



ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT...

Akeem Hunt-Running Back, Houston Texans Newton High School Class of 2011



It wasn't all that long ago that Houston Texans running back, Akeem Hunt, moved to Newton County, Georgia and enrolled in the third grade at Fairview Elementary School. From there he attended Clements Middle School before graduating as an honor roll student (and star football player) from Newton High School with the Class of 2011. A successful collegiate football career at Purdue University soon followed, which ultimately led to his signing as a rookie free agent with the New York Giants in May 2015. He was later signed and released from the Baltimore Ravens before signing with the Houston Texans later that year.

Now, in just his second season with the Texans, his team is in the NFL playoffs with their eyes on the ultimate prize—the Super Bowl. That would be enough to boost the ego of many 23-year-olds well into the stratosphere, but that's not Akeem Hunt. Ask him any question and the words, “faith,” “discipline,” “strength,” or “integrity,” will probably be somewhere in the answer.

In fact, those characteristics meant a lot to him all the way back in his school days. While Houston, Texas is over 800 miles from Covington, Georgia, memories from home and school are never all that far away. He hasn't forgotten how his experiences in the Newton County School System (NCSS) helped prepare him for his success in college and ultimately his pursuit of his lifelong dream of playing in the NFL.

When asked if playing in the NFL was always his career goal, his answer is matter-of-fact, “yes.” It's the answer to why it was always his career goal that truly explains the inner workings of this young man.

In Hunt's mind, a career in the NFL always meant, “The thrill of knowing it's a bumpy road and knowing that faith is always the best weapon to use during battle.”

When you realize his go-to Bible verse is, Philippians 4:13, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” and his advice to others is two-fold, “Always live by faith and keep your frequency high,” and “smile,” his answer to why his goal was always to play in the NFL makes perfect sense.

Knowing that pursuing a career in the NFL would be a “bumpy road,” Hunt worked hard to continually improve in academics and athletics. And that's where Newton High School came in.

“Everyone in the school played an important role,” said Hunt, although he singled out three Newton High School staff members who made the most impact when he was a student there—football coaches Cortez Allen and Camiel Grant, and his mother, Sophia Lewis, who still works at the school today. “There was great involvement and a great teaching zone. I learned a lot.”

Newton High was where he learned to study, and according to Hunt, that is a skill that “will always help in anyone’s life when it comes to overcoming an obstacle.” Those study skills helped Hunt become an honor roll student in the classroom.

Outside of the classroom, Hunt said participating in the athletic program at Newton High School was an important factor in his success at the collegiate level, because there, he explained, he was “able to spot my weaknesses and start working to get better. You have to learn to do things yourself or else you will fail. It gave me integrity and discipline.”

In addition to his good grades, Hunt was also the offensive MVP for the Newton Rams’ his senior year. With an eye on his ultimate goal of playing in the NFL, Hunt selected Purdue University as his college of choice, “because of the academics and a chance to achieve my passion to play football.” He majored in movement and sports science.

During his freshman year with the Boilermakers, Hunt appeared in 12 games as a reserve and finished third on the team in rushing with an impressive 287 yards and two touchdowns on just 33 carries. By the time his collegiate football career at Purdue came to an end, he had played in 49 games and amassed 371 rushing attempts for 2,035 yards and 11 touchdowns; 100 receptions for 841 yards and six scores; and 74 kickoff returns for 1,747 yards and six touchdowns.

Although he wasn’t drafted in the 2015 NFL draft, he signed immediately after the draft with the Giants. Soon after, he moved to the Ravens before ultimately signing on with the Houston Texans. He’s been there ever since, first on the practice squad, and as of November 21, 2015, the active roster. The next day, in his first game in the NFL, Hunt rushed for two yards on his very first carry against of all teams, the New York Jets. Overall, he played in seven regular and one post season games during the 2015 season and has played in eight regular season and one post season games in the 2016 season.

That means, the young boy whose ultimate goal was always to play in the NFL, has not only worked hard and achieved that goal, but he’s also played in post-season games in each of his first two years as a professional football player. And this year his team is still in contention for the Super Bowl, which of course, will be played on his home field at NRG Stadium, home of the Houston Texans.

When you ask him what his professional goals are for next year and into the future, he doesn’t list personal achievements, such as winning individual awards or recognition. For him it’s all about what he can do for his team.

“I know there are better things to come through Christ who strengthens me,” he said. “My goal is to become a better and better teammate to help the team achieve their goals.”





Is it any surprise that just five years ago, his classmates at Newton High School elected him as Homecoming King?

“I remember the smiles of every genuine person that understood my message when I was running for Homecoming King, and knowing that I won for them,” said Hunt, adding, “Personality over popularity. I would recommend to any student to just be themselves and to use their intelligent and beautiful minds to create peace.”

With the Houston Texans still focused on post season play and the ultimate possibility of winning Super Bowl LI on their home field, Hunt and teammates are busy preparing for their next opponents, the New England Patriots. Once their season is finally over, he’ll have more time for his many hobbies, including dancing, playing piano and drums, poetry, bowling, Wordplay with Beats, skating, movies, and taking care of his dog, Yuki. Until then, he’ll be on the practice field getting ready for the big game.

So remember, the next time you tune in to a Houston Texans game, look for #33 Akeem Hunt. He’s not just a NFL player who worked hard to achieve his dream, he’s also a proud of alumnus of Newton High School, Class of 2011!

***All Photos Courtesy of the Houston Texans.*

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