

# MOTTO Athletics Top Ten Area Football Teams



Jamaal Fowler

## PICKS BY JAMAAL FOWLER

	Points For	Points Against
1. Glenn (2-0)	58	0
2. Reidsville (1-0)	48	14
3. West Forsyth (2-0)	89	21
4. Dudley (2-0)	74	26
5. Mt. Tabor (2-0)	84	21
6. Grimsley (2-0)	54	7
7. Davie County (2-0)	77	21
8. Western Alamance (2-0)	92	14
9. Northern Guilford (2-0)	94	6
10. Walkertown (2-0)	80	8
11. North Forsyth (2-0)	38	2
12. Eastern Alamance (2-0)	70	18
13. Winston-Salem Prep (2-0)	88	33
14. NW Guilford (2-0)	79	18
15. Randleman (1-0)	49	0

Honorable Mention: N. Rowan (2-0), Ledford (2-0), Reagan (1-1) Oak Grove (1-1), N. Davidson (1-1)

## Apparel

From page B1

er companies once again and figured out a better sales strategy.

While doing his homework on other companies, James came across Russell Athletics. He says he remembers having to wear the Russell Athletics in college and having to hide the emblems from other brands because they were prohibited from wearing them and if caught, they were fined.

"I really wanted to make a brand for the CIAA," he continued. "You know, something for the Black colleges and Black players."

Through his research, James noticed that Russell Athletic was making a lot of their profits through bulk order uniforms. He adopted a similar model to fit his business and has continued to build the company in that way.

"That's when MOTTO really became what it is today; we do uniforms and that's our niche," he said. "I am not doing T-shirts anymore and we are not just a printing company, we are a brand company, but we specialize in uniforms."

James bet on himself by making the move to bulk jersey sales. He took all his previous profits and

to get the consumer to believe it enough."

Ameer Watkins is the sales manager for MOTTO Athletics. As a veteran salesman with more than two decades of experience, he connected with James while James was coaching at North Forsyth High School several years ago. Watkins was eager to jump on board with James to bring his expertise in sales to the business.

"It was just his passion of what he was talking about and how he developed it from scratch," said Watkins about why he connected with James. "With my sales background, I can kind of see how I can direct some things and put some stuff on the forefront."

"Since we have coached together, we already have a like mindset. It's about competition, it's about having fun, it's about entertainment, but at the end of the day, how can you make this pay for what you're doing?"

One of the ways Watkins thought he would be able to bring more attention to the business was to partner with The Chronicle. For the remainder of the football season, MOTTO sports will sponsor the Player of the Week section of the sports page.

Each week, The Chronicle will select a

# A NEW JOURNEY BEGINS

THE CHRONICLE WILL HAVE A SERIES OF ARTICLES FOLLOWING FERNANDERS THROUGHOUT HIS FRESHMAN YEAR.

## The journey continues for Mt. Tabor's Fernanders

BY TIMOTHY RAMSEY  
THE CHRONICLE

The Chronicle has followed young O'Shae Fernanders throughout his freshman year as he transitioned from middle school to high school basketball. Now that he has concluded his first season on the varsity level, he shared his thoughts on the new level of competition.

Fernanders gained some valuable experience playing his first full season on the varsity level, he said. He knew there was going to be a learning curve, but wanted to take full advantage of every opportunity he was afforded. "I did expect to go in and have to buy in on defense and I expected a lot of yelling from Coach (Andy) Muse, but it was all for the good," said Fernanders. "I just braced myself for all of that and I also just went in with a positive mindset."

"I just thought to myself that I am one of Coach Muse's strongest sophomores, so I have to go in and play like I have been here for three years. I knew that I had to buy in on defense, because the scoring is going to come."

Fernanders had a stellar freshman season for the Spartans. He was named to the 2019 Lash/Chronicle All-Tournament Team, along with being voted The Chronicle's 2019-20 JV Player of the Year. Fernanders set a few goals for this season and worked tirelessly to accomplish them.

"I just wanted to be more physical and applying myself outside of playing basketball," he said about his goals for sophomore year. "I wanted to play a step up from the level I played last year and wanted to buy into Coach Muse's system."

To prepare for this season, Fernanders worked out several times per week to build up his strength and stamina. Because of the pandemic, the amount of practice time leading up to the season was cut short, so Fernanders made sure his body was in shape for the rigors of playing against bigger and stronger players.

"I was working out



O'Shae Fernanders stands with his mother, Nakeeba Orr, in their Mt. Tabor hoodies.

every morning and then I transitioned to the Central Y (YMCA) to work out," he said. "It was mostly working on my footwork and agility and not really basketball. It was just me working on myself. I also had to work on my muscle mass, too."

Fernanders says he didn't want to go out on the court like a deer in headlights. As a young player, his goal was to play beyond his years and stay composed at all times when his number was called by Coach Muse.

"I had to play like I've been there," he said. "I got a taste of varsity last year when I got moved up. I already knew I was going to have a strong spot on the team, so I had to tell myself every game that I couldn't go out there and underachieve."

Fernanders had to make an adjustment this year moving up to varsity. On the JV team, he was one of the main players that was looked upon to do a multitude of things, including much of the scoring load. Fernanders logged a lot of minutes on JV; however, on the varsity level he had to make the best of the minutes he was given.

"I can't really say it was hard, it was just an adjustment that I was ready for," he said about his new role on the varsity team. "I'm used to somewhat being a role player on certain teams, so it's nothing new to me. I just went out there and gave my team all I could. I didn't try to be a hero, but I did want to step up when coach needed me."

Fernanders' parents, Chad Fernanders and Nakeeba Orr, were excited to see their son compete on the next level. There were a lot of nerves for Orr due to her worrying how her son was going to transition playing against the best the area has to offer.

"This has been a struggle for me, because transitioning from being one of the star players to being a role player and having a coach that's verbal was different," said Orr. "Looking at it as a mother did a lot to me, but I had to realize that this will make him stronger on the next level. I had to put the mom in me to the side and say to myself, 'Coachable players make for more employable adults.'"

"I know Coach Muse has been doing this a long time and he knows what he is doing and I know he loves these kids, but out there it's a business and everyone has to play their role. I think this is making him mentally stronger."

Orr stated the pandemic made it difficult to enjoy the football season. Because parents were not allowed to attend many games, Orr and Fernanders had to stream many of the games on television. Once parents could attend, they had to alternate who would go to the game because of the limited number of people allowed.

Mr. Fernanders felt O'Shae began the season well, but thought more playing time would have bode well for him in his development as a player.

"It was a trial season for him and my expectations were for him to score

around 9 or 10 points a game and to pick up his defense and rebound, basically become a complete player," said Mr. Fernanders. "He had a couple of mishaps and had some growing pains."

"He had a couple of good games where he started to get going, but for the most part, I am just glad he kept his composure and didn't allow the growing pains to get him down. All in all, I think this year made O'Shae a better player because he knows he has to keep working hard."

Fernanders and his father both agree that he can become a little more aggressive on the court and not just when it comes to scoring.

"I am always on him about it, because basketball is supposed to be fun even with the ups and downs," Mr. Fernanders said about his son. "This is a part of life in general, so I want him to always stay aggressive and like I always tell him, 'We don't have to get ready, if we are always ready.'"

"O'Shae has to do what he has to do and do whatever it takes to stay on the court. He saw what he went through this year. Coach Muse is not going to change, O'Shae has to change, so it's all on him."

Fernanders says he knows there are things he needs to work on this summer, namely his defense and his footwork, to become a better player. He feels his role will enhance next season if he does the necessary things in the off-season.

"I am going to make sure that my head is wrapped around the fact that I will have a huge role next year," Fernanders continued. "I'm also doing AAU (Amateur Athletic Union) ball, so that will also allow me to be more comfortable going out there and playing how I know how to play."

Fernanders is also playing football during the offseason to help him work on his toughness. He hasn't played organized football in nearly seven years, but enjoys the physicality of the sport.



Photo by Timothy Ramsey

MOTTO Athletics is a Black-owned sports apparel company located right here in Winston-Salem.

invested in himself. He said there was no question what direction he wanted to move, so he dove head-first into his new venture with no apprehension.

"I didn't really have any second thoughts," he stated. "I am not worried about anyone else; it's a hundred people that make uniforms. I am in my own lane, but I am not worried about the next man. It's enough income for everybody to eat off of. If I'm worried about someone else, I'm never going to make it."

"Nike makes shoes and it's a hundred other people that makes shoes. You think Nike is going to stop because someone else is making shoes?"

James was able to grow his brand to this level by staying close to the game. He played semi-pro football and has coached for several high schools around the area.

"Whatever I do, I am involved in every sport, so that's how I'm getting in there," he said. "I've been establishing this business since 2012, so if somebody thinks they can do something like this, they have to put the work in."

For the last few years, James has set up shop at his storefront on Hanes Mall Blvd. He explained that the store was not because his business was getting too large, but rather because he wanted his customers to believe in dreams as much as he did.

"I never got so big that I needed this," he said about the store. "I made it real enough that you believe it, because I already believed it. Whatever I did with MOTTO Athletics is

player from the game of the week that was the catalyst in leading their team to victory. MOTTO will also sponsor the Top Ten teams in the area in the section as well. Watkins says he wanted to connect with The Chronicle because of the neighborhood ties the paper has.

"When it comes to sales, it's all about driving traffic here," said Watkins. "With me growing up here, The Chronicle always had a great sports page. I just thought we could get ourselves in the face of this and kind of bring back what they used to do in the day as far as player of the week."

"We are also giving gratitude to the kids that are playing and putting them in the paper and they are going to be looking at it online and the physical paper. We are also driving traffic here at the same time."

Watkins also came up with the idea of giving MOTTO apparel to the player of the week. He figured that would be a physical reminder to show the players and coaches what the store has to offer. Included with the apparel is a discount coupon for the coaches as well.

As a Black entrepreneur, James also wants to give back to those who have the entrepreneurial spirit. He has a program where young people can work with him as salesmen to learn how to own your own business.

MOTTO Athletics is located at 680 Hanes Mall Blvd. Their phone number is 336-912-3333.