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For the record

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Anderson's journey: From turmoil to triumph

LINEBACKER KADARRON ANDERSON finished his college football career in 2011 with an impressive list of accolades. He led the Southern Conference with 111 tackles, and his 372 career tackles rank him 13th in Furman history. He was a three-time All-America and all-conference performer, and he was team captain his final two seasons.

But those are the least of his accomplishments. Because when Anderson marches across the stage at Paladin Stadium in May to receive his degree in business administration, he will have taken another step in a journey that began when he was 8 years old and left to make his own way at the Connie Maxwell Children's Home in Greenwood, S.C.

Anderson and his older brother, Demarco, were placed there by the Department of Social Services after his mother was unable to care for them. At the same time, his three sisters were placed in foster homes throughout the state.

"It was tough for Kadarron, like it is for all kids in that situation," says the Rev. Miller Murphy, Connie Maxwell's director of communications for more than 20 years. "He was eight years old, he was moved from Rock Hill to Greenwood by DSS workers, and he couldn't help but wonder what was going on."

Murphy says the young Kadarron was alternately scared, anxious and angry during his early days at Connie Maxwell. Anderson agrees: "I definitely had anger issues. I was getting into altercations with other kids quite a bit."

But a coach saw him on the playground one day during middle school and invited him to play football. Once Anderson channeled his anger into football, things changed dramatically. He loved it from the beginning and soon began playing every sport he could. Sports became a way to keep his mind on anything but his circumstances and gave his life valuable direction.

Things continued to improve, and Anderson actually had the opportunity to leave Connie Maxwell at age 13 and return to his parents. But he decided to stay. "It was home for me at that point," he says.

He became a good student and an athlete of the highest order. He played six positions on the Emerald High football team and was named all-region and all-state. He even averaged 17 points and 9.2 rebounds in basketball as a senior.

Major football colleges came calling early — among them South Carolina, Clemson, Georgia and Georgia Tech — but an elbow injury at the end of his junior year kept him out of summer camps, and their interest cooled. It was then that Furman entered the picture.

Anderson says that Steve Wilson, Furman's linebackers coach at the time, came to watch him play basketball — and a full scholarship offer soon followed. "He told me he had never had a linebacker who could dunk," Anderson says, smiling.

His enrollment at Furman provided a rallying point for the family that had unraveled a decade earlier. His mother, with whom he had reconnected in 10th grade, came to every home game, as did his brother and sisters, numerous cousins, and Rev. Murphy. "You could say that my playing at Furman really brought the whole family together again," Anderson says.

One way or another, the 6-1, 234-pound Anderson hopes he is not through with football. He planned to move to Charlotte in January and begin training for the professional football combines in the spring. If pro football isn't in his future, he wants to get into coaching.

But wherever he is ultimately headed, the journey gets less difficult each day.

— VINCE MOORE

The author is director of news and media relations at Furman.

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■ In addition to Kadarron Anderson, Paladin cornerback Ryan Steed '12 and tight end Colin Anderson '13 were All-America honorees for 2011. Both made four All-America teams, and Steed was invited to play in January's Senior Bowl.

■ Walker Zimmerman '15 was named to Soccer America's All-Freshman first team. Zimmerman, a defender, was the Southern Conference Freshman of the Year and a third-team National Soccer Coaches Association of America All-America pick. Teammate Coleton Henning '13 was the league's co-Player of the Year, and Doug Allison's squad received the NSCAA Academic Award by posting a 3.0 grade point average as a team. On the women's side, Rachel Shelnuttt '12 gave Furman a sweep of league Player of the Year honors . . .

■ Former men's tennis coach Paul Scarpa was to be inducted into the conference's Hall of Fame March 1. Scarpa retired last summer as the winningest coach in NCAA men's tennis with 853 victories (817 in his 45 years at Furman). His teams won 17 league championships, and he was named coach of the year nine times. He joins Frank Selvy '54 (basketball) and Megan Dunigan '02 (tennis) as Furman's representatives in the league's shrine . . .

■ At the close of the fall season, the Furman men led in the race for the conference's Commissioner's Cup, given to the year's most successful men's athletics program, and the women were third in the Germann Cup competition. The men's soccer, football and cross country teams all finished in the top four in the league standings, and the cross country team's second-place showing propelled the women into contention.

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