4-1-2001

Mind power

Vince Moore
Furman University

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine

Recommended Citation
Available at: https://scholarexchange.furman.edu/furman-magazine/vol44/iss1/101

This Regular Feature is made available online by Journals, part of the Furman University Scholar Exchange (FUSE). It has been accepted for inclusion in Furman Magazine by an authorized FUSE administrator. For terms of use, please refer to the FUSE Institutional Repository Guidelines. For more information, please contact scholarexchange@furman.edu.
Mind power

*Martin a major model of a modern student-athlete*

For everyone who believes that the word student-athlete has become an oxymoron in college athletics, we give you Furman's Marion Martin.

On the athletic side, he started his final two seasons at linebacker for a nationally ranked football team that compiled an 18-6 record during those years. In addition to serving as co-captain of the team last fall, his final season included 81 tackles, an interception and four pass deflections.

On the academic side, he graduated Phi Beta Kappa, summa cum laude in June of 2000 with a degree in chemistry (3.9 grade-point average) and spent his final year of football eligibility pursuing a master's in the same discipline. He will finish his master's this summer and then head to Stanford University, where he has received a full scholarship to pursue a Ph.D. in physical chemistry.

Surely, Martin is what the early proponents of college athletics had in mind when they envisioned a student who was as strong in mind as in body. It is one thing to be able to stop a 220-pound running back at the line of scrimmage. It is quite another to conduct a research project titled the "Electron Spin Resonance Studies of Mass-Selected Matrix Cations."

"Marion did a great job for us and just kept getting better every year," says Furman coach Bobby Johnson. "He was very disciplined and there's no question his mental abilities helped him become a good player. He knew just what to do and he was never out of position. It seemed like he remembered everything a coach ever told him."

Although the football program was willing to provide Martin with scholarship assistance, he never required a penny of athletic aid because his academic scholarships covered the cost of his education. He was a Beckman Scholar in the chemistry department and was named a National Football Foundation/College Hall of Fame Scholar-Athlete, which was worth $18,000 in scholarship aid. He was also a two-time selection for the Verizon Academic All-America University Division football team.

Martin was valedictorian at Richland Northeast High School in Columbia, S.C., and scored 1420 on the SAT, so academic rigor was the top priority when he began looking at colleges. But he also wanted to play football — he was an all-region defensive back at Richland Northeast — which is how Furman entered the picture.

"At first, I was determined that I was going to school out of state," Martin says. "But when I came to a Furman football game in the fall of my senior year, that was all it took to change my mind. It was like the perfect college atmosphere."

The 5-9, 216-pound Martin was red-shirted his freshman year, then spent the next two seasons as a backup linebacker. Although he was improving steadily, Martin discovered that the analytical mind that served him so well in the lab wasn't always helpful on the football field.

"I definitely went through a stage when I was thinking too much," he says. "You have to know what your responsibilities are, but you can't analyze everything. If you do, you react too slowly and then you're worthless. I had to learn to use my intelligence to my advantage and not to my disadvantage."

Martin moved into the starting lineup during the 1999 season, then had another decision to make after the season ended. Although he would graduate the following spring — and had the academic credentials to qualify for any graduate program in the country — he also had another year of football eligibility remaining.

"During the 1999 season, I was almost 100 percent positive that I wasn't going to come back and play another season," Martin says. "But once I got away from football during Christmas break I started feeling that pull again, that desire to play. My grandmother always told me we only pass this way once, so I decided to take advantage of what I considered to be a great opportunity."

The Paladins, of course, had another stellar season in 2000 (9-3 overall with a trip to the Division I-AA playoffs) and Martin was glad he stayed to be a part of it. In fact, he wouldn't change anything about his Furman experience.

"I couldn't have dreamed of a better situation," he says. "It's been awesome. That's what made it so easy to come back for another year. I told my professors and coaches that they would probably have to kick me out before I would ever leave. I guess we've finally gotten to that point."

— Vince Moore