

SPORTS

Without Sports

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Back in Action

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Who's your Draddy?

Jetton among semi-finalists for 'academic' Heisman

Justin Hite
Reporter

At the snap of the ball, the offensive and defensive lines mash together in an effort to gain that critical inch, in what most people consider to be an unorganized and unintelligent movement.

However, it is far from that. Most people look at the "hog-mollies" lined up in the trenches and think of dumb farm boys, but they are far from that. Mark Jetton gave yet another reason why though theories are

wrong. The senior defensive lineman was recently thrust into the national spotlight after being named to the Draddy Trophy semi-finalist list.

In many circles the Draddy is considered to be the "academic" Heisman, awarded every year to a student-athlete who excels on and off the field. The semi-finalist is nominated by his university.

"It shows that the guys in the trenches aren't stupid," Jetton said. (A true statement as 45 out of the 184 semi-finalists were on the offensive line.)

"It shows that college football is more than just football. It's a game where guys have a chance to also excel in the classroom," Jetton said. Jetton has been able to do exactly as he says, maintaining a 3.42 grade point average.

"My parents are very proud, especially my mom," Jetton said. "She has always pushed me to be a major with a concentration in management. Jetton is planning on applying for law school in the fall.

He has appeared on the Dean's List four times, the Athletic Director's Honor Roll five times and the Southern Conference Honor

Roll. Jetton has done all of this since transferring from Clemson in 2002.

"I was more in the backlight (at Clemson), being here has given me more of the opportunity. With so many guys (at Clemson) it's hard. Coming here has given me more of an individual recognition," Jetton said.

Jetton has also excelled on the field as the team captain for the past two years and 30 starts in his career at Elon. He is a three-year letterman and a regular starter in 2003 at defensive end. He made the difficult switch to defensive tackle for the 2004 and 2005 seasons.

This year Jetton has helped anchor a defense which, after the first month of the season, is first in the Southern Conference in both rushing and total defense. The defense is ranked second in the conference and tenth in the nation in points allowed per game through the month of September.

Jetton's off-the-field and out of the classroom credentials are just as impressive. He is a football mentor for this academic year and has volunteered at a local hospital on multiple occasions. He is also a mentor to incoming freshmen this year and an elementary school mentor. Jetton has been involved in the Adopt-A-Highway program, which cleans up local roads.

The Draddy Trophy is given annually to a senior or graduate student who best combines academics success, football performance and off-the-field leadership. In order to qualify academically for the award, an athlete must have a GPA of at least a 3.0 on a four-point scale.

"By recognizing this group, we highlight the countless hours and demands that each college football player must balance as they pursue their dreams of higher education and their passion for football," said National Football Foundation President Steven J. Hatchell.

The nominees for this year include Michigan wide receiver Jason Avant, Virginia Tech tight end Jeff King, Georgia quarterback D.J. Shockley and pre-season Heisman hopeful Missouri quarterback Brad Smith. Jetton



Andrew Brickey/ Photographer

Mark Jetton (above) goes for a tackle in a recent game against North Carolina A&T. Jetton was named a semi-finalist for the Draddy Trophy. It is also considered the "academic" Heisman. Players must have a GPA of at least 3.0 in order to qualify.

is one of 44 nominees from Division I-AA.

"It means a lot, I was really honored. It's an honor to be in that company," Jetton said. Past winners include Peyton Manning, Chad Pennington and Danny Wuerffel. Wuerffel won the Draddy and the Heisman in the same year.

Former Elon offensive lineman Brandon Mason was a finalist for the award last year.

Finalist this year will receive an \$18,000 post-graduate scholarship. Fifteen finalist will be announced on Oct. 27, while the winner, who is selected by the National Football Foundation Awards Committee, will be announced on Dec. 6. The winner of the award will receive a 24-inch, 25-pound trophy and a \$25,000 post-graduate scholarship.

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Mark Jetton

Height: 6'3"

Weight: 251

Career Stats:

2003:

50 tackles, eight tackles for loss, three sacks, one forced fumble, two fumble recoveries.

2004:

39 tackles, eight tackles for loss, four sacks, two passes defended, one fumble recovery, 12 games

2005:

19 tackles, three and a half tackles for loss, one sack, one pass defended, one fumble recovery, five games.