

“This Kid is Intense!”

Meet Washington Redskins
NFL Player Reed Doughty

Can you smell it? Sniff harder, you’ll catch it. It’s November and football is in the air. Here in Washington, D.C., we smell football early. The hometown team, the Washington Redskins, commenced training camp in August at Redskins Park in Ashburn, Virginia, where fans flocked to see their beloved Skins at open practices. Don’t even try to keep us away. We show up in thousands.

Except for one day in August. I left the thousands behind (I already had joined the thousands on Fan Appreciation Day) and met Reed Doughty on the last day of training camp. Drafted by the Washington Redskins in the sixth round of the 2006 NFL Draft, Reed was known last year as the man who replaced Sean Taylor, Number 21, who died tragically in 2007. That was *last* year.

This year, you can spot Reed as Number 37—the starting strong safety who is tenacious, aggressive, loves to sack the quarterback, and interrupt what the opposing offense has so carefully planned. He is known as a solid and versatile cover safety who fits in well with Washington’s aggressive defense and special teams.

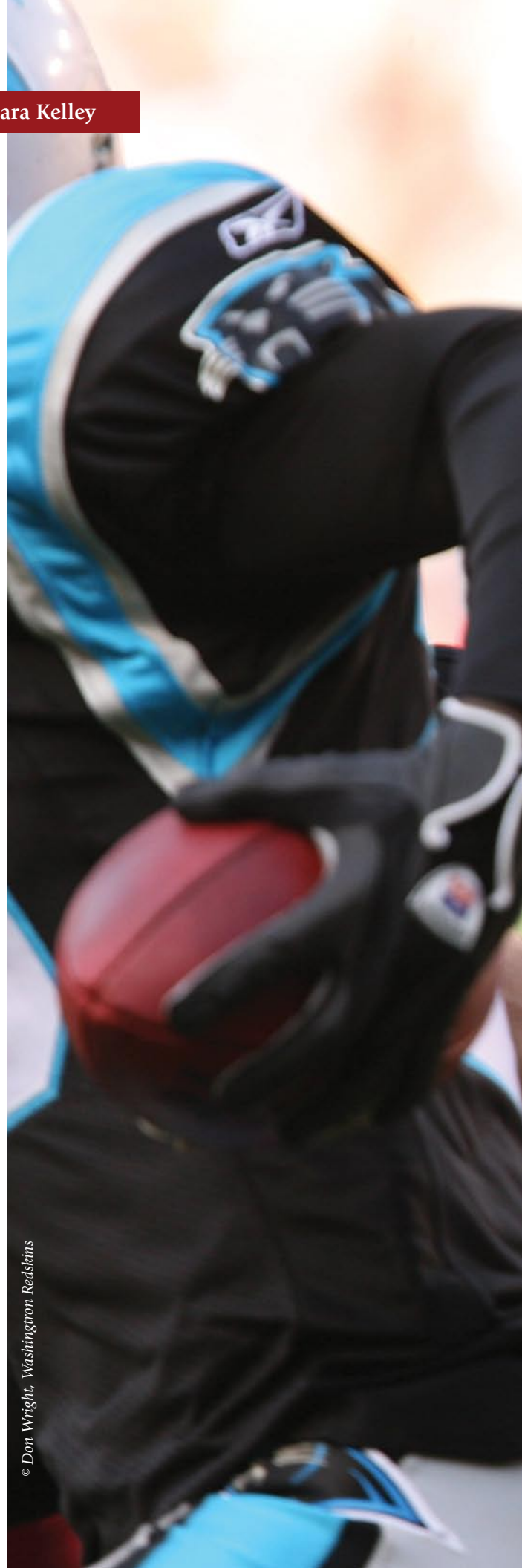
Doughty, 26, graduated from Northern Colorado University as the school’s first ever three-time Academic All American with a 4.0 grade point average. He is married to Katherine (Katie). They have a son, Micah, who is almost two. Doughty took time off last year from football when their son, who is now doing well, needed a kidney transplant. Giving up is not something Reed would consider.

Reed and the Redskins granted *Hearing Loss Magazine* an interview to talk about his hearing loss. But, when I met Reed on August 13, his hearing loss was clearly a sidebar topic. He is first an NFL player, family man, and scholar athlete who just deals with his hearing loss. Knowing what he had to do, and with encouragement from Katie, he got hearing aids. His hearing loss doesn’t get in the way of the job at hand. Watch a Skins game and you’ll see what I mean.

A trip to Redskins Park is an experience in itself where the staff greets you with enthusiasm and professionalism. The same enthusiasm permeates the complex as they carefully handle and train their players. Watching Head Coach Jim Zorn at practice with the team (yes, we saw some play calling) was exciting as we waited for Number 37 to come off the field and out of the shower to meet us.

Let’s go talk to Reed Doughty. You don’t have to be a Redskins fan to become a fan of Number 37.

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Reed Doughty *cont. from page 10*

Hearing Loss Magazine (HLM):

What makes you a starting safety? What attributes do you have that put you in that spot?

Doughty: Three things: toughness, tenacity and hard work. I think I can push harder and focus longer than everyone else.

HLM: Are you a hitter or a cover guy? *(Editor's note: Generally, in my armchair opinion, hitters use their brawn; players who cover use their speed.)*

Doughty: I like to hit, but I'm required to do both. But I would rather be physical.

HLM: You mention you had hearing loss as a child. Did you use hearing aids then? When is the first time you got hearing aids?

Doughty: The first time I used hearing aids was this past season at age 25. I probably had been needing them for a while. While I was growing up people knew I had a hearing loss, but thought I could either use hearing aids, or not use them. When my family life and school life were affected, I needed to get them. I had just found a way around them at first, but realized that it was time [to get hearing aids].

HLM: You were a scholar athlete at the University of Northern Colorado with a 4.0 GPA and earned the Draddy Trophy—the “Academic Heisman.” How did you get through college with the hearing loss? Did you use any hearing assistive technology?

Doughty: I told most of my teachers about it. They noticed that I listened very directly, always paying attention. Almost so much so that they were probably saying, “Dang, this kid is intense.” I would sit in the front and let them know that I didn't hear very well, but if they could enunciate, and speak in a normal voice, I'd be fine. And as long as I could see them I was okay.

A lot of my study was hands-on for the Exercise Science degree, so there weren't that many lectures. It was a lot more lab work and I was able to get

by. I took good notes. I'm also a visual learner so if there was anything on the board I would write it down.

HLM: We know in college football you memorized hand signals and were vigilant in all the plays. Your success led to your NFL career and now with the Redskins. What is different in the NFL as compared to college football in regard to your hearing loss?

Doughty: The big thing with college was that as far as the calls were concerned, it was very simple. I would just look to the sidelines; I don't even think I got in the huddle. It's hard when it's loud, and when someone has a mouthpiece in to know the difference between “sin” and “swim.” Those are different calls we have. It's hard. That was college.

But now I have a different responsibility in the NFL, so I have to rely on someone else for the call, and that can make it difficult. [Washington Redskins Linebacker] London Fletcher knows that if I can't see him, I can't get the call. So I just make sure that when we're in the huddle I have a clear line of sight and make sure I can see what he's saying, or ask him to give the call again. The worst feeling is when you really don't know the call and you can't play fast. I think that's the biggest adjustment I've had to make.

In college, we didn't have much meeting time, but in the pros, we have so much meeting time. I think coaches really noticed it my first year. I think they honestly thought “this kid was supposed to be smart and I'm telling him stuff and he's not paying attention.”

They would be sitting behind me in meetings and talking and correcting me and I wouldn't have any clue or I would just nod my head because I was embarrassed, and just say that I heard what they were saying when I really didn't. That's what really led to me getting the hearing aids because although I can't wear them on the field, in the meetings it really helps.

HLM: How are the Redskins accommodating you with the hearing loss? Are you being proactive in asking the trainers, teammates, coaches for what you need to communicate? They have

a lot invested in you and your value to the team is obvious. What do they need to know from you and what are some solutions that work?

Doughty: My rookie year, our defensive coordinator, Gregg Williams, wanted me to get a hearing test. He told me, "I think you may have some hearing loss," and I was like, "Coach, I know I have hearing loss."

I wouldn't say I wasn't forthcoming. I was trying to start my NFL career, and nobody wants limitations whether it's physical or mental or whatever, so I was just trying to start out on the same foot as everybody else.

Coach Williams actually made me get a hearing test that confirmed what I already knew. I went back to Northern Colorado University where they have a great audiology department. They told me it was completely up to me. I decided I had the money to get them, so it definitely was a smart thing to do and it helped my family life a lot.

HLM: How have your coaches reacted since they heard of the hearing loss? Are they supportive?

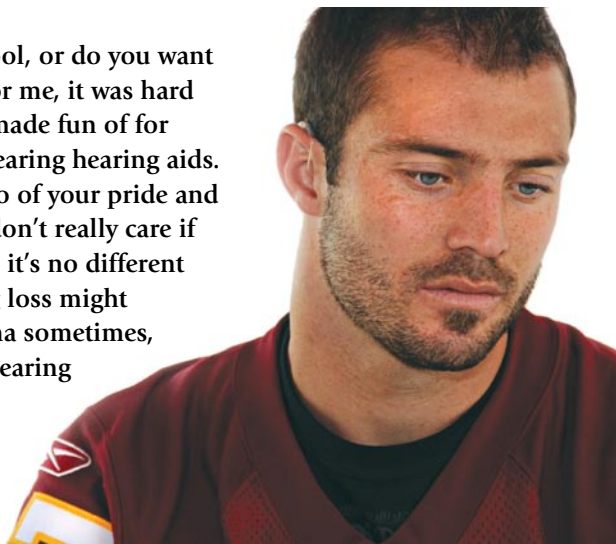
Doughty: In my rookie year, my coach couldn't really put two and two together as to why I was making the same mistake twice and not getting it corrected. He thought he had corrected me but I didn't hear him correcting me.

After I had told him that I was hard of hearing, [Coach Williams] thought that it made sense. He just noticed that if I didn't acknowledge him, that I didn't hear it. He would tap me on the shoulder to make any correction I needed on the field. If I'm running back from a long pass, he didn't correct me there; he waited until I got back, so I could hear him. That helped a lot.

HLM: What strategies do you use in meetings? In training?

Doughty: Now that I wear the hearing aids in the meetings, Coach Williams really noticed that everybody else would have their heads down during the meetings, and I was always watching him. He said to me, "You're either super intense and focused, or you might be reading my lips." It was

“Do you want to be cool, or do you want to live a good life? For me, it was hard growing up, getting made fun of for hearing loss or for wearing hearing aids. You just kind of let go of your pride and wear hearing aids. I don't really care if I'm not cool...I think it's no different than glasses. Hearing loss might have a different stigma sometimes, but I am in need of hearing enhancement, and I'm going to wear hearing aids.”



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a little combination of both.

I was focused and paying attention but I was really looking at him to hear what he was saying. The hearing aids have helped me a lot, especially when another safety wants to ask me a question about a play and he's whispering. I don't do well with whispering, but the hearing aids help. I mean, I turn them up and turn them down.

HLM: What is the most frustrating situation for you with your hearing loss?

HLM: It doesn't have to do with football, it has to do with my family life. I can wear my hearing aids during the day and hear my son. We live in a tri-level town home. So if I'm on the bottom floor and he's upstairs with my wife, and she calls down for me to get a bottle and I come up; she asks if I heard her, and I say no. But now that I have my hearing aids, it's fine.

But the hardest times are at night. I'm fearful that if my wife were to work nights like she used to as a nurse, I'd probably go sleep in my son's room because I just sleep through stuff. I always thought I was a heavy sleeper, but I think it was because I didn't hear. I didn't usually wake up during thunderstorms or when my son was crying, so that's been the hardest part.

HLM: Who has provided the most support since you found out you had hearing loss?

Doughty: I've had hearing loss my whole life, so my family has been great.

My grandmother was deaf, and one of my aunts is severely hard of hearing, as is my father. He taught for 35 years so I think he was my greatest support and inspiration. He is in his late fifties and he's doing well with hearing aids.

My mom has supported him, and my wife, Katie, has supported me. She understands me and definitely helps when I miss something. A restaurant is sometimes so annoying to me because I want to be able to order, but if I don't hear the waiter or something I directly look at her and she already knows. "He wants french fries," she will say. It's kind of funny but it's also frustrating.

But that's why I like the hearing aids, because they allow me to take care of her instead of my always looking to her for confirmation of what's going on. Katie has been awesome.

HLM: What advice would you give parents whose boys want to play football? Among parents there seems to be two camps. One says start them early in elementary school. The other says that the early start only teaches the boys to be rough with little skill development, so don't start them until high school.

Doughty: I started playing when I was seven years old. As far as it being too rough of a sport, it's a game and you can be aggressive on the field instead of off. You can play hard and hit hard but still play the game with integrity and character. Off the field, you can be a nice guy and help people. I don't think there is any correlation with being

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Reed Doughty *cont. from page 13*

aggressive on the field and being a bully off the field.

If kids want to play, then let them play. A rule in my family is if you start something then you should finish it."

HLM: What advice would you give to young people who discover they have a hearing loss?

Doughty: Do you want to be cool, or do you want to live a good life? For me, it was hard growing up, getting made fun of for hearing loss or for wearing hearing aids. You just kind of let go of your pride and wear hearing aids. I don't really care if I'm not cool. I think it's no different than glasses. Hearing loss might have a different stigma sometimes, but I am in need of hearing enhancement, and I'm going to wear hearing aids. If I didn't, I would be just like someone who is going to try to drive without glasses when he needs them.

Have enough confidence in yourself and have a support group around you. You find out who your good friends are, and they'll help you out.

HLM: How does it feel to play in Washington, D.C., where the fans eat, breathe and bleed Redskins?

Doughty: It's fun. I don't think they really care about my hearing as long as I'm playing well. That's the fun part. And that's how it is in life. Success isn't determined by what our limitations are but how we get over them. Whether it's hearing or not having the same physical ability as someone, or not having the same mental ability, you just have to work harder.

Conclusion

I told Reed we didn't want to take too much of his time. It was the last day of training camp, and Reed was heading home to see Katie and Micah. The players live at training camp for the duration and the Doughty's live a few miles from Redskins Park. But he just talked to Katie, and since she wouldn't be home right away, he said, "I can spend more time with you." So he did.

He showed us his hearing aids, took them out, handled them like



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a pro, and swapped hearing aid tales with Patrick Holkins, HCAA member, summer intern at HCAA, and college senior. Then Reed led us to the office and gave us a box of Redskins goodies—hats, shirts—and autographed all of them. What a way to end the day! 📺

Reed Doughty Injured

October 15, 2008: The report from Redskins Park today is that Reed Doughty was placed on injured reserve because of a nerve problem in his back. Head Coach Zorn said, "He still has some numbness in his feet and it is likely he will need surgery."

Such is the life of a football player who plays it rough. With the same toughness, tenacity, and hard work he displays on the field, we expect to see Reed fight back from the injury and enjoy watching him play once again.

For more about Doughty, go to www.washingtonredskins.com.

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Have You Heard About Redskins Running Back Larry Brown?

Lawrence "Larry" Brown, Jr., born in Clairton, Pennsylvania, is a former NFL player whose eight-year career was spent exclusively with the Washington Redskins from 1969 to 1976.

Brown went to four consecutive Pro Bowls during his first four seasons and led the Redskins to their 1973 Super Bowl VII appearance against the "perfect season" Miami Dolphins. Brown finished in the top five of the league for rushes five times, rushing yards three times, yards from scrimmage three times, and total touchdowns twice.

Helmet Fitted with Hearing Aids

In 1969, newly arrived Redskins coach Vince Lombardi noticed that Brown, an obviously talented but underperforming running back, was starting slightly late behind the snap of the ball. Tests ordered by Lombardi determined that Brown had a hearing loss and that he was watching for the lineman to move rather than listening to the quarterback's snap count.

Lombardi had Brown's helmet fitted with an ear-piece that relayed quarterback Sonny Jurgensen's snap counts, thus improving Brown's responsiveness, and allowing him to hit the hole very quickly.

Brown went on to become one of the great running backs in NFL history, with a reputation for toughness, for running hard, and for running "much bigger" than his 195 lb. frame would suggest. Because of his hard-churning style, his career was cut short due to numerous injuries, but not before establishing himself as an NFL back of note.

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