

Big John holds down interview

I thought it would be cool to do an interview with Jean "Big John" Downing this week. Some people may remember him from his days playing football for Winston-Salem State (1995-98). He was one of the leading offensive tackles heading into the 1999 NFL Draft.

Things didn't workout for him with football, but he still found a way to make it big. He's presently head of security for rap superstar Lil' Wayne. Some of you probably noticed him in Lil' Wayne's latest video, "A Milli." He got a lot of face time in that video. I usually hit John up once every few months to see what's good. I thought this would be a good time to put a conversation on paper.

He's cool, funny, knowledgeable and very down to earth. He and I talked about a number of things earlier this week, including Lil' Wayne, Chris Paul, Josh Howard, the Washington Redskins and the late legendary coach Bighouse Gaines. This was another one of my favorite conversations simply because Big John was really putting me on to some new knowledge. Take a look at some of the things Big John and I discussed on Tuesday evening.

Anthony: Hey, Jean. What's good, man?

Big John: Nothing much, bruh. How are you doing?

Anthony: (Smiles.) I can't complain. I'm feeling pretty right now. Let's talk about you real quick. You got major face time in Lil' Wayne's latest video. How was that for you?

Big John: It was cool. Know what I'm sayin'. That was really Wayne's idea. Most of the time I'm kind of laid back. I'm not trying to be in too many videos. That was really Wayne's idea. But it was cool. It was like I was working.

Anthony: Is that kind of the what goes down behind the scenes during a Weezy video?

Big John: Yeah, somewhat. It was still directed. That particular video was done in one take. That was the kind of video Wayne wanted to do. He actually shot three videos that same day. He was actually leaving one video before doing that one. You can see that at the beginning of the video.

Anthony: What's it like to work for Lil' Wayne?

Big John: It's a fun experience. He's a really smart dude. He's really about his business. He's probably one of the hardest working dudes I've ever been around.

Anthony: How did you two come in contact with each other?

Big John: Um, I actually used to work for Juelz Santana and Dipset. I got hooked up with Wayne through Juelz. They used to hang with each other quite a bit. But I really got the job during a Chris Brown tour in L.A. I had a fight with four Samoans. Everybody left me out to hang. I guess they thought I was gonna take an L. I came out of that one.

Anthony: (Smiles.) That's wild. I know that you used to play football, but what kind of training did you have to go through to do what you do now?

Big John: I've been doing this for 14 years. I was doing this while I was playing football, during the summer time.

Anthony: Were you a



Photo by Anthony Hill

Jean "Big John" Downing is a former WSSU football standout. He's presently head of security for rap star Lil' Wayne, and can be seen in his latest video — "A Milli."

bouncer?

Big John: No, it wasn't really bouncing. I was working with other guys. My first job was with Mad Lion (Dancehall rapper). They would call me and my crew when they came to town. We would hold it down as long as they were in town. It's been since '95.

Anthony: How much do you miss playing football?

Big John: It was a good experience, but I don't really miss playing. I'm at a different

in the last year?

Big John: One girl wouldn't move her car. She parked her car right in front of the bus, like bumper to bumper. That's probably the craziest experience I've ever seen. It's not really a point of me seeing a lot. It's really about me keeping Wayne safe at all times, because different people feel differently about Wayne in every city. That's all.

Anthony: How do you have a personal life with your schedule and duties?



time in my life. That was what I did when I was in school. Now, I'm into my career. I more so miss the guys I played with. I miss the people.

Anthony: How much did you come in contact with coach Gaines?

Big John: I used to come in contact with coach Gaines quite a few times. I was trying to play basketball too. I was all right on the court. I wasn't sorry. (Both laugh.) But, I talked to him (Coach Gaines) a lot. He was always in the coaches office, and we would sit down and talk. He helped me with different things.

Anthony: What's the craziest thing you've experienced on the road

Big John: It's hard. I'm married and I have kids. So, it's difficult. But I do everything for my family and my kids.

Anthony: That's what's up. Hey, what's Baby (Williams) like?

Big John: Baby is cool. He is real laid back. He's the boss. He knows how to take care of things, and he keeps the same guys around him at all times. He's like the people you see in movies. He's the boss. It's funny because people don't think of Baby like that. He's probably one of the most cool, laid back guys that you would ever talk to. He makes being there a lot better.

Anthony: I want you to tell everyone how much love Chris

Paul gets in New Orleans.

Big John: Man, Chris Paul has his face on the side of a building. He's doing a crossover or something. Yeah. Right downtown.

Anthony: So, New Orleans is Lil' Wayne and Chris Paul?

Big John: Yeah. I would say that now it's more Chris Paul because he's physically there. Right now the city belongs to Chris.

Anthony: (Smiles.) Who do you keep up with the most from Winston-Salem?

Big John: I talk to Josh (Howard) and Chris most of the time. I also go back to see coach Blount every now and then. But I really don't have too much time to keep in touch. I stay busy.

Anthony: Are you treated like a celebrity when you go places nowadays?

Big John: Oh yeah, especially in the airports. A lot of people recognize me from the video. That's the main thing. I honestly sign autographs and everything.

Anthony: (Laughs.) Speaking of that video. Where did the idea for the Mohawk come about?

Big John: I was getting a haircut. And, I was asking Wayne's barber to give me a cut that makes me look big and crazy. He said that I was already big. He asked me if I would do the mohawk. (Both laugh.) I told him that I would try it. I'm going to keep it. Wayne messes with me about it all the time.

Anthony: When are you going to see Wayne again?

Big John: Actually, I'm going to L.A. on Thursday (today) to do a video with T-Pain. I'll see him on Thursday.

Anthony: Cool. What do you think you'd be doing if you weren't doing what you're doing today?

Big John: (Laughs.) I'd be doing bail bonds. That was one of the things that I was doing.

Anthony: OK. Do you have a favorite NFL team?

Big John: Oh, I roll with the Redskins all the way.

Anthony: What? You don't like the Cowboys?

Big John: Cowboys? Who are they? (Both laugh.) I have been a Redskins fan since I was a kid.

Anthony: (Smiles.) What are your thoughts on Brett Favre possibly coming back to the NFL?

Big John: That's good. Football is a tough grind. If he still has that passion then he should still play.

Anthony: I hear that. Let's finish with free association. Uh, Big John.

Big John: Works hard.

Anthony: Winston-Salem State.

Big John: Best school.

Anthony: Coach Kermit Blount.

Big John: Great man and coach.

Anthony: Tory Woodbury. (Former WSSU QB)

Big John: Good player.

Anthony: Young Money Records. (Lil' Wayne's record label.)

Big John: The best.

Anthony: J-Ho. Josh Howard.

Big John: A good man. And, a good basketball player.

Anthony: No doubt. That's what's up.



Wake photo

Wake's Natalie Sheary gave up an \$8,000 prize due to her amateur status.

Sheary finishes second at CIGNA Golf Classic

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

2008 with a 74.2 stroke average last season, won the Northrop Grumman Regional Challenge, finished fifth in the ACC Championship and tied for 28th at the NCAA Championship. She became the first freshman to win an event for Wake since Marta Prieto won the ACC Championship in 1998 and was named the College Female Golfer of the Week by GolfWorld magazine following the victory.

Sheary's win at the Northrop Grumman in the first event of the spring season gave Wake Forest back-to-back individual medalists for the first time in program history. Nannette Hill won the Landfall Tradition in the last event of the fall season. The National Golf Coaches Association selected Sheary as an All-America honorable mention making her the first Deacon freshman since Alexandra Armas in 1995 to receive such honors.

Sheary led the Deacs in one-over 217 last weekend to finish second in the Duramed Futures Tour's CIGNA Golf Classic in Bloomfield, Conn.

The Wake Forest sophomore, playing in just her second Futures Tour event, shot 71-75-71 for the 54-hole event at the Gillette Golf Club in her home state. Sheary finished second to Vicky Hurst, who ended the three-day tournament at seven under par. The closest amateur score to Sheary's was Stephanie Kim's (Orlando, Fla.) 13-over 229.

Because of Sheary's amateur status, the \$8,000 second-place prize went to third-place finisher Song Yi Choi, who recorded a two-over 218 on the 6,401-yard course. Sheary has now competed in two Futures Tour events, the first being last season's CIGNA Golf Classic where the Hartford-native finished tied for 19th.

Sheary led the Deacs in

2008 Winston-Salem WARTHOGS

THIRSTY THURSDAY

Sponsored by Foothills Brewery, The Buzzard and Yes Weekly

<p>Thursday, July 17th 1st Pitch at 7:00 PM Vs. Myrtle Beach</p> <p><small>Thirsty Thursday sponsored by Foothills Brewery, The Buzzard and Yes Weekly</small></p>	<p>Friday, July 18th 1st Pitch at 7:00 PM Vs. Myrtle Beach</p> <p><small>Fireworks Friday Sponsored by Quality Inn and Suites at Hanes Mall and WMAO Come celebrate Wally's Birthday. Kids get free bleacher ticket if they bring a Birthday card for Wally!</small></p>	<p>Saturday, July 19th 1st Pitch at 6:00 PM Vs. Myrtle Beach</p> <p><small>Christian Concert featuring Barlowgirl sponsored by WBFJ and Crisis Control Ministries All tickets \$12 for game and concert</small></p>
---	---	--

Ernie Shore Field
401 Deacon Blvd.
Winston-Salem

Where Everybody Plays! 759-2233 or warthogs.com

call us first.
888.286.5259

GRANITE MORTGAGE, INC.

Financing The American Dream

Looking for a new or first home?
Call Granite Mortgage for excellent customer service, quick turnaround, and a great rate. If you are looking for a first home, call us first as we have been #1 in North Carolina for First-Time Homebuyer Loans for the past 17 years.* You will also receive a free pre-approval and have the opportunity to speak with one of our mortgage bankers. They will review your financial needs and assist you in choosing the best loan program for you.

Call us first.

*As ranked by the North Carolina Housing Finance Agency for first-time homebuyer loan production in North Carolina. Rank and pricing subject to change. Loan approval is based upon credit history and other related factors of borrower.