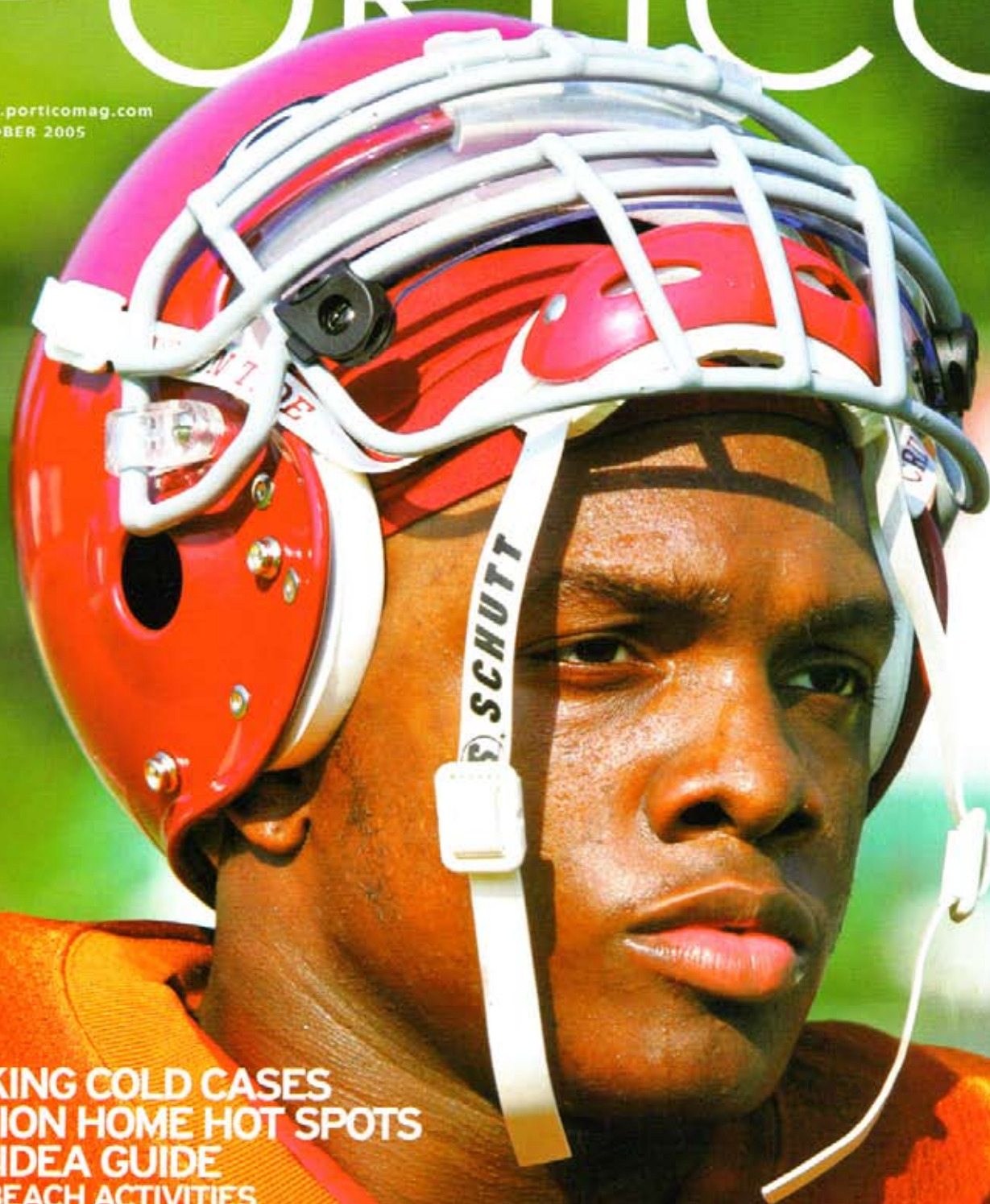


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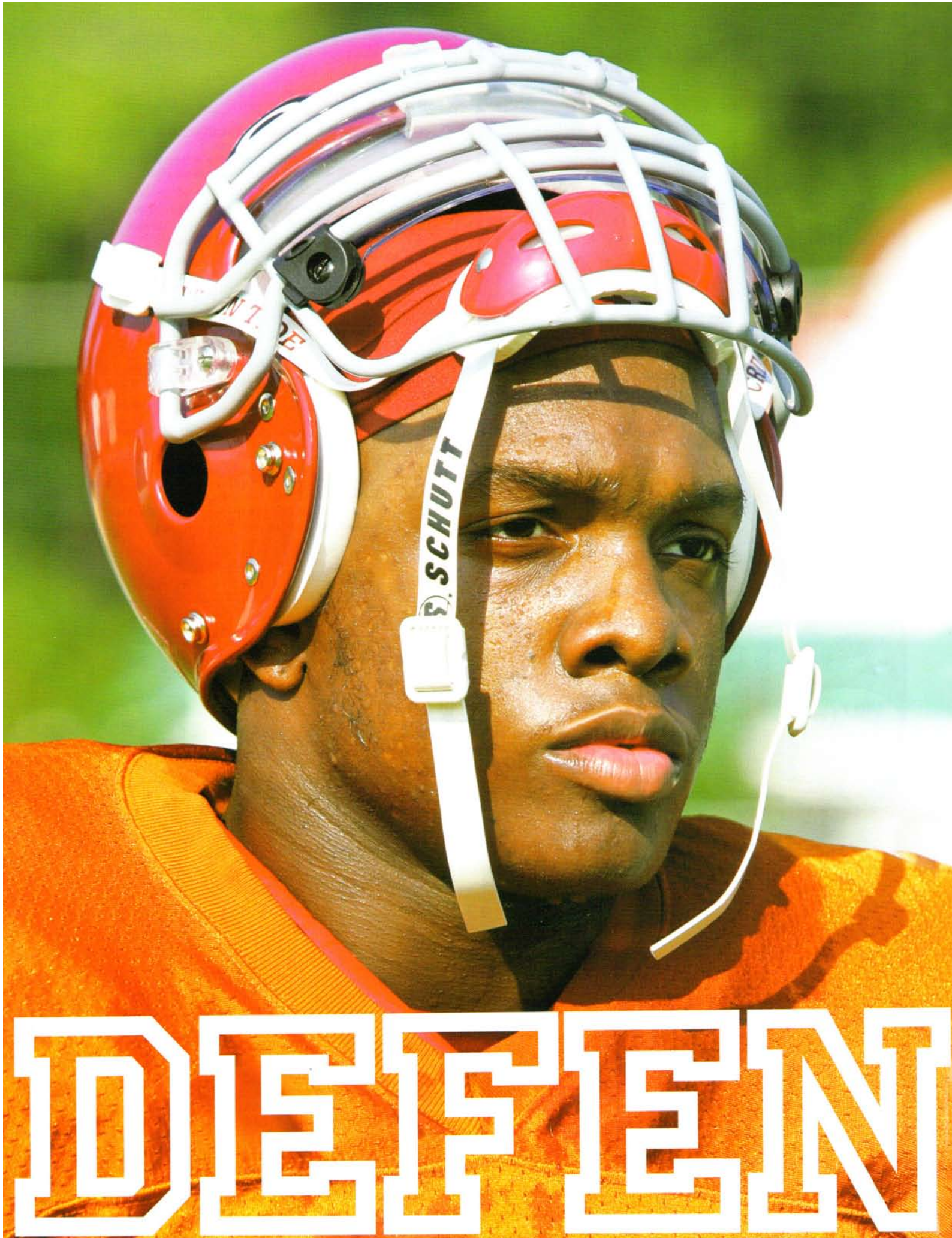
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COLLEGE FOOTBALL 2005

Behind the Scenes at
Auburn & Alabama



son Tide linebacker Mark Anderson





SEE!

Follow two defensive stars—
Mark Anderson at Alabama, left,
and T. J. Jackson at Auburn, above—
as they prepare for the 2005 season.

BY LOYD MCINTOSH
PHOTOS BY KENT GIDLEY,
UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA MEDIA RELATIONS,
AND TODD VAN EMST,
AUBURN UNIVERSITY MEDIA RELATIONS





T.J. Jackson AUBURN UNIVERSITY

ALL PRACTICE FOR THE AUBURN FOOTBALL TEAM began on August 2nd, eight months after the conclusion of an undefeated season that saw the Tigers left out of a national championship hunt that, most people would argue, they belonged in.

For Thomas "TJ" Jackson, the 6' 1", 305-pound nose guard, the 2005 campaign is his last with the Big Blue.

Jackson, 21, has been an important member of the defensive line since he worked his way into the rotation as a freshman. Already in his dorm over a month before fall classes started, Jackson begins his day at 6:30 a.m. Devoting the majority of his life for the next few weeks to football, Jackson heads to the weight room shortly after breakfast around 7:30 in the morning but admits he's been in football mode mentally for some time before loading the first plate in his weight-training session.

"I'm a 24-hour-a-day man. I think about football in my sleep," Jackson says. "This time of year it's 16-hour days on the field practicing, in the weight room working out, or in meetings with coaches learning the defense."

Later in the morning, Jackson and his teammates are on the practice field during the hottest part of the day, at first in helmets and shorts, but eventually working out in full pads. This August, midday temperatures routinely reach the high 90s, but with the Georgia Tech game looming just three weeks away, Jackson works through the heat, even as he acknowledges he'd rather be playing in brisker conditions: "I like playing in cold weather more than playing in hot weather," he says.

Depending on the schedule, the Tigers practice once or twice a day—the NCAA banned back-to-back days of two practices per day some time ago—but even on one-practice days there is plenty of football to learn. Jackson and the rest of the Tigers have a lot of pressure placed on them this year. Following an undefeated season and having unknown commodities at the quarterback and running back positions, there is a lot more attention being placed on the Plains this season than in previous years. With newspaper and television reporters constantly on campus, Jackson understands the importance

of staying clear of temptation as he assimilates into normal campus life.

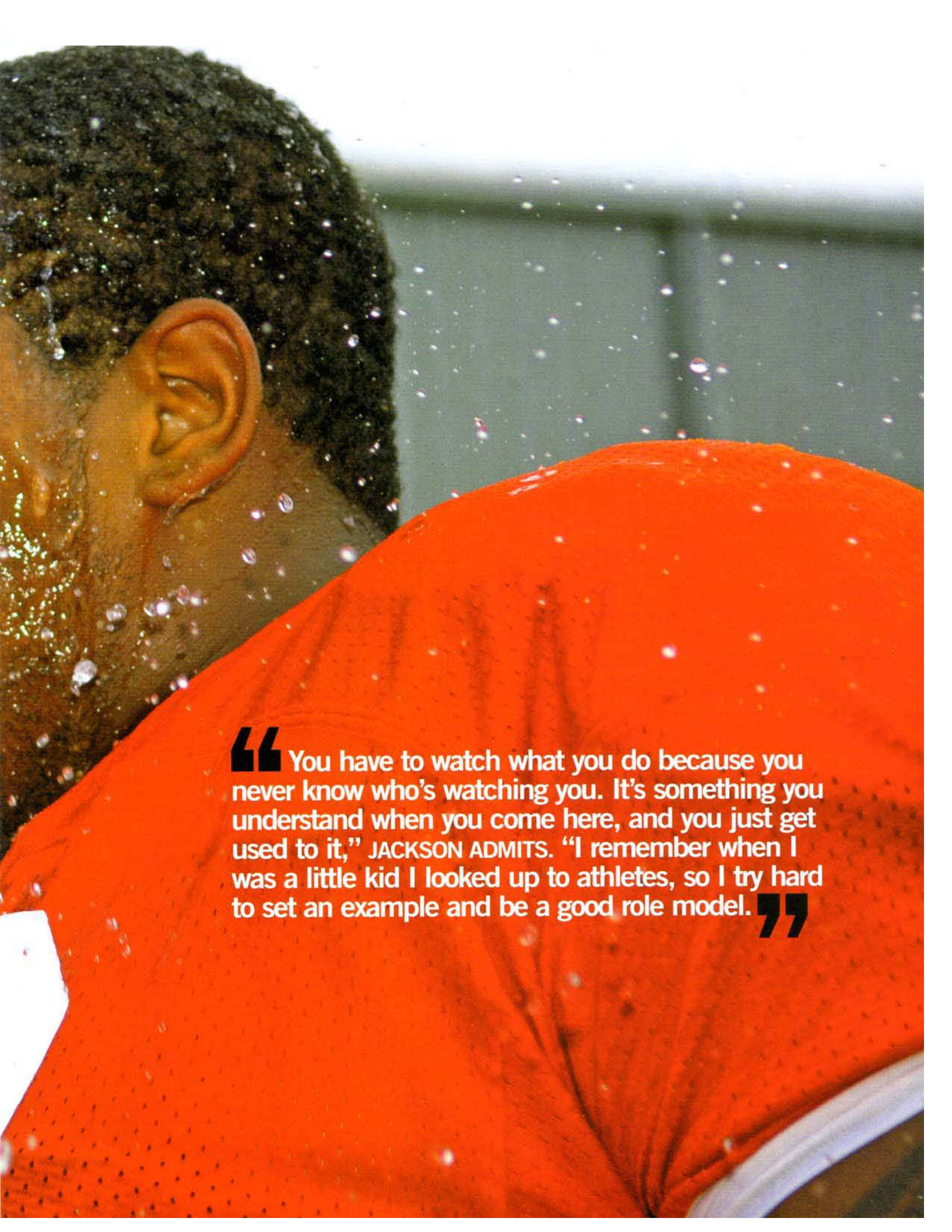
"You have to watch what you do because you never know who's watching you. It's something you understand when you come here, and you just get used to it," Jackson admits. "I remember when I was a little kid I looked up to athletes, so I try hard to set an example and be a good role model."

A native of Opelika, Jackson knows he is lucky compared to many other players who have come from hundreds of miles away to play football at Auburn. With his mother Virginia just a few minutes away, Jackson realizes how beneficial it is to have family close by. Homesickness, particularly among freshman, can be a problem, and Jackson has done what he can to be there for other guys whose families aren't nearby. "Guys like Tim Duckworth and Quentin Groves are from Mississippi, and their families don't live nearby, and they don't get to see each other very often," Jackson says. "You just try to be brothers for each other and be there for each other when you can."

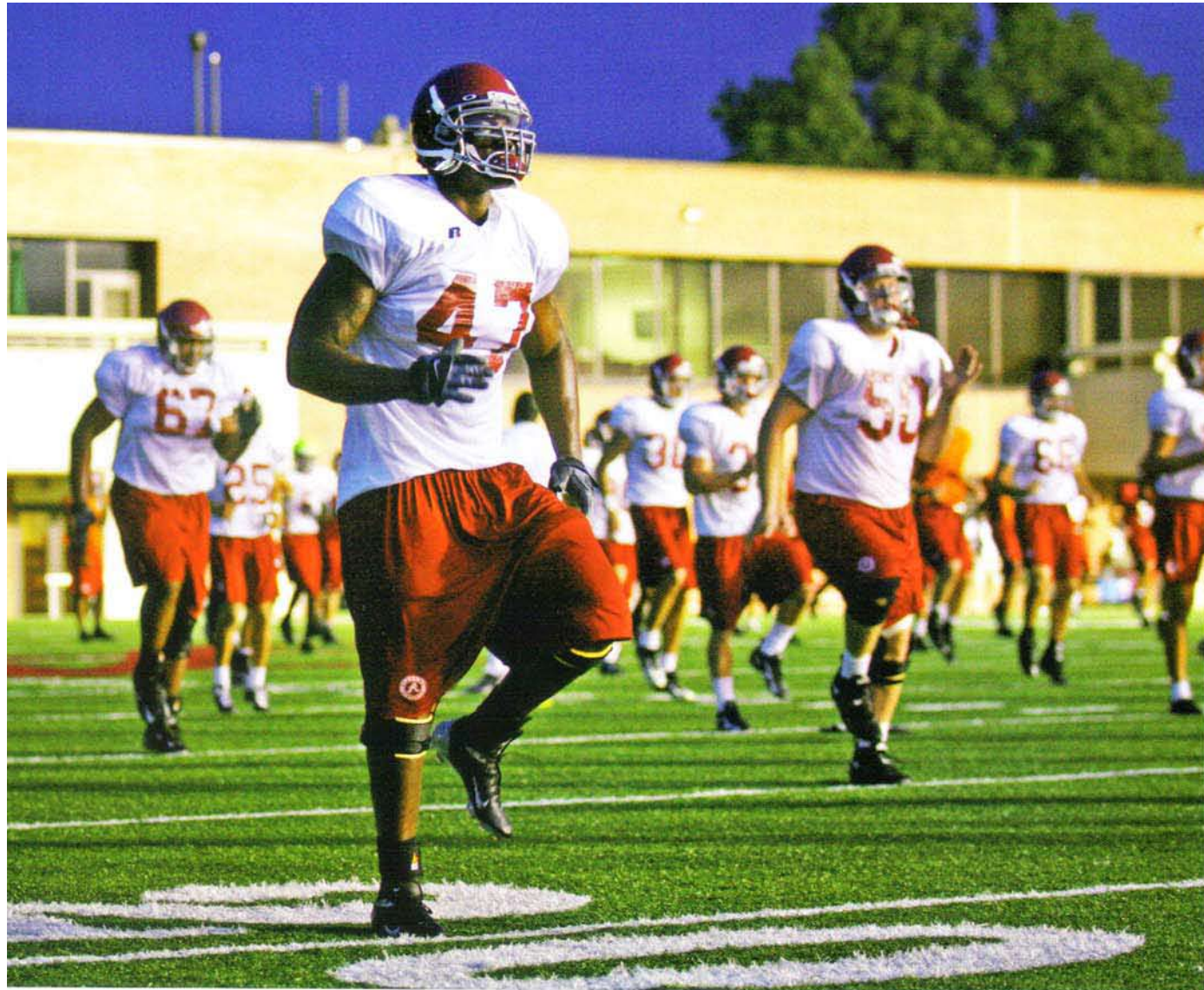


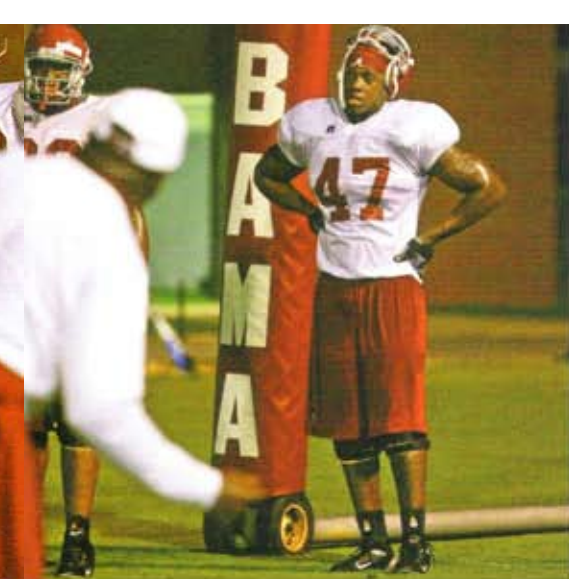
OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Jackson and other members of the Auburn defense listen to an assistant coach as the field is prepped for practice. Focused and intense, Jackson bursts through the line during scrimmage. Jackson joins other members of the team in the cafeteria. The defensive lineman visits with a fellow teammate while getting his ankles taped. ABOVE: Jackson, #58, joins fellow players for a prayer following practice.





“ You have to watch what you do because you never know who's watching you. It's something you understand when you come here, and you just get used to it,” JACKSON ADMITS. “I remember when I was a little kid I looked up to athletes, so I try hard to set an example and be a good role model. **”**





Mark Anderson ALABAMA

CROSS THE STATE, FOOTBALL PRACTICE BEGAN at the Capstone on August 9th as the Alabama Crimson Tide started summer drills. The football program has hit a rough patch in recent years and, after an injury-plagued season combined with depleted numbers due to NCAA sanctions, the Tide hopes to turn things around in 2005.

Alabama went 6-6 in 2004, an improvement over 2003, which saw Alabama win only three games. The offense has typically been a problem during those years, but defensively, Alabama has been solid—extremely solid.

Alabama's defense finished the 2004 season as the fifth-ranked defense in the nation, and one of the defensive stars is a 22-year-old Tulsa, Oklahoma, native named Mark Anderson.

Anderson was a starter in every game in 2005, finishing as the Tide's eighth tackler with 41 stops. He has played in every game since his freshman season, including 18 starts, and his name has been discussed as a middle-round draft pick in the 2006 NFL Draft in April. A veteran of summer training camp, early morning wake-up calls are nothing new for Anderson.

"I wake up around 6:30 and head down to breakfast around 7:00," Anderson says. "I'm usually going from around 7:00 a.m. to 10 p.m. with little breaks built in here and there."

At 6' 5" tall and weighing in at 253 pounds, Anderson knows that maintaining proper nourishment is key. Following morning workouts in the weight room and meetings with coaches, he makes his way to the cafeteria for lunch. After four years on campus, Anderson has come to appreciate the offerings of the university's food service department. "The food around here is pretty good, especially when they have steak and potatoes," he laughs.

In the week before Alabama's season opener with Middle Tennessee State University, the heat index topped 100 degrees. Conditions could be classified as 'dangerous' for many, but the players on the Crimson Tide roster faithfully suit up for practice each day, with start time usually scheduled for 4 p.m. Even with temperatures in triple digits under a helmet and pads, Anderson thrives in the oppressive conditions as he and the rest of the first-team defense rack up a string of successes against the first team offense in scrimmage.

"I love playing in the hotter weather. I really don't like the cold at all," Anderson says. "You can always drink some water or do some other things to get cool, but if it's cold, there isn't much you can do about that."

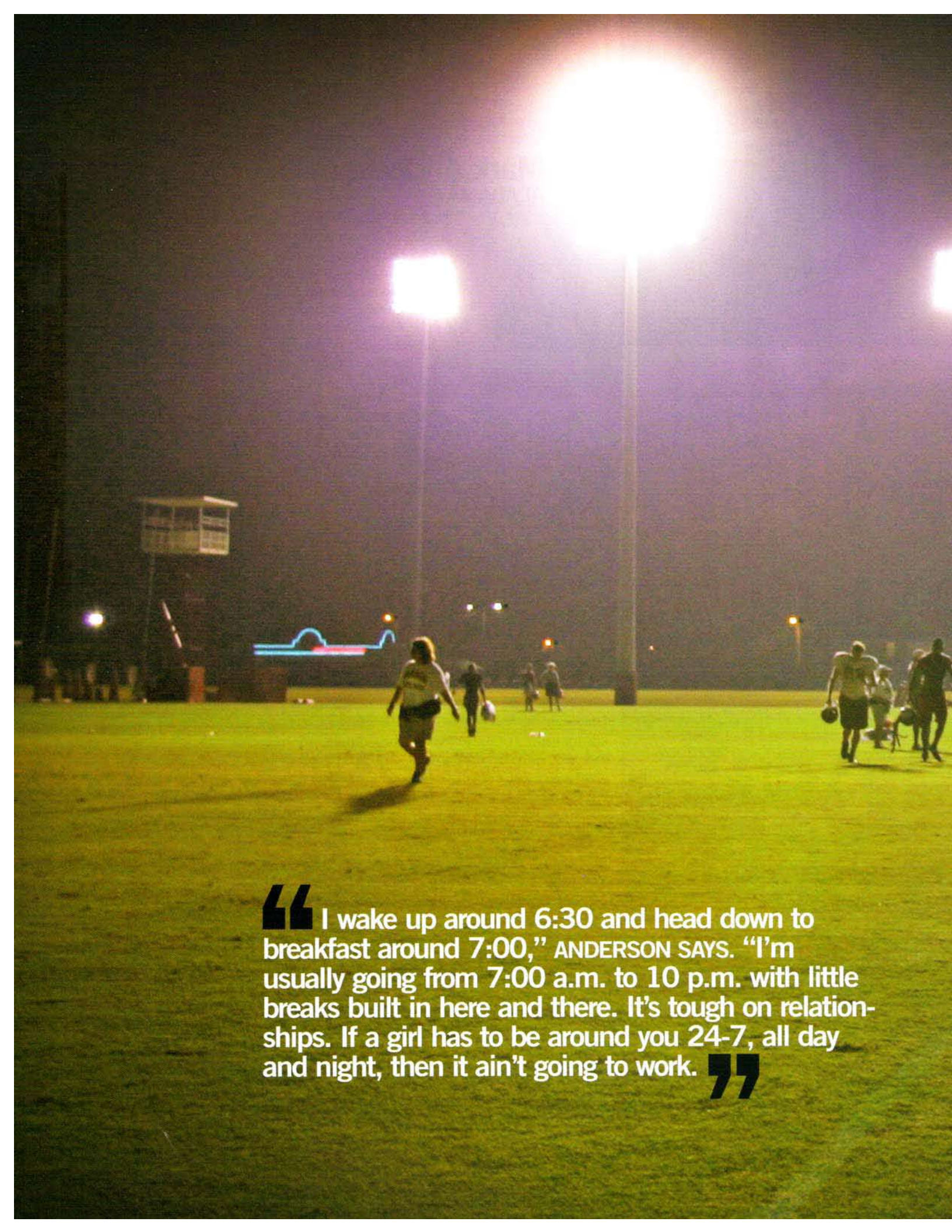
Football practice, meetings, and weight training, combined with the demands of classes and frequent travel, make maintaining personal relationships difficult. As for dating while playing football, Anderson says finding a girl who understands the demands on his time is important. "If a girl understands you're going to be gone a lot and not have as much time as some other guys, then it has a better chance of working out," he admits. "If she has to be around you 24-7, all day and night, it ain't going to work."

Now in graduate school, Anderson has already earned his degree in financial planning and has successfully managed to balance schoolwork with being an athlete. Anderson says he uses his short breaks as opportunities for study as well as the time traveling to away games to hit the books. "During the season, one of the best places to do class work is on the plane," he says. "The plane is the best place to study."

As for traveling, where is Anderson's favorite place to play besides Bryant-Denny Stadium? His home state of Oklahoma, of course: "Got to give a shout out to my home state," he says. ☉



OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: Anderson high-steps his way down field during conditioning drills. Listening to instructions from an assistant coach, Anderson catches his breath between drills. Anderson and fellow teammates rest in the lockerroom after practice. Sharing a laugh with friends in the dining hall. A trainer inspects Anderson's knee. ABOVE: Anderson and teammates huddle for a prayer at the end of practice in the August heat.



“ I wake up around 6:30 and head down to breakfast around 7:00,” ANDERSON SAYS. “I’m usually going from 7:00 a.m. to 10 p.m. with little breaks built in here and there. It’s tough on relationships. If a girl has to be around you 24-7, all day and night, then it ain’t going to work. **”**

