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A SUMMIT ON THE COLLEGIATE ATHLETIC EXPERIENCE

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The George Washington University
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11) Opening remarks by Myron Rolle, graduate of The Hun School, Princeton, NJ and prospective football athlete enrolled at Florida State University

MYRON ROLLE: Thank you. All right, well, I attended The Hun School of Princeton, New Jersey, as was stated and I recently graduated, December 16th and I enrolled at Florida State on January 9th. I graduated early. I had enough credits in high school to do that.

And my recruiting process was very intense and very interesting, and that's the first word that comes to my mind, intense, because it started the summer of my sophomore year. My brother who's older than me, he's about twenty-one years old, he attends St. John's University in Queens, New York, he told about, you know, a few camps that I should go to just to sort of get my name out there and just be noticed.

And I went to the Oklahoma summer camp. We drive twenty-four hours from New Jersey all the way out to Norman, Oklahoma and that was quite an experience. But we drove out there and I did really well at the camp. I got moved up from the freshman to the sophomore group and put with the seniors and won MVP.

And at the end of the camp, actually this was just after I made a play, a receiver was running a post route and I broke up the ball and I see in the middle of the field Bob Stoops was standing right there and saying, Myron, come over here one second. And I said, wow, this is Bob Stoops like, wow, this is crazy.

And he calls me into his office after the camp is over, I try on his rings and his watches and all of that and he shows me, you know, that he won National Coach of the Year and Oklahoma's the number one team in the country and they offered me a scholarship right then and there and that was the first offer I got. And at that time they were the number one ranked team in the country.

So that really just started my recruiting process, that started, you know, that allowed me to know that, yeah, I could play college football, you know. I'm going against some of the best players in the country at this camp and I excelled and I could play at this next level. And from then on, you know, it was just like a snowball effect.

My name started to grow on the internet recruiting sites, you know, and the recruiting circles, message boards and newspaper articles and things like that, people started to gain notice of this super sophomore from New Jersey, this defensive back that, you know, people were likening to Shawn Taylor or Ronnie Lott or whatever it was. I started to fill out questionnaires in my sophomore year.

But my real experience in the recruiting world didn't really start until the summer going into my junior year. I went to combines, now combines are these things, are these events that college coaches can attend and your internet recruiting sites such as rivals.com, scout.com, they're at these combines.

And you run your forty yard dash, you get timed, you run a relay shuttle, you get timed, you bench press, how many times you can do 185 pounds, you do a vertical

jump, a broad jump, for me you go through different defensive back drills and then you go on to the one-on-ones, which is really show time, that's where you show out and you go against the receivers, the quarterbacks throw the ball and you really show what you can do. And at these combines I did very well. I won MVP at both of the combines that I attended.

Several universities were attending these combines that offered me scholarships on the spot. They invited me to their summer camps and I started gaining more notice and attention from these colleges and also from the websites. They started talking more about me. You know, they started asking questions about me.

Well I went to a prestigious prep school in Princeton, I had a 4.0 GPA, I had 1340 on my SATs, I wanted to be a neurosurgeon when I get older. I don't just want to play football, you know, I aspire to be something better than that. So, you know, my story started to get out and people started to take notice and that summer going into my junior year was incredible.

My junior year started and I had maybe about three to four coaches in my school every day. And they were from all the way from USC to Michigan to Washington to Texas. Jim Tressel showed up, Lloyd Carr, I mean I think the assistant coach from Michigan was at my school more times than my head coach, who was a lieutenant [policeman] in Princeton Township. I mean this coach was at my school so much, just eating breakfast all the time and I just, you know, I just got used to him being there. And what it also did, you know, having all these coaches come to my school allowed for my teammates to benefit from it as well.

Some of which who, you know, were going to go to Ursinus or, you know, some D-III school, some, you know, didn't have any offers, were going to walk on to certain schools. That allowed for them to get opened up into the recruiting process and my exposure helped them, you know, earn Division I scholarships. And my teammates, I think I had six that year that went D-I, you know, all from schools that came to see me and saw them and evaluated their tape and offered them scholarships.

The summer of my senior year, going into my senior year I sort of just relaxed a little bit, I didn't go to any combines or camps. I visited all my schools. I knew I wanted to commit, I wanted to commit to a university before my senior year started, September 1st, because I wanted to get it out of the way. I mean I had gone through the process so long and it was intense and sometimes overwhelming with the amount of phone calls I received from college coaches, coupled with internet recruiting sites, I wanted to get it out of the way because it's a lot of pressure. And fortunately I had four older brothers and my parents, my dad is sitting back here and my mother in the audience right now, that really just, you know, sheltered me from all of that, you know. There were times they screened their phone calls where, you know, they couldn't talk to me. If recruiting sites got my cell phone number, you know, it just, I sometimes put their number in as, don't pick up, because it just got to a point where I just, I couldn't take it that much longer.

So I took all my visits to schools, Penn State, Michigan, Miami, Florida, Florida State and Oklahoma in the summertime and I had a great time on my recruiting visits. These colleges knew that I'm somebody who focuses on academics and education is the priority to me so they let me see the biology departments, they let me talk to neuroscientists within the university, they put me together with, you know, other student-athletes who are very focused on academics.

I got to meet President T.K. Wetherell, I got a text message from Governor Jeb Bush on my visit to Florida State. I met the president of Florida, Mr. Machen; I met David Boren, the president of Oklahoma; Barry Switzer, Jimmy Johnson, I mean, Warren Sapp happened to be in the same room I was in when I walked into Miami. Emmitt Smith was around the corner when I walked through Florida. You know, just

the amount of attention I got and the different things that happened to me on these recruiting visits just to pique my interest and get me to like this school even was just incredible.

And I, you know, it was exciting, I'm not going to lie, it was exciting, it was interesting, it was a new experience for me and my family and the way we went about it was that I included my family in everything I did. All the visits I went to, they were there, all the decisions that I made, they were a part of it.

When we evaluated the schools we looked at how many academic All-Americans these schools had, how much TV exposure they had. You know, our relationship with the defense coordinator. Was the defense coordinator going to be there for my full four years. You know, Bobby Bowden and Joe Paterno, you know, they're older, you know, are they going to be there for my tenure at Florida State or Penn State? You know, we took all of that into consideration, we made a whole list and we looked at it, we talked about it extensively, about each school that I was considering and we came upon that Florida State was the best choice for me.

On September 1st I committed to Florida State and I didn't, it wasn't an emotional decision. I loved Deion Sanders and Peter Warrick and all those guys growing up, but I had to make a business decision based on, you know, what I can do, what can I get out of Florida State University? You know, I'm going through the exercise science program, through pre-med to eventually be a doctor. You know, I want to be involved in the community.

Florida State players are active within Tallahassee. And I also want to prepare myself for the National Football League. And so once all those criteria were met by, you know, the schools that were looking at me, I just had to come down to, you know, what school I felt most comfortable at, what school my parents felt safe sending me to and we came upon Florida State.

There were a lot of positives and negatives that went into my recruiting process, you know, some of which I can elaborate on further. But it was just, in all it was a truly extraordinary time of my life and I'll never forget it. Thank you.

DR. TURNER: Thank you. Thank you very much for getting us started. Our next speaker is Ruth Riley who has the distinction of having been the MVP of the Final Four of the NCAA and also of the WNBA Finals. She also has a gold medal from the 2004 Olympic Games. She's a graduate of Notre Dame and now plays with the Detroit Shock. So thank you for being with us.