**Football star shows you can't judge a book by its cover**

**ATHENS, Ga.** - It was in the best seller section of a Barnes & Noble in this college town that Kathy Rackley found a novel story of her own - a young man by the name of Malcolm Mitchell.

"I mean a chance encounter in a bookstore, how wonderful is that?" said Kathy. She had no idea who Mitchell was. "None whatsoever."

And Malcolm didn't tell her. "I knew they were going to find out," Mitchell said. "But I wasn't going to say it.".

Fact is, Rackley may have been the only one in Athens who didn't know the name Malcolm Mitchell. Number 26 for the University of Georgia Bulldogs was one of the top recruits in the country a few years ago. He's Georgia royalty.

And presumably, if Rackley had known that, she wouldn't have stood in that Barnes & Noble talking his ear off about the book club she had just joined.

"I mean he like stepped back and he said 'You did? You did?' and he said, 'Can I join your book club?'" Rackley recalled.

"And I said, 'I don't know if you want to join mine. We're all 40-, 50-, and 60-year-old women.'"

But Mitchell was undeterred. So now, one of the top wide-receivers in the country has been meeting monthly with his book club lady friends.

He's the only man, and the youngest by a generation -- but Mitchell doesn't care. Nor does he care what anyone thinks.

"Somebody called me a nerd. That's not a word that I'm used to hearing," he said. But he's more than okay with the label. "I was proud of it... It's like a badge of honor to me, knowing where I came from."

Mitchell confessed that when he started college he could only read at about a junior high level, and it bothered him. So he started putting as much effort into his reading game as his football game.

Every free moment, he had a book in his hand. He's now reading things he never dreamed he could, and although some of the book club selections he would never pick himself, Mitchell seems to enjoy them all.

After everything he's accomplished, what's he most proud of?

"I finished the 'Hunger Games' series in about two days," Mitchell said.

Wait, but what about the touchdowns?

"That came natural," Mitchell said. "That's a gift. I had to work to read."

But his greatest talent may lie in his ability to step so outside his comfort zone, to be able to meet people and focus so sincerely on what they have in common, instead of their trivial differences.

Sometimes football makes men great. And sometimes, great men just happen to play football.