

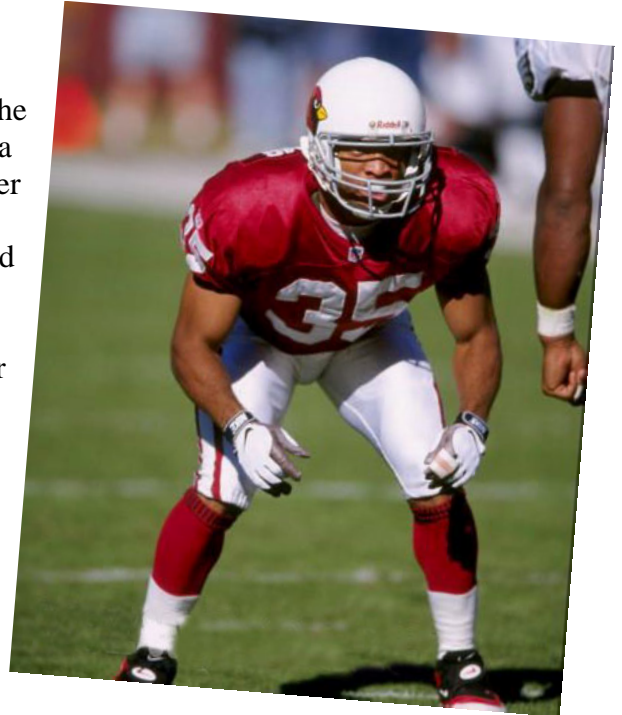
TOP THIRTY: DEFENSIVE BACKS – 1978/2008

By Kent Schmidt, CSN Columnist

(List: Ranking, Player, Position, School, NFL Draft)

1. Aeneas Williams, CB, Southern University, 3rd Rnd-1991

At Southern, Williams concentrated on his academics, not playing football until his senior year, as a graduate student in 1990. That year, he tied the Division I record for most interceptions. He joined the Arizona Cardinals in 1991, and quickly established himself as a shutdown corner back, with an exceptional rookie season, tying the NFL lead for interceptions. As of 1997, Williams had four Pro Bowl appearances and routinely covered the opposing team's lead receivers. In the 1998 season, Williams helped the Cardinals win their first playoff game since 1947. In 2001 he was traded to the St. Louis Rams. Due to roster concerns, Williams learned the free safety position. With the Rams, He went to Super Bowl XXXVI, in which his team lost to the New England Patriots. He will be inducted into the Arizona Cardinals' Ring of Honor during the 2008-2009 football season after he was a eight time Pro Bowl performer (1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2001, 2003) and was named to the all 1990s Decade NFL team. He finished with 795 tackles, 55 interceptions, 7 touchdowns in his NFL career, which ended after the 2004 season.



2. Albert Lewis, DB, Grambling State, 3rd Rnd-1983

Lewis had an outstanding career at Grambling and after his senior season was named to play in the 1983 Senior Bowl, a place that has since placed him into their Hall of Fame (1999). He picked off 42 passes in 16 NFL seasons and also recovered nine fumbles while playing for the Kansas City Chiefs (1983-1993) and the Oakland/LA Raiders (1994-1998). He blocked a punt that was returned for a touchdown in the Chiefs' 1986 AFC playoff game with the New York Jets; another three blocks during his career resulted in touchdowns for Kansas City. He made the Pro Bowl four times (1987, 1988, 1989, 1990) and was inducted to the Chiefs' Hall of Fame in 2007.

3. Brock Marion, DB, Nevada, 7th Rnd-1993

Marion has the fourth most career tackles in Wolfpack history with 304 and tenth most career interceptions with 13. He played at free safety in the NFL for twelve seasons with the Dallas Cowboys, the Miami Dolphins, and the Detroit Lions from 1993 to 2004. Marion was a three time Pro Bowler in 2000, 2002 and 2003 with the Dolphins. He also had an interception in Super Bowl XXX in 1995 to aid the Cowboys to the win over the Pittsburgh Steeler and had his best year in terms of tackles in 1997 with 100. Marion retired with 676 career tackles, two quarterback sacks, 31 interceptions with three for touchdowns.

4. Rodney Harrison, S, Western Illinois, 5th Rnd-1994

Harrison holds the Western Illinois record for tackles by defensive back with 345. He was a first team All-America his senior season in 1993 after being a second team member in 1992. He set the single game school record with 28 tackles versus Western Kentucky in 1993. Harrison was originally drafted by the San Diego Chargers, the same year they made their first and only Super Bowl (Super Bowl XXIX). He left the Chargers after the 2002 season to play for the New England Patriots. He aided the Patriots to victories in his first two years there-- Super Bowl XXXVIII (victory over Carolina) and Super Bowl XXXIV (victory over Philadelphia). He has been named



to the All-Pro team three times (1998, 2001, 2003). Thus far, Harrison has 589 tackles, 31.5 sacks, and 33 interceptions in his career.



5. Darren Sharper, DB, William & Mary, 2nd Rnd-1997

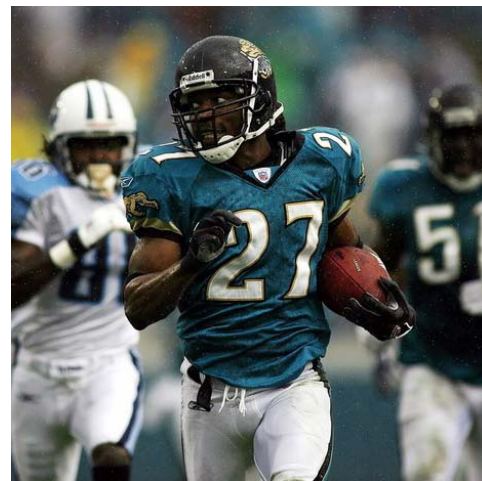
Sharper was named a first team All-America in his senior season of 1996 and was named as the Yankee Conference's Defensive Player of the Year. As a second-round selection of the Green Bay Packers, Sharper also becomes the highest NFL draft pick in W&M history. He currently is the strong safety for the NFL's Minnesota Vikings. He was selected for the 2007 Pro Bowl, after coming second in the league in interceptions for that season. He previously played in the NFL with Green Bay Packers until 2005. He began his NFL career in 1997 and made Pro Bowl appearances with the Packers in 2000, 2002, and 2005. He is one of two current NFL players with 50 or more interceptions (53 currently).

6. Ashley Ambrose, DB, Mississippi Valley State, 2nd Rnd-1992

Ambrose was an All-American performer his senior season at MVSU. He was a one time Pro Bowl selection in 1996 while he was playing with the Cincinnati Bengals, the team for which he played for from 1996 to 1998. Ambrose also played for the Indianapolis Colts from 1992 to 1995, the New Orleans Saints in 1999 and again for two seasons in 2003 and 2004 and the Atlanta Falcons from 2000 to 2002. He had 42 career interceptions for 512 yards and three touchdowns in his NFL career. Ambrose recently has been signed to be a defensive technical intern for the Colorado football team.

7. Rashean Mathis, CB, Bethune-Cookman, 2nd Rnd-2003

Mathis recorded 14 interceptions during the 2002 regular season, shattering the previous FCS single-season mark of 12 picks in his senior season at Bethune-Cookman. Those marks resulted in him being awarded the Buck Buchanan Award--the only time so far that the award has been given to a defensive back. Mathis had 81 tackles as an NFL rookie while played both safety and cornerback in 2003 with the Jacksonville Jaguars--the only NFL team that he has played for thus far. He converted to cornerback full-time for the 2004 NFL season. Mathis was selected to his first NFL Pro Bowl in 2006 after finishing third in the league with 8 interceptions. He has 334 tackles and 21 interceptions thus far in his career after five seasons.



8. Willie Williams, CB, Western Carolina, 6th Rnd-1993

After his time with Western Carolina, Williams was drafted in the NFL by the Pittsburgh Steelers in 1993 and spent four seasons in Pittsburgh. He was a key member of the 1995 Steelers team that played in Super Bowl XXX. From 1997 to 2003, Williams played for the Seattle Seahawks, before returning to the Steelers for the 2004 and 2005 seasons. Williams has the distinction of being the only player from the Steelers 1996 Super Bowl XXX roster to be a member of the Steelers 2006 Super Bowl XL roster and retired after that season. He finished his NFL career with 26 interceptions and four of those for touchdowns.



9. Mike Prior, DB, Illinois State, 7th Rnd-1985

Prior was a three year All-American with Illinois State and still leads the Redbirds' record books with 108 career punt returns for 906 yards and took three back for touchdowns, as well as 23 career interceptions, when he played from 1981 to 1984. He played as a safety in 13 NFL seasons from 1985 and 1987 to 1998 for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Indianapolis Colts, and Green Bay Packers, recording 35 interceptions and 17 fumble recoveries. Prior intercepted a pass for the Packers thrown by quarterback Drew Bledsoe of the Patriots in Super Bowl XXXI, to help Green Bay win the game.

10. Mark Kelso, DB, William & Mary, 10th Rnd-1985

Kelso was an Academic All-America performer on two occasions while at William & Mary. He played in 8 NFL seasons and his entire career with the Buffalo Bills from 1986-1993. His peak performance as a pro came during the 1988 season when he had intercepted 7 passes for 180 yards and 1 touchdown. Kelso appeared in 4 consecutive Super Bowl appearances for the Bills from 1990 to 1993. He was well known for wearing a "pro cap" on his helmet which was used to reduce the risk of concussions. He finished his career with 30 interceptions, 8 fumble recoveries, and 2 defensive touchdowns. As of the 2006 NFL season, Kelso serves as the color commentator for Buffalo Bills radio broadcasts on WGRF 96.9 FM.

11. Tim McKyer, DB, Texas-Arlington, 3rd Rnd-1986

McKyer was a two time All-Southland performer as a cornerback (1984 & 1985) and the distinction of playing the last year that Texas-Arlington field a football team. He played in 12 NFL seasons for 7 different teams from 1986 to 1997. His best year as a pro came during his rookie season with San Francisco, intercepting 6 passes for 33 yards and 1 touchdown. A three-time Super Bowl winner, with the 49ers in 1988 and 1989, and the Denver Broncos in 1997. In his NFL career, he totaled 33 interceptions and returned two of those for touchdowns.

12. Dwayne Harper, DB, South Carolina State, 11th Rnd-1988

Harper was a two time All-MEAC performer (1986 & 1987) and was an All-American in his senior season for the Bulldogs in 1987. In 1990, he was inducted into the SCSU Athletic Hall of Fame. He played 12 seasons in the NFL with the Seattle Seahawks, San Diego Chargers, and Detroit Lions. He started in Super Bowl XXIX for the Chargers when they lost to the San Francisco 49ers. He played in 148 NFL games and intercepted 24 passes in his career.

13. Kurt Schulz, DB, Eastern Washington, 7th Rnd-1992

Schulz was an All-America in 1989 & 1991. In his Eagles' career he recorded 17 interceptions and 224 tackles. He played 10 years in the NFL from 1992 to 2001, eight for the Buffalo Bills, and two for the Detroit Lions. He highlighted his career by two Super Bowl appearances with the Bills. He became the starting free safety in 1995 for the Bills and was a second team All-AFC performer as he intercepted six passes including one for a touchdown. In his NFL career, he intercepted 30 passes in 83 games started.



14. Lance Schulters, DB, Hofstra, 4th Rnd-1998

Schulters transferred to Hofstra after two years in junior college and made an immediate impact at the strong safety position. In his senior season of 1997, he led Hofstra with 109 tackles and was named to two All-American teams in 1996 and 1997. He played four seasons with the NFL's San Francisco 49ers and three seasons with the Tennessee Titans, making the Pro Bowl in 1999. He was with the Miami Dolphins in 2005 and again last year after being with the Atlanta Falcons in 2006. He has 19 interceptions in the NFL thus far in his career.

15. Terrence McGee, DB, Northwestern State, 4th Rnd-2003

McGee was an All-American returner in 2000 for the Demons and a two time All-SLC member (2000, 2001). He is a versatile threat for his kick return skills as well as his defensive play for the NFL's Buffalo Bills--his only pro-career team thus far since 2003. In 2005 against the Cincinnati Bengals, he became the first NFL player to score touchdowns on an interception and a kick return in the same game. He already ranks second in Bills' team career history in return touchdowns with six.



16. Nick Collins, FS, Bethune-Cookman, 2nd Rnd-2005

Collins had a breakout junior season in 2003, leading the MEAC in interceptions with six and finished third in the conference in passes defended with 13. As a senior in 2004, Collins was a third-team FCS All-American and first-team All-MEAC honors at the free safety position. He once again led the conference with six interceptions, led his team in solo tackles (34) and passes defended (13). Collins had an interception in each of the first four games of the 2004 season. In the NFL thus far from 2005 on, he has started every game--totaling 198 tackles (148 solo), four



interceptions, two forced fumbles, 25 passes defended and one touchdown for the Green Bay Packers. He was a member of the 2005 All-Rookie team.

17. Antoine Bethea, SS, Howard, 6th Rnd-2006

Bethea was a three-time choice of the SBN Black College All-American team--became one of four players to earn honor three times. He was a three-year starter for the Bison and finished his career with 309 tackles, three sacks, and seven interceptions. He has played two years in the NFL with the Indianapolis Colts, winning the Super Bowl in his rookie season and named to the Pro Bowl after last season. He has 200 tackles and five sacks thus far in his NFL career.



18. Cortland Finnegan, DB, Samford, 7th Rnd-2006

At Samford, Finnegan led the Bulldogs in tackles for three seasons from his safety position, and he was named the OVC Defensive Player of the Year in 2003. He was named All-OVC in 2003, 2004 and 2005, and he was named All-American in 2003 and 2005. He is a current member of the NFL's Tennessee Titans--the team that drafted him in 2006. He had a breakout second NFL season last year. Finnegan had 95 tackles, one sack, one interception and one forced fumble. His tackle total was second on the team in helping the Titans to a playoff berth.

19. Michael Green, S, Northwestern State, 7th Rnd-2000

Green was a two time All-American safety with the Demons. He actually was drafted in the NFL by the Chicago Bears with the final pick of the 2000 draft--making him "Mr. Irrelevant" for that draft. Green not only made the Bears' roster, he was their second-leading tackler over the last six seasons and was traded to the Seattle Seahawks before last season. He has started 46 games thus far in his NFL career and has recorded 325 tackles and four interceptions in the seven seasons.

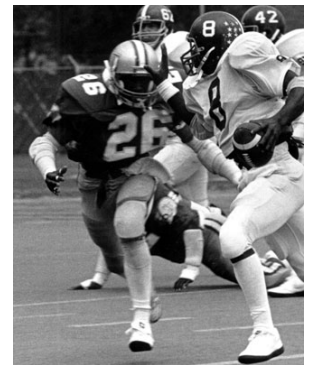


20. Donnie Abraham, CB, East Tennessee State, 3rd Rnd-1996

Abraham is tied for fourth on the career interception list and second in a game's tackles with 20 (1992) at ETSU. He was an All-Southern Conference performer in his senior season with the Buccaneers in 1995. He played cornerback in the NFL for the Tampa Bay Buccaneers (1996-2001) and the New York Jets (2002-2004). He is now the defensive backs coach for East Lake (FL) High School. He finished his NFL career with 38 interceptions with three returned for touchdowns in his nine seasons. Abraham made the Pro Bowl once--after the 2000 season in which he intercepted 7 passes and returned two of those for touchdowns.

21. Don Griffin, DB, Middle Tennessee State, 6th Rnd-1986

Griffin was a three-time All-OVC performer and was the OVC Defensive Player of the Year and an All-American in 1985. He played in 11 NFL seasons from 1986 to 1996 for the San Francisco 49ers, Cleveland Browns, and Philadelphia Eagles. Among his NFL honors were 1986 NFC Defensive Rookie of the Year, All-Pro by UPI, winning a spot on the All-NFC team, and twice being a No. 1 alternate for the Pro Bowl. He finished his NFL career with 25 interceptions, and two touchdowns on a fumble and kick return.



22. Dominique Rodgers-Cromartie, CB, Tennessee State, 1st Rnd-2008

Rodgers-Cromartie was a four-year starter for the Tigers and a consensus first team All-American (FCS), a SBC All-American and was tabbed the 2007 Black College Sports Page Defensive Player of the Year in his senior season a year ago. He was drafted with the 16th overall NFL draft selection by the Arizona Cardinals this year. In his Tiger career, he finished with 11 interceptions (six in 2006) with 4 TDs, 158 tackles with eight TFLs (30) and seven blocked kicks (4 in 2007).

23. Terry Taylor, DB, Southern Illinois, 1st Rnd-1984

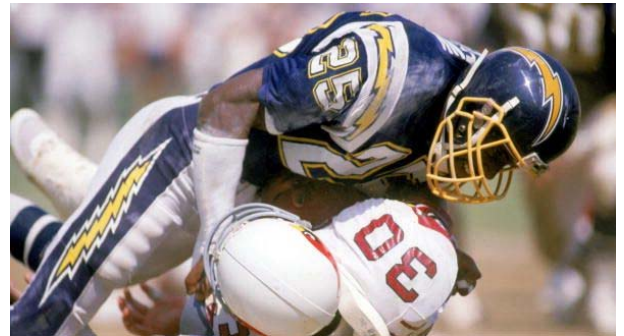
Taylor was named an All-American after his junior and senior seasons in Carbondale of 1982 and 1983. He was a member of the SIU national championship team of 1983 and is a member of the Saluki Hall of Fame. He is still the all-time career interceptions leader (20) in SIU school history. He was a first round NFL draft pick for the Seattle Seahawks. Taylor played in 12 NFL seasons from 1984-1995 for the Seattle Seahawks, the Detroit Lions, the Cleveland Browns and the Atlanta Falcons. He finished his NFL career with 25 interceptions and five fumble recoveries.

24. Barney Bussey, DB, South Carolina State, 5th Rnd-1984

Bussey was an All-American performer after his senior season of 1983 for South Carolina State. He was selected in the 1st round (8th overall) of the 1984 USFL Draft by the Memphis Showboats in January 1984. Bussey then signed with the Showboats and spent two seasons with Memphis. He was a key member of a defensive unit and helped lead the team to the USFL Semi-Finals in 1985. After the USFL folded in 1986, he went on to play ten NFL seasons (1986-1995) with the Cincinnati Bengals and Tampa Bay Buccaneers, recording 10 interceptions and 6 fumble recoveries. Bussey is currently the defensive backs coach at Lakota West High School in Cincinnati, Ohio

25. Vencie Glenn, DB, Indiana State, 2nd Rnd-1986

Glenn was an All-American performer after his senior season for the Sycamores in 1985. He also aided ISU into the playoffs of 1983 and 1984. He played ten NFL seasons from 1986-1995 for the New England Patriots, San Diego Chargers, New Orleans Saints, Minnesota Vikings and New York Giants. Glenn had 35 career interceptions with two returned for touchdowns.



26. Patrick Hunter, DB, Nevada, 3rd Rnd-1986

Hunter had 15 career interceptions for the Wolfpack in his four year career in Reno. He was named an All-American after his senior season of 1985. Hunter was named to the All-Nevada 100 Year team for his career efforts. He played cornerback in the NFL for 10 seasons for the Seattle Seahawks and the Arizona Cardinals from 1986 to 1995. He finished his NFL career with 10 interceptions with one touchdown.



27. Terrance Shaw, CB, Stephen F. Austin, 2nd Rnd-1995

Shaw was a first-team All-American and a first-team All-Southland Conference selection after his senior season for the Lumberjacks in 1994. He played as a cornerback in the NFL for the San Diego Chargers, Miami Dolphins, Minnesota Vikings, New England Patriots, and Oakland Raiders. He was a member of the Patriots' 2001 team that won Super Bowl XXXVI over the St. Louis Rams. He finished his NFL career after the 2004 season with 10 seasons with 11 interceptions and 163 tackles.

28. Gene Atkins, DB, Florida A&M, 7th Rnd-1987

After his time at Florida A&M, Atkins was drafted in 1987 by the New Orleans Saints. He played safety in the NFL for the New Orleans Saints and Miami Dolphins from 1987 to 1996. He recorded 25 interceptions in his NFL career.

29. Fred Thomas, DB, Tennessee-Martin, 2nd Rnd-1996

In the lone season for the Skyhawks, Thomas was an All-OVC performer in 1996 after intercepting four passes. He transferred to Tennessee-Martin from FBS Mississippi. He played cornerback in the NFL, who is currently a free agent. He was originally drafted by the Seattle Seahawks and played there from 1996 to 1999. He moved to the New Orleans Saints from 2000 to last season. In his NFL career, he totaled 13 interceptions and 324 tackles thus far.



30. Tony Stargell, DB, Tennessee State, 3rd Rnd-1990

After his playing time with Tennessee State, Stargell was drafted in 1990 by the New York Jets. He played as cornerback for eight professional seasons 1990-1997 for the Jets, Indianapolis Colts, Tampa Bay Buccaneers, Kansas City Chiefs, and Chicago Bears. He totaled six interceptions in his NFL career.