



Local 5285 cheers NFL selection of member's son

By Derek Smith



Pictured Left to Right: Father and UAW Local 5285 member Kevin Muse, Tanner Muse, Mother, Shannon, and Uncle and also a UAW Local 5285 member Ron Muse

MOUNT HOLLY, N.C. – Union brothers and sisters at Daimler's Freightliner Truck Manufacturing Plant have been following Tanner Muse's athletic endeavors since he was a young boy at the Belmont, N.C., Optimist Park.

Muse, son of Kevin Muse, a longtime member of UAW Local 5285, was selected by the Las Vegas Raiders with the 100th pick of the 2020 NFL Draft. "I always felt he belonged and he proved to everyone he belonged," Kevin said. "I always told him if that's your goal, then fine, but let's get that degree, too."

The 6'2, 227-pound linebacker from Clemson was taken with the 36th pick in the third-round after earning two College Football Playoff national titles (2016, 2018), two all-Atlantic Coast Conference honors (2018, 2019) and one All-American award (2019). In April's draft, Raiders

coach Jon Gruden phoned the Muse household in Belmont prior to Las Vegas' pick to let him know the team was going to select him. "I got to ask you. Do you want to be a Las Vegas Raider?" Gruden inquired, as seen on a YouTube video. "You going to play linebacker for me? Be a captain on special teams?" Muse answered in the affirmative and told the Super Bowl winning coach and former Monday Night Football analyst he wanted to be a Raider more than anything. Moments later, NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell announced the pick live on ESPN, and all the blood, sweat and tears of Muse's lifelong of hard work had paid off.

Muse attended South Point High School, 8.4 miles from the Freightliner plant in Mount Holly where his father, a CI production tech, has worked since 1984. His uncle, Ronnie, a CI facilitator, has also been a member of Local 5285 since 1988.

Tanner was a standout in high school in both football and baseball. As a senior, Muse recorded 150 tackles with four interceptions on defense and rushed for 1,292 yards, earning first-team all-state and Shrine Bowl honors. He was rated a four-star recruit before committing to Clemson. Muse also spent a few weeks after graduation playing baseball with the Gastonia Grizzlies of the Coastal Plain League, a wood bat collegiate summer organization. When he was drafted this spring, he became the second CPL alum to be selected by the NFL. The first was Super Bowl winning quarterback Russell Wilson, who also spent time in Gastonia during the summer of 2010 as an N.C. State football and baseball player. His high school baseball coach, Mickey Lineberger, thought professional baseball was an option if he opted out of college. Muse was redshirted as a freshman in 2015, but the following season he saw action in all 15 games for the Tigers, making 24 tackles as a reserve safety and special team player during Clemson's College Football Playoff championship season. He blocked a punt against Alabama in the title game.

Over the next three seasons, Muse established himself as one of the best safeties in the country and finished with 237 career tackles, seven interceptions and two defensive touchdowns. At the conclusion of his eligibility, he was named a permanent team captain after playing in 59 games, tied for the most in school history. "He's had to fight for a lot of things and they weren't just given to him," his father said. "It takes only one opportunity to make a bad decision and tear it right down in seconds."

Eric Norman, a Materials Auditor at the Mt. Holly plant, was a press box staffer at a rival school and got to see Muse up close and personal during his high school career. He said from an early age, Muse's speed and hard-hitting ability was evident. "There was a lot of buzz about Tanner," Norman said, of the talk around the plant among high school football fans. "He was definitely known. We all knew he was going to be on the radar."

Joseph Adams, who works in Cab Mount Build-up and coached against Muse at another rival high school said, "He's a kid that never stopped working. Everything he's got, he earned." Local 5285 President/Shop Chairman Billy Rose said the union's brother and sisterhood extends to the children of the membership.

"It's kind of hard to pull against one of your co-worker's kids," Rose said. "We're glad to see them get scholarships and an education because you always want to see your kids do better than you. For Tanner to go all the way and get taken in the draft is really something special."

Since April's draft, Muse has been at Clemson staying in shape and working on conditioning until the NFL allows players back at team headquarters, Kevin said.

His father said Tanner took part in a Zoom meeting recently with Gruden and Raiders general manager Mike Mayock and, "Gruden said it was like talking to another coach. They were really impressed."

Tanner's brother, Nick, might be the next Muse drafted by the NFL. He's a 6'4, 250-pound senior tight end at South Carolina. Nick transferred from William and Mary prior to the 2019 season and caught 17 passes for 158 yards before an injury ended his junior year in the Vanderbilt game.

"We're proud of both of them," Rose said. "I know their family is super proud of them." As luck would have it, Muse and the Raiders will open the 2020 NFL season at Bank of America Stadium against the Panthers in Charlotte, only a few minutes from hundreds of family and friends at Local 5285 and the Belmont and Mt. Holly community.

Derek Smith works on the Front/Rear Axle Swing at Daimler Trucks in Mount Holly and is the former sports editor of the Belmont Banner.