

Thomas excels on the field and in the classroom at Piedmont

By Todd Forrest
North Georgia News
sports@nganews.com

Demorest - When Blairsville native Vincent Thomas accepts his diploma from Piedmont College this spring, the 2011 Union County High School graduate can walk away with the satisfaction of knowing that he gave the school its money's worth, both on and off the field when he chose them four years ago.

While carving his niche into the Lions soccer program, his character and work ethic not only on the field, but in the classroom as well, earned the International Studies Major the respect of his peers, as well as coaches.

"One of the things I'll miss about 'Slim' is his positive attitude," said Piedmont Head Mens Soccer Coach Jimmy Stephens. "He is a true team player and a hard worker. He carries over his ambition and hard work from the field to the classroom. I like having players like Slim, because I never have to worry about them in the classroom."

Thomas will likely graduate as a three-time Academic All-Conference selection, hav-



Vincent Thomas is a 2011 graduate of Union County will graduate from Piedmont University in the spring. His career stats rank in the top five in five different categories in team history. He also finishes in the top 10 in nine other categories. His single season statistics put him in the top 10 in another nine statistics. According to his coaches, work ethic, attitude, and team-first attitude is what the Lions will miss most of all. Photos courtesy of Piedmont Athletics.

ing already received the honor as a sophomore and a junior, but the official announcement won't come until May. He was also named a Capital One Academic All-District Honoree.

Not only does his plate remain full at school, he is also involved in youth camps and ministries. Over the past three summers he worked for CentriKid Camps, through Southern Baptist Lifeway (SBL). Last fall he was asked to help a SBL kids ministry workshop and hopes for an internship with the SBL following graduation.

During the school year he works on campus for Piedmont's Athletic Department.

As for his on-the-field

accolades, there was no shortage of acclaim for the soccer star that Coach Stephens remembers as a shy and awkward 18-year old.

"I wasn't sure what to think about Vince when we met," Stephens said. "He probably didn't say two words to me for the first week or so. After he got settled and comfortable he opened up and has a unique sense of humor. I know that Slim will be successful in whatever he decides to do and I really will miss him."

And with Thomas' seven game-winning goals for his career, it's not only his sense of humor that Stephens will hate to see leave.

"I was confident that he

would be successful in college," said Howard McCombs, Thomas' soccer coach at Union County High School. "He was a fantastic finisher, had great instincts on the field, was unselfish, and could distribute as well as score. By his senior year he pretty much, game in and game out, was the best player on the field regardless of who we were playing."

In November, Thomas was named to the USA South All Conference team, becoming just the second Lion to earn an All Conference nod since Piedmont joined USA South in 2012. Thomas was also featured in the Blitz Sports' College Spotlight at the beginning of the 2014

season.

As a senior team captain last fall, Thomas totaled nine goals, six assists, and 24 points at the forward position. His six assists and 24 points were both career highs while the nine goals matched his career-best - nine goals as a junior in 2013. He leaves Piedmont after appearing in 70 games during his four-year career - the eighth highest total in team history. His 58 games started is good enough for 10th place. He also resides in 10th place in minutes played after logging 4,605 minutes during his career.

"He worked extremely hard and was unbelievably self motivated," McCombs said.

"Vincent was going to be ready to play regardless of the circumstances and I never worried about Vincent being prepared to play. Whether it was coming into the season from the off season or during the season he was always prepared. He also had a passion for the game, was a huge part of the soccer success our team had, and was just fun to coach."

As a high school senior in 2011, Thomas tallied 30 goals and 9 assists while helping Union County men's soccer compile a 57-9-1 record during his four years.

Over his final three years at Union, the Panthers won two Region titles and one Sub-Region championship and went to State all three times. As Coach McCombs reflected on Thomas' high school career, there are a handful of memories that continue to stand out.

"The first moment that comes to mind was Vincent, about 30 yards out with his back to the goal, received a pass and from the volley, all in one motion he turned and ripped a goal in the top corner," McCombs said. "It was an unbelievably hard blast. This was the best goal or shot that I saw from any player at anytime while I was coaching. I also remember him calming me down before games. I can remember him telling me 'not to worry we got this' before big games."

"As a team during his playing career, two moments come to mind. Defeating our rivals Dawson over there leading to a Region Championship, and winning a playoff game against Blessed Trinity at home, which we'd never been done before."

"Most of all Vincent is a great person and I'm very proud of his accomplishments here and in college. I was fortunate to be a small part of his soccer career."

Vincent is the son of Blairsville's Nelson and Shelley Thomas.



Vincent Thomas

No Greater LOVE 5K and 1 mile Walk to benefit Tricia Spear

Tricia Spear (Humane Society Thrift Shop Manager) has been in the Neurological ICU of Erlanger Medical Center since the beginning of January. She is a great friend to our community and not many have gone untouched by her compassion. Whether volunteering for events, giving up her days off to help at the Farmer's Market, saving a stray animal or helping with the needs of families displaced by a fire, Tricia has always been the one who steps up time and time again to offer assistance to anyone and everyone.

Now it's our turn.

We are hosting the No Greater LOVE 5K and 1 mile Walk on Valentine's Day, Saturday, February 14th at Meeks Park. The money we raise will go towards a Recovery Fund that will pay bills and expenses while she is unable to work. Please consider sponsoring our event and helping us make sure the only thing Tricia needs to think about is getting better.

Ways you can help:

1) Become a sponsor for the event by contacting Colleen



Tricia Spear

Urbaniuk at colleen-1969@hotmail.com or stop by the Seasons Inn Motel or The Humane Society Thrift Shop (both in Downtown Blairsville) to get a sponsorship form.

2) Register to participate in either the 5K or the 1 mile walk. Registration forms are available at the Seasons Inn Motel, The Humane Society Thrift Shop or online at active.com. You can also register the day of the race. Registration begins at 9 AM and the

race starts at 10 AM. Entry fees are \$25 for 5K and \$20 for the 1 mile walk. Registration includes an event t-shirt for all those who pre-register for the event.

3) Volunteer to help for the event. Please contact Colleen Urbaniuk at Seasons Inn 706-745-1631.

4) Make a donation to The Tricia Spear Recovery Fund at United Community Bank.

5) Prayers, Prayers, and more Prayers for her recovery.

Vincent Thomas Individual Career History

Season	GP	Min.	G	A	Pts	Shot	Shot%	SOG	SOG%	GW	PK-Att
2011	16	705	2	1	5	28	.071	7	.250	0	0-0
2012	18	1094	1	3	5	38	.026	16	.421	0	0-0
2013	18	1340	9	3	21	48	.188	37	.771	4	1-2
2014	18	1466	9	6	24	57	.158	33	.579	3	2-3
TOTAL	70	4605	21	13	55	171	.123	93	.544	7	3-5

SINGLE-GAME HIGHS [all-time ranking]:

Points: 5, NC Wesleyan College -- Oct 11, 2013; at Toccoa Falls College -- Sep 09, 2014

Goals: 2, 4 times

Assists: 1, 13 times

Shots: 7, at Greensboro -- Oct 08, 2011

CAREER ALL-TIME RANKINGS:

Penalty kick attempts: 2nd (5)

Penalty kicks made: t-2nd (3)

Shots attempted: 4th (171)

Game-winning goals: t-4th (7)

Goalie Games started: t-5th (1)

Shots per game: 6th (2.44)

Shots on goal: 6th (93)

Assists: t-7th (13)

Games played: t-8th (70)

Points: 9th (55)

Goals: 9th (21)

SOG per game: 9th (1.33)

Games started: 10th (58)

Minutes played: 10th (4605)

SINGLE-SEASON RANKINGS:

Penalty kick attempts: t-1st (3 in 2014)

Penalty kicks made: t-3rd (2 in 2014)

Penalty kick attempts: t-6th (2 in 2013)

Game-winning goals: t-7th (4 in 2013)

Penalty kicks made: t-7th (1 in 2013)

Shots per game: 8th (3.17 in 2014)

Shots attempted: 10th (57 in 2014)

Game-winning goals: t-10th (3 in 2014)

Goalie Games started: t-10th (1 in 2014)

NASCAR 2015

By Gerald Hodges/the Racing Reporter

Busch's ex is a dangerous woman

"She's an assassin and could take me down at any time," the Wilmington News-Journal quoted Kurt Busch as saying about his ex girlfriend.

The courtroom drama between the "Outlaw" Kurt Busch and his former girlfriend Patricia Driscoll took on the theme of a Hollywood soap opera as both Busch and Driscoll accused the other of weird actions.

Busch's time on the stand was spent describing Driscoll as a trained assassin. He claimed she'd help take down drug lords. He said she had shown him pictures of corpses and that the lead character in the film "Zero Dark Thirty" had been based on her. He shared details of her leaving him one evening, dressed in battle-ready boots and gear and returning later that night in a trench coat and nightgown with "blood and other matter" on it.

Driscoll, who is seeking a court order for Busch to stay away from her, told a family court commissioner that he had choked her and smashed her head into a wall inside his motorhome at Dover International Speedway after she drove from her Maryland home to check on him.

Busch's attorney Rusty Hardin, suggested that whatever happened the night of Sept. 26 could have been prevented had Driscoll left when Busch told her to.

Driscoll disagreed. "I am not to blame for him putting his hands on me," she said.

Driscoll, who was born in 1977, is an American businesswoman and author. A native of El Paso Texas, she now heads a national charity, the

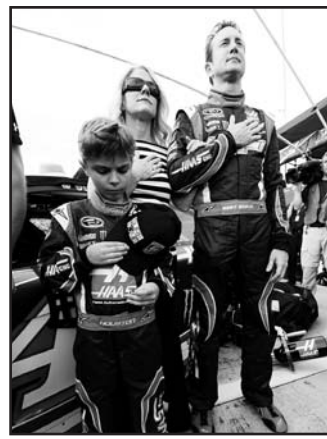
Armed Forces Foundation, and a surveillance system company, Frontline Defense Systems, LLC., both based in Washington, D.C. She also serves as President of the Armed Forces Foundation (AFF), an organization devoted to providing financial assistance, morale activities, career and educational opportunities to wounded service men and women and their families.

Busch testified he ended their four-year relationship following a race in New Hampshire, a week before the race at Dover International Speedway, where the alleged altercation occurred. He said the two of them had a discussion en route to Logan International Airport in Boston and in the process he wrecked a rental car.

"She left me stranded at the airport," he continued.

The two had no contact in the week leading up to the Dover race, but Driscoll said she did reach out to Busch's mother and was concerned about his alcoholism and depression. Busch said he did not drink the night of the alleged assault and has avoided alcohol during race weekends for 15 years. That night in Dover, Busch said he had been sleeping when Driscoll arrived unannounced at his motorhome with her nine-year-old son. He said he told her repeatedly to leave, but she kept bringing her son in from another room, saying that Busch needed to tell the boy that their relationship was over.

Busch said he was naked during the entire encounter, and finally put his hands on either side of Driscoll's face. "I took my hands and cupped her cheeks. I looked her eye-to-eye.



Kurt Busch with ex girlfriend Patricia Driscoll and her son Houston, prior to the May 25 Charlotte race. Furnished by NASCAR

I said, 'You have to leave.' I was diffusing the situation," he told the courtroom.

Busch's motorhome

driver and personal assistant to the couple testified Wednesday that Driscoll had instructed him at the beginning of the year to not bring any alcohol on the bus because Busch had a problem. He was the first witness called by Busch's attorneys. Doncheff said he believed Driscoll when she said Busch had assaulted her, but added she had also told him several stories that he thought were exaggerated. He said Busch treated him well but had a temper at times. Busch often deferred decisions to Driscoll, who Doncheff said could be "high maintenance."

But wait. We can expect more mud slinging. Driscoll's attorneys sent out a mass email to the media in which she claimed that Busch's "trained assassin" claims were based on a screenplay that she had been writing, and was only meant to discredit her.



SPRING SOCCER REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!!

Age Groups U6-U16

Register online at www.mountainsoccer.org

Registration forms are also available to print from the website. Forms can be mailed to P.O. Box 1862, Blairsville, GA 30514.

Deadline to register is January 31, 2015.

For additional information please check out our new website at www.mountainsoccer.org or email us at musa.soccer@gmail.com.

Union County Pig Jig

Saturday, January 24th

10 AM

Union County Livestock Pavilion
147 Industrial Blvd.

Blairsville, GA

Showmanship Classes at 10 a.m.

Lunch at 11:30 a.m.

Noon Market Hog Classes at 12 p.m.

Lunch will be served, come enjoy the day with us. All proceeds benefit the Union County FFA Alumni in its mission to assist in providing greater opportunity for students to learn through agriculture.

FFA 'Coon Hunt

WHEN: January 31st

LOCATION: Union County Agriculture Barn

Blairsville, GA

CHECK-IN: 4:30pm-6:30pm

WEIGH-IN: Midnight

COST: \$15 per dog/ meal ticket provided per dog

FOOD WILL BE PROVIDED AT CHECK IN!!

500.00 cash grand prize!!

Other prizes that will be awarded:

Electric smoker!

Dog box!

And more more!!

For more information call:

Austin Dyer (706) 994-1445

Jake McClure (706) 994-7982

John Clark Pettit: (706) 273-8457