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Then and Now : Alumnus Richard Shelton

April 01, 2009 | Eric Brown

When Liberty University alumnus Richard Shelton first arrived on campus in 1984, there was no Williams Stadium. A former defensive back on the Flames football team, he recalls playing at Lynchburg City Stadium and traveling 20 minutes each day by bus just to get to the practice field on Treasure Island near downtown.

“I just remember going down for practice, coming back and having to get down to the cafeteria [on campus] before it closed,” Shelton said.

After graduating in 1988 with a bachelor’s degree in psychology, Shelton earned a spot on the Denver Broncos’ roster as an 11th round pick in the 1989 NFL draft. To this day, he holds a prominent spot in the Flames’ record books, tied for second on the all-time list for pass deflections with 26.

During his five-year stint in the NFL, Shelton suited up for the Broncos and Seattle Seahawks and spent his last three seasons with the Pittsburgh Steelers. As a Steeler, he reunited with fellow Liberty graduate and teammate Eric Green, who was drafted by Pittsburgh 21st overall in 1990.

Shelton recorded three interceptions in week 17 of the 1991 season against the Cleveland Browns, becoming one of three Steelers to accomplish the feat. His performance earned him the honor of NFL Player of the Week. Before retiring due to a knee injury, Shelton served as Pittsburgh’s special teams captain during the 1993 season.

Wanting to be around the game after his playing days were over, Shelton became a college scout

for the Philadelphia Eagles, evaluating players in Tennessee, the Carolinas, Georgia, Florida, Alabama and Mississippi. From 2000-04, he was instrumental in helping the organization acquire quality players, resulting in three NFC championship appearances.

Shelton tried his hand at coaching as Florida A&M's defensive back coach in 2006 before returning to scouting last year.

He currently works for the Tennessee Titans, assessing talent throughout the Northeast region.

"Right now, I enjoy doing what I do," Shelton said. "I like being on the road. I like seeing different schools and different areas. Every day is something new, so you can't beat it."

Shelton stopped by his alma mater during Alumni Weekend in October and reviewed video of Liberty's top NFL prospects.

"You've got some that stand out, like the running back [Rashad] Jennings," he said. "I think he is a guy that can play in the league."

Returning to Liberty brought back many memories for the former defensive back. Seeing the changes that have taken place since he graduated, Shelton says his alma mater's future is very bright.

"Dr. Falwell's dreams are pretty much coming true," he said. "He always wanted to play Notre Dame. I think they are on their way to doing that."