

# ***Brothers After the Whistle***

By: Nicholas Williamson

When between the white lines of the football field, you must rely on the other 10 men on the field to achieve success and best your opponent.

Every practice, play and game, players suit up with hopes of being better than the man lined up on the other side. Through all the successes and inevitable failures, the bond formed between teammates is unmatched. For three Cougars, it runs much deeper, propelling their bond to greater heights.

Arriving at the University of Houston by way of Missouri City, Texas, Matthew Adams, Joeal Williams and Khalil Williams are more than three defensive teammates. Unknown to most, the trio has been together on and off the field for some time now.

“It started at Lake Olympia Middle School,” Khalil Williams said. “Joeal and I met during football and everybody thought we were brothers so we just went with it.”

Joeal and Khalil did not share the same blood, but there was no way to prove the two were not brothers. The bond had been formed and would only grow from here.

As they raised through the stages of football, they would soon gain another companion, forming the trio that we see before us today. On the surface, Adams was a unique force from Mesquite Poteet High School who would make waves on the field; underneath he was as gentle as they come.

“I was intimidated at first, but when I got to know him he was a little Care Bear,” Khalil Williams said.

Coming all the way from Dallas, Adams was a lone wolf at Hightower High School. With nothing to latch himself onto, he searched the only place he was familiar with for allies, the field.

“I wanted to know where the ballers were and everybody pointed me to Khalil and Joeal,” Adams said. “We had the same interest and goals so that made us tight, and we all stuck together.”

The trio had been formed, and the natural characteristics of a brotherhood began to reveal themselves. Joeal, the youngest of the three, was the quiet little brother following the blueprint of his older counterparts.

Khalil, the energetic brother that’s constantly in the mix of things. In their brotherhood dynamic, Khalil views himself as a target because his brothers are always picking at him.

And Adams, the protective leader of the pack, always staying on his brothers trying to keep them focused on the goals they have set for themselves.

Their bond was inseparable. Through the battleground that is Texas high school football and the recruitment process, their relationship remained solid. So much so, it played a significant part in their recruitment, landing them at the University of Houston together.

“This was our first offer together,” Adams said. “It didn’t matter where we went, we had the skill set to separate ourselves, and Houston was a big platform. We came here to make something happen and it’s paying off well.”

The trio sat down during the recruiting process and decided to choose the same path. A few years later, they are now staples in the Houston Football program. Adams and Khalil are in their final season as Cougars, while Joeal will have one season of eligibility remaining.

“I don’t know how I’m going to survive without these guys,” Joeal Williams said. “They push me, they set the bar for me and it’s high, so I have to step up to the plate.”

Joeal knows he has big shoes to fill following in the footsteps of his brothers, but it is a task they have prepped him for and believe he can do.

As they continue their individual journeys, two things are certain: they will always have Missouri City; and they will always have one another.