

By Bill Bumgarner

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In his fourth year of a head football coaching stint at Carver High in New Orleans, Wayne Reese was scanning the hallways at the Ninth Ward school looking for some personnel that could be of assistance to his team. Outside the school cafeteria, he spotted a youngster whom he felt held some promise.

“I thought of myself as a good (on-campus) recruiter and I was after anyone who looked like a player,” said Reese, “I went up to this freshman and asked him why he was not playing football. He did not say a word.”

The next day, however, the youngster reported for practice.

“I remembered him and said, ‘So you decided to come out,’” recalled Reese, “Once again, he did not say a word.”

The Rams’ staff ticketed the first-year player as a wide receiver as a freshman but an injury to the starting tailback forced a change on the roster that would ultimately change history,

As a junior and senior at Carver, Marshall William Faulk was voted to the All-District team as a running back, honors that would soon pale by comparison.

By the time his collegiate and professional football careers had come to a close, the legs that carried Marshall Faulk from the Desire Street Project to San Diego State to the Indianapolis Colts and to the Los Angeles Rams would also propel him to three All-Pro selections and seven Pro Bowl appearances.

His accomplishments on all three levels led to his unanimous selection to the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame, with a future induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame sure to follow.

In 12 professional football seasons with Colts (1994-'98) and the Rams (1999-2005), Faulk pulled down the highest of honors: the NFL Most Valuable Player in 2000 and the Offensive Player of the Year from 1999 to 2001. He played in Super Bowl XXXIV as a member of the Rams.

He would perform in 176 games and amass 12,279 yards rushing, with a 4.3-yard average. His sure hands enabled him to catch 767 passes for 6,875 yards.

Picked No. 2 in the 1994 NFL draft by Indianapolis, Faulk previously established his credentials during a standout career at San Diego State. In his second collegiate game, Faulk galloped for 386 yards and seven touchdowns against Pacific.

Much was said in the media during Faulk's days at San Diego State about the other colleges who fruitlessly pursued him with the intent of playing him at cornerback. San Diego State had him pegged for the offensive backfield.

"I really thought he was going to go to either Nebraska or Miami," said Reese. "When he came in and said it was San Diego State, I nearly fell out of my chair. I think if he had stayed at cornerback, he would have been drafted No. 1.

"He had a 49-inch vertical jump; he was drafted as an outfielder in baseball; he ran a 20.9 for 200 meters in track.

"When he first came out he did not look like the typical football player with a great big neck and bulging muscles. The kids teased him about his (lack of) strength. So he came in every morning at 6:30 and asked me for the key to the weight room. When he left Carver, he could squat 500 pounds."

Reese smiles as he recalls some of the reactions Faulk evoked as a Carver Ram before he became a St. Louis Ram.

"Following a game against East Jefferson, their coach said that tackling Marshall was like trying to catch a bullet in the dark. Brother Martin Coach Bobby Conlin called him 'Superman.' "

After the Rams and his announced retirement both took place in 2007 retired his number, Faulk became a football analyst for NFL Total Access on the NFL Network.

But Reese says his star pupil still remembers his roots.

"He has come back and done things for the people in the Desire Street Project, for St. Roch Playground and for Carver," Reese said. "He knew what he needed to do to become successful and he never forgot where he came from.

"He went around knocking on the doors of people in the neighborhood who had helped him. He would give them washing machines."