

SPORTS

Wedlock: Easy to be a Phantom

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EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

The last 18 months of Jonathan Wedlock's life have brought many changes and challenges. Since the fall of 2006, Wedlock has gone from starting in Winston-Salem State's backfield, to being viewed as a pariah by administrators, and fulfilling his dreams of playing professional football.

Despite finishing his time at WSSU with a career-best season, Wedlock is perhaps best known for his "So Hard To Be A Ram," a clip he posted on youtube.com to promote a film he was hoping to release.

The clip, which he produced as a student at WSSU, shows football players before a game, in their WSSU jerseys, using profanity as well as mixing large quantities of alcohol in a trashcan.

WSSU athletics director Chico Caldwell told the Winston-Salem Journal the language was "deplorable and disappointing for college-level students."

According to Wedlock, a film company in Atlanta wanted to distribute the film. However, the university refused to give the company the rights, and the full video was never released.

Ironically, another one of Wedlock's youtube.com clips helped him land a spot in professional football. Tavares Bowens, head coach of the American Indoor Football Association's Florence (S.C.) Phantom saw a highlight tape Wedlock posted on the site and contacted him last December.

While the AIFA isn't the NFL, Wedlock says that playing professional football is a dream-come-true. Through four games, Wedlock was

leading the team in rushing with 98 yards on 5 attempts and a touchdown.

"It's great," he said. "We live in a hotel, food is free, and we get paid every week. It's like being in college without going to classes."

Bowens said that Wedlock has caught on to the pro rather quickly.

"He's a rookie, but he's catching on fine," he said. "He picking it up pretty fast."

Wedlock also said that he has found that players on the professional level are more team-oriented and he likes the fact that players on his team are used to being successful.

One of his teammates, quarterback Omar Jacobs, was an honorable mention All-American in 2005 and was drafted by the Pittsburgh Steelers in the '06 draft.

"In college, everyone was more worried about themselves getting to the next level; it's more team oriented here," Wedlock said.

"It's great," he said. "We live in a hotel, food is free, and we get paid every week. It's like being in college without going to classes."

Another of his Phantom teammates is Jermaine Branton, a lineman from North Carolina A&T. Wedlock said he never fails to mention WSSU's 41-14 win over A&T during his senior year to Brantley.

"Every week, I let him know," said Wedlock. So what do his teammates think about his now-infamous youtube.com video?

"Everyone on the team has a copy," he said. "They love it."

Wedlock said that although he doesn't know what the future holds for his football career, he doesn't plan on putting up his cleats anytime soon.

"I'll stop playing," he said, "when God tells me to stop."



Photo Courtesy of Jonathan Wedlock
Former WSSU fullback Jonathan Wedlock has found a home in pro football.

WSSU student-athletes help out in W-S

STAFF REPORT

Winston-Salem State student-athletes continued to give back to their community on April 22 in Winston-Salem, as nearly two dozen current WSSU student-athletes from nine different athletic teams participated in the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Forsyth County Special Olympics at Wake Forest University's Kentner Stadium.

The annual Forsyth County Spring Special Olympic Games

are held every April at Kentner Stadium on the campus of WFU and the 2008 games mark the first year that the WSSU student-athletes have participated with area schools in the opening ceremonies.

There are currently more than 2.5 million children and adults with intellectual disabilities who are training to compete in the Special Olympics. Special Olympics North Carolina offers 20 Olympic-type sports for athletes to

choose from and compete in.

The three-day Forsyth County Spring Special Olympic Games, which took place from April 22-24, features over 450 participants from area schools competing in 20 different events. The top 15 athletes move on to the State of North Carolina Special Olympic Summer Games in Raleigh, N.C., June 6-8.

During the 2007-08 academic year over 170 WSSU student-athletes volunteered more than

800 hours of their time reaching thousands of local children through the efforts of the CHAMPS/Life Skills Program and the WSSU Student-Athlete Advisory Council under the direction of WSSU Associate Director of Athletics, Tonia Walker.

"Getting involved in events such as Special Olympics provides an opportunity for the athletes to give back, be committed and get involved," WSSU Associate Director of

Athletics, Tonia Walker said. "The connection and relationship with the community that develops from community service adds an invaluable layer to education."

Walker says honesty is the best policy.

"We must be honest with all that is going on in the world today and if you are honest with yourself," she said. "It's not difficult to commit to serve and do what's necessary to build a stronger community."

Rams add 2 new players

STAFF REPORT

Winston-Salem State University head women's basketball coach, Dee Stokes, announced Wednesday that two student-athletes have signed National Letters of Intent on the first day of the late signing period. Stokes announced the commitments of center Elizabeth Maas and guard Shatara Jackson for the Rams' recruiting class of 2008.

Elizabeth Maas, a 6'5" center from Clemmons, North Carolina, is a two-time All-Conference selection, a two-time Most Valuable Player honoree, and an All-Forsyth County player. A four-year varsity letterwinner at West Forsyth High School, Maas averaged a double-double for three seasons, including an average of 10 points, 10 rebounds and 4.3 blocks per game during her senior campaign.

Shatara Jackson, a 5'8" guard from Wilmington, North Carolina, was named Player-of-the-Year in the Mideastern Conference as well as being honored as the team's Most Valuable Player. Jackson has been a four-year letterwinner for Coach Sherri Tynes at Laney High School. During the span of Jackson's high school career the Buccaneers have posted an impressive 90-22 record.

Jackson has been the recipient of First Team All-Conference honors three times. She has also earned All-Area honors and was selected as the District Player-of-the-Year during her senior season. As a Buccaneer, Jackson scored 1,580 points and tallied 305 assists and 458 steals.

"Shatara will be an asset to the WSSU program," said Laney coach Sherri Tynes. "With the guidance of the WSSU coaching staff, I feel that she has the ability to become a solid player in their program."

"We are thrilled to sign Liz and Shatara during this late signing period," remarked WSSU head coach Dee Stokes.

"I have recruited Liz hard for two years and as everyone knows we were desperate to get more help in the paint. I think she has unlimited and untapped potential."



Photo by Garrett Garms

Last season, the Ram women went 3-25.

I am equally excited about Shatara's potential as a combo guard. She can really get to the rim and finish, but also has the ability to knock down the three ball. Coach Baugh did an outstanding job of recruiting this young lady and we are thrilled to have her join our family. We are still looking for 2-3 more signees to wrap up this class, but this is a great start for us."

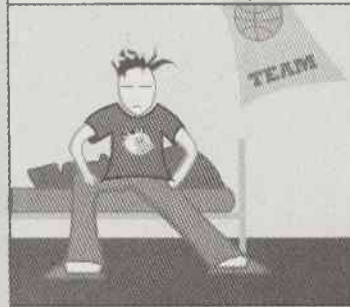
For additional information on WSSU women's basketball, contact the WSSU Office of Athletic Media Relations at (336) 750-2909 or log on to the Official Website of WSSU Athletics at WSSURams.com.

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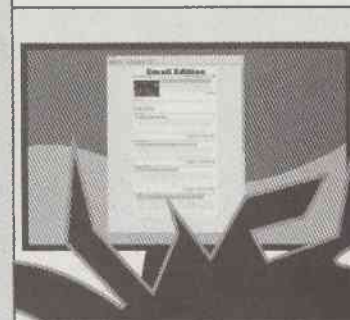
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