

CALEDONIA – Garrett Weathers didn't care the helmet was too big.

It probably also wasn't vitally important to Weathers that the new headgear was crimson red and emblazoned with a white script A for the University of Alabama.

After all, when you're 3 or 4 years old, your loyalties haven't completely formed, even if you live in Ethelsville, Alabama, which is less than an hour away from the Alabama campus in Tuscaloosa.

On that day, Weathers was more concerned with putting the Christmas gift to immediate use, so he stuffed it over his head and raced out to the front yard to throw the football.

Even then, Weathers was ahead of the game in that he already loved football.

An ankle injury in the season opener against Nettleton kept the Caledonia High School senior from the sport he loved for four and a half games. But Weathers made up for lost time when he returned to the field, as he helped lead Caledonia to the third round of the Mississippi High School Activities Association (MHSAA) Class 4A playoffs.

On Monday, Weathers announced his football journey was going to continue at Mississippi College. The signing ceremony in the Caledonia High football program's field house was even

more special because family and friends from Weathers' previous schools – South Lamar High in Millport, Alabama, and Columbus Christian Academy in Steens – were on hand to congratulate him for his achievement.

“It is something that has been in the making for, I don't know, it feels like ever since I started playing football,” Weathers said, thinking back to those days wearing the Alabama helmet. “I have always dreamed about going to play college football.”

Weathers admitted he wasn't sure if that dream was going to be realized. Transferring from CCA to Caledonia High, he needed to learn a new offense to get him ready to play in Class 4A, Region 3, one of the state's most challenging regions. But the 5-foot-11, 150-pounder didn't let any of that -- or the injury -- stop him.

Caledonia High football coach Michael Kelly said Weathers had the right mind-set to run his team's Flexbone offense. While Kelly acknowledged Weathers probably would have enjoyed throwing the football more, he said his quarterback / cornerback did what the Cavaliers needed just like a true leader.

“He is the kind of kid you can't replace in your program,” Kelly said. “He has great character and works extremely hard.”

Kelly said Weathers stepped back in after the player who replaced him at quarterback went down with a season-ending injury. He said Weathers is an extremely smart player who was

receptive to the Cavaliers' ground-based attack and worked hard in the preseason to grasp its intricacies. Kelly praised Weathers' "motive" in that he was more about the team rather than his individual success.

"We wish we would have had him for four or five years," Kelly said. "He would have been really, really special on top of that, but we're really proud of what he did and what he accomplished in the year he was here and the impact he had on our program."

That shouldn't have been surprising because Weathers' dreams started big – he thought he was former Patriots and Buccaneers great Tom Brady – in that big helmet. This past season, Weathers even tried his hand at cornerback, a position he had never played, but Kelly said he took to it immediately.

Weathers said the adjustment to quarterback was "different" in that he had to train his eyes to different reads and make decisions even quicker. He feels that preparation and hard work will help prepare him to transition to the next level.

"I learned how to go right off the spot and know I had to get the ball now and not second-guess myself and trust myself and go with it," Weathers said.

Weathers plans to go into the ministry, which is why Mississippi College, a private, Christian university of liberal arts and

sciences in Clinton, is an ideal fit, unlike one of the first helmets he wore on a football “field”.

“I feel like I am called to go there,” Weathers said of Mississippi College. “I feel like God has something special for me there. It is going to be great.”