2014 EMCC SPORTS HALL OF FAME INDUCTEE

JOHN MASON

An all-county quarterback at Foley High School in Alabama, John Mason turned down a scholarship offer from Livingston State University (now the University of West Alabama) to play for Coach Bill Buckner at East Mississippi Junior College. In quarterbacking the Lions to a two-year composite record of 15-5 in 1973 and 1974, Mason capped his EMJC playing career by earning honorable mention All-America honors and participating in the annual Mississippi junior college all-star game. Despite winning the starting quarterback spot during Virginia Tech’s spring practice in 1975, Mason instead chose to return to Mississippi to complete his college education and enter the work force. After earning his bachelor’s degree in health and physical education from Mississippi State in 1979, he began a successful 29-year coaching and teaching career with a four-year stay as an assistant football coach on Joe Williford’s coaching staff at West Lauderdale High School. His initial coaching stint also involved duties as the school’s track and field coach and junior high football coach. Mason returned to his native Alabama to lead Daphne Junior High School to a country championship in 1984 before joining fellow EMCC Hall of Famer Lester Smith’s Foley High School coaching staff for the spring semester in 1985. However, Mason was courted back to West Lauderdale to serve as head coach during the 1985 and 1986 football campaigns. He then settled in to enjoy a 19-year stint as an assistant coach at prep powerhouse Meridian High School. Primarily coaching quarterbacks and running backs under head coaches Mac Barnes, Bill Sartin and Ed Stanley, Mason helped guide the Wildcats to 15 playoff appearances, including a Class 5A state championship in 1990, a state runner-up finish in 2005 and six division titles. Having most recently worked part-time for the Mississippi Department of Wildlife, Fisheries, and Parks, Mason is married to the former Sara Lou VanDevender of DeKalb, and they have two sons, Chris and Kenny, along with two grandchildren. Chris and his wife, Heather, have a daughter, Anslee, and a son, Daniel.