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Five Lions make football commitments

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A week away from national signing day, five Columbia Central football players have made their collegiate choices known.

Linebacker Malik Church, quarterback Matthew Markham and two-way lineman Desmond Owens have all committed to play at Harding University. Wide receiver Dre Hall committed to the University of North Alabama, while running back Chris Martin committed to Wofford College.

“It feels real good,” said Columbia coach Howard Stone. “These kids have worked extremely hard and are very coachable.”

The five Lions, who were a part of a senior class that posted a remarkable record of 47-9 highlighted by winning the 2010 Class 5A state championship, can officially sign with their colleges of choice on Feb. 6.

Markham enjoyed a stellar senior season by completing a school-record 153 of 239 passes for 2,589 yards with 18 touchdowns and six interceptions. Markham also broke records for completions (24) and attempts (33) in the BlueCross Bowl.

Markham also leaves Columbia as the all-time career leader for passing yards (6,323), completed passes (325), attempted passes (550) and touchdowns (51).

Hall capped his fantastic career by recording a school-record 74 receptions for 1,286 yards with 11 touchdowns. In his final game as a Lion against Beech in the BlueCross Bowl, Hall broke single-game school records for catches (12) and yards receiving (184 yards).

In addition to his single-game records, Hall also leaves as Columbia’s record holder in career receptions (168), career receiving yards (3,238) and career touchdown receptions (26).

Martin had a standout four years with the Lions finishing with 3,330 yards rushing. Martin ended his stellar career just 26 yards short of breaking Ronnie Pillow’s record for most rushing yards in school history. Martin did break the school record for most career rushing attempts with 532. During his senior year, Martin rushed for 1,211 yards with 21 touchdowns.

Church led the Lions with 142 solo tackles as well as 53 assisted tackles and 14 tackles for loss. He also forced three fumbles to go along with a fumble recovery and an interception.

Owens was a two-way starter for the Lions at defensive end and left guard. Defensively, Owens recorded 30 tackles with 14 assists, seven tackles-for-loss and a sack.

In addition to these five players, Stone expects a few more Lions to sign with a college on signing day.

“I think we’ll get two, maybe three more on scholarships,” Stone said. “Once the big boys come glean what they want, some of the smaller schools like Cumberland, Campbellsville and Bethel will come in and get a couple of kids.”