

Cowboys Defender Seeks Lasting Legacy

SPORTS



Micah Parsons | Image by Dallas Cowboys

By **Travis Tyler - Staff Writer**

Jul 28, 2023

Micah Parsons has quickly ascended to his place as one of the top defenders in the NFL and one of the most impactful players and leaders of the Dallas Cowboys defense in his first two years as a pro football player.

Even with all the accomplishments and accolades, the two-time All-Pro and 2021 Defensive Rookie of the Year, who lands at No.2 in the Pro Football Network's top 100 rankings for the 2023 season, has his sights set on becoming as great a player as possible.

“The Top 100's always cool, but if I'm not No.1, it's pointless,” he **said** on 105.3 The Fan's “GBag Nation” on Thursday. “I've got to get to number one.” Parsons entered the league as a linebacker after switching from running back at Penn State. He has since become one of the premier edge rushers in the league, **tallying** 26.5 sacks in 33 games, yet he is not satisfied.

Earlier this offseason, he met with former All-Pro offensive tackle Andrew Whitworth to get opposing feedback and continue to harness his craft.

“I just wanted to dig deep inside the mind of the guy,” Parsons **explained**.

“Tackles, I felt like I struggled against those more athletic, strong, durable tackles and trying to find a weakness where he felt a guy like me could exploit...He kind of broke some things down with me. We watched film together, we hit the field together, and I just got to pick his brain for a couple days, which was pretty awesome.”

“...There’s a lot of good feedback when you go across the room because d-linemen can only tell you what they do and what they see...When you have a guy who’s a little different, I want to know, ‘What’s their plan for me? How would you slow me down?’ Things like that to increase my process.”

Parsons will once again play a crucial role on the Cowboys’ defense as the team enters the season with high expectations, which he believes are perfectly warranted.

“I think we are the top team in the NFC,” he **told** the show. “No one can be you except when you beat yourself. You look at our game last year [against San Francisco], that’s a game we could’ve won, but we beat ourselves with mistakes and things like that. I think we are the number one team when you talk about numbers, experience, and the guys we got back.”

“I think we’re the only team that gained players,” he **added**. “We didn’t lose a Javon Hargrave then draft somebody. We have everybody across the board, so you talk about years of playing together and years of experience. I think we’re up there to be the better team.”

The Cowboys have the third-best odds to win the NFC and represent the conference in the Super Bowl, which Parsons believes would put him on par with some of the all-time greats.

“I would break down in tears,” he **remarked**. “When you talk about legacy and you talk about leaving a print and a foundation in the organization, I think that’s the most [*sic*] one. You bring a DROY home, you bring a Defensive Player of the Year home, that leaves a ‘He was a very good player with the organization,’ but you win a Super Bowl with an organization, it’s like, ‘Man, that’s a guy you remember forever.’”

“That’s why you guys constantly talk about Aikman, and guys are talking about Michael Irvin,” he **continued**. “Those guys were [playing] decades ago, but

their names still ring bells when you talk about success and winning, and I want my name in the conversation.”

EXTRA POINTS

- All-Pro guard Zack Martin is currently holding out over a contract dispute but recently **texted** the rest of the offensive line that he will “be there soon,” according to left tackle Tyron Smith.
- Young wide receivers have been **impressing** Cowboys coaches in **camp**.
- Quarterback Dak Prescott is **adjusting** to becoming one of the older players on the team as he approaches his 30th birthday.
- Washington Commanders’ second-year running back Brian Robinson **feels** a huge difference entering the season after getting shot at the beginning of his rookie year.
- Miami Dolphins cornerback Jalen Ramsey underwent surgery on his meniscus on Friday after colliding with a teammate in Thursday’s practice. He is expected to **return** at some point this season.
- The Seattle Seahawks **signed** fifth overall draft pick Devon Witherspoon to his rookie contract on Friday. Witherspoon was the last remaining unsigned player drafted in April.
- The Houston Texans have **signed** veteran offensive tackle George Fant.

Big3 Returns to Dallas



Ice Cube performs during halftime in the game between the 3 Headed Monsters and Triplets in Week Five of the BIG3 at Comerica Center on July 17, 2022 in Frisco, Texas. | Image by Richard Rodriguez/Getty Images for BIG3

By Travis Tyler - Staff Writer
Jul 2, 2023

The Big3 basketball league returned to Dallas this weekend when American Airlines Arena hosted six games on Saturday.

Actor and hip-hop icon Ice Cube and entertainment executive Jeff Kwatinetz founded the league to serve as a way for former NBA players to continue their careers. It also ended up serving as an alternative entertainment option for fans who do not follow other summer sports.

It began play in 2017 and **tipped off** its sixth season last weekend.

“I figured there were a lot of people like me that were out there just hanging around waiting for football season to come,” Ice Cube told *The Dallas Express*. “So I was like, ‘It’d be cool if there was something cool that could take this void and where you can check out something cool in the summer.’”

“It started to really kind of roll with me and my guy Jeff once Kobe [Bryant] retired after scoring 60 points,” he continued. “He was like, ‘There ain’t nowhere for us to see this dude play no more.’ We just felt like that’s sad. It’s a

shame, and there's probably guys out there that can still hoop but just can't do the NBA schedule."

The duo devised a solution: a three-on-three league for former players with a shorter schedule that fills the fans' need for entertainment during the summer and reaches an underutilized segment of the basketball market.

"Nothing's going to beat the NBA in five-on-five," Ice Cube explained. "You're just always going to be the B version. Three-on-three? Different story. FIBA was really the only sanctioned league, and they're pretty amateur and basically claim the amateur three-on-three space. We wanted to claim the professional space, and that's what we did — create the NBA version, in some ways, of three-on-three."

The emergence of the Big3 has allowed players to prolong their basketball careers for as long as possible and continue to find success at a high level.

"They can continue their career, continue to feed their family, [and] continue to have pride in the skills that they've honed since they were eight years old, and everybody's telling them it was great," Ice Cube said. "They can play as long as they like. As long as they can handle the level of play, [they] won't age out."

This year's rosters **include** ex-NBA players like Rashard Lewis, Mario Chalmers, Michael Beasley, Nick "Swaggy P" Young, Jason Richardson, Cuttino Mobley, and Joe Johnson. The league's coaches and executives include NBA and WNBA legends Gary Payton, Julius Erving, Gilbert Arenas, Lisa Leslie, Nancy Lieberman, Charles Oakley, Clyde Drexler, and George Gervin.

It would have been unfair to expect the Big3 to become a success overnight, but Ice Cube said he has been encouraged by how its fanbase has grown over the years.

"People were coming out at first just to kind of check out, 'What's Cube got? What's going on?'" he told *The Dallas Express*. "Now, they have favorite teams and favorite players, and they're rooting for their teams to win. So, it's really grown in that way."

Ice Cube attributes the growing fanbase to the Big3's familiar, physical playing style and unique format and environment.

"They recognize the game," he said of the fans. "Most people play more three-on-three than five-on-five in their whole lifetime if you think about it. It's a recognizable game. It's endorsed by the biggest names to ever play the game —

Rick Barry, Dr. J, Nancy Lieberman, Clyde Drexler. It's endorsed by the best, and it's the best three-on-three you're going to see in the world. Those are things I think make it worth checking out."

"[There's a] little more banging than the NBA, but the guys like to play that way," Ice Cube added. "We take the game very seriously, but we're having fun with it. You won't get tackled if you go get an autograph from Dr. J. No one's going to throw you out of the building for getting out of your seat and running over and saying, 'Hi.' I think it's important to make sure that we understand that basketball's entertainment."

The league has continued to evolve since its early days as it gained popularity and more former players entered the fold.

"Play has gotten better," Ice Cube remarked. "The players have gotten stronger, more in shape, and ready to go. The game has really progressed, and we've developed a few different rules to just make it better, more pleasing to watch, and more pleasing to play."

Some unique rules that the Big3 **implemented** include not using a game clock and playing to a specific point total. To win, teams must score at least 50 points and hold a two-point lead.

"Our guys play hard because there's no minutes," Ice Cube noted. "It's first to 50, got to win by two. How are they going to get it? Sudden death. It's pretty cool."

One change this season is the league **moving** the championship and All-Star games overseas to O2 Arena in London.

"[We just] really wanted to show that the league is international," Ice Cube explained. "Our thoughts and our vision are international. There's nothing lost in translation. We recognize, as a global sport ... the market is right there. People love basketball, and once you see the Big3, people love the Big3."

The Big3 **plays** an eight-game regular season schedule followed by two rounds of playoffs, all taking place in different cities, and just made its fourth trip to Dallas since its inception.

"Dallas has always supported us, even before they knew what it was," Ice Cube told *The Dallas Express*. "Year one, 2017, we announced we were coming to Dallas, and [they] didn't know what it was ... They packed the arena and really liked what we were doing, and they came back the next year. It's been nothing but support and love growing the sport from scratch."

“It’s really about going where they want you, and Dallas has been great,” he added. “We’ve done things like hold playoffs here, or when we first did our ‘Ballout,’ where the whole league plays, we did it first here. It’s just been a special place for the Big3. We eventually want to have a team here once we start selling to individual owners.”

CPS Closes Investigation of Local Coach

SPORTS



Texas CPS logo | Image by DFPS

By Travis Tyler - Staff Writer

Apr 20, 2023

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (CPS) has closed its investigation of former Rockwall-Heath head football coach John Harrell and the school’s program.

Harrell had been under investigation from a **January 6** team workout that led to the hospitalization of many players with rhabdomyolysis — a potentially

fatal condition **stemming** from intense exertion, heat exposure, and overuse that can damage the kidneys and heart.

Harrell was **placed** on administrative leave, and a third-party investigation was launched in addition to the CPS investigation.

Despite **support** from some parents and players, Harrell **resigned** as the team's coach after the third-party investigation concluded that his offseason workout program was the cause of the affected athletes' conditions.

"Following a thorough investigation, the investigators determined multiple student-athletes were diagnosed with rhabdomyolysis resulting from a football workout," a March email update from the district **read** in part.

"The investigators found sufficient evidence existed to support a finding that the offseason workout plan was implemented in a way that negatively affected the physical health of some student football athletes at Rockwall-Heath High School in violation of Rockwall ISD Board Policy. Due to confidentiality under Chapter 21 of the Texas Education Code, the district is unable to release specific evaluative information regarding District personnel."

According to WFAA Dallas, the CPS investigation **concluded** "no abuse or neglect" was involved.

The district moved quickly to find a new head football coach and **hired** Rodney Webb, an experienced and successful high school football coach from Texas.

Webb previously coached at Rockwall High School, among others.

"Obviously, we moved quickly because the kids need to have a leader," Rockwall ISD Athletic Director Russ Reeves told *The Dallas Express* about the hiring process last month. "We were able to interview and make a determination very quickly, which was in the best interest of the kids in the school."

"We're very excited to have Coach Webb back," he added. "What he means to this community, he loves his community, and the community loves him. What he brings from a community standpoint is an unbelievable asset, but then you couple that with his coaching success, we can't be more blessed to have him back."

Deion Sanders Has Blood Clot Surgery

SPORTS



Deion Sanders | Image by Lucy Nicholson/REUTERS

By **Travis Tyler - Staff Writer**

Jun 26, 2023

Former Dallas Cowboys standout and current University of Colorado football coach Deion Sanders underwent successful surgery to repair multiple blood clots in his legs late last week.

The news had been previously announced by former NFL defensive back Adam “Pacman” Jones on an episode of “The Pat McAfee Show” last week. Sanders later **confirmed** it with some clarifications on what had been reported.

“[I] met with my doctors a week ago,” the pro and college football Hall of Famer **said** in a recent Instagram video. “[I’ve] got hammer toe. Two of the three toes are hammer toes, and they want to straighten them out, but I’m not receiving enough blood flow in order to do that surgery and another surgery to fix the dislocation in the foot as well.”

The coach posted multiple videos to the account after his surgery, in which he can be seen being **prepped** for the procedure, giving his kids a post-surgery update, and **receiving** gifts as he welcomes visitors.

“I had a blood clot in my thighs that they got out,” he **told** his family over a video call. “Then, I had something below my knee that they got out. Then, I got one in the right leg that they’re going to get soon.”

He also revealed that he **expected** to be released on Sunday.

The university is not providing updates on the situation because it is a personal medical matter.

Dr. Randall DeMartino, a vascular and endovascular surgeon at the Mayo Clinic, says it is typical for surgeons to address clots in the upper leg before the lower leg.

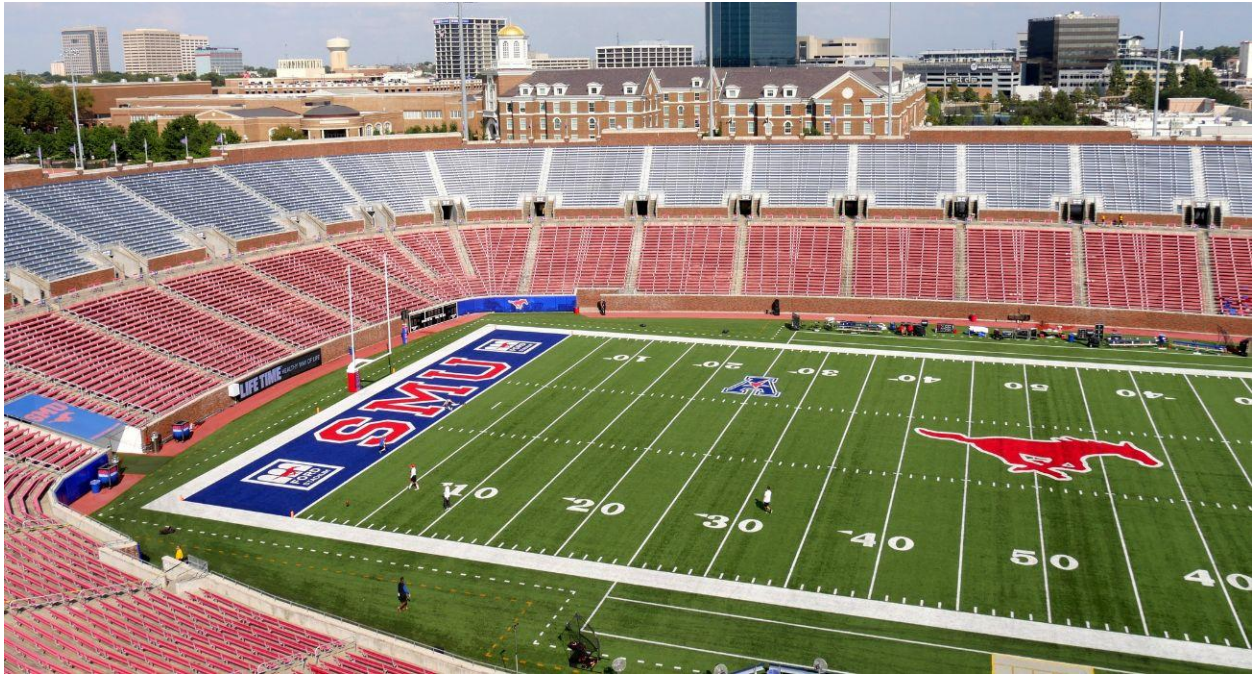
“If there’s areas where there are blockages preventing blood flow, we want to start from basically the highest area down to the lowest area, meaning from the closest to the heart down to the furthest,” he told *The Dallas Express*. “We sort of move – when we talk about the legs – from top to bottom, so if there’s an issue with an artery in the groin, fixing that would probably take precedence before fixing something down in the calf or the lower thigh.”

While it is important to note that Dr. DeMartino is separate from the team handling Coach Sanders’ case and is not privy to certain information, he also mentioned that the typical recovery from the procedure can be short. Patients are generally not limited in day-to-day life, but they must be cautious and avoid strenuous activities over the first few weeks.

He also notes there are usually no significant concerns with returning to fast-paced environments like leading a Division I football program.

SMU Enters 2023 as Conference Contender

STATE



SMU Football Field | Image by RaksyBH/Shutterstock

By **Travis Tyler - Staff Writer**

Jul 29, 2023

The SMU football program enters the 2023 season and a new age for the American Athletic Conference with high expectations as a true conference championship contender after the departures of Cincinnati, Houston, and UCF.

The Mustangs have competed for the conference title with those three schools over recent seasons but have not won a conference championship since 1984. “I’m really excited about what it’s going to take to try to win this league this year because it’s going to be as big a challenge — if not better — than it’s ever been,” head coach Rhett Lashlee said as he addressed the media at the AAC’s annual media days.

“I’m really excited about our team,” he added. “Just the roster that our staff has put together from returning players to high school kids and transfers and

all in between. We've got a good group and [it's] been fun to watch them just work together in the spring and summer."

SMU was picked to finish third in the conference behind defending champion Tulane and defending Conference USA champion Texas-San Antonio, one of six former Conference USA schools that joined the AAC on July 1.

"I think we've been picked third, fourth, or fifth the last few years," Lashlee told *The Dallas Express*. "I think that's a good thing that there's expectations on our program. I think it shows we've consistently gone for [the championship] the last four or five years, but we've not won a championship." Although last season's 7-6 overall record was a step back **compared** to recent seasons, SMU went 5-2 down the stretch (3-1 in November) to **finish** in a tie for fourth place in the conference with Houston with a 5-3 record in conference play.

"It was a big deal to us, so hopefully, we can build on that," Lashlee told the media. "We got some really hungry returning players like the guys I brought here...They've done a lot for our program, and I think they're really excited about what this team can do in Year Two to try to take what we did last year and build on [it] now that we're all in contention to start the season. We feel like we put ourselves in the conversation to compete for a championship."

One of the primary issues holding the Mustangs back has been the defense, which once again **finished** among the worst in the country in yards allowed and scoring defense last season.

"With [defensive coordinator] Scott Symons in Year Two, the returning nucleus of guys like [defensive tackles] Elijah Chapman and DeVere Levelston who are here today, a lot of the guys we brought in both high school and transfers, we feel like we've transformed the roster on defense in a good way," Lashlee told *The Dallas Express*. "... I'm excited to see our defense take a step we haven't taken in a long time, which may give us a chance to compete for the championship."

If it all comes together, 2023 could be the most exciting season for SMU and its fanbase in quite some time.

"We're excited that we feel like we have a team that can compete for the championship, but we know it's going to take an uncommon effort [and] an uncommon focus, and we're excited about the opportunity to do that," Lashlee concluded.

The Mustangs will kick off their season at home against Louisiana Tech at 11 a.m. CT on Saturday, September 2.