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Intro to Sports Journalism

JMC 4970-002 (Assignment 1 - Josh Norman Feature)

Once questioning his future and purpose, it's Brent Venable's S.O.U.L Mission where this athlete found life's more impactful moments. Josh Norman is a former OU standout, NFL player, musician and a third of the S.O.U.L Mission's Directors.

Eager to say what he and the others are doing for the OU football program and the community abroad the National Champion grins,

"We are in the player development department," he said. "S.O.U.L is an acronym for 'serving our uncommon legacy'".

The acronym corresponds to George Washington Carver's quote, "When you do the common things of life in an uncommon way, you will command the attention of the world."

Each director is responsible for, community engagement, former player relations, professional development and life skills development.

"Venables is dead set on building uncommon men, uncommon husbands, uncommon fathers and uncommon community leaders," he said.

SOUL makes two service trips every year. Recently visiting Rio de Janeiro during Spring Break and South Africa during January.

"It's just evil. It's so evil man, I still get emotional talking about it," he said.

If you were black in South Africa during Apartheid, your life was in danger. The Dutch (Afrikaners) had assumed control after the British left and forced their curriculum on the school aged children. The Soweto student uprising was responsible for countless deaths.

“They opened fire on these kids, like I’m talking about 16 and younger, eight to 16 was the age range,” he said. “We visited the church in Soweto called Regina Mundi, during the massacre priests opened up the church for people seeking refuge, like they went into the church trying to get these kids.”

It was the townships of Soweto that seemed to most impact everyone on the trip.

“One of our players was sitting on the stoop outside and he was just bawling, man, bawling,” he said. “He told me it reminded him of his African Grandpa, you know dealing with these same battles,” he said. It was a powerful moment he would never forget and where he realized the magnitude of the SOUL Mission.

After his playing time at OU, he entered the NFL with remaining credits for his Undergraduate degree, he was limited on the coaching opportunities.

“When I finished my degree, so many more opportunities opened for me, it excelled quickly,” he said. “Because of my time in the NFL, they provide a lot of benefits for former players and one of those is a continued education program where they’ll pay for you to finish your degree or get a new degree or whatever.”

Being the first person in his family to earn a degree of any kind, He earned his MBA at SNU where it afforded him the ability to teach at OU.

“Intercollegiate Athletic Administration, it’s a 4000-level course,” he said. “It’s teaching about the ins and outs of intercollegiate athletics.”

Regardless, his passion is evident for the mission at hand, “I love what I’m doing,” he said. “I love being here at my alma mater and working with Curtis and Caleb, being able to pour into these young men is such a dream job, for real.”