Black and Gold Player Spotlight:
Hughes anchoring high-powered offense

By Nick Phillips

What are your expectations for yourself and the team as you head towards the final stretch of the regular season?
My expectations and those of my teammates are the same. We all want to go to playoffs and win a championship for Pembroke.

Describe your experience as a UNCP student athlete.
My experience at Pembroke has fortunately been a pleasant and unique one. Because of Pembroke's small size, many of the athletes on the athletic teams chill and congregate together giving me and many other athletes different friends and experiences that we might not have at another university.

What is your most exciting football moment?
My most exciting football moment of all time would definitely be in high school when we played in the playoffs where I, a lineman, was given the chance to run the ball. It was the most invigorating feeling in the world. The crowd and all your friends watch in anticipation to see if you score a touchdown. As a lineman you only dream for such a rare opportunity.

Who/what are your biggest inspirations, in football and life?
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Talk a bit about what goes on in the locker room before a game.
Before every game, I sit in the locker room and chill with my boys who I have been with for most of the time I have been here at Pembroke. Myself, Phillip Cheek, R.J. Harvin, Jordan Champion, Lee James, Brad Lewis, Justin Watts and Terrence Carter basically joke around until the receivers go to the field. We joke on almost anything around us. Anything is game to be made fun of. After that we play baseball with a tennis ball and a stretching tool until it's time to go on the field.

2011 Stats - Through 10 games
Part of an offensive unit averaging 486.6 yards per game, 36.5 points per game.

Outside the Lines:
Williams after more than wrestling greatness

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In any sport, a two time All-American is considered a leader of his team, and Williams is no exception.

Mike the captain
As a team, the Braves are ranked 18th in the pre-season top-20 poll that was released by the NCAA Division II Wrestling Coaches Association on Oct. 26. But Williams is the only individual wrestler to be recognized in the preseason listing.
Williams checked into the listing as the No. 3 wrestler in the country. “It’s great to be ranked 3rd nationally early in the season, but that’s about it. It’s 3rd accomplishment; many teams and athletes in many sports have started a season off ranked high nationally and never reached their full potential or ultimate goals,” Williams said. “My ultimate goal since I became a part of this program was to be a national champ. Once I achieve that, I’ll be satisfied,” he added.
Williams also said that this season’s Braves are a young team loaded with potential. “We still have the ability, I think, to do some big things on the national scene. It’ll come down to how much work guys are willing to put in to develop as wrestlers, and right now it’s looking good,” he said.

What does Williams bring to the table for the young team? Energy, experience, drive and determination.
“I’m a leader not necessarily by choice but by nature. I’ve always been a leader on any team I’ve been a part of; God has just blessed me with that quality. I lead by keeping guys motivated and winning,” Williams said.
He added that other older wrestlers, such as Shane Nolan and Shiheem Bryant, also set the tone for the young squad and provide a leadership role.

Mike the student
In the small amount of free time he does find, Williams keeps himself busy.
He is a member of Omega Psi Phi fraternity, and the president of UNCP’s Chi Mu chapter. He is also working with the Dream Academy, a non-profit organization that provides younger students an afterschool program to go to, while also being a member of the NAACP, which allows him to work with other small organizations that also provide community service.
Williams said he loves UNCP’s small atmosphere and the small campus allowing you to have a relationship or at least interact with the same group of individuals on a day to day basis, as opposed to a larger school where it may be harder to run into the same students daily.

The resources here are tremendous. I don’t think students utilize the resources here enough, including faculty and staff,” he added about UNCP.
He loves traveling to different colleges with his fraternity brothers, listening to music and writing, but he says he loves doing something business related.
“I’m working on a couple different business ventures, one of which is launching my own marketing company by next year and working with a network marketing company throughout the state,” Williams said.

The easiest question Williams may ever answer is what drives him. A quick guess might be to be the best in the country in his weight class or something else blessed, but Williams takes another path.
“I am definitely driven by my children every day and the desire to be successful. There are days I don’t want to get up, let alone go to class or practice. But if I don’t have the luxury of failing, because if I fail, I’m failing my children,” Williams said.

“raly seems cliché but that’s genuinely what I’m driven by, to know that I have to succeed. Most people want to succeed. I have to. I don’t have a choice because my dreams are no longer just about me.” he finished.

Bio of the week
Gerald Hughes

Year - Redshirt-Senior
Sport - Football
Position - Offensive Line
Hometown- Columbia, S.C.

Major - Computer Technology and Criminal Justice

Photo courtesy of UNC Sports Information

Mike Williams wrestles in the Black and Gold Scrimmage on Oct. 27. Williams is a two-time All-American and a father in addition to his student-athlete responsibilities.