

WSSU's Middleton feeling good after wins

Winston-Salem State senior cornerback DeRon Middleton has been walking around with a little more bounce in his step lately. Middleton has been a lot happier too.

He's been feeling a lot better due to the way the Rams have played the last two games — defeating Hampton and Delaware State on their home fields the last couple of weeks.

Despite the slow start, Middleton has actually been doing his thing his senior year. He also holds the school's record for longest interception return for a touchdown.

I caught up with my favorite Ram earlier this week to discuss Winston-Salem State's late start, coach Kermit Blount, Parkland football, Antonio Wardlow and a few other things. D-Black was cool to talk to. We also talked about Monte Purvis, Nitty Gritty, Parkland's Nick James and a few other things on Tuesday evening.

Take a look at some of the other things we talked about earlier this week.

Anthony: What's up, D?

DeRon: Nothing, man. I'm chillin'.

Anthony: I see. (Smiles.) You guys are looking good right now. I'm not even gonna lie. I'm surprised.

DeRon: (Laughs.) Yeah, man. We're on a two-game winning streak.

Anthony: Where were these Rams at the beginning of the season, bruh?

DeRon: Man, we've been here the whole time. Everybody is just playing together now. We had to learn each other. It's a little late. But we've started.

Anthony: What's changed since the start of the year? You guys went from losing to a team like A&T to beating schools like Hampton and Delaware State. How does that work?

DeRon: (Laughs.) It's more of everybody coming together. Everybody has come together as one. We know each other more. We have about eight seniors. The rest of the guys are freshmen and sophomores. We had to get used to everybody. Everybody is playing together now. And, everybody wants to win.

Anthony: How were you able to stay motivated to practice on Mondays after coming up on the short end of things on some Saturdays?

DeRon: Coach Blount, basically. He's one of the best speakers. He can get you motivated to do anything. Know what I mean? When you know that you could've won it makes it easier to work harder to win.

Anthony: OK. How special is it for you to be a part of the team that helped coach Blount make history?

DeRon: It feels real good. (Smiles.) It's funny because I told him that him we were going to get him the record before these last two games. I promised him.

Anthony: What? (Smiles.) What did you say when you told him that?

DeRon: The first time he looked at me and smiled. He's kind of like a father to me. I've been with him for four years. Last week, he gave me a hug. He told me that I said it. And, we did it.

Anthony: Do you get some gratification by finishing the season on a good note?

DeRon: Yeah. It's going to be a good feeling. I've got two more games. I'm trying to go out 4-0. I don't want to leave here with a bad taste in my mouth. It's going to be real good.

Anthony: Does it matter that you weren't able to win any kind of title?

DeRon: Um, a little bit. Everybody wants a championship or bragging rights. But I came in under a great

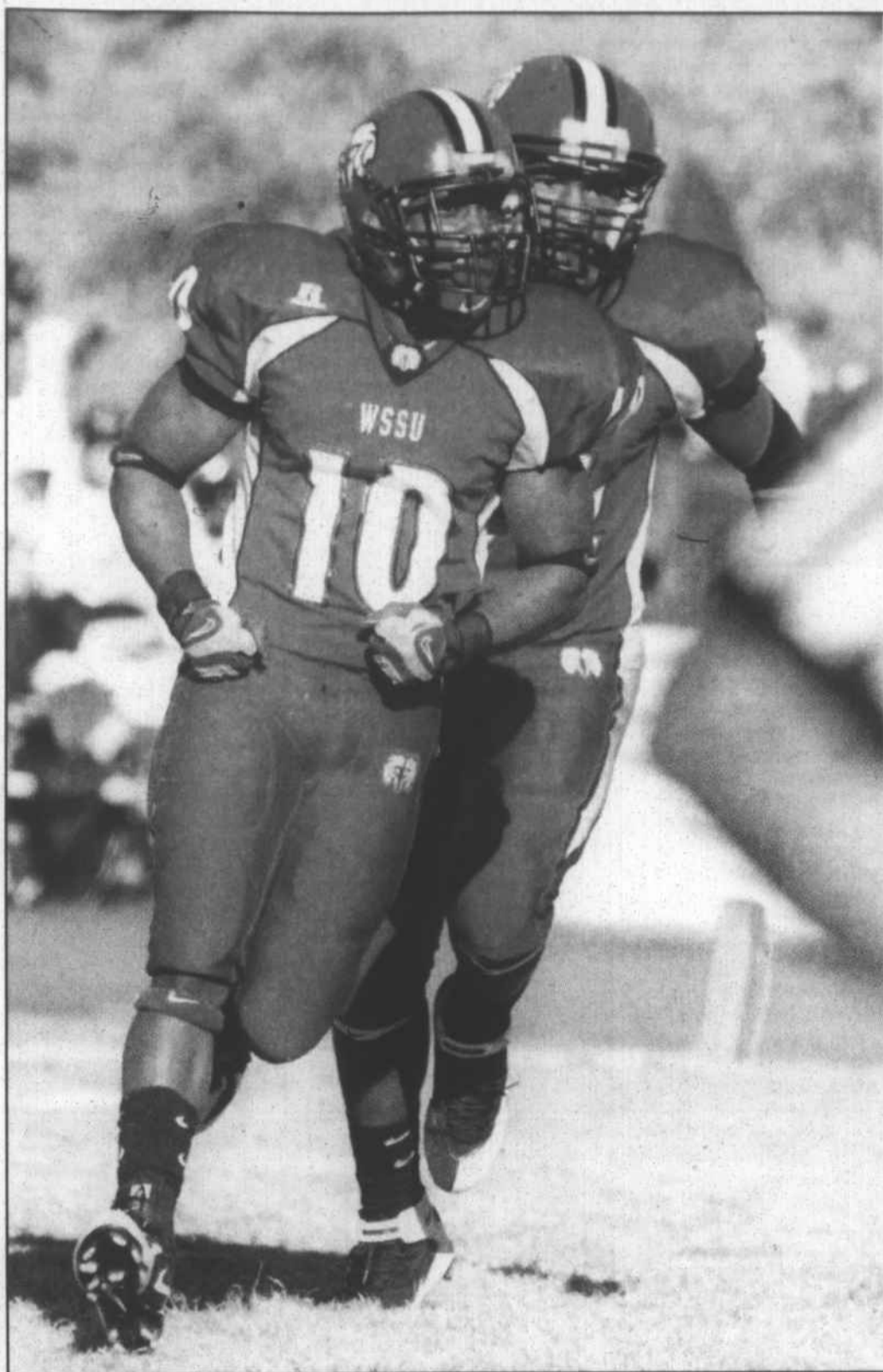
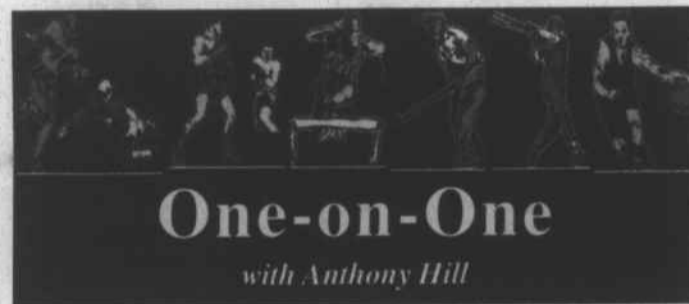


Photo by Charlie Pfaff

WSSU senior defensive back DeRon Middleton is a former standout for Parkland.



situation. I did all that I could do to help them build the program. I'm going to leave a little legacy. I've got a couple of records. (Smiles.) You know what I mean.

Anthony: Is that 80-something yard interception return for a touchdown (from Howard game) a record?

DeRon: Yeah. It's actually the Winston-Salem

State Division I record. It's second all-time. My home boy David (Irizzary) came back and ran a missed field goal for 100 yards two weeks later.

Anthony: Do you have any plans to play football after college?

DeRon: Uh, yeah. Right now I'm trying to get all my little injuries out of the way. I'm getting myself healthy. I'm gonna try the NFL combines, and some of the other things that come with it. We'll see what happens.

Anthony: OK. What are



Middleton

your thoughts on the Parkland Mustangs?

DeRon: (Laughs.) I'm not there anymore. But I'm going to be a Mustang until the day that I die. It's not called Parkland. It's called, "D-Parkland High School." We want those boys over there to win. They came up short on a couple games. But they've got some great athletes.

Anthony: Are you guys trying to sign any of those boys?

DeRon: As a matter of fact, we want about three of them. The quarterback (D.J. Adams) and definitely that receiver.

Anthony: Nick James?

DeRon: Yeah. He's pretty good. I talk to him a lot. I worked out with him a little bit over the summer.

Anthony: Do you think you could lock him down?

DeRon: (Laughs.) No problem. (Both laugh.) He ain't got up there yet. But Nick is pretty cool. That's my man.

Anthony: No doubt. Are you the best defensive back to come out of Parkland?

DeRon: I honestly think I'm the best DB to come out of Parkland. I told Antonio that he wouldn't have had all those stats without me. I locked them down and he always took my interceptions.

Anthony: What other school could you have gone to if you didn't sign with WSSU?

DeRon: What's funny is that I had an official visit to App. State right before I signed here. I didn't really think much about them at

that time. As soon as I got here they won three straight. Elon wanted me a lot too. But I really wanted to come here after I talked to coach Blount. He opened the doors for me and let me know what it was going to be. I have no regrets.

Anthony: Cool. How are the ladies treating D-Middleton?

DeRon: (Laughs.) You know it.

Anthony: (Laughs.) Do you all still get love when you lose?

DeRon: Uh, you know that you don't get any love after some losses. But it's going to come any way that you look at it when you play football.

Anthony: No doubt. Where's your favorite spot to eat in Winston?

DeRon: My favorite spot to eat is Olive Garden and Applebee's. I go to the Nitty Gritty when I want some soul-food.

Anthony: No doubt. Who's the best athlete on the WSSU squad?

DeRon: DeRon Middleton. (Both laugh.) No, we've got some young guys that are really great athletes. But I think me and my home boy, David (Irizzary), are the best.

Anthony: Seen any good movies lately?

DeRon: Yeah. We saw the "Incredible Hulk" on the bus. I thought that was pretty good. I like all the Friday's. I've also been watching, "Roscoe Jenkins" everyday.

Anthony: (Smiles.) All right. Let's finish with free association. Uh, Monte Purvis.

DeRon: Eggs. **Anthony:** (Both laugh.) DeRon Middleton.

DeRon: The best. P.T.P. (Prime time player).

Anthony: All right. Coach Blount.

DeRon: Greatest of all-time.

Anthony: Best high school coach.

DeRon: Dee Bell.

Anthony: Carver.

DeRon: Rivalry. Hate them. Best girls, though.

Anthony: Best DB to come out of WSSU.

DeRon: DeRon Middleton.



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