

Austin Peay Football 2023 Signing Class

Athlete	Ht.	Wt.	Pos.	Hometown	High School	Previous School
Tahir Annoor	5-11	195	DB	Nashville, Tenn.	Nashville, Tenn.	Wofford
Zach Avina	6-2	205	LB	Huntington Beach, Calif.	Palm Desert HS	Golden West College
Jaden Barnes	5-9	160	WR	Fairburn, Ga.	Langston Hughes HS	
Frank Caldwell III †	6-2	215	LB	Smyrna, Ga.	Pace Academy	
Jeremiah Collins	6-2	160	DB	Murfreesboro, Tenn.	Oakland HS	
Marceo Collins	6-3	265	DL	Ringgold, Ga.	The Baylor School	
Carson Conner ‡	6-4	280	DL	Picayune, Miss.	Picayune Memorial HS	East Mississippi CC
Malaki Dowell	5-10	185	RB	Sparta, Tenn.	White County HS	
Josiah Drake	6-3	275	OL	Duncanville, Texas	Duncanville HS	
Javen Edmiston	6-1	215	LB	Summertown, Tenn.	Summertown HS	
Matthew Flint ‡	6-0	240	LB	Huntsville, Ala.	Madison County HS	Western Kentucky / North Carolina
Leo Gonzalez †‡	6-4	295	OL	Lenoir City, Tenn.	Lenoir City HS	
TJ Hartley	6-0	172	K	Fayetteville, Ga.	Whitewater HS	
Brenen Hawkins	6-3	211	WR	Colleyville, Texas	Heritage HS	Kansas State
Garrett Hawkins †	6-2	220	LB	Sevierville, Tenn.	Sevier County HS	
Benji Johnson ‡	6-4	215	DB	Hooks, Texas	Hooks HS	New Mexico
Tyler Long ‡	5-11	222	LB	Cincinnati, Ohio	Hughes STEM HS	Lackawanna CC / Norfolk State
Khatib Lyles	6-1	218	WR	El Paso, Texas	Parkland HS	North Texas
Jaden McKinney †	6-4	280	OL/DL	Collierville, Tenn.	Collierville HS	
Kyan Miller †	6-3	230	DL	Lexington, Ky.	Henry Clay HS	
Ashton Nickelberry †‡	5-10	184	WR	Brandon, Miss.	Brandon HS	Jones County JC
Michael Ruttlen Jr.	5-9	195	DB	Mount Juliet, Tenn.	Mount Juliet HS	Princeton
Courtland Simmons	5-10	185	ATH	Nashville, Tenn.	Davidson Academy	
MJ Singleton †‡	5-10	170	WR	Lubbock, Texas	Monterey HS	Garden City CC (Kan.)
Marquez Taylor	6-0	170	RB	McKenzie, Tenn.	McKenzie HS	
Griffin Throneberry	6-2	205	ATH	Mt. Juliet, Tenn.	Mt. Juliet HS	
Ty Watkins	6-3	220	QB	Cumming, Ga.	South Forsyth HS	
Kaden Williams	5-9	180	RB	Thibodaux, La.	St. James HS	
Ty Williams †	6-4	276	OL	Greeneville, Tenn.	Greeneville HS	
Dane Woodard	6-9	345	OL	Carthage, Tenn.	Smith County HS	

† - signed during December early signing period (8), ‡ - early enrollee/mid-year transfer

February Signing Class Biographies

Tahir Annoor

5-11, 195, Cornerback, Nashville, Tennessee (Wofford)

Prior to Austin Peay: Played four seasons at Wofford (2019-22)... 2022: Played in all 11 games for the Terriers, finishing with a career-best 50 tackles (33 solo) and three fumbles recovered... Had a season-best seven tackles against Mercer (Oct. 1)... The next week had six solo tackles at Samford and recovered a fumble (Oct. 15)... Held without a tackle against The Citadel (Oct. 15) but recovered a fumble for the second-straight game... Closed the season with 16 tackles in his final three games... Had five tackles, a fumble recovery, and two pass breakups in home final against VMI (Nov. 12)... **2021:** Played in ten games with seven starts in the secondary and recorded 36 tackles on the season... Against Kennesaw State (9/18) had one tackle and recovered a fumble... At ETSU (Oct. 2) led the team with eight tackles and had a pass break-up... Added three tackles against Furman (Oct. 9)... Had seven tackles against Samford (Oct. 16)... At Mercer (Oct. 23) had four tackles and a pass break-up... Started against Western Carolina (Oct. 30) and had five tackles... Had five tackles against Chattanooga (Nov. 6)... At The Citadel (Nov. 13) had three tackles... **2020-21:** Started four games at safety and recorded 23 total tackles... Named Second Team All-Southern Conference by the coaches... Against Mercer (2/20) had six tackles and a pass break-up... Added six tackles at Chattanooga (2/27)... At Samford (March 13) had seven tackles... Recorded four tackles against VMI (March 27)... **2019:** Played in ten games, finishing freshman season with seven tackles... At VMI (9/28) had two tackles... Added two tackles at ETSU (Oct. 5)... In the FCS Playoffs against Kennesaw State (Nov. 30) had a solo tackle...

High School: Played defensive back for four seasons at Brentwood Academy, winning a state championship each season... As a senior for coach Cody White, had 70 tackles and two interceptions on defense and added 600 receiving yards and six touchdowns on offense... Earned All-State, All-Region and Tennessee All-Star honors following the season... As a junior, was named All-Region with 30 tackles and two interceptions on defense and eleven touchdowns on offense... Also was a four-time state champion as a sprinter on the track team...

Scotty Walden on Annoor... "We are excited to bring this Brentwood Academy product back home! Tahir is a really good athlete and comes from a family of athletes. He covers a ton of ground in the back end and does a great job making plays on the football. He won a state championship at Brentwood Academy and will bring that winning pedigree to the Black Reign and our program!"

Zach Avina

6-2, 205, Linebacker, Huntington Beach, Calif. (Golden West College)

Prior to Austin Peay: Played one season at Golden West College... **2022:** Recorded 17 tackles, one sack, and six pass breakups in 11 games... Made debut with three tackles against Orange Coast (Sept. 3)... Notched second three-tackle game the following week against Palomar... Broke up a pair of passes at Saddleback (Oct. 22)... Posted three solo stops, a sack, and a pass breakup against San Diego Mesa (Nov. 5).

High School: Played linebacker and defensive line for head coach Shane McComb at Palm Desert High School... Finished senior season with 10.5 sacks, 45 tackles, three forced fumbles, four recoveries and a blocked punt... Named *The Desert Sun's* 2021 Defensive Most Valuable Player.. Also competed on the wrestling team.

Jaden Barnes

5-, 160, Wide Receiver, Fairburn, Georgia (Langston Hughes HS)

High School: A wide receiver for head coach Daniel Williams at Langston Hughes High School... Helped Langston Hughes claim the 2022 GHSA Class 6A State Championship... Caught eight passes for 152 yards and a touchdown in the state championship game against Gainesville... Named to GPB All-Finals Team... Finished season with 44 receptions for 1,179 yards and 15 touchdowns... Named to Recruit Georgia's Class 6A All-State Team... Also competed on the track and field team... Member of Langston Hughes Class 6A State Champion 4x200-meter relay team and silver medal 4x100 team... During the 2022 outdoor season ran a 10.92 in the 100-meter dash and a 22.46 in the 200-meter dash.

Scotty Walden on Barnes... "One of the most explosive playmakers in this class, he runs just under 11 flat in the 100 meters and won a state title this season playing for one of the most dominant football programs in the state of Georgia. The stat that caught our eye with Jaden was that he averaged 30 yards per catch! That is a stat we value at receiver, and we have never signed a guy that averages that many yards per catch! We are excited to add this explosive playmaker from the state of Georgia to the Red Flash!"

Jeremiah Collins

6-2, 160, Defensive Back, Murfreesboro, Tennessee (Oakland HS)

High School: Played senior season in all three phases of the game under head coach Kevin Creasy at Oakland High School... Member of Oakland's 2022 TSSAA Class 6A State Championship team... Helped the Patriots reach the title game, returning the opening kickoff 99 yards for a touchdown in state semifinal game against Maryville... Averaged 57.3 yards per kick return, amassing 516 yards on nine kick returns with two touchdowns... Also had 15 receptions for 212 yards and two touchdowns... Defensively, he recorded 21 tackles, an interception, six passes defended, and blocked a field goal... Began prep career at Male High School in Louisville, Kentucky... Finished junior season with 19 tackles, a tackle for loss, a sack and two interceptions while helping Male High School claim KHSAA 2021 Class 6A runner-up spot... A three-star recruit by ESPN... Ranked No. 14 player in Tennessee and No. 36 nationally by 247Sports.

Scotty Walden on Jeremiah Collins... "Jeremiah is the total package. A state champion at Oakland High School for Coach Creasy, he is a 3-star recruit, a top-20 ranked player in the state of Tennessee, and he backs it up. He is extremely long at 6-2 and runs like the wind. He can cover man-to-man and is a weapon with his speed as a returner. We are thrilled to keep this dynamic playmaker at home for the Black Reign!"

Marceo Collins

6-3, 265, Defensive Lineman, Ringgold, Georgia (Baylor School)

High School: A defensive lineman for head coach Eric Kimrey at Baylor School... Part of Red Raiders 2023 TSSAA Division II-AAA State Champion team... Credited with tackle for loss in state championship game... Also competed in track and field and wrestling.

Scotty Walden on Marceo Collins... "I can remember when I first walked into Baylor School and saw Marceo working out. I knew then and there he was a D1 guy! He is a big, physical defensive lineman that has great ball get off, which he showed at our satellite camp in Chattanooga. He helped guide Baylor School to a historic run this year by winning a state title. We are excited to add his toughness and strength to the Black Reign!"

Carson Conner

6-4, 280, Defensive Lineman, Picayune, Mississippi (Picayune Memorial HS/East Mississippi CC)

Prior to Austin Peay: Played two seasons at East Mississippi Community College (2021-22). **2022:** Played in 10 games for the Lions, recording 12 tackles and a tackle for loss... Posted a season-best three tackles – with two solo stops – at Northeast Mississippi, Oct. 13... Picked up a tackle for loss against Mississippi Gulf Coast, Nov. 5... Had a tackle in the Mississippi Association of Community and Junior Colleges to help the Lions claim the 2022 conference title over No. 2 Northwest Mississippi, Nov. 13. **2021:** Played in just two games for the Lions... Recorded a tackle in back-to-back contests against Mississippi Delta, Sept. 16, and Holmes, Sept. 23.

High School: Played defensive line for coach Cody Stogner at Picayune Memorial High School... Posted 200 tackles, 51 tackles for loss, and 15 sacks during his prep career... Recorded 53 tackles, 12.0 tackles for loss, 2.5 sacks as a junior, a safety, and returned a fumble for a touchdown during his junior season... Helped lead the Maroon Tide to a 14-1 season and a runner-up finish in the 2019 Mississippi High School Activities Association 5A State Championship... Also lettered in baseball for the Maroon Tide, hitting .226 with 14 runs batted in, 8 runs scored, and three doubles during his senior season.

Scotty Walden on Conner... "We were looking for a nose guard in this class and Coach Jones did a great job finding Carson Conner out of East Mississippi Community College, one of the most prestigious junior colleges in the nation. Carson is strong and quick off the ball for a 280-pounder. He has enrolled early and is already working out with our team. Gov Nation come check this guy out in spring ball clogging up holes in the middle for the Black Reign!"

Malaki Dowell

5-10, 185, Running Back, Sparta, Tennessee (White County HS)

High School: A running back for head coach Mark Frasier at White County High School... Helped lead Warriors to the program's first playoff victory... In 12 games, ran for 3,201 yards and 40 touchdowns on 299 carries, the second most rushing yards in TSSAA history... Had a 472-yard, seven-touchdown game against Cookeville... One of three finalists for 2022 Tennessee Titans Mr. Football Award in Division I Class 5A... Named to Tennessee Sports Writers Association All-State 5A Team... Main Street Preps All-Midstate Offensive Player of the Year... Region 5-5A Most Valuable Player... Ran for 2,029 yards and 22 touchdowns in nine games as a junior after recovering from a knee injury that shortened his sophomore season.

Scotty Walden on Dowell... "In my opinion, one of the most versatile players in the state. Malaki is one of the leading rushers in not only Tennessee, but the nation as well, averaging 10.7 yards per carry! Everyone he played knew he was getting the ball and they still could not stop him. He has unbelievable balance and vision at the running back position. I am beyond excited to add such a versatile and explosive weapon to the Red Flash!"

Josiah Drake

6-3, 275, Offensive Lineman, Duncanville, Texas (Duncanville HS)

High School: An offensive lineman for head coach Reginald Samples at Duncanville High School... Helped lead Duncanville to Texas UIL Class 6A Division I State Championship and undefeated season in 2022... An 11-6A First Team All-District Offensive Lineman.

Scotty Walden on Drake... "Josiah played for one of the nation's most dominant high school teams at Duncanville High School in Dallas. He has played and dominated elite competition and helped lead his team to a state title this year. I was blown away with his combination of size and athleticism. He has great feet for a big guy, and we feel he can play in space and move people in the box against their will. I was blessed to coach his brother, Jeremiah, several years ago and it is really cool to watch this come full circle. We are blessed to have Josiah and his awesome family join our family here in Stacheville!"

Javen Edmiston

6-1, 215, Linebacker, Summertown, Tennessee (Summertown HS)

High School: A linebacker and running back for head coach Jason Busby at Summertown High School... Finished career with 343 tackles, 1,169 rushing yards, and 599 receiving yards... Amassed 90 tackles and 10 tackles for loss as a senior while rushing for 504 yards and three touchdowns... As a junior, rushed for 505 yards and six touchdowns while posting 96 tackles... 2021 Region 5-2A Co-Defensive Player of the Year... 2021 Tennessee Academic All-American powered by scoutSMART... Also played basketball.

Matthew Flint

6-0, 240, Linebacker, Huntsville, Alabama (Madison County HS/ /North Carolina/Western Kentucky)

Prior to Austin Peay: Played two seasons at North Carolina (2018-19), earning his undergraduate degree in just three years in Chapel Hill and then played two seasons at Western Kentucky (2021-22). **2022:** Played in seven games... Had a solo tackle in the season opener against Austin Peay, Aug. 27... recovered a fumble and returned in five yards at Hawaii, Sept. 3... Added another tackle against FIU, Sept. 24. **2021:** Appeared in 13 games and recorded 15 tackles in his first season at Western Kentucky... Had a season-best three tackles – with all three being solo stops – at Rice, Nov. 13... Closed the season with multiple tackles in three-straight games with three tackles at Marshall, Nov. 27, and two tackles at UTSA, Dec. 3, and Appalachian State, Dec. 18. **2020:** Chose to opt out of the 2020 season at North Carolina before announcing his intentions to transfer to Western Kentucky. **2019:** Appeared in two games for the Tar Hills... Picked up a tackle against Miami, Sept. 7. **2018:** Played in a pair of games, recording three tackles and a half tackle for loss... Posted his first-career tackle in his collegiate debut against Pittsburgh, Sept. 22... Added two tackles and a half tackle for loss against Western Carolina, Nov. 17... received a redshirt for the 2018 season.

High School: Played linebacker and wide receiver for coaches Scott Peavy and Scott Sharp at Madison County High School... Recorded 124 total tackles and an interception during his senior season... Also had 33 receptions for 425 yards and scored seven total touchdowns as a senior... Earned 4A First Team All-State honors and was selected to play in the Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Classic... Was ranked a three-star recruit by *247Sports.com* and *Rivals.com* as a linebacker... Also played basketball for the Tigers.

Scotty Walden on Flint... "I am excited to add Matt to our family! He and I have had a relationship for five years, dating back to when I recruited him at Southern Miss. Matt is a very intelligent player; he is also very athletic and physical. He played multiple positions in high school and is very versatile. I am excited to add his playmaking ability and maturity to the Black Reign and our program."

Brenen Hawkins

6-3, 211, Wide Receiver, Colleyville, Texas (Kansas State)

Prior to Austin Peay: Spent the 2021-22 seasons as Kansas State, redshirting in 2021 and did not play in 2022.

High School: Played his senior season at Heritage under head coach Kirk Martin, helping the Panthers earn an 8-2 record and a trip to the regional round of the 5A Division I state playoffs... Played his junior season at Godley High School, posting 50 receptions for 963 yards and 14 touchdowns... Earned honorable mention all-state honors as a junior from the Texas Sports Writers Association and Texas Associated Press Sports Editors in addition to first-team all-district honors.

Scotty Walden on Brenen Hawkins... "Brenen grew up near my hometown in Texas and was a household name in Johnson County due to his amazing playmaking ability. He was a highly-recruited 3-star recruit that signed with Kansas State. We started our relationship about three to four years ago when I recruited him, so it is exciting to get Brenen in our system! He is extremely long at 6-3 and gives us length and speed at wide receiver. He can go up and make contested grabs and run away from people; he will add another vertical threat for the Red Flash! We are excited to have Brenen and his awesome family join us here in Stacheville!"

TJ Hartley

6-0, 172, Kicker/Punter, Fayetteville, Georgia (Whitewater HS)

High School: A kicker and punter for head coach Chad Frazier at Whitewater High School... Made 8-of-9 field goals and 39-of-42 PATs as a senior... Recruit Georgia Class 4A All-State selection... GHSA Region 4-AAAA selection... Connected on all 11 field goal attempts and 42-of-44 PATs as a junior.

Benji Johnson

6-4, 215, Defensive Back, Hooks, Texas (Hooks HS/New Mexico)

Prior to Austin Peay: Played two seasons at New Mexico (2021-22). **2022:** Played in 11 games and made 11 tackles – including seven solo stops – for the Lobos... Recorded a season-best four tackles – with a pair of solo tackles – at LSU, Sept. 24... Added two more tackles at New Mexico State, Oct. 25. **2021:** Redshirted his first year in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

High School: A quarterback, wide receiver, and defensive back for coach Chris Birdwell at Hooks High School... Completed 71 passes for 1,323 yards and 11 touchdowns – with just four interceptions – during his senior season, he also rushed 96 times for 700 yards and four touchdowns... Was named the Hornet's offensive MVP following his senior campaign in 2020... Was named a Texas Sports Writers Association 3A All-State Honorable Mention at defensive back following his junior season in 2019... Was ranked a three-star recruit by *247Sports.com* and a two-star recruit by *Rivals.com* as an athlete... Also lettered in basketball, baseball, and track & field... Was named the Hornet's Offensive Player of the Year on the basketball court in 2020.

Scotty Walden on Johnson... "Benji is a very long, physical safety that had really good film while playing at New Mexico. I actually recruited his brother from Hooks High School in East Texas a while back, and knew Benji would be cut from the right cloth. What I love about Benji is that he was a high school quarterback. He knows how offenses and QBs think, which allows him to play more instinctively on defense. Benji has enrolled early and is already working out with our team! Come check out his playmaking ability on the back end this spring!"

Tyler Long

5-11, 222, Linebacker, Cincinnati, Ohio (Norfolk State)

Prior to Austin Peay: Played one season at Lackawanna Community College (2019) before transferring to Norfolk State... Played two seasons at Norfolk State (2020-22), which did not participate in football during the 2020 season... **2022:** Played in all 11 games... Named First Team All-MEAC... Recorded 106 tackles with six double-digit tackle outings during the season... Also had seven tackles for loss and five sacks during the season... For the second consecutive season opened with double-digit tackles against an FBS foe, notching 11 stops and an interception at Marshall (Sept. 3)... Had 12 tackles and 1.5 sacks against Saint Francis (Sept. 24)... Scored 13 tackles the following week at Sacred Heart (Oct. 1)... Pitched in 10 tackles against Howard (Oct. 29)... Notched season-best 14 tackles against North Carolina Central (Nov. 12)... Finished the season earning MEAC Defensive Player of the Week and Pro Football Network Shrine Bowl HBCU Player of the Week honors following a 13-tackle effort at South Carolina State (Nov. 19) that included three tackles for loss, two sacks, and a forced fumble... **2021:** Started all 11 games... Named Second Team All-MEAC... Led NSU and ranked fourth in the MEAC with 78 tackles... Also finished the year with 3.5 tackles for loss, 1.5 sacks, one pass breakup, one forced fumble and two quarterback hurries... Made 11 tackles in season opener at Toledo (Sept. 4)... Posted six tackles with half a sack against Elizabeth City State (Sept. 18)... Was credited with nine tackles, half for a loss, at St. Francis (Sept. 25)... Made six stops and broke up one pass at Hampton (Oct. 2)... Named the MEAC Defensive Player of the Week after registering nine tackles, 1.5 for loss, with one sack and a forced fumble against Morgan State (Oct. 30)... Ended the year by making 29 tackles over a three-game stretch at N.C. Central (eight), Delaware State (nine) and South Carolina State (career-high 12)... **2020:** Transferred to Norfolk State, which did not participate in football during the COVID-19 pandemic year... **2019:** Named Second Team All-Northeast Football Conference... Recorded 53 tackles, 10 for loss, with six sacks, one forced fumble, one fumble recovery and one pass breakup on the year... Tallied 16 tackles in the NJCAA Division National Championship game against Mississippi Gulf Coast.

High School: Was a linebacker for head coach Chris Mobley at Hughes STEM High School for final two prep seasons... Posted 122 tackles, including 15 tackles for loss, as a senior... Notched 120 tackles, 13 tackles for loss, and five sacks as a junior... Selected to play in 2018 Ohio North vs. South All-Star Classic Football Game.

Scotty Walden on Long... "We needed to fill a void in production at linebacker and Tyler brings us just that. He had over 100 tackles in his career at Norfolk State and has the pedigree to be an elite player for us in his last season as a grad transfer. His brother, David, was a starting linebacker for the Tennessee Titans this past season, so Tyler is cut from the right cloth. We love his ability to cover sideline-to-sideline and defend downhill runs. He will bring great maturity and production to the Black Reign. Tyler is early enrolled and will go through spring ball with us here in Stacheville!"

Khatib Lyles

6-1, 218, Wide Receiver, El Paso, Texas (North Texas)

Prior to Austin Peay: Was at North Texas for four seasons (2019-22), redshirting his true freshman season in 2019... **2022:** Saw action in 12 games, primarily (special teams and did not record any statistics... **2021:** Made 12 appearances and finished with 155 receiving yards and a touchdown on 13 receptions... Caught three passes for a season-best 50 yards against UTSA (11/27), including a 48-yard reception... Caught a 35-yard touchdown pass at FIU (11/20)... Caught three passes for 18 yards at Rice (10/30)... Caught two passes for 19 yards against Liberty (10/23)... Caught two passes for 22 yards against Marshall (10/15)... Caught one pass for eight yards at Missouri (10/9)... Caught a pass for three yards against UAB (9/18)... **2020:** Appeared in eight games, mostly on special teams... Made his collegiate debut in the season-opening win against Houston Baptist (9/5).

High School: Played wide receiver for head coach Eric Frontz at Parkland High School... Finished senior season with 1,012 receiving yards and 12 touchdown catches with 70 receptions in 12 games... Also had four touchdown runs and returned a kickoff for a touchdown to finish senior season with 17 total touchdowns... Finished prep career with 2,276 receiving yards, 26 touchdowns, and 150 receptions in 33 games... Rated a 3-star recruit by ESPN, 247Sports and 247Sports Composite, and a 2-star recruit by Rivals.

Scotty Walden on Lyles... "Khatib is not only a special player, but a special person. I recruited Khatib previously so when the opportunity came for him to join our program, we jumped all over it. Khatib was a highly-rated 3-star recruit from El Paso, Texas who signed with North Texas. He is a really thick WR that can go up and make all the grabs. He has really good balance and body control, and will be a productive target for the Red Flash Offense! We are blessed to have Khatib and his amazing family join our family here in Stacheville!"

Michael Ruttlen Jr.

5-9, 195, Defensive Back, Mount Juliet, Tennessee (Princeton)

Prior to Austin Peay: Was on the Princeton roster for four seasons (2019-22)... **2022:** A First Team All-Ivy selection after recording 37 tackles (22 solo), three interceptions, and three passes defended while playing all nine games... Notched season's first interception at Lafayette (Oct. 8) while recording three tackles... Had interceptions in back-to-back Ivy League games: Notched a season-best eight tackles and an interception at Harvard (Oct. 21) and followed that game with seven tackles (six solo) and a pick against Cornell (Oct. 29)... Nominee for AllState AFCA Good Works Team... **2021:** Recorded 29 tackles (27 solo), two interceptions, and three pass breakups and played in all nine games... Picked off season's first pass against Stetson (Sept. 25)... Had an interception and two pass breakups against Yale (Nov. 13)... Closed season with a season-best six tackles at Penn (Nov. 20)... **2020:** The Ivy League did not compete in football during the 2020 season due to the COVID-19 pandemic... **2019:** Played in all nine games as a true freshman.

High School: Played defensive back for head coach xxx at Mount Juliet High School... Named Tennessee Sports Writers Association's Class 6A All-State Team at defensive back as a senior... A three time all-region selection... National Football Foundation and College Hall of Fame Scholar-Athlete... Finished career with 212 tackles, six tackles for loss, three interceptions, 14 pass breakups, three fumbles recovered, three fumbles forced, and three defensive touchdowns.

Scotty Walden on Ruttlen... "Mike is one of the most intelligent and mature players I have been around. He was very productive at Princeton and has a ton of experience. He is a product of Mt. Juliet High School and it is great to be able to bring him back home for his final year. Mike tracks the ball extremely well and has great ball skills. He will lead the Black Reign defense to a lot of takebacks!"

Courtland Simmons

5-10, 185, Athlete, Nashville, Tennessee (Davidson Academy)

High School: An all-purpose back for head coach Jonathan Quinn at Davidson Academy... Finished senior season with 1,067 rushing yards and 12 touchdowns on 135 carries over 10 games... As a junior, amassed 2,265 all-purpose yards, including 525 rushing yards, 756 receiving yards, 644 kick return yards, and 219 interception return yards... Responsible for 22 total touchdowns during his junior season... Named to Tennessee Sports Writers Association Division II-AA All-State team at defensive back as a junior... A three-star recruit by 247Sports.com... Played basketball at Davidson Academy and scored his 1,000th career point in January 2023... Also competed in track and field, posting a time of 11.58 seconds in the 100-meter dash and 23.85 seconds in the 200-meter dash.

Scotty Walden on Simmons... "Courtland is one of the most versatile players in the class. He is a 3-star recruit that played at Davidson Academy for Coach Quinn. He comes from a winning culture and is the second Davidson Academy signee for us in the last two years. He will be a Gov back for us because he can catch the ball, run great routes, and carry the ball from the backfield. He is a third Generation Gov – his grandad played at Austin Peay and his father attended Austin Peay. We are fired up to see Courtland help the Red Flash become even more explosive!"

Marquez Taylor

6-0, 170, Running Back, McKenzie, Tennessee (McKenzie HS)

High School: An all-purpose back for head coach Wade Comer at McKenzie High School... Helped lead McKenzie High School to back-to-back Class A championship game appearances, winning the program's first title in 2022... Ran for 163 yards and a touchdown on 15 carries during the state championship game... Named to Tennessee Sports Writers Association's First Team Class A All-State Team... Named to 2022 TACA East-West All-Star Classic Team... Finished junior season with 1,676 yards and 33 touchdowns on 193 carries, added 411 yards and six touchdowns on 24 receptions, and also had a touchdown on defense... Ran for 85 yards and a touchdown in 2021 TSSAA Class A championship game... One of five finalists for 2021 Tennessee Titans Mr. Football Award in Division I Class 5A... Rated a three-star athlete by 247Sports and Rivals... Also competed in basketball and track and field... Holds McKenzie High School records in the 200-meter dash (22.96), 400-meter dash (52.05) both set during his sophomore season in 2021.

Scotty Walden on Taylor... "One of the most versatile and productive athletes in the state. A highly-rated 3-star recruit, Quez can score a touchdown from anywhere on the field. He is a state champion for Coach Comer at McKenzie High School in West Tennessee. When we went to watch him play this season, it was evident his speed and vision were on another level. Look for him to be a dynamic playmaker for the Red Flash! We are blessed to welcome Quez and his wonderful family to the Austin Peay Family!"

Griffin Throneberry

6-2, 205, Athlete, Mt. Juliet, Tennessee (Mt. Juliet HS)

High School: A quarterback for head coach Trey Perry at Mount Juliet High School... Missed the 2022 season after suffering an injury in the season's first game... Made appearances at wide receiver for the Golden Bears after starting at quarterback as a freshman... Also played basketball for the Golden Bears.

Scotty Walden on Throneberry... "Griff was one of the first commits of this class and embodies our culture. He has infectious energy with his coaches and teammates. He played quarterback locally at Mt. Juliet High School and we love his versatility. Unfortunately, his senior year was cut short due to injury. We feel he can play all over the field for us on defense because he is extremely long and athletic. We are excited to add this OKG and his family to the Governor Family!"

Ty Watkins

6-3, 220, Quarterback, Cumming, Georgia (South Forsyth HS)

High School: A quarterback for head coach Troy Morris at South Forsyth High School... Back-to-back Region 6-7A Offensive Player of the Year as a senior and junior... Threw for 4,109 yards in his prep career and owns the South Forsyth career passing record... Finished senior season with 1,943 passing yards and 25 total touchdowns... Threw for 1,951 yards and 18 touchdowns in his junior campaign, adding 151 yards and six touchdowns on the ground.

Scotty Walden on Watkins... "Ty is an extremely productive quarterback out of Georgia and was Region 7A Player of the Year in back-to-back years in an extremely competitive region. He led his team to the playoffs this year and produced both throwing and running the football. I love his versatility, toughness, and savvy as a quarterback. He never flinches and has incredible leadership intangibles. He came and camped with us twice this summer and showed great consistency. When you watch his tape, you will see him improvise and get the ball to his playmakers in space. We are excited to add this QB to the Red Flash!"

Kaden Williams

5-9, 180, Athlete, Thibodeaux, Louisiana (St. James HS)

High School: An all-purpose back for head coach LaVanta Davis at St. James High School... Helped St. James reach Division III Non-Select state semifinals as a senior... Finished prep career with 4,056 all-purpose yards, including 2,180 rushing yards, 1,033 receiving yards, and 843 kick return yards... Also accounted for 48 touchdowns in four seasons at St. James, including 34 touchdowns as a senior... Ran for 1,759 yards in and 32 touchdowns over 12 games during his senior season, including 10 100-yard performances... Named a finalist for WAFB Warrick Dunn Award, presented to the top player in Louisiana... A Louisiana Sports Writers Class 3A All-State selection... District 8-3A Offensive Most Valuable Player... Rated a three-star recruit by 247Sports.

Scotty Walden on Williams... "One of the most explosive playmakers in the class, he had 40 touchdowns his senior year at St. James High School in Louisiana! Kaden is versatile, has breakaway speed, and will be a threat from all over the field for the Red Flash! When you watch his highlight tape, you will be 5 minutes in and still watching touchdowns! He was one of the most explosive and productive players in the entire state of Louisiana. I am excited to get this OKG from The Boot to Stacheville!"

Dane Woodard

6-10, 365, Offensive Lineman, Carthage, Tennessee (Smith County HS)

High School: An offensive and defensive lineman for head coach Matt Dyer at Smith County High School... also played basketball and competed in track & field – throwing the shot put – for the Owls.

Scotty Walden on Woodard... “It will not take you long to spot Dane in pregame. Standing 6-10 and about 365 pounds, he is by far one of the largest players on our team. It’s not only his size that attracted us to him, but his ability to bend and finish blocks on tape. It’s not usual to see someone his size move as well as he does. His father played here at Austin Peay as well, so it is awesome to bring Dane home to Stacheville!”

December Signing Class Biographies

Frank Caldwell III

6-2, 215, Linebacker, Atlanta, Georgia (Pace Academy)

High School: A linebacker for coach Nick Bach at Pace Academy, Caldwell II served as a team captain during his junior and senior seasons... A Second Team All-Region 5AAAA selection at linebacker in 2022 and an Honorable Mention in 2021... A three-sport athlete, he helped the Knights win the Georgia Class AAA Basketball State Championship in 2020 and the Class AA state title in 2021... Also competed in track and field where he was a state finalist in the high jump and set the Pace Academy high jump record at 6’ 2” in 2021.

Scotty Walden on Caldwell III... “Fearless, fast, and physical – our brand describes Frank Caldwell. He can play sideline-to-sideline and hunt down ball carriers. He came to our camp down in Chattanooga and really separated himself from the pack. He is long, athletic, and delivers a strike when tackling opposing ball carriers. Get ready to see him add to the already dominant Black Reign defense!”

Leo Gonzalez

6-4, 295, Offensive Lineman, Lenoir City, Tennessee (Lenoir City HS)

High School: An offensive lineman, defensive lineman, punter, and kicker for coach Gary Duggar at Lenoir City High School... An All-Region 3-AAAAA offensive lineman in 2022 after helping the Panthers rush for 2,651 yards while recording 37 pancake blocks... Added 18 tackles, 2.0 tackles for loss, 1.5 sacks, a fumble recovery, and an interception during his senior season... Punted 26 times with a 35.5-yard average, four punts downed inside the 20-yard line, and a long of 51 yards in 2022, also went 17-for-19 on PATs and 3-for-4 on field goals with a long of 47 yards... An All-Region 3-AAAAA punter and All-5Star Preps offensive lineman selection in 2021... also played goalkeeper on the Lenoir City soccer team.

Scotty Walden on Gonzalez... “Leo is one of the most unique players I have ever recruited. He is not only a dominant offensive lineman, but he can also kick and punt. His soccer background has led him to have great feet, so he is a very athletic 300-pounder. This kid could be the Mayor of Lenoir City because he is so loved. He is an OKG all the way! We are blessed to have this East TN native join our family!”

Garrett Hawkins

6-2, 220, Linebacker, Sevierville, Tennessee (Sevier County HS)

High School: A linebacker and running back for coach Todd Loveday at Sevier County High School... Was named the Sevier County Defensive Player of the Year in 2020 and 2021 by *The Mountain Press*... A two-time Region 2-AAAAA Linebacker of the Year selection, he holds the Sevier County career tackles record with 471 stops... Also added 23 tackles for loss, four sacks, and four interceptions en route to a trio of All-Region 2-AAAAA selections.

Scotty Walden on Garrett Hawkins... “Garrett is an OKG all the way. We have recruited him for a long time, and it is awesome to see him officially become a Gov. Garrett came to our camp and really flashed because he has a rare combination of size and speed. His toughness separates him from the competition as he had an amazing career at Sevier County in East Tennessee. We are blessed to have Garrett and his family join our family here in Stacheville! Gobs Nation, get ready to see this guy making plays all over the field!”

Jaden McKinney

6-4, 280, Offensive/Defensive Lineman, Collierville, Tennessee (Collierville HS)

High School: An offensive and defensive lineman for coach Joe Rocconi at Collierville High School... A First Team All-Region 8-AAAAAA selection on the offensive line in 2022 and the defensive line in 2021... Represented the Dragons in the 20th annual AutoZone Liberty Bowl All-Star high school football game following his senior season... Racked up 84 tackles 18 tackles for loss, five sacks, and an interception during his prep career... Ranked a three-star recruit by *247Sports.com* and a two-star recruit by *Rivals.com* as a defensive lineman, he is the second-highest-rated recruit to sign with APSU with a 0.8467 composite score on *247Sports.com*... A three-sport athlete, he also played basketball and competed in track and field for the Dragons... Finished seventh in the shot put at the 2022 TSAAA Class AAA Track and Field State Championship with a throw of 48' 1.75"... Holds the Collierville record in the shot put with a personal-best throw of 49' 6.50".

Scotty Walden on McKinney... "We are thrilled to have a DL/OL with so much size and athletic ability in Jaden. He did an amazing job for Coach Rocconi at Collierville, playing both sides of the ball on the offensive and defensive line. He is a 3-star kid and the 27th-ranked player in Tennessee. He will be the 2nd-highest-rated recruit signed in Austin Peay history. Beyond all of that, Jaden and his family are some of the best people I have ever met. We are blessed to have them join our family! Stacheville, Let's welcome this OKG home!"

Kyan Miller

6-3, 230, Defensive Lineman, Lexington, Kentucky (Henry Clay HS)

High School: A defensive end and running back for coach Demetrius Gay at Henry Clay High School... A 2022 First Team Lexington All-City selection on the defensive line... Racked up 87 tackles, 18 tackles for loss, five sacks, two forced fumbles, and four fumble recoveries – one of which he returned eight yards for a touchdown – during his junior and senior seasons... Also added a 31-yard rushing touchdown during his senior campaign... Ranked a two-star recruit by *Rivals.com* as a defensive lineman... Also played basketball and helped the Blue Devils win the 2022 Boys Basketball 11th Region Championship before advancing to the Sweet 16 in the Kentucky State Tournament.

Scotty Walden on Miller... "Kyan was the first commitment in our class this year! He is an unbelievable player and person! He came to our camp and put on a show, and then played numerous positions for his team at Henry Clay High School. He is going to be an elite pass rusher for the Gobs and I am really excited about his potential growth because he has a great frame. We are blessed to have him and his family in Stacheville!"

Ashton Nickelberry

5-10, 184, Wide Receiver, Brandon, Mississippi (Brandon HS/Jones County JC)

Prior to Austin Peay: Played three seasons at Jones County Junior College (2020-22) in Mississippi. **2022:** Played in 10 games and made 32 catches for a team-best 582 yards and eight touchdowns... ranked seventh in touchdowns, 18th in receiving yards, and 32nd in touchdowns at the NJCAA Division I level... Had a career-best two touchdown grabs against Itawamba (Sept. 1) and Southwest Mississippi (Oct. 13)... Also had a career-long 61-yard touchdown catch against Southwest Mississippi... Earned Second Team All-Mississippi Association of Community Colleges Conference honors. **2021:** Recorded 17 receptions for 136 yards and a touchdown in 10 appearances... Posted his first collegiate touchdown on a seven-yard grab against Mississippi Gulf Coast (Oct. 21). **2020:** Played in five games during the COVID-shortened season... recorded 12 catches for 131 yards... also added one kick return for 19 yards.

High School: A wide receiver for coach Brad Peterson at Brandon High School... Earned Mississippi All-State honors as a senior after recording 66 receptions for 1,196 yards and 14 touchdowns – he led Class 6A Region 3 in receiving yards... Averaged 18.1 yards per catch and led the Bulldogs to a 9-5 mark in 2019... Posted a career-best 270 receiving yards and two touchdowns against Oak Grove (10/24/19)... Represented Mississippi in the 2019 Alabama-Mississippi All-Star Game... Had 53 receptions for 626 yards and seven touchdowns as a junior while helping Brandon to a 13-2 record... Also participated in track and field where he competed in the 100 meters, 200 meters, 4x100 meter relay, 4x200 meter relay, high jump, and long jump... Was a part of 4x100 meter (42.52) and 4x200 meter (1:28.71) relay teams that posted the second and fourth best times, respectively, in Brandon history... Ran the ninth-fastest 100 meters in school history with a time of 11.33.

MJ Singleton

5-10, 170, Wide Receiver, Lubbock, Texas (Monterey HS/Garden City CC [Kan.]

Prior to Austin Peay: Played two seasons at Garden City Community College (2021-22) in Kansas. **2022:** Played in 10 games and hauled in 28 receptions for 488 yards and four touchdowns... Averaged 48.8 receiving yards per game and 17.4 yards per game with a career-best 75-yard touchdown grab against Ellsworth (Oct. 29)... Ranked in NJCAA Division I top 45 in receiving yards (26th), receiving yards per game (27th), and touchdowns (28th), and receptions (43rd)... Also returned 20 kicks for 421 yards, a 21.1-yard average, and an 89-yard touchdown against Dodge City CC (Oct. 1)... Earned Second Team All-Kansas Jayhawk Community College Conference honors at wide receiver. **2021:** Appeared in 11 games for the Broncbusters as a freshman, recording 22 receptions for 252 yards and three touchdowns... Averaged 22.9 yards per game and 11.5 yards per catch... Had a career-best two touchdown catches against Navarro College (Dec. 4).

High School: A wide receiver for coach Wayne Hutchinson at Monterey High School... Posted 1,893 receiving yards and 13 touchdowns in his prep career, including 41 catches for a team-best 77 yards and three touchdowns during his senior campaign... Ranked a three-star recruit by *247Sports.com* and a two-star recruit by *Rivals.com*... Also competed in track and field for the Plainsmen, he finished seventh in the 2021 University Interscholastic League State Track & Field Championship and set the Monterey record with a 10.56 in the 100 meters... also finished eighth at the state meet and set the school record in the 200 meters with a time of 21.88.

Scotty Walden on Singleton... "MJ will add electricity and speed to the explosive Red Flash offense! He was a 10.5 100-meter runner in high school in West Texas at Monterey High School in Lubbock. He was a three-star kid as well and went to Garden City JC in Kansas where he flourished. MJ is an OKG all the way, he is not only a great player but holds above a 3.0 GPA and is a first-class human being. We are thrilled to have MJ and his family join our family here in Stacheville!"

Ty Williams

6-4, 276, Offensive Lineman, Greeneville, Tennessee (Greeneville HS)

High School: An offensive and defensive lineman for coaches Caine Ballard and Eddie Spradlen at Greeneville High School... Was named the 2022 Region 1-AAAA Offensive Lineman of the Year after anchoring an offensive line that helped the Green Devils average 378 yards – 197 rushing and 181 passing – and 40 points per game... Participated for the East Team in the 2022 Tennessee Athletic Coaches Association East-West All-Star Classic – played at Fortera Stadium... Also played basketball for coach Brad Woolsey and helped the Green Devils win the TSSAA Class AA State Championship in 2021 and the Class AAA State Championship in 2022.

Scotty Walden on Williams... "Ty is the beast from the East! We are pumped to keep this Tennessee native home! Ty is one of the most athletic and powerful O-Linemen I have seen on tape. He can get in space, pull, and punish defenders. His basketball background has led to his athletic ability on the field. The thing we loved when recruiting him was not only did he kill it at our East TN Camp this summer, but he literally does not come off the field for Greenville High School. He can do it all – an OKG all the way! We are blessed to have Ty and his family join Govs Nation!"