

Sports

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UCHS QB Cole Wright gives verbal commitment to Army-West Point

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Earlier this month, Union County quarterback Cole Wright announced his commitment to Army-West Point, becoming the first Panther football player to accept a scholarship offer from an FBS (Football Bowl Subdivision) school since Blake Gowder signed with Vanderbilt during the 2009-10 school year.

Wright visited West Point in July and he received an offer from the prestigious military academy. Three months later, he chose Army over Kennesaw State and Furman to become the second consecutive Union County quarterback to play at a Division I school (Joseph Mancuso) and the third overall under head coach Brian Allison (Robbie Brown - Georgia Tech).

Through three varsity seasons -- two at quarterback -- Wright has found the endzone 68 times. On the ground he's totaled 32 touchdowns with another 32 coming through the air. He also added four receiving scores as a sophomore wide out in 2015.

At East Hall on Oct. 13, Wright set a school record with 536 total yards -- 436 passing and 100 rushing. For his career he has 6,207 total yards: 3,521 passing, 2,316 rushing, and 370 receiving.

Last weekend the *North Georgia News* was able to catch up with Wright and Coach Allison to discuss his college decision and what the future holds for the Class of 2018 QB.

NGN: How much have you been in contact with the Army coaches since you visited over the summer?

CW: I talk to the offensive coordinator about once a week. He's calls to check on me and to see how the games are going. Then I called him to say I was ready to commit (on Oct. 9). He's a really good guy.

NGN: What other schools showed interest?

CW: KSU (Kennesaw) invited me to a couple of games and I went to one, but I couldn't make the next one they invited me to. Furman started off very interested and I talked to the



Recent Army commit Cole Wright (8) is swarmed by teammates following a long TD run at Gilmer County earlier this season. Photo/Todd Forrest

head coach for about 30 minutes but that went cold after they signed another quarterback.

NGN: Did you ever hear back from Mercer?

CW: No I didn't. They talked to some of our (UCHS) coaches about me but they never contacted me.

NGN: At what point did you know Army was your choice? Then how long did you spend contemplating the decision before you called the coach?

CW: I've definitely put a lot of thought into this because this is planning out the next nine years of my life, when you count the five years of service after (school). It was a big decision but it's a great school where I can play football at the highest level. And really, it was a no-brainer the more I would think about it.

NGN: What other people helped you with your decision? Family, coaches, anyone else?

CW: My parents, most definitely. I talked about it a lot with my dad. He talked about what a big deal it is for our family because we've never had

anyone play football on a full scholarship. But (my dad) was the biggest influence.

Then probably the offensive coordinator at Army (Brent Davis), he really played a major role in my decision. He's a great guy and I look forward to spending the next four years up there with him.

NGN: Was there anything else that sold you on Army?

CW: I joke around about this a lot, but there was a big carton full of popcorn in the food court and I said to my dad, "where do I sign?"

But just the history of the school and the great views of the Hudson (River), it was awesome. That place is beautiful. It was like Hogwarts from *Harry Potter*.

NGN: Do you have a date set for when you're going to enroll?

CW: I'm working on admissions right now and I'll sign in December. I should get up there in early-July to finish my boot camp right before school starts. It's an abbreviated boot camp so I think it's only four

weeks (long).

NGN: It seems like more football players from Union County and northeast Georgia are getting noticed than in previous years. How are guys like Joe (Mancuso), Charlie Womerner (Rabun Co.) and yourself defying the stereotypes that are often attached to athletes from mountain schools?

CW: That's something that we would like to do. As athletes, we want to go out and prove ourselves at the highest level. And like you said, not many of us get this opportunity so I'm hoping that more scouts and recruiters will start looking at northeast Georgia and take notice of the talent that we have, because we definitely have some very good ball players.

NGN: As a freshman you broke your leg, then you were moved to receiver as a sophomore, moved back to quarterback as a junior, and finally this year you've dealt with nagging injuries and adversity. You're a perfect example of someone who excelled individually while always putting his team first and doing what needed to be done.

What advice would you give to younger players who want to reach the next level but are afraid that injuries or position/role changes will hurt his/her college future?

CW: Whatever position the coaches decide to put you at, always give it your all. When it comes to injuries, if you think it's something you can play through and you're dedicated to your team and want to play for your brothers, then I say go for it. But if it's something that can be injured worse or possibly ruin your life, I'd say you have to make the grown up decision and not play.

NGN: Any advice you'd give on dealing with the recruiting process and making a college decision?

CW: Do not stress about college. Enjoy high school. You only get 40-something games, if you make the playoffs, and you need to enjoy those as much as possible. Enjoy hanging out with your best friends but definitely don't worry about the college decision and just keep working your butt off and (opportunities) will come

to you.

NGN: Anyone you want to thank?

CW: I definitely want to thank Coach Allison and my family for everything they've done for me.

NGN: (To Coach Brian Allison) How does Cole compare to the other quarterbacks you've coached in the past? Most notably, quarterbacks like Mancuso, Kolt Owenby, and Robbie Brown that played at the next level?

BA: He's a different type of quarterback than those other guys. The game is a little different now with the spread offense, but compared to Joe (Mancuso), he's not as big but he's a little more elusive as a runner.

NGN: What have you enjoyed most about coaching Cole?

BA: Just being able to watch the progression he's made since he was a freshman and only got to play a couple of games because of an injury. Then he stepped into the wide receiver role as a sophomore so I've really enjoyed watching how he's progressed over the last three or four years.

I hate that he got hurt against GAC. I would have really liked to have seen just how dynamic he could've been during those middle games while we were struggling.

NGN: What role did you play during his recruiting process? What advice did you give him?

BA: I just told him to keep all of his options open and be open to any situation. Sometimes when people hear "military academy" they say, "I don't want to be in the military" but it's more than that. It's a heck of an education and you come out of there as a leader and an officer (in the Army) so your degree is in leadership as much as it is anything else. Then the sky's the limit on what you can do with a degree from there. No matter what your major is.

NGN: Anything you would like to add about Cole?

BA: He's had some pretty good players around him. He's had some receivers and offensive linemen that have worked very hard and have helped him out along the way.



Cole Wright leads his teammates in a pregame prayer at Hayesville, NC earlier this season. Photo/Todd Forrest



Cole Wright evades the grasp of a North Hall defender to fire a pass downfield. Photo/Todd Forrest

#	NAME	GAMES	CMP	ATT	CMP %	YDS	YDS/ATT	YDS/GAME	LNG	TD	INT	SACKED
8	C. Wright	8	110	192	57.29%	1,508	7.85	188.50	71	17	3	1
17	P. Allison	8	20	27	74.07%	224	8.30	28.00	50	4	-	-
3	K. Hemphill	1	1	2	50.00%	29	14.50	29.00	29	1	-	-
	Rest of team		-	3	0.00%	-	0.00	0.00	-	-	-	6
Total:			131	224	58.48%	1,761	7.86	220.13		22	3	7

#	NAME	GAMES	CARRIES	YDS	YDS/CARRY	YDS/GAME	LNG	TD
8	C. Wright	8	73	780	10.68	97.50	63	11
24	C. Buzzard	8	105	501	4.77	62.63	24	4
15	C. Dockrey	7	31	181	5.84	25.86	43	3
17	P. Allison	8	4	29	7.25	3.63	10	-
3	K. Hemphill	1	1	29	23.00	23.00	29	-
22	A. Paltee	8	2	11	5.50	1.38	10	-
6	S. Sutton	3	3	9	3.00	3.00	6	-
2	C. Schafer	7	1	7	7.00	1.00	7	-
14	R. Barrett	5	2	5	2.50	1.00	10	-
25	U. Montelongo	1	2	4	2.00	4.00	4	-
14	E. Strayer	1	1	-6	-6.00	-6.00	-	-
	Rest of team		10	-43	-3.31	-5.38	10	-
Total:			238	1,501	6.31	187.63		18

#	NAME	GAMES	REC	YDS	YDS/REC	YDS/GAME	LNG	TD
21	S. Drake	8	25	510	20.40	63.75	71	7
22	A. Paltee	8	31	328	10.58	41.00	23	3
4	K. Hemphill	7	21	238	11.33	34.00	40	3
16	L. Dyer	6	12	187	15.58	31.17	32	1
2	C. Schafer	7	7	132	18.86	18.86	43	1
84	K. Morlock	7	11	120	10.91	17.14	20	4
20	C. Rich	7	12	105	8.75	15.00	28	-
24	C. Buzzard	8	6	73	12.17	9.13	36	2
16	N. Underwood	1	1	29	29.00	29.00	29	1
15	C. Dockrey	7	3	29	9.67	4.14	14	-
12	S. Dobbins	7	2	14	7.00	2.00	10	-
	Rest of team		1	4	4.00	0.50	4	-
Total:			132	1,769	13.40	221.13		22

Union County offense 2017 season statistics (through 8 games). In the above statistics, No. 25 Peyton Ivester is incorrectly listed as 'U. Montelongo' and No. 14 Riley Barrett is incorrectly listed as 'E. Strayer.'