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For football player, faith is relevant

Succop feels 'incredibly blessed'

by KATIE MOORE

staff writer

HICKORY — Ryan Succop doesn't mind being the last pick in the 2009 NFL draft. In fact, he considers it a blessing.

"I took it differently than most people would," said Succop, who was acquired by the Kansas City Chiefs as the 256th overall draft pick.

"As a kicker it's hard to get drafted," Succop said, "I looked at it as a blessing."

Along with a chance to tryout for the team, being the last pick in the draft earned Succop the title of "Mr. Irrelevant," which for better or worse carries with it a good bit of publicity.

The title, "Mr. Irrelevant," has been around since 1976 when former NFL receiver Paul Salata wanted to honor the underdog or the final pick of the NFL draft with a week-long celebration of events in Newport Beach, Calif.

This year's celebration is scheduled to take place June 22-26.

But Succop doesn't have time to think about all that.

"I really don't worry too much about the attention — simply because I still have to go out and make the team," he said. "Right now I'm just focusing on football."

Succop was born and raised in Hickory, where he and his family attend St. Aloysius Church. His mother, Kathy, is the pastoral coordinator there.

He attended Hickory High School, where he was rated the fourth best kicker in the nation.

Then he accepted a full athletic scholarship to the University of South Carolina, where as a punter and placekicker, he set scoring records and earned numerous awards.

While at USC, Succop excelled academically, often making the dean's list while pursuing a double major in finance and management with a minor in psychology.

Throughout his college years, Succop said it was his faith that helped him meet challenges.

"My faith has helped me a lot" he said. "Knowing I've got that rock to fall back on strengthens me in everything I do."

At USC, Succop and his teammates prayed with the team chaplain.

“The whole team says the Lord’s Prayer before every game,” he said.

Off the field, Succop has made it a priority to give back to those who are less fortunate.

“I’ve been so blessed,” he said, “I just want to be able to give back and help do God’s work.”

As a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, Succop spent time during college visiting with children at local hospitals and elementary schools.

That desire to help those in need was instilled in him through his faith.

“God has given me a platform to go out and help others,” he said. “I want to use that platform.”

Succop completed rookie camp with the Kansas City Chiefs the second weekend in May.

He’ll spend the rest of the summer, minus the week of festivities in Newport Beach, completing grueling training camps and workouts in Kansas City, Mo.

Then in September, he’ll find out if he has made the team.

While his focus is on football, Succop hasn’t lost sight of what’s really important.

“I always ask myself, ‘Am I honoring God by doing this?’” he said. “I just try to honor the Lord in everything I do.”

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