

PRO FOOTBALL

Howard U. quietly develops NFL pipeline

Three years ago, Troy Kyles was a reserve wide receiver in a run-oriented offense on the Howard University football team. Today, he is a wide receiver with the National Football League champion New York Giants.

What Kyles and many of his former Howard Bison teammates have done in the last three years is help take Howard's football program to a higher level. Under the tutelage of second-year coach Steve Wilson, who played 10 seasons in the NFL, the Bison are

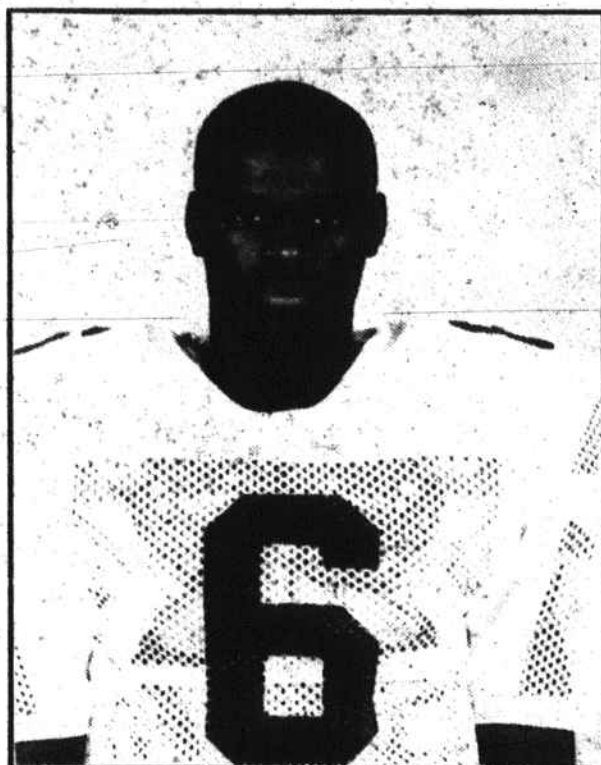


Photo courtesy of Howard University
Howard University graduate Troy Kyles earned a roster spot and some playing time as a member of the Super Bowl champion New York Giants.

being exposed to the finer points of the pro game.

Howard, which is world renowned for educating many of the nation's black doctors and lawyers, has moved into the arena of developing professional football players. The Bison had seven players attend NFL training camps last summer and five of them were on an NFL roster at some time during the season.

In addition to Kyles, Jimmie Johnson (tight end, Washington Redskins), Sean Vanhorse (cornerback on injured reserve, Miami Dolphins), Derrick Faison (wide receiver, Los Angeles Rams) and David Westbrooks (defensive end, Minnesota Vikings) all experienced time in football's ultimate league.

"We've had a very high success rate with our kids making it in the league," says Wilson, who played with the Denver Broncos and Dallas Cowboys. "We teach the techniques and systems the pro teams run and the scouts understand this. Most small schools do not run NFL-type systems or play tough competition. We run the right system, and with us playing schools like Temple and Alcorn State in 1991, we are strengthening our schedule."

Kyles, who caught four passes for 77 yards in eight games since being activated off of the Giants' practice squad, graduated from Howard with a bachelor's degree in radiologic technology last year.

In Kyles' first three years at Howard, he caught seven passes for 144 yards in a limited role. Wilson's arrival in '89, however, proved to be very beneficial for Kyles, who worked hard on running precise pass routes and his concentration level during the off season. As a senior, he averaged 22.3 yards per catch and

scored four TDs as Howard's legitimate deep threat.

"My career at Howard was not that spectacular but I ran good times for the scouts (4.3 in the 40-yard dash) and showed them I had the ability to go deep my last year in college," said Kyles, a Detroit native. "I received a

number of calls on draft day and after discussing my options with coach Wilson, decided New York would be a good place for me to be."

-Jesse Batte

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