Q&A: Menlo Alum and NFL Vet/Author Nate Jackson

Nate Jackson ’01 is a rarity in the football ranks. His three-year career as a wide receiver for the Oaks included shattering every receiving record at Menlo College netting him All-American status. From there, he went on to a six-year career in the NFL for the Denver Broncos, twice as long as the average NFL career. His penchant for breaking the mold led him to his current career as an author, having recently released his first book, a memoir entitled, Slow Getting Up: A Story of NFL Survival from the Bottom of the Pile. Long before the book became a reality, the seed was planted during Jackson’s life-changing tenure at Menlo College.

MENLO: You cite that your column in the Menlo Oak gave you artistic freedom and allowed you to find your voice. How did this experience lead you to your current career as an author?

NATE: I came to Menlo because I had a dream of playing football. From high school I went to Cal Poly SLO, and walked on to the football team, but was cut. Bye bye, dream. But then I discovered Menlo, was almost magnetized by it, and came running. It felt so right. It was hard to explain, but we know that feeling when it happens, and it is a magical feeling. Once I got to Menlo, the moments continued to amaze me: my friends, my teammates, my coaches, professors. It was such an overwhelmingly positive environment, and it allowed me to flourish not only as an athlete but as a young man. I was allowed to try new things, to take chances, to make mistakes and to push ahead; all the while, there were supportive people encouraging me and clearing the path for my success. It was the perfect place for me to come into my own as a young man, and it gave me the confidence I would need in the NFL and beyond.

MENLO: What advice would you give to the current crop of Menlo College student-athletes in order to get the most out of everything that Menlo has to offer?

NATE: My advice to Menlo students, whether they play a sport or not, is to push the envelope. Challenge yourself and challenge others around you. Enjoy your life. Don’t be afraid to fail. In fact, be excited to fail. Knock yourself down. Get kicked around. You’ll be surprised at how resilient you are, how well you can bounce back and what you’ll gain from going through it. Believe in your own mind and your own ideas. Believe that what you’re feeling is true, is real and is worth something. Dig into your psyche and pull something out of it. And use Menlo as the backdrop to do it. There’s no better place.

Jackson returned to Menlo College for a book signing in conjunction with the final home football game of the season on Nov. 16.

“Push the envelope” Nate Jackson