

# Speas stakes claim to another title

This is an interview I've been wanting to do for a while. It has very little to do with the fact that Winston-Salem Prep head track coach Derrick Speas is one of my good friends. It's mostly because of the things I would like to ask him, on the record.

There are a number of topics he and I joke about in our down time. He kind of slid away from those issues during this interview. But he still gave a good interview. As soon as I turned the tape recorder on, Speas went from my boy to coach Speas. It was pretty funny, actually. That's how he is when it comes to coaching and mentoring kids. He takes that very seriously. And, he's a proven winner.

I mean, he's been associated with all three of the state championships Winston-Salem Prep has won. When tennis star David Hopkins won a 1-A state title two years ago, Speas was his trainer. He trained the state championship-winning basketball team. And, he coached his girls to a 1-A track title over the weekend. I got with coach Speas on Monday to discuss some of those accomplishments, as well as a few other topics.

Take a look at some of the topics Speas and I talked about at his home earlier this week.

**Anthony:** (Smiles.) What's going on, coach Speas?

**Speas:** (Smiles.) Nothing much. Just sitting here, relaxing. It's been a blessed year for me and my family. Right now I am just chilling.

**Anthony:** Congrats on guiding your team to a state championship in your first year at Winston-Salem Prep. That's an awesome accomplishment.

**Derrick:** I'm still excited. I find myself reliving the moment all the time. I'm just enjoying it.

**Anthony:** Do you enjoy this championship more than the three you were a part of at Reynolds?

**Derrick:** Yes. The ones at Reynolds are still close to my heart. But this one is priceless. This was my first year as a head coach. The kids bought into my championship demeanor. I'm glad to win my first championship as a head coach at Winston-Salem Prep.

**Anthony:** Is this justification of your worth to Reynolds. I mean, it seemed like you were taken for granted over there. Does this show certain people what you can do?

**Derrick:** Well, I don't think it's a situation like that. The opportunity to be the head coach simply presented itself at Winston-Salem Prep. Mr. Watts gave me an opportunity. And, I came to this school because of him. He is the reason I am in the school system today. It all started with Mr. Watts.

**Anthony:** No doubt. You know you have something to do with every state title Winston-Salem Prep has won. That's pretty cool.

**Derrick:** This is what I do. I hope the community picks up on it. I hope people continue to believe in coach Speas as a coach and mentor. The proof is in the pudding.

**Anthony:** What was going on with the 4x100-relay? How did they get disqualified?

**Derrick:** They said there was a lane violation. But all white flags went up during the race. Then, they called me to the center of the field to say we were disqualified. That was almost an hour later. I tried to appeal it, and I wasn't heard. In the long run, the kids got a little upset because they saw them try to take something away from us that we earned. The kids channeled their anger into that last event (4x400). We improved by 10 seconds from last week. The girls stepped their game up. Bishop beat us by 8 seconds last weekend. We beat them by 2 seconds on Saturday.

**Anthony:** Do you feel any pressure to do it again?

**Derrick:** Not really. I just take it one day at a time. With us not having a track, we have to do things the old fashion way.

**Anthony:** Stop. (Smiles.) How can a team win a state track title without a track to practice? I've watched your team practice in the gym, only clearing two hurdles. We all



Here, W-S Prep head coach Derrick Speas talks things over with David Lindsay during the City/County Meet.

know there's eight hurdles in a race. How did you all do it, man?

**Derrick:** (Laughs.) You have to use it for motivation. Anything is possible. You just have to be ready. We need a track, though.

**Anthony:** No doubt. Who are your main influences as a coach?

**Derrick:** I'd have to say the late coach Lemuel Johnson. He was a father figure to me. I also admire Trevor Graham. He's taught me a lot as well. And, I can't forget my track coach in Kansas, Scott Walkenshaw. He taught me how to evaluate and spread out talent.

**Anthony:** What are you usually doing during your free time?

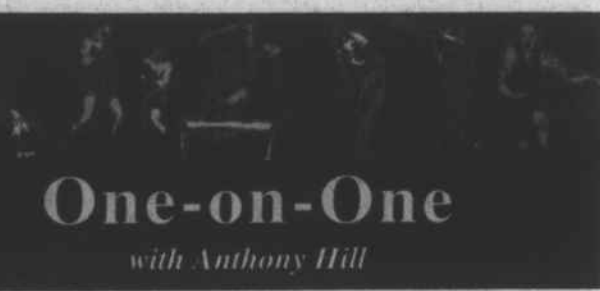
**Derrick:** Doing Next Level All-Sport Training. We're still training some of the best athletes around the area. During the day I am at Winston-Salem Prep. I just do what I want to do.

**Anthony:** Do you want to coach in college one day?

**Derrick:** I may have dreams of coaching on the collegiate level one day. One day, maybe even on the professional level. Who knows?

**Anthony:** Do you consider yourself as the best track coach around?

**Derrick:** (Smiles.) Pound for pound. (Both laugh.) I feel as though I am a very unique coach. I bring a lot to the table. I am



a former track athlete. And, I also went through some of the same things these kids are facing today. Well, I went through more. To answer your question — yes. I've been a part of five state championships, even when Carver won it. That's on my resume. So I want to keep adding to it. I always want to be the best.

**Anthony:** What happened to your career, as an athlete?

**Derrick:** Well, I made some bad decisions. Life is about making the right decisions. Also, there weren't as many things in place as there are today. So, it was easy for me to go the wrong way.

**Anthony:** Do you have a favorite show?

**Derrick:** I'm an old school gangsta type of guy. I also love The Wire. I watch a lot of CSI and crime stories. I've also been watching the Flava of Love repeats. They are off the chain.

**Anthony:** (Both laugh.) What's your favorite meal?

**Derrick:** I'm a K&W guy, hopefully that can change in the future.

**Anthony:** What have you been listening to lately?

**Derrick:** I'm a Tupac Shakur guy. But my daughter is heavy into Lil Wayne. So, she's making me into a Lil Wayne fan.

**Anthony:** If you could meet anyone, dead or alive, who would it be?

**Derrick:** Tupac Shakur.

**Anthony:** How's your love life? I am sure the ladies want to know if you're single.

**Derrick:** Coach Speas has been single for a while. But, you know. (Both laugh.) I'm always hopeful. I have someone in mind.

**Anthony:** If you could date any celebrity who would it be?

**Derrick:** Someone like Stacy Dash.

**Anthony:** Who would win a race between you and Parkland's Antwan Hughes?

**Derrick:** Come on now. (Smiles.) Coach Speas. Coach Hughes was a good athlete in his time. But I ran with guys like Julius Reece, Randy Jones and Sonny Weaks. It was a different era of athletes. Derrick Speas, man.

**Anthony:** (Smiles.) OK. Name the fastest kid in the city.

**Derrick:** Hunter Furr. He doesn't run with the greatest form or technique. You need to call me, Hunter. But he's got a tremendous will to win. And, he runs with so much emotion and power. You have to bring your A-game against Hunter.

**Anthony:** All right. Uh, free association. Winston-Salem Prep.

**Derrick:** The best school in Winston. And, the only school with two state championships in one year.

**Anthony:** Rev. Richard Watts. (W-S Prep principal)

**Derrick:** A very blessed man. A man I really respect.

**Anthony:** Your grandmother.

**Derrick:** (Smiles.) That's my heart and soul. None of this would've been possible without my granny, Margaret. She's been my greatest inspiration through everything.

**Anthony:** Derrick Speas.

**Derrick:** One of the best track coaches ever in the state.

**Anthony:** Julius "Juice" Reece.

**Derrick:** He's like my brother. Good friend.

**Anthony:** Best running back to play at Reynolds.

**Derrick:** Without a shadow of a doubt, Chris McCoy.

**Anthony:** (Smiles.) Best sports writer in North Carolina.

**Derrick:** It's got to be me. No doubt. You provide the best coverage of youth sports in the area, period. You have the best interviews too. I'm just glad that you are here, and that you're a friend of mine.

**Anthony:** (Smiles.) That's what's up. I am definitely printing that.



WSSU head coach Bobby Collins is pleased with his latest signees.

## WSSU announces basketball signees

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Winston-Salem State University men's basketball coach Bobby Collins announced a talent-laden 2008 signing class last week as he confirmed that four student-athletes have signed National Letters of Intent to play basketball for the Rams next season.

"We're addressing some issues and adding some quality depth to our team with these signees" Winston-Salem State head men's basketball coach Bobby Collins said last week. "We have an opportunity to strengthen our program with these four talented freshmen. They are a welcome addition to the strong tradition of Rams basketball."

The Rams will strengthen their backcourt with the signing of three guards, including a pair of North Carolina natives. Michael Bonner, Jr., a 6-5 guard from Hertford, N.C. he led his Perquimans High School squad to a 21-6 record last season en route to capturing the Albemarle Conference regular season title. In addition to the team title, Bonner took home a number of individual honors including being named the Albemarle Conference Player of the Year as well as being selected the Daily Advance Player of the Year.

An All-District and first team All-Conference honoree he was selected to play in the North Carolina Coaches Association East/West All-Star game to be played at the Greensboro Coliseum on July 21, 2008. Bonner averaged 16.4 points, 8.7 rebounds and 4.7 assists per game in 2007-08.

Bonner chose Winston-Salem State over South Carolina State University where he was also offered a scholarship to play basketball.

Joining Bonner at WSSU is Lamar Monger, a 6-0 guard from Ahsoskie, N.C. where he led his Hertford County High School team to the Northeastern Coastal Conference regular season and tournament championships.

Monger chose to join the Rams over interest from Appalachian State and Old Dominion, as well as Furman and Gardner-Webb, both of whom offered Monger football and basketball scholarships.

Also heading to WSSU is Jemaricus McClinton, a 6-3, 175-pound guard from Chester, S.C. who was the state of South Carolina leader in scoring at 26 points per game last season. McClinton added eight rebounds and two steals per game as he led the Chester High School Cyclones to the Class AAA Upper State championship game.

Named The Herald's All-Area Player of the Year, McClinton earned All-Region 3A honors and was named to the Class 3A All-State team. McClinton turned down offers from Louisiana Tech and South Carolina State in order to sign with the Rams.

Adding some punch to the Rams' frontcourt will be 6-7 forward Stephon Platt. A native of Laurinburg, N.C., Platt led the Fighting Scots to a second place finish in the Mid-Southeastern Conference and an appearance in the NCHSAA playoffs.

A three-time first team All-Conference honoree, Platt led the conference in blocked shots during his junior and senior seasons. A force offensively as well as on the defensive end of the court, Platt averaged 17.9 points, 8.5 rebounds and 4.6 blocks per game.

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