It’s amazing that a young man who was playing football at Yazoo City High School just a short time ago is now in position to become the wealthiest man in town.

After two outstanding years at Mississippi State University, Fletcher Cox is expected to be a first round pick in the upcoming NFL draft. That means Mr. Cox is about to make a lot of money.

He deserves every penny of it. Cox is a rare talent. Only a small percentage of high school athletes can compete on the Division I collegiate level. Only a small percentage of those will ever suit up for the NFL.

Cox was blessed with the physical tools to rise to the top. Standing at 6-4 and weighing in at 298 pounds, Cox has the size it takes to compete with elite athletes.

God gave Cox the potential to be the best, but the discipline it takes to succeed in athletics was something he had to do for himself. Cox has made all the right moves, and hopefully he will serve as a positive role model for young Yazooans looking to follow in his huge footsteps.

Having the talent to be the best is rare, having the discipline and character to earn a chance to prove yourself is something that’s even harder to find.

Too many young people these days fail to realize that it takes more than just practicing your sport to succeed. Work in the classroom is just as important.

When I was the sports editor for The Bolivar Commercial in Cleveland we had 11 high schools in our coverage area, so it wasn’t that uncommon to see athletes with college potential.

When college recruiters visited schools, the first question they asked wasn’t about how many tackles an athlete made or how many touchdowns he scored. They wanted to know his ACT score and if he was going to be able qualify academically.

The sad reality is that the answer was often no.

I’ve seen some young men who clearly had the talent to compete in SEC football miss their chance because they failed to take their schoolwork seriously.

Then there are discipline issues. Think about how many times you hear about a college athlete getting kicked off a team because of discipline problems.

Just last week Dylan Favre, nephew of NFL legend Brett Favre and one of the most prolific quarterbacks in Mississippi high school history, was suspended indefinitely from his junior college team after being arrested on drug charges.

It’s hard to believe that someone with so much on the line would do something so foolish, but

unfortunately things like that happen all the time. Young people often make bad decisions just because they lack life experience, but it would help if they better understood the consequences. Fletcher Cox has done things the right way, and that's one more reason why all Yazooans should be proud to call him a native son. I'm looking forward to seeing where his career takes him and wishing him many successful years as a professional athlete.