

BC's Evans Finds Way To Stay

Evans Joins Army Reserves

College Football

Sophomore CB Joins Army Reserves To Pay For College

By GREG MADIA

Daily News-Record

BRIDGEWATER — Isaac Evans was left without much of a choice: Figure out a way to pay for school or don't come back.

"It was at that point," Evans said. "I was trying to weigh my options and was looking for everything and anything that could help me."

Evans said he began to realize his dilemma last summer when he was preparing for his sophomore season at **Bridgewater College**. He knew he'd be able to play in the fall, but was unsure of what his future would hold beyond the football season.

He took out loans to pay for school and play this past season, and as the son of two former marines, he said his freshman year was covered by part of his father's GI Bill.

In-state tuition at **Bridgewater College** costs \$31,480 without any financial aid, and in Division III football there are no athletic scholarships.

"My sister had graduated from high school and she was getting ready to go to college, too," Evans said. "I didn't want to put a load on my parents financially, so I made a decision that this was the way I could take the load off of them along with giving me a foundation for what I wanted to do in my career."

He got his own GI Bill.

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Evans enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserves, which meant after his sophomore season he'd trade his crimson and gold No. 8 jersey for the military-issued camouflage uniform. He'd give up spring practice for basic training and swap his dorm room for a barrack. His second season at Bridgewater was a good one, too. As the team's No. 1 cornerback, he was a first-team All-Old Dominion Athletic Conference selection and a first-team VaSID all-state choice after recording 48 tackles, a blocked kick and two touchdowns on interception returns.

"I just really didn't want to have any doubt about me coming back to Bridgewater due to financial reasons because I love my school and I love the football program," Evans said. "I asked my parents for suggestions and they said that going in [to the reserves], it'd be hard, so it was a big decision for me to make."

Evans' father, Ronald, served 20 years and mother, Charlena, served four years. Evans said he lived everywhere — from where he was born in San Diego, Calif., to Texas, Florida, Massachusetts and even Japan — based on his dad's assignments. Eventually, his family moved to Fredericksburg, where he played football at James Monroe High School.

Right now Evans is stationed at Fort Gordon outside Augusta, Ga., where he's working through Advanced Individual Training until early July. His job: a multichannel transmission operator specialist.

"I deal with radios and intelligence," he explained. "I'm learning how to set up radios and how to send radio signals through different channels. So say if I'm in Afghanistan, I'd be able to communicate with another company of soldiers via radio. I'm the radio guy. I pass on messages." Evans started his time with the reserves in mid-January at Fort Jackson, near Columbia, S.C., for basic training. "There was a lot that was tough," Evans said. "I went down in the

back toward the football field this fall is an English class. Before he left for basic training, he returned to Bridgewater after Christmas for the interterm semester. He needed one more credit to remain eligible for the fall, but the problem was he had to leave for basic training before the interterm was over.

His English professor, Bryan Duncan, agreed to work with Evans. Duncan said the cornerback could complete the course once he returned to Virginia in order gain his eligibility.

"He took an incomplete in the course, which we assign to students here whenever there's some intervening circumstances," Duncan said. "The first day of class he explained to me that he had joined the reserves and said he wasn't exactly sure when he'd be called up, but he was wondering if we could arrange something that would allow him to complete the course when he completed [his time with the reserves]."

"I'm someone who had to work full-time in order to pay for my undergraduate education and was fortunate enough to have grants and fellowships to help me through graduate school, so I can understand where he's coming from. And anyone who is going to commit themselves to the armed forces is always going to get respect from me, as well."

Duncan said Evans has already contacted him about figuring out what he needs to do to pass the course once he returns.

And Evans can't wait to get back to Bridgewater.

"I'm the only returning All-ODAC player at Bridgewater, but I want to make sure other people from Bridgewater are on that list this year," Evans said. "As a defense, I'm going to lead it."

"I've talked with [defensive coordinator Rob] Everett when I got out of basic and I'm going to make this defense my baby. I want to take it to the next level. This is going to be a big year as a team and this defense is going to be lethal and I want to be the leader of the defense."

winter and the weather was tough at basic with field-training exercises when we had to stay outside for four days and three nights. Those were the toughest. “That really made me want to quit right there.”

But he didn't.

He persevered because he could see the bigger picture.

Once he completes the Advanced Individual Training, the Army will pay for him to return to Bridgewater. He'll have all expenses during his junior year and senior year covered and all his loans from the previous semester taken care of, as well. “It was a win-win, but the Army made me work for it and are still making me work for it,” Evans said.

Evans said his sister, Whitney, eventually ended up choosing the Air Force over attending college at Virginia State University after seeing his commitment to military service. She's currently stationed in Alaska. For Evans, the final step

Evans said he plans on bringing some of the leadership tactics he learned over the past few months with the Army to the football field this fall.

“You deal with different personalities here,” Evans said. “You deal with 30-year-olds and I'm only 19. I have to tell them what to do and it's really weird.

“I think it'll definitely help me out when it comes to leading the defense and helping freshmen that are coming in. If I have to tell people that are older than me what to do, it won't be a problem. I've become a better leader.”

As for BC football coach Michael Clark, he can't wait for Evans to return to the team.

“I remember last summer when he said, ‘Coach, I don't know if I'll be here anymore,’” Clark said. “We were so concerned that we were going to lose Isaac and then he called me back. He said, ‘I got this figured out.’ “I asked, ‘What's your plan?’ He said, ‘I'm getting my own GI Bill.’”