to improve his grades so he can fulfill his hopes of playing football in college.

"I haven't gotten any offers, but a lot of coaches (are) looking at me. I'm working on my ACT and SAT scores," Smith said. "I think I'll be getting some more calls from coaches, but I need to take care of my school first."

Despite the aspirations of these two student-athletes and student-athletes nationwide, a study conducted by the NCAA found only 6.5 percent of high school football players go on to play in the NCAA.

According to CCHS Athletic Director Dr. Jon Ward, it is not until their final games of their senior season that most players begin to comprehend this reality.

"You play your last game of football, there's nothing that you can do that can ever simulate that. You can play soccer, baseball, basketball and intramural pickup but there's never a situation where you put the equipment back on and play 11-on-11 football," Ward said.

CCHS 2008 graduate and former offensive tackle Trevino Woods, who played at the University of Kentucky, knew that once the final game of his senior season in college ended, football would no longer be a part of his life.

"Physically, I did not want to lift another weight, I didn't want to run another yard, I was done with that physically, but emotionally, as soon as the clock ticked on my last game, I knew I'd never play football ever again," Woods said. There's almost like a grieving process with that.

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--TREVINO WOODS,

former CCHS and University of Kentucky offensive tackle

For Woods, the realization his football career was over hit hard. "I think it goes back to those guys that's been reinforced in their minds and it's been kind of pounded like, 'You're going to be this big NFL star' and once that clock strikes zero and it's like, 'O.K., my chances of going to the NFL are slim-to-none,'" Woods said.

According to Woods, who picked up a football for the first time in his junior year at CCHS, it is not purely talent that earned him a scholarship to the University of Kentucky, but a combination of coachability, academics and discipline.

"I think the biggest factor would've been grades. I wasn't a straight-A student, but I did what it took to get commendable grades," Woods said. "I was coachable and that just means being able to listen well to what your coaches are telling you and to do those things to the best of your ability."

Ward believes without these components, an athlete is not likely to play football in college.

"It's the kid with the ability to run extra sprints, spend extra time in the weight room, spend extra time on the field and also along the way to have done what is

necessary academically to be qualified to go play at the next level," Ward said.

Physical education department teacher Ahren Self was the head football coach from 2013 to 2016 for McCall and senior running back JaQua Daniels, who will play for Marshall University. He has seen the time and effort the athletes put into both their academic and athletic careers.

"Their hard work, their effort, everything, all the time, blood, sweat and tears they've put into this program, into school with their academic work and out there on the football field, because of their dedication and their effort and their hard work, (they have) earned the the opportunity to get a free education at the next level," Self said.

Daniels feels he has been positively influenced by the sport.

"It keeps me out of trouble," Daniels said. "When I was young, I used to be in trouble a lot, so when I started playing football it changed."

Smith agrees and believes football has also kept him on the right path through life.



Photo courtesy of CCHS Athletic Department.

Above: FUNDING A FUTURE: Former CCHS offensive tackle Trevino Woods went on to play at the University of Kentucky after graduating from Clarke Central in 2008. He committed to play at UK his junior year, also his first year of playing football. "They sent me an offer for a full-ride scholarship," Woods said. "I called him up and said, 'Hey, I'm giving my verbal commitment now.'" **Right:** DREAMING A REALITY: Clarke Central alumnus Alan Posey sits at the table where he initially signed to play at University of Tennessee in 2011. After transferring to Mercer University in 2013, he is now finishing his senior year at UT not playing football. "Growing up, it's always something you look up to college players and NFL players that sort of thing so it was always the kind of childhood dream," Posey said.

"Sometimes, I noticed when I wasn't doing football, I was doing the wrong things," Smith said. "Football has motivated me to go somewhere in life. (For) some people, it might just be like, they just want to be successful, but football is the reason I want to be successful."

For players who do not make it to the next level, accepting that football will no longer be a part of their lives can be difficult.

"Once that dream ends, that reality hits, then it's obvious that's not going to happen for them, there's sometimes a little bit of depression there," Woods said.

Former CCHS lineman Alan Posey, who graduated in 2011, went on to play at the University of Tennessee before transferring to Mercer University. He has seen players struggle to find themselves once their football careers ended.

"You see even today, guys who get done playing in the NFL and they've been football players all their life and it ends. They don't really know what to do with themselves," Posey said.

Posey recounts that he personally felt this sense of confusion.

"I have always identified myself as a football player, even from an early age, and when it ends, you don't have that identity anymore and it's kind of a weird place to be in, to create a new identity for yourself and figure out who you are and what your passions are," Posey said. "It's a transition, and you have to sit back and take some time off and realize what you like and who you are when your football days end."

"If you're willing to work and you're willing to work with others, you can win football games. I think that's a similar formula for being successful in life."

--ERIK KRIEBEL,
former CCHS academic coordinator

When Woods' football career ended upon graduating from the University of Kentucky in 2013, he found himself outside of the sport.

"It's like losing something that you've done for so long, and it's something that you love. It's not exactly like losing a person, but it's close. It's something that you've done and your whole identity is football, especially on that college level," Woods said. "But as you get older, as you start working, you find your identity in other things."

Posey agrees that once a player can get past the initial disappointment of not playing football at the next level, they are able to move on from the sport.

"I have seen guys (who) didn't get the opportunity, and I think it bothers (them), but eventually gets to the point where you realize that there are other things besides football," Posey said.

According to Ward, the CCHS football program is not just focused on training athletes, but also enhancing qualities in them that will benefit them throughout life.

"What we hope is that the program here at Clarke Central, whatever sport it might be, will provide (players) with the opportunity to have a great experience playing at the high school level in that sport, and then develop qualities that will allow them to be successful in whatever endeavor they choose after high school," Ward said.

Former CCHS academic coordinator Erik Kriebel, who is now the defensive coordinator at Oconee Middle School, works to instill

lifelong skills in his players.

"Working your absolute hardest can get you a long way," Kriebel said. "You may not always be the fastest or smartest person, but if you're willing to work and you're willing to work with others, you can win football games. I think that's a similar formula for being successful in life."

Even after he stopped playing football, Posey's coaches encouraged him to stay on the academic track.

"When I used to talk to (former CCHS offensive coordinator Forrest Paulson) and even my college coaches at Mercer, I told them that I didn't want to play football anymore and they said, 'Well, whatever you do, make sure you get your degree, whether you're going to go back to Tennessee or wherever it might be, go get your degree,'" Posey said.

Woods now works as a sales consultant for AT&T and Posey has returned to UT to finish his degree in geography. Though it has been three years since Woods last played football, the qualities he developed in the sport are still present to this day.

"Any job I've ever had, football translates directly," Woods said. "Some lesson you learn from football, whether it's the discipline aspect, or the different approaches, being responsible, teamwork, those things all translate into some sort of job in some way."

Through coaching his athletes both on the field and in the classroom, Kriebel attempted to prepare them for life after football.

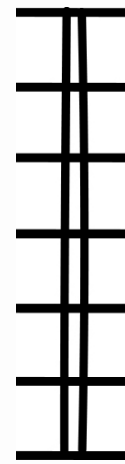
"I tried to constantly remind my players that football is going to end. The average NFL player plays three seasons, so if you're lucky enough to be that one percent that gets to play in the NFL, your career will probably be over by the time you're 25, and you have a whole life to live after that," Kriebel said. "Having character, having an education, those things will remain with you your entire life."



1,086,627
High school
football players

70,147
NCAA players

254
NCAA drafted
for professional



6.5%
High school to
NCAA

1.6%
NCAA to
professional

0.08%
High school to
professional

THE ROAD TO THE PROS

Infographic by Johanna Hall.
Statistics from NCAA.org.

Photo by Julie Alpaugh.

