

MOISE FOKOU '04

FOOTBALL, PHILANTHROPY AND EDUCATION—BACKBONES TO SUCCESS

As a child, Moise begged his mom to allow him to play football. “She only let me play soccer, fearing I’d get injured playing football,” he says. But Moise was persistent and eventually she agreed to let him play recreational football in 5th grade—and he was instantly hooked. “From that point I was determined to always have football in my life,” he says. Becoming a professional athlete is something many kids dream of; for Moise, it became his reality.

Moise entered Bullis as a junior and recalls that while being the new kid can be difficult, the

positive culture at Bullis was so infectious that he quickly felt like part of the family among his classmates and football coaches. In particular, he thanks Coaches Walt King and Dan Rascher '82 for taking great care of him. “Bullis is very dear to my heart,” Moise says. “I made best friends as a student and am still close with those same people today.” Moise also focused hard on his school work and was successful academically. A standout player on the football team, he was named All-IAC and *Washington Post* second team All-Met player in his senior year, as well as MVP of the conference.

Following graduation, Moise played football at Frostburg University for one year before transferring to the University of Maryland, where he excelled on the practice squad and earned a scholarship the following season. He played for three years and garnered attention as a star linebacker. Before he would allow himself to think about professional football possibilities, though, he committed to graduating from college first. He and his siblings are the first in his family to attend college and “the opportunity to finish strong was not going to be wasted,” he says.

Moise graduated with a degree in criminology in December 2008.

In spring 2009, Moise was drafted to the Philadelphia Eagles and recalls that moment as very surreal: “You go from being a college kid to walking into a locker room with guys you’ve looked up to. It’s emotional—I felt like I won the lottery.” Moise played all 16 games that season, and started in the final four games. After three seasons with the Eagles, Moise played one season with the Indianapolis Colts, two years with the Tennessee Titans and then one season with the New

Orleans Saints. “Football has taught me a lot of life lessons, including persistence and determination,” Moise says, “but I really love the teamwork and camaraderie—11 people on the field, depending on each other to achieve a common goal. Playing in the NFL is very intense, thrilling, and something special that very few people get to experience.”

Recognizing how fortunate his life has been, and wanting to pay it forward, Moise established the Root 53 Foundation in 2012, named because ‘root’ refers to someone’s heritage and 53 is his football number and also pays homage to the 53 men on a roster. Root 53 provides hands-on learning opportunities for at-risk youth in Maryland, Washington, D.C. and Tennessee, where he was still playing football at the time.

“Kids should feel positive about going to school,” Moise says, and he aims to be instrumental in their journey, just as other people were for him as a child. Recalling an organization that took him and other underprivileged students in elementary school on a shopping spree for new clothes and school supplies, Moise says “That put the biggest smile on my face and helped me feel like I belonged. Being able

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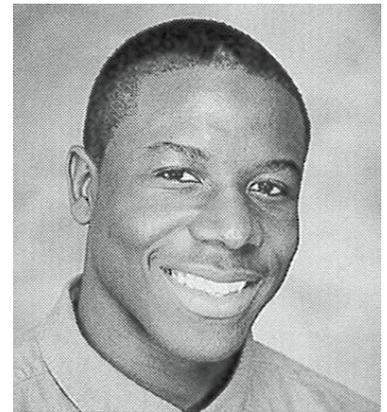
to do that for kids now through my foundation is an incredible feeling.”

Root 53 educates children in urban areas on topics including healthy living through proper nutrition and exercise. The organization also provides children with clothes and school supplies to help them feel successful intellectually and emotionally. The Foundation received the Henry L. Dixon Award for Best Organizational Achievement at the Montgomery County Community Action Awards in 2014 for its role in helping “low income individuals in Montgomery County move toward or achieve self-sufficiency.”

While still playing football in Tennessee, Moise opted to pursue a master’s degree in business administration from George Washington University. “I wanted to have as much education as possible to rely on when my football days were over,” he says. He received his degree in 2014. “That graduation day was awesome, both

for my parents and me,” he says. “The way they saw me attack this opportunity was definitely a marquee moment in my life. That diploma will serve me long after football.” Currently a free agent, Moise hopes to pursue a career in real estate development when he retires from football.

“If you want anything in life, set a goal and make a plan,” Moise advises current students. “Work at it tirelessly and surround yourself with the right people. One way or another, you will achieve your goal.”



Opposite page: Moise Fokou '04 in a promotional photo shoot

At left: Moise getting the crowd excited during a Philadelphia Eagles game

At top: Moise’s senior portrait from the 2004 edition of *Roll Call*

Above: Moise dancing with students at a Root 53 Foundation event at the University of Maryland promoting a healthy lifestyle

