

Tri-City

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systems – and we are confident that Tri-City Project Teach will be even stronger.”

“Under Tri-City Project Teach – Teaching Education and Athletics to Create Hope – we the founders pass the gavel to our present president, Learmond ‘Buddy’ Hayes,” Johnson said. “Buddy is much more than our lead-off leg. He is a coach, a strong parent, an AAU official, director of our tutoring program and much more.”

One reason Johnson and Riley feel strongly about taking a step back is because of the upcoming young coaches who were former standouts in the program but have come back to take active roles as coaches. Julius Reece and Derrick Speas, who both began their careers

with Tri-City at age 12, are lending a hand as coaches.

The two are also involved locally as football coaches, Reece as wide-receiver coach at Winston-Salem State and Speas as running-back coach at R.J. Reynolds High School.

“We proudly welcome them and all the qualified coaches of our team and organization,” Johnson said. “Our coaching staff of 2002 has helped us qualify some 80 kids for national competition – a team record. Hats off to them.”

Johnson said the organization is blessed to have a strong backbone, with supporters who help to keep it functioning.

“With even more strength come out anchor legs, who are appreciated and should be commended,” he said. “Our mighty Executive Board, our parents, our sup-

porters, our practice facilities providers, our community our total team membership have been outstanding.”

Recently a record number of supporters crowded into High Point’s Simeon Track facility for the N.C. AAU Regional Championship. Athletes from Winston-Salem took charge in many events, competing with top teams from Charlotte and the rest of the state. Some 80 athletes qualified to move on to regional or national competition.

That, according to Johnson, is proof positive that Tri-City is still going strong. “We want to congratulate and encourage our athletes for their success and achievements,” he said. “We also wish them much success and encouragement. We also wish them success in every other sport in which they compete.”

Woodbury

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camp. “But I was determined that I was going to make it.”

That meant battling a long list of quarterbacks beginning with the Jets’ first training camp. Woodbury beat out Rashard Casey, the former Penn State quarterback, during the first mini-camp, and that set him up as the Jets’ third quarterback to assure himself a slot on the roster.

Being third on the depth chart didn’t assure Woodbury a position on the active roster, however. That’s something he earned later as a member of the team’s scout team. Woodbury turned heads with his performance at wide receiver on the scout team, and that helped him land a spot on the Jets’ specialty team.

“I’ll never forget the way it felt to finally play in an NFL game,” Woodbury said. “It was against the Carolina Panthers, and I had a lot of people out there to watch me. I made two tackles and it was a great experience.”

It was an eye-opener for a lot of people, but not for Woodbury.

“I felt all the time that I belonged,” he said. “When I compared myself to other people, I felt that I belonged. It was just a matter of me staying sharp mentally and grasping the offense and showing my ability on the field.”

That’s perhaps the most difficult part of playing in the NFL, according to Woodbury.

“During training camp we’re given a play book with more than 400 plays,” he said. “There are plays for every possible scenario, and you have to learn them and know the coverages and adjustments that you have to make. You have to know how to audible and the plays that you have to audible to if the defense changes.”

When the season starts, there are more plays to learn.

“There’s a playbook for each team,” he said. “As a quarterback you have to be mentally prepared for each one every week.”

Mental preparation begins on Monday after the previous Sunday’s game and doesn’t end until game time.

“You spend so much time in the classroom learning,” he said. “You might have a three- or four-hour meeting and then go out

and have a 30-minute walk-through on what you’ve learned during the meeting. So you have to be really focused and attuned to things during every meeting.”

“I understand now that NFL football is a business,” he added. “You have to be able to get up and go to work every day and treat it like a job. You can have fun, but you have to be serious about it and your career or you won’t be there long.”

“I’ve seen guys move their families up and then be released two or three days later. That’s hard but you understand that it goes with the territory.”

It is all the more reason why Woodbury said he feels fortunate to be a member of the team.

“I thank God for blessing me with the ability to be where I am,” he said. “And I hope to be able to take advantage of it.”

To do that Woodbury said he has to take his daily workout routine seriously and be prepared to compete for the starting quarterback job when he reports later this month. He impressed a lot of players and coaches with his performance at the team’s recent mini-camp. Vinny Testaverde, the starting quarterback, missed the camp because of injuries, and Woodbury got an opportunity to share playing time with the starters along with backup Chad Pennington.

“The media around there had a lot of positive things to say and so did the coaches,” Woodbury said. “I feel more confident now, and I have a better grasp of the offense.”

It could mean that

Woodbury will get a chance to work with the team’s top players during preseason games. Woodbury played quarterback in more than half of two exhibition games last year. But that was with other rookies, free agents and draft picks who were trying to make the team.

“I think I can showcase my talent when the top guys are in there,” he said. “And really, that’s all that I ask.”

Until he reports, Woodbury will continue his workout schedule, which lasts three to four hours each day. It begins with a workout on the weights and then he runs the track at Winston-Salem State.

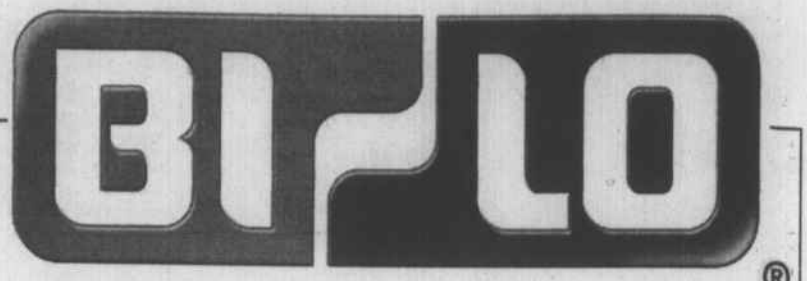
“While most people are sleeping I’m up running,” he said. “I usually start around 6:30 in the morning and I’m finished at about 10:30.”

Special emphasis is on the lower part of his body after he injured a quadriceps muscle and missed the Jets’ playoff loss at Oakland.

“I’m doing a lot more work on my legs than I did in the past,” said Woodbury, whose weight is up to 217 now after starting last season at 205. “But I’m 100 percent now, and I don’t expect the injury to be a factor.”

He does expect his physical assets to be a factor. At 6-3, 217, Woodbury has the strongest arm of the three quarterbacks and is also the most athletic, regularly clocking a time of 4.4 in the 40-yard dash.

“Hopefully the team will make the commitment ... to use me more this year in a lot of situations,” he said.



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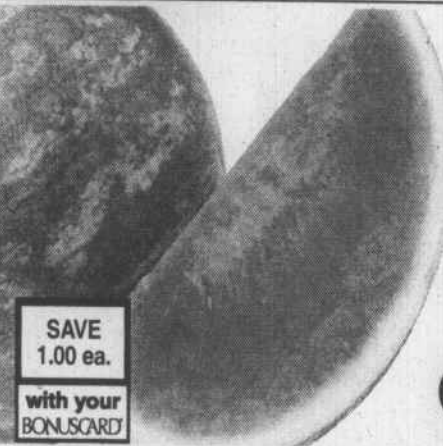
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