

PRESTON

CONVERSATION:

out of his father's shadow

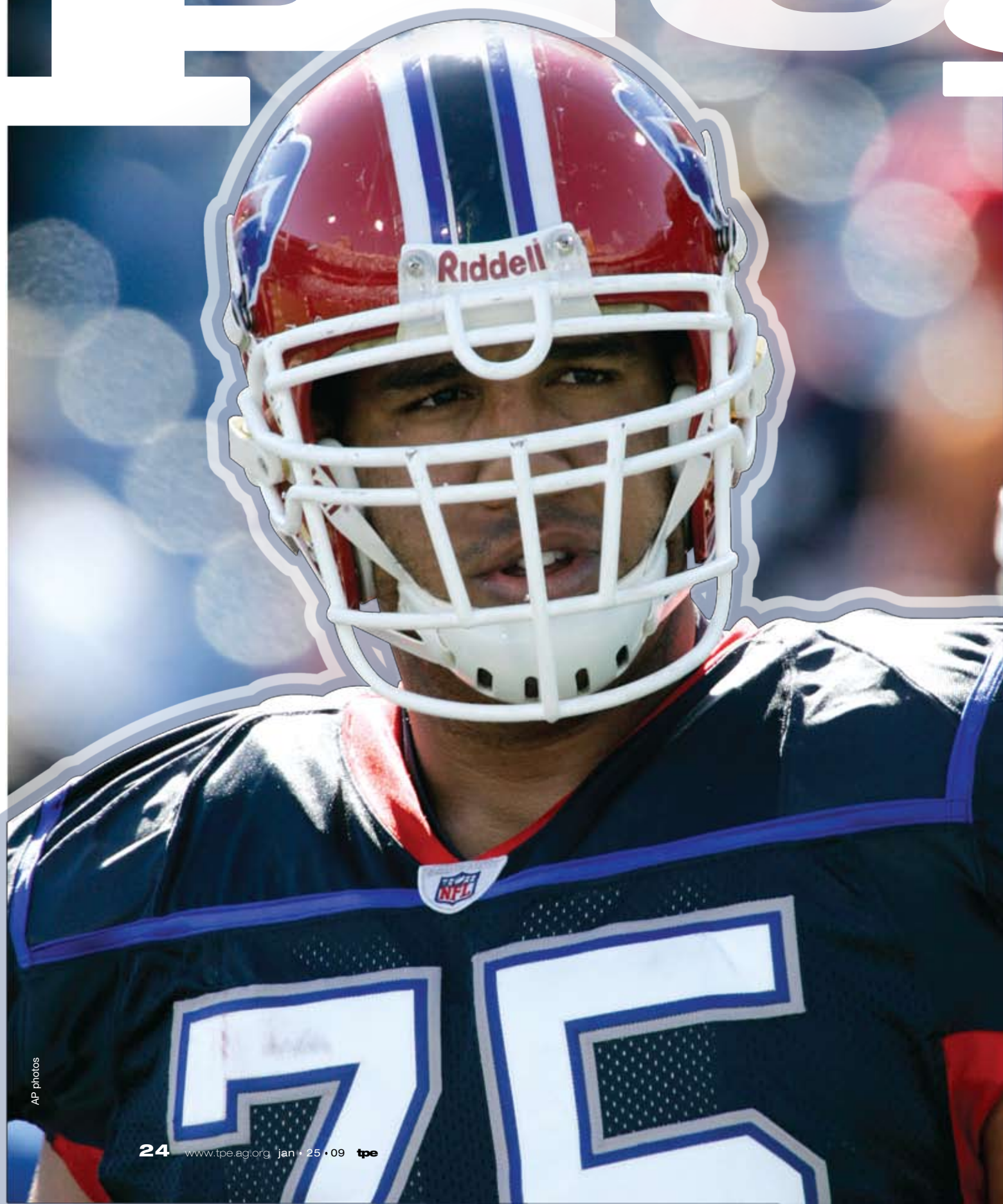
By Chad Bonham

Duke Preston grew up in the shadow of his father — former NFL linebacker Raymond Preston. But after starring at the University of Illinois, Duke was drafted by the Buffalo Bills who utilize his skills on the offensive line. Recently Duke Preston spoke to Chad Bonham about football, faith and life.

tpe: What was it like growing up as the son of an NFL star?

PRESTON: I was 3 years old when my dad retired, so I don't remember going to the games. I do remember in my early elementary years when Dad used to take me around to all of the alumni events and just being around the guys that he played with. We would go to the alumni games and walk down the tunnel with all the old guys and go out and stand on the field before the game.

The best part of it for my sister and me was that my parents were always around. My dad was always around to coach my Little League teams and things of that nature. It was great to have both of my parents really involved in everything I did.



AP photos

Duke Preston

tpe: What are some life lessons your father taught you?

PRESTON: Whatever you do, do it right. Do it to the best of your ability. That was a key for me growing up. People ask me all the time if I felt pressure growing up with a dad who played nine

years in the NFL. I really didn't, because everything he stressed in our home was to do everything the right way and do it to the best of your ability. When Dad was coaching me in Little League baseball, he'd have us run a lap over to a tree. We had to run all the way around the tree, not up to the tree or close enough to where

you could almost touch it, but all the way around the tree. I'm positive I'm where I am today because Dad taught me how to do things right and to do them right consistently.

tpe: How important is the concept of biblical integrity to you?

PRESTON: So many people will drive as fast as they can, and as soon as they see a cop they slam on the brakes. But you don't have anything to fear if you stay within the law all the time. As an athlete, you might try to win your coach's favor or the respect of your teammates, but as Christians and as Christian athletes, in terms of living our lives with integrity, we need to keep an eternal perspective. We're doing our work and we're playing our sport unto the Lord and for His glory — not so much to be looked at by men and to have our fans look at us and glorify ourselves.

tpe: When did you first start to have an understanding of who God is and the importance of having a relationship with Jesus?

PRESTON: Growing up in a Christian household like I did, my athletics and my life were God-

continued on page 28

Duke Preston plays in Kansas City against the Chiefs (left) and signs autographs the last day of training camp.



BLOG BYTES

Got a newsletter, church bulletin or company memo to jazz up? Use free fillers from Today's Pentecostal Evangel blogs. Visit the blogs at tpe.ag.org and copy and paste any material you want to use. It doesn't cost a cent. (Please remember to include the byline.)

Visit tpe.agglogger.org for TPE staff Weblogs on Christian living, news and random observations. Also, check out Answers.agglogger.org for feedback on tough biblical and theological questions.

Today's Pentecostal Evangel
tpe

U.S. MAPS RVolunteers

AG Mission America Placement Service

"Building Churches — Changing Lives" is not only the mission statement of U.S. Mission America Placement Service but is also the motivating force of its people. Although fuel prices reached an all-time high in 2008, the RV Volunteers continued to travel and continued to invest their time, skills and resources into the kingdom of God.

- ✓ More than 113,000 hours of volunteer labor
- ✓ 55 completed construction projects
- ✓ Cost savings in the millions

If you would like to know more about becoming a part of this ministry, please contact us at **1-877-346-6277** or on our Web site at www.usmaps.ag.org

pray * give * go

Have your kids checked out the new BGMC Web site just for them?

BGMC Kids!

BGMCKids.org

Evangelizing, Equipping, & Empowering

The Next Generation of Christlike Men & Lifelong Servant Leaders

royalrangers.ag.org

BE PREPARED

The AG College Guide can help you pick the right college for your future.

Free

AG Higher Education
Call **1-800-641-4310** for **FREE** AG College Guides or download at www.colleges.ag.org. For more information E-mail us at colleges@ag.org.

ALLIANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

(74LX7001)

centered from a young age. I correlated the integrity of my parents with biblical wisdom and biblical principles. I always felt convicted. I could hear God speaking to me and really talking to my heart from a very young age in terms of knowing what He did and didn't want me to do. My parents' instructions were reinforcing the principles I knew.

Whenever I struggled with something or I was afraid of something, whether it was performing athletically or taking a test at school, the first thing we always did was pray. God was very real to me. When I was stressed out about pitching my first Little League game as an 11-year-old, I read Romans 8:31: "If God is for us, who can be against us?" That spoke to me at a young age.

tpe: You and your wife do a lot of work with at-risk kids. How important is it for today's children to have positive role models at home and in the community?

PRESTON: It's huge. It really makes me feel lucky to have parents who pointed me in the right direction. They instilled in me that in times of trouble you take refuge in God and His grace. So many people try to rely on themselves, and that's almost a foreign concept to me because I always run to God.

Kids these days don't have that. They don't have the hope in knowing that God loves them. There's that power in Jesus we have access to through prayer and the Word. That's one of the reasons why I like to go out and speak. It's one of the reasons why I wanted to make it to where I am now so I would have a platform to go talk to kids. It's such a passion of mine to see the faces of kids and think back to when I was that age and remember what I was thinking about and the hopes I had.

I'm still geeked on what I get to do now. I get to play on Monday Night Football. That's a dream come true. For someone like me who really felt God move in my life from when I first started playing sports until now, it's really impor-

tant for me to go out and talk to kids and tell them to dream just as big and help give them the confidence in knowing that God is faithful and He will take you to where He wants you to be. It may not be exactly the plans you have, but He has great plans for all that He has called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).

tpe: What do you tell kids you work with — especially those who don't have a strong sense of moral and biblical guidance in the home?

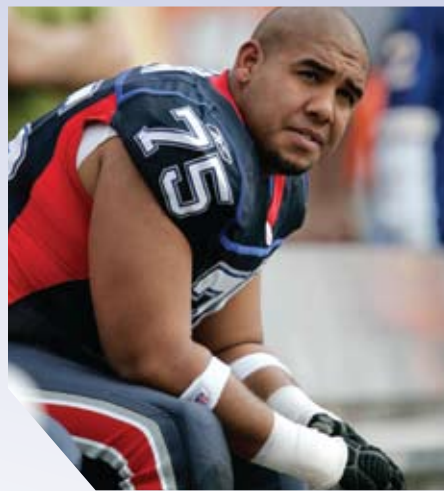
PRESTON: That's the hardest job. You just look at the moral standing of our world today and the stuff that you see on TV and all the things that young people are exposed to today. It was hard when I was in middle school and high school to stand firm on my principles. I can only imagine how much harder it is now. Christian values and Christian morals are getting increasingly further away from the norm in society.

So I tell kids to cling to God. Cling to the things that you know to be true in terms of the Word. You've got to find something like Fellowship of Christian Athletes to get involved with and try to find people who are like-minded with you. I had a few people growing up who had goals like I had and were willing to sacrifice certain things and maybe sacrifice being part of the cool crowd. Try to find friends like that — people who will stand strong with you in times when you feel like you're standing out like a sore thumb because you don't really believe the same things that other people believe.

tpe: How do you deal with the challenges of being a young man living in the fast-paced NFL lifestyle?

PRESTON: It's hard because it's such a pseudo reality. You're only in your 20s and you're making a paycheck that's just absurd. Everyone wants to be your friend and everyone wants to be around

Preston sits on the bench before a game against the Miami Dolphins in 2007.



you. It's real easy to get caught up in what people think of you and then all of a sudden you start to think more highly of yourself than you should.

For me, it's just been a challenge to keep that same godly perspective and that same biblical perspective. God planned for me to be here. It's no accident that I'm in Buffalo. It's no accident that I was drafted where I was. I have to keep the perspective that God has something He wants me to do for His purpose here. It shouldn't be about me and all that I have. All of that stuff comes with it when you're living according to God's purpose.

tpe: Ultimately, what helps you keep your head on straight when things get crazy?

PRESTON: This NFL career is such a passing thing. It's so short. It's easy to get wrapped up in, but it's the wrong thing to get wrapped up in. My dad played for nine years, but it was good that I got to see the end of it when there was no more hype, no more autographs and he was retired. It's a totally different animal. Because of that, I've always had a pretty good perspective because it's so passing.

It's really no different from how God does it. He's going to get your attention one way or another. It's always interesting to see how God gets His will accomplished. He's going to do it one way or another. **tpe**

E-mail your comments to tpe@ag.org.

Kids Page

PIGSKINS AND PLAYBOOKS

Don't wait!

Maybe you have an idea of what you want to become when you grow up. A doctor? A pastor? Perhaps even a football player? But you don't have to wait until you are an adult to get ready to follow that dream.

God uses all kinds of experiences to get you ready for His best plan for you.

Brock Berlin is a quarterback for the St. Louis Rams. But he's been playing football since he was a kid. Back at Evangel Christian Academy in Shreveport, La., Brock led his team to three state championships. He completed 964 passes for 13,902 yards and 145 touchdowns.

You can get ready today for the great things God will help you do years from now. Just like with football, the really great plays in life start with learning the basics of the game. Study your Bible, hang out with friends who will encourage you to stay close to God, and pray. You can't go wrong with that kind of daily exercise for your faith.



Make a paper football!

STEP 1: Fold a regular sheet of paper in half lengthwise twice so it is long and thin.

STEP 2: Bring the top corner over against the opposite side to form a little triangle.

STEP 3: Fold the triangle over and down again and again.

STEP 4: When you have one last square left at the bottom, fold it up into the flap on the fat triangle. It will tuck in better if you fold the last square's corner to make a point with the triangle's longest side.

STEP 5: For a lighter football, cut the sheet of paper in half lengthwise and fold it lengthwise just once.



Enter to win!

(Recommended for ages 5 and up.) Play hard in all kinds of conditions with the Nerf Weather Blitz football. Enter online by February 4 at tpe.ag.org or mail an entry postmarked on or before that date to Football Giveaway, *Today's Pentecostal Evangel*, 1445 N. Boonville Avenue, Springfield, Mo. 65802. Include a daytime phone number. You must have a parent's permission to enter.



TPE Kids is sponsored in part by



U.S. MISSIONS

...that none perish

www.usmissions.ag.org

Did you know?

Pigskin: Footballs are made of cowhide, not pigskin. The name probably came from the inflated pig bladders used as soccer and rugby balls many years ago. Wilson has the only dedicated football assembly factory in the world in Ada, Ohio (pop. 5,400). Workers there craft more than 700,000 footballs a year, including the balls used in every Super Bowl. In fact, since 1941, every Hall of Famer has made his mark with a Wilson game ball.



Playbook: The book listing all the secret coded plays for a team is worth more than gold. If a player loses one, the fines range from \$100 a page to \$8,000.

BY THE numbers

3,000 — calories consumed by typical viewer during the Super Bowl

50 million — pounds of avocados consumed during last year's Super Bowl

97.5 million — viewers of Giants win over the Patriots in Super Bowl XLII

248 — average poundage of an NFL player