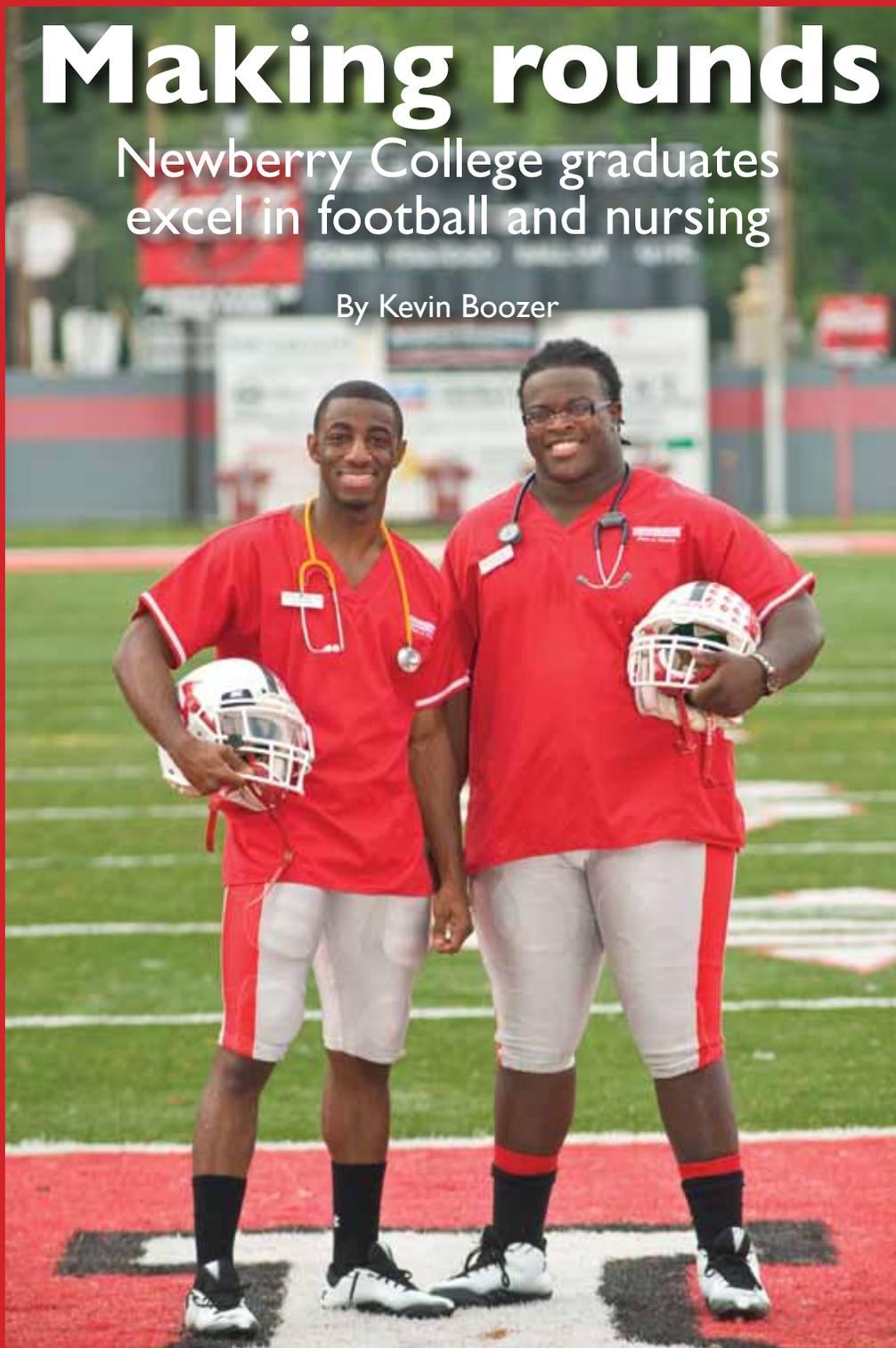


Making rounds

Newberry College graduates excel in football and nursing

By Kevin Boozer



For most football players, a run-in with a nurse happens in a doctor's office or hospital. For the opponents of James Bostick and Lequawn James, however, it happens on the field. Last year, James and Lequawn had the double distinction of being captains of the Newberry College Wolves football team and graduates of the college's nursing program. This rare combination of academic and athletic achievement attracted considerable media attention, including local television coverage, but both student athletes remain humble, crediting God for their success.

At 5'8", the soft-spoken James plays bigger than his size and has become a registered nurse as well as an NFL prospect as a defensive back. Lequawn, with his wide-rimmed black glasses and well-spoken demeanor, appears the more studious of the two. But at 6 feet and 300 pounds, the giant with the gentle nature is also an all-conference offensive lineman.

For James, who grew up in Estill, becoming a nurse fulfilled a lifelong dream. Under the influence of his aunt, a nurse at the Augusta Burn Center, and his grandfather, a doctor who served in the Korean War, James found his calling early. Because his grandfather was also a mortician at his family-owned funeral home, "he let me see things that most little kids couldn't see, and medicine became something I wanted to do," James says. His faith guided him through the rigors of juggling school and sports. "I always knew that if I trusted in the Lord and did as he asked, he would hold me in high honor and bless me to do what I love to do."

Part of that blessing was how God led him to his best friend, Lequawn James. From age 6, Lequawn grew up singing in the church choir, men's choir, and youth praise team. He also helped with canned food drives for needy families in his church and his community of North. After working with a sports medicine physician during high school, however, Lequawn realized medicine—not music—was his calling. Both Lequawn and James chose to study in Newberry's nationally accredited nursing program, and say they could not have succeeded without the other.

They met in chemistry class, and by studying together formed a brotherly bond. They also worked out, ate, watched movies, and played video games together. For Lequawn, an admitted overachiever, James' demeanor helped settle him down in the days before exams. Lequawn remembers encouraging James to stick with nursing early in his studies after he had done poorly on a test. They prayed for each other often.

When they studied, James would immerse himself in one subject, and Lequawn, another. Then they would brief each other on the material. Their technique made them work harder, because they didn't want to let each other down. James and Lequawn even shared driving to nursing clinicals and worked together on the same floor at Lexington Medical Center.

That mutual support was needed to complete their final two years of college, which included nursing courses and clinical experiences at Lexington Medical Center, in school districts, at Three Rivers Behavioral Health, and at South Carolina DHEC clinics. Newberry nursing faculty worked closely with Wolves' football coaches to develop a schedule that maximized the players' classroom time as well as their practice time.

During the 2011-12 school year, Lequawn worked as a nurse technician at Lexington Medical Center while serving Newberry College as a resident advisor, a job that sometimes involved late nights followed by 5 a.m. wakeup calls for clinicals. Nurses at LMC marveled at his ability to do so many things at once. For Lequawn, it all fit together. Football helped him become a more observant nurse, he said, because of skills he honed while breaking down game film. "With nursing, you are taught to look at the whole picture. You have to go beyond what you see, and we do that in the film room, too."

For James, football's carryover to nursing is confidence. "As a defensive back, if you get beat on a deep ball, you have to move to the next play. We 'move on to the next play' in nursing, too. You have to be confident. You can't appear unsteady or uncertain." James aspires to work in the critical care field and believes that playing the high-pressure position of cornerback helped prepare him for the pressure-filled ER.



The nursing class of Newberry College's Class of 2012

Lequawn agrees that confidence is crucial to nursing. His favorite scripture passage, "I can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13), keeps his confidence high. "It is my scripture of guidance in case I am down for some reason or another," he said. "All I have to do is look to Christ, and talk to him, and I know things will be better for me. That in turn makes me believe in myself

This fall Lequawn rejoined the Wolves to serve again as team captain. Although he completed his degree in May, he's thankful for the opportunity to take extra courses, like personal finance. He's also learned a new position, center, and thinks his versatility will be an asset as he seeks a professional football career. He was voted to the preseason All-South Atlantic Conference team and will likely be an Academic All-American for the third consecutive year.

He continues to work as a nurse in the medical surgery unit at Lexington Medical center. During the summer after graduation, James studied for his nursing boards and worked as a nurse at Lexington Medical Center. He keeps in playing shape in hopes of signing with an NFL team. Lequawn is also an NFL prospect and plans to participate in pro days this spring as James did before him. Thanks to the support of his best friend, Lequawn

has faith that an NFL position may be in his future, but places greater faith in knowing that the Lord will direct him where he needs to be.

Both Lequawn and James plan to be nurses in the off-season if they are fortunate enough to become professional football players. They hope their example will inspire others spiritually and vocationally. Their hectic schedules and late-night study sessions meant limiting fun social time, but it was worth it, they agree.

"At the end of the day, my friends could not graduate for me," James said. "It was my choice to be a student first and an athlete second." They hope more dedicated, energetic student-athletes will study nursing at Newberry College. Lequawn encourages students to make the most of their college experiences and to remember the Lord from whom they receive their strength. "I remind (my teammates) that hardly any of us will get to go pro, so we need to be proactive in our educations. If they put the same effort in the classroom as they do here in football, they will guarantee success." 



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