

## **Good story on coach**

**Wednesday, April 23, 2008**

I would like to thank The Enterprise and staff writer Kayvon Pourmand for the well-written article on April 11, "Putting academics first."

I feel that it would be a wrong if it went without mention about Coach Aaron Foreman. Coach Foreman's (volunteer coach/defensive coordinator for Great Mills High School) tireless efforts in college recruiting not only assisted my son in receiving his athletic scholarship to attend West Virginia State University, but in the past several years he has helped more than 30 other young men from St. Mary's County to reach their dreams of receiving scholarships or financial assistance to attend college.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to mention Coach Foreman.

Calvert S. Thomas III, Leonardtown

## **Putting academics first**

### **Great Mills senior signs with WV State**

**Friday, April 11, 2008**

One thing is made

abundantly clear when Calvert Thomas IV, a senior lineman at Great Mills High School, and his father, Calvert Thomas III, speak about the younger's recent decision to attend West Virginia State in the fall: academics trump sports.

Thomas signed a letter of intent to play football for the Yellow Jackets, but his decision to attend the school was far more complicated than his desire to play football. Thomas has high hopes academically and professionally and also has familial ties to the school.

"Right now, I'm planning on majoring in criminal justice," said Thomas, who played both offensive and defensive line for the Hornets. "After that, I have plans of going to the FBI ... ever since I was little I've wanted to [be in law enforcement]."

Thomas' dream of working for the FBI follows on the heels of his father's work as a sergeant for the Prince George's County Police Department. The younger Thomas said that following his father's work gave him a desire to some day work in law enforcement, preferably as a crime scene analyst.

"His mom and I were trying to direct him towards accounting," said the older Thomas, smiling as his son snickered. "But he's 18, so he has to make his own decisions, and I support him in whatever he wants to do."

His attempt to follow in his father's footsteps as a cop isn't the only instance where the younger Thomas emanates his father – the older Thomas also played college football, at Howard University from 1983-88 as an offensive tackle. Now the Great Mills senior has decided to play for West Virginia State, the alma mater of his grandmother, Sephronia, who attended the school in the 1950s. Sephronia is also a native of Institute, W.Va., where her grandson will soon become the fourth generation of his family to attend college.

But while the Thomas family has always stressed academics, he will attend West Virginia State on a football scholarship – something that may not have happened without the help of his current head coach Bill Griffith and Great Mills principal Tracey Heibel. Both father and son point to Griffith's work as instrumental in developing the senior tackle into a college-ready football player.

"Whether it's athletic scholarships, or it's academic, they really invest their time in the kids," said Thomas III of Heibel, Griffith and his staff. Thomas III is also a volunteer offensive line coach for Great Mills. "This program, although we didn't win anything last year, I think the main thing we taught them is how to grow up and be men, and I think that's most important thing they did for these kids."

And if it weren't for Heibel, Thomas may never have stepped onto a football field. Aside from his father's push to find an extracurricular activity, Thomas was discovered, in a way, by Heibel when she worked at Leonardtown High School, where he used to be a student. After Heibel made the switch to Great Mills, she was instrumental in bringing Thomas, who wanted to participate in Great Mills' Naval JROTC program, along with her.

The discovery comes from a story Heibel tells about Thomas as a freshman at Leonardtown.

“I myself noticed his potential aptitude for football when his candy didn’t drop out of a snack machine and he smashed the machine,” said Heibel. “Instead of a light tap, it came across as a very solid hit that smashed the whole window out of the snack machine. It was not funny at the time, but I think it does speak to some early aptitudes, early indicators that he could be a great football player.”

Thomas’ reaction to the story – besides clarifying that it was a honey bun he was after, not candy – underscores his true personality.

He is often bashful, but also very humble and thoughtful. He doesn’t boast about his abilities – remarking that he never really believed he was talented even though his teammates, friends and family told him otherwise – and with every question asked of him, he takes a brief moment to make sure he gives an answer he thinks is appropriate.

Such characteristics might be good for the program he will enter at West Virginia State, a team that for years was at the bottom of the West Virginia Intercollegiate Conference, but has recently seen a spike in success. The 2007 season was the first since 1992 to see the Yellow Jackets finish with a winning record and the team hasn’t won a conference title since 1968.

“Most of the team isn’t graduating this year,” said Thomas. “There are a lot of returning players. So, that’s going to be very good for us. Now, with the new players, the team will probably get better as we go on.”

But no matter how well the team performs, Thomas always has his eyes set on the future.

“My goals, so far, are to make the dean’s list and stay on the dean’s list all four years I’m there,” said Thomas. “And to maintain as high a GPA I can get there and to do my best at football.”