



Joshua Dobbs is the starting quarterback and an aerospace engineering major at the University of Tennessee.



Star Quarterback/ Future Engineer

By Cindy Atoji

Tennessee quarterback Joshua Dobbs — 6’3, 216 pounds — has NFL scouts sitting up and taking notice. His name has been mentioned with the words “Heisman Trophy,” as he’s equipped with athleticism, great arm technique, leadership skills and offensive smarts. He ended last season for the Volunteers with more than 1,200 passing yards and 469 rushing yards. Dobbs was a third-string afterthought at the beginning of the season but got the nod when starting quarterback Justin Worley was injured. And he set the SEC East ablaze. In the TaxSlayer Bowl, he proved his mettle, completing 16 of 21 passes, rushing for 76 yards and tossing a touchdown.

But Dobbs, 20, is more than a bowl MVP and emerging superstar on the field. He’s also an aerospace engineering student at the University of Tennessee. He tackles rigorous coursework and the team’s playbook with equal mastery. Recently challenged by a news broadcaster to recite at least 45 digits of pi — the never-ending number that represents the ratio of a circle’s circumference to its diameter — Dobbs recalled a prodigious 48 digits.

“Engineering in itself is a very demanding endeavor, and when you combine that with sports, it takes a lot of discipline to stay on topic and on task,” says Dobbs. “But I have learned to focus and stay in the game, whether it’s a challenging classroom project or an early morning workout.”

Even while growing up in the Atlanta suburb of

Alpharetta, Ga., Dobbs starred as a quarterback, first in the youth leagues and then on his high school team. But at the same time, Dobbs says, his parents also coached him on the importance of academics. His mother, now a retired manager, and his father, a corporate banker, always reminded him that education was first and that on the field, the team’s interest and needs, not any individual player’s, were most important.

“Being a good student and a good athlete are not mutually exclusive,” says Dobbs. “Being successful at both takes a lot of determination, practice and time management skills.”

These days, arranging his class schedule with football practice times and workouts is like a jigsaw puzzle, but he believes his mental and physical stamina are building because he’s pushing his limits.

Dobbs credits a black aerospace professional organization with exposing him to the aviation industry, allowing him to tour airplane manufacturing facilities and even giving him the opportunity to pilot flights.

“I want to design and build airplanes and maybe even one day run my own company,” says Dobbs.

The pressure will be on, this coming season, when Dobbs is top quarterback, but he believes he will fly high, both on the field and in the classroom.

“I believe in enjoying the process and embracing everything that comes with it,” he says. “That is what leads to success.” ■

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