

One for the boys

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game that Winbush had come back to be in. Though he had started every game during the season, they were merely stepping stones to his final reward.

And, despite the fact that the Rams lost a nail-biting 20-19 decision to Norfolk State, Winbush got that reward, playing the game of his life and giving his teammates the kind of leadership that normally wins championship games.

The scrappy senior racked up impressive numbers against the number one defensive team in all of Division II football, completing 20 of 32 passes for 220 yards and a touchdown. He also eluded the rock-hard Norfolk rush, scrambling to buy time until he could find open receivers.

As I walked with Winbush across Foreman Field to the Ram lockerroom after he accepted an award as the Rams' outstanding player, it was obvious he was hurting inside. He had enjoyed his best game ever as a Ram, but Winbush had difficulty accepting the loss.

After watching Tyrone Smith's field goal attempt hit the upright, Winbush had thrown himself to the Astroturf, weeping in disbelief. Now, however, he had regained his composure.

"Winbush, you are a tough little quarterback," a Norfolk partisan said, as Winbush wove his way through a maze of green and gold-clad supporters. "You can play on my team anytime."

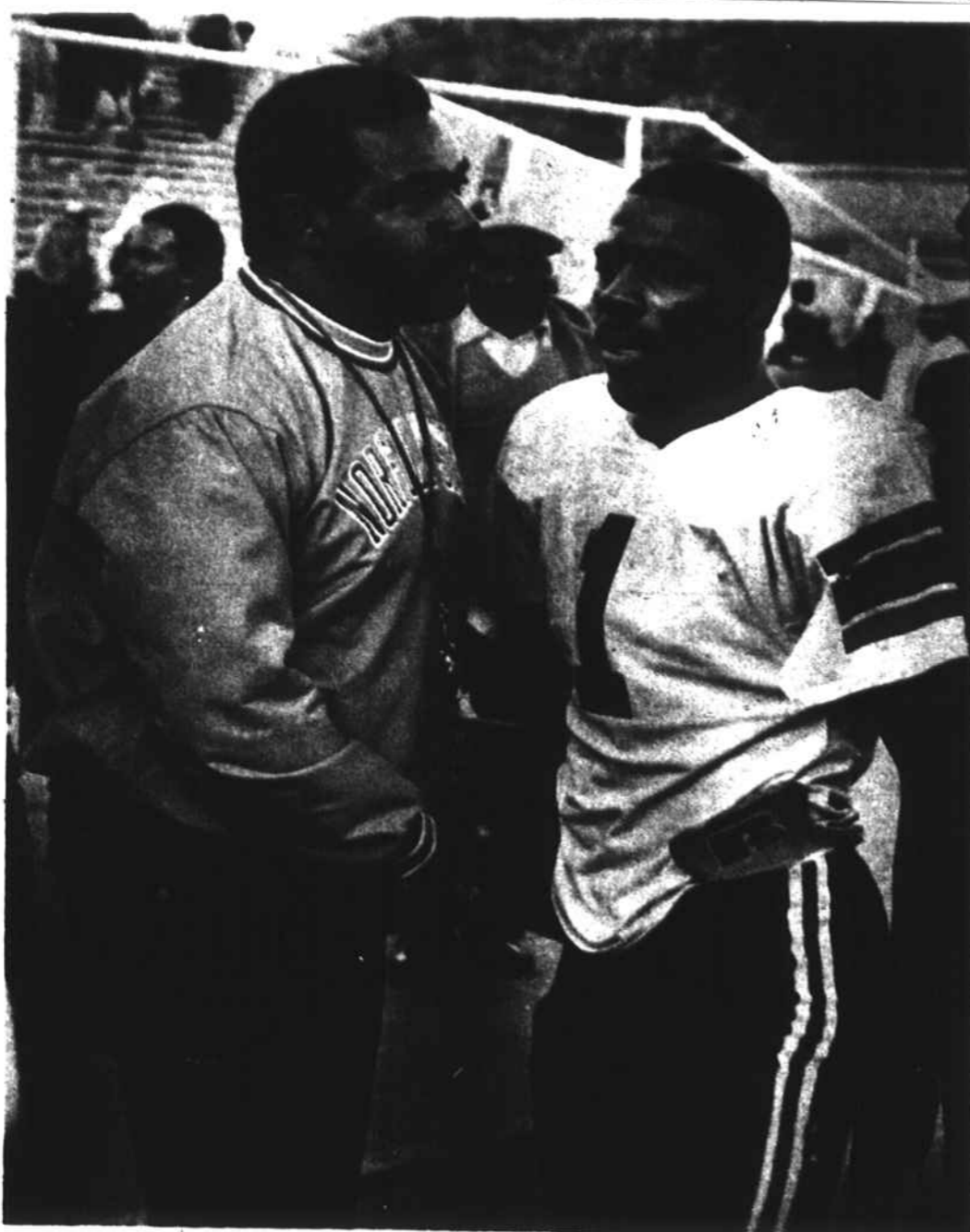
Even the Norfolk players were in awe of the 5-10, 175-pound Goldsboro native. After witnessing his performance, nearly half of the Spartans came over individually, chatting briefly as they extended their hands to him, saying with their expressions, "Boy, you were too much for us today."

Still, I don't think Winbush realized what he was able to accomplish on this brisk autumn afternoon.

Winbush refused to give in when the Rams' offense was being soundly defeated in the second quarter. Almost singlehandedly he directed the offensive attack.

He could have given up after Norfolk had taken a 17-6 lead with only a minute and twenty-three seconds left in the first half. But, being the competitor that he is, he fought on.

Winbush helped stem the Nor-



A Norfolk State assistant coach offers congratulations to Mike Winbush as he prepares to accept an award for being the Rams most valuable player in the CIAA championship game (photo by James Parker).

folk tide by creating a few waves of his own.

The biggest play of the game as far as the Rams are concerned came on first down of that particular drive, when Winbush eluded at least four Norfolk defenders, leaving them grabbing air as he scampered for daylight.

He pumped new life into his teammates and they responded. While he only picked up eight yards on the play, it was enough to let his teammates know that he wasn't about to quit. From that point on, the Ram offense began to click.

"That's what really got us going," said Ram defensive captain Mike Warren. "That was the turning point in the game. It gave us the momentum for the second half."

The Rams came up empty on the final drive of the half, but Winbush had provided the lead and the rest of the team soon followed suit.

"From that point on, we moved the ball," said Winbush. "We scored two quick touchdowns in the second half and everything started going our way."

Though the Rams' final effort came up short, it was nevertheless a thing of beauty. Winbush orchestrated a picture-perfect drive. He controlled a no-huddle offense and the Rams did whatever he asked. On at least two occasions, he switched receivers and backs from side to side, getting the matchup and formation that worked perfectly almost every time.

The game will go down in history as a defeat for the Rams and a conference championship for the Spartans. Yet, Mike Winbush was a winner last Saturday. Even if he never realizes it, Winbush accomplished much more than he set out to when he passed up the money that pro baseball could have given him this fall. Just ask his "boys."

She's a natural

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had someone to push me."

Although she had never run competitively before she started running cross country, Tomika has become increasingly interested in track.

Following her success as a ninth-grader on the cross country team, Tomika decided to go out for the track team. After a few races, she came to like it more than cross country.

"I really like running track," says Tomika. "My goal is to run in the Olympics someday. I still like cross country, but now I run cross country because it prepares me for track. It builds up my endurance."

She isn't sure which event she'll specialize in yet, but Tomika is fondest of the mile and two-mile runs.

Last summer, she ran with the Greensboro Champions track club and came away with some impressive awards.

"I came in first place in the 800 and second in the mile in the AAU Regionals," she says. "I was supposed to go to the nationals, but the team couldn't go because of financial difficulties."

Because of her involvement in cross country and track, Tomika says she doesn't have many hobbies. "Cross country takes up most of my time," she says. "Usually when I come home from practice, I'm pretty tired."

At first, Tomika says, her mother thought cross country was taking too much out of her. "My mom thought I was run-

ing too much at first," Tomika says. "I'd come home all tired and she thought I was overdoing it. But now she encourages me; she's my biggest booster."

Despite being a standout athlete, Tomika is equally as talented in the classroom. For the past three years, she's been a member of the student council. She's also been a solid B student and last year was recommended for the National Honor Roll.

She somehow finds time to play in the marching band at West Forsyth, too.

"I've been playing the flute for four years," she says. "It's really the only hobby I have."

Looking at the size of Tomika, it's hard to believe she has the stamina to compete in high school sports. A mere 5-3 and 90 pounds, she says her size doesn't affect her one way or the other. Only once, she says, has it come into play during a meet.

"The only time that anyone tried to take advantage of me was in the state meet," she says. "This one girl tried to nudge me every time I tried to pass her, but I didn't let it bother me."

To prepare herself for competition, Tomika runs five or six miles a day.

"Some days I might run 10 miles," she says. "Over the weekends, my coach (Lew Newton, cross country coach at West) might tell me to run a total of 15 miles."

Tomika says running those long distances is difficult, but she

doesn't think about the distance. Rather, she tries to work on her form.

"I sort of blank out," she says. "I concentrate on trying to push myself. I have to concentrate so that I make myself keep going."

Once her high school days are over, Tomika says, there are other things she'd like to accomplish.

"I would like to go to the University of Tennessee," she says. "They have a good track program there."

However, Tomika realizes she won't be able to run track forever and that there are other goals to attain.

"I want to get my degree from college," she says. "I want to specialize in computer science. I like computers and I think I would enjoy working with them."

If she takes to computers as quickly as she has to cross country, Tomika Whitten may continue to be a pacesetter for years to come.