

For Immediate Release
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Harlan County's Hensley signs to play at Pikeville College

Harlan County High School football standout Jesse Hensley will be back in a Bear uniform next season. Hensley, a 6-3,275 pound senior center for the Harlan County Black Bear football team signed to play next season for the Pikeville College Bears.

Speaking to area media personnel, Hensley said jokingly Wednesday, "I'll be fading from cardinal red to orange." He has worn the cardinal red and black for the past three seasons and now will be wearing Pikeville College's orange and black.

Hensley signed during a ceremony at the high school Wednesday, attended by high school and district officials, Pikeville College officials that included College President Paul Patton, many of the upper classman teammates, his family and friends.

Upon completing the signature process, Patton told the crowd gathered that he hopes that Hensley is "the first of many signings we are going to get from this beautiful school in Harlan County."

Hensley became the second signee for Hilton, who will be in his first season when the Pikeville College Bears take the field this fall. Earlier in the day Hilton signed his son, John Dudley Hilton, a standout from Bell County High School.

"This is a big day for Pikeville College," said Patton.

Patton said Pikeville College is moving to a higher level in academic and athletic performance. "You can learn a lot about life in an athletic program like you have here and we have at Pikeville College."

Harlan County Coach Tom Larkey said Hensley "will make Pikeville a good student and a good player. He has a lot of dedication to the sport. He is a very responsible person who can handle the load that he is about to be a part of. He was one of the most improved players I've ever coached between his junior and senior season. He is an outstanding young man who can get along with anyone."

"We are all proud of him for making this decision," said Larkey.

"I think it is a great opportunity to further my education and play the game I love," said Hensley.

"When I played under him (Hilton) in the Border Bowl, I liked the way he coached. I felt like I was still playing with Coach Larkey because he ran the same stuff."

Hensley received numerous accolades this season for his success as he helped lead the HC Black Bears to the 5A regional championship. He just recently was named All SEKC-First Team, All-SEKC Offensive Lineman of the Year out of Classes 3A, 4A and 5A and then played in the Border Bowl for the Kentucky All-Stars at the University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg.

Hensley said he is excited about the opportunity he is receiving at Pikeville College, noting he plans to pursue an education major and hopefully coach in Harlan County someday or possibly pursue a degree in the medical field.



Front Row: Dad James Earl Hensley, Bear Signee Jesse Hensley, mother, Benita Hensley, Pikeville College President Paul Patton, Pikeville College Dudley Hilton;

Back Row: Brother James Earl Hensley, brother Sonny Hensley, HCHS Coach Tom Larkey, HCHS Athletic Director Freddie McCreary, and Harlan County Superintendent Tim Saylor.

