SATSUMA

Shaun Whittaker

Whittaker: Quiet and confident

BY DARRON PATTERSON
Sports Correspondent

If you're looking for someone to give a big rah-rah speech or another kind of pep talk, Shaun Whittaker is probably not your guy.

He's a man of few words, which is kind of fitting for somebody whose favorite movie is about a family just trying to balance regaining the public's trust of superheroes with their civilian family life.

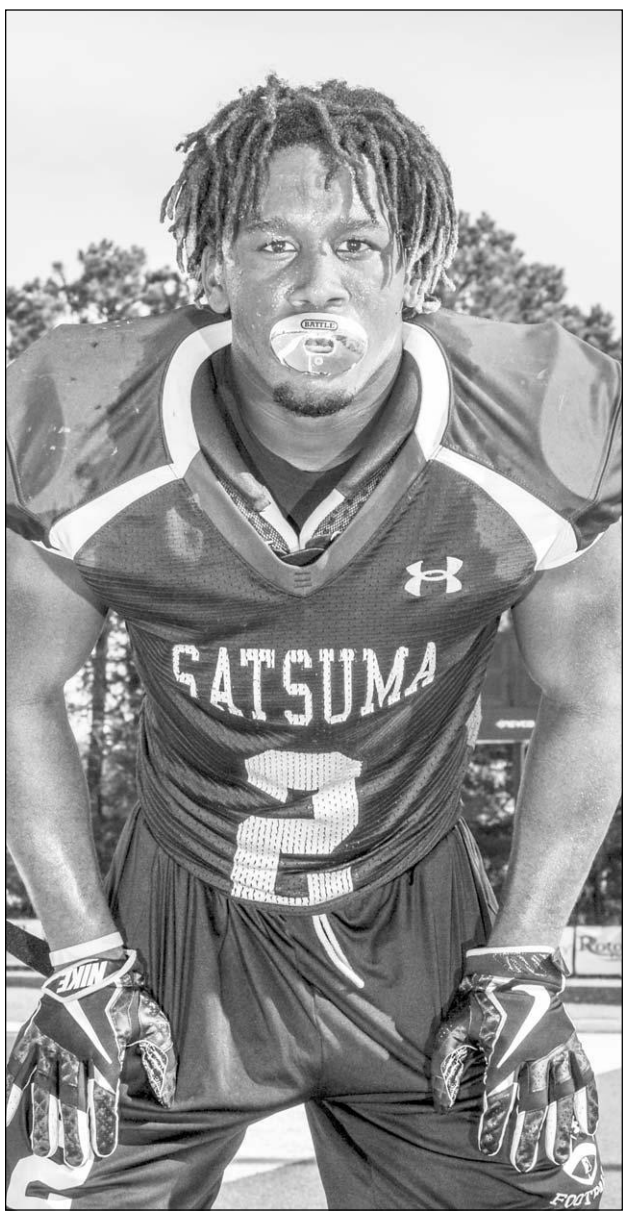
"Yeah, I like 'The Incredibles II,'" he said with a laugh.

Just a family doing their job, even if it is a big one.

Whittaker, 6-foot-1, 240 pounds, will be doing his job on both the offensive and defensive lines this fall as Satsuma looks to turn things around from last year's 4-6 season

"We think we can win every single game on our schedule right now. Playoffs,

See **WHITTAKER**, 56C



"I just want to keep making plays for my team and do whatever my coach tells me to do. Wherever my coach tells me to play, I'll do it."

— Satsuma's Deion Pickens

Standout receiver Deion Pickens puts focus on playoffs

BY DARRON PATTERSON
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Deion Pickens' goals for the 2018 Satsuma season are simple. No, it's not to solidify a college scholarship for himself. And, nope, it's not a 1,000-yard, multiple-touchdown year.

But the senior wide receiver knows if he just reaches this one milestone, everything else will take care of itself.

"I want to make the playoffs," he said. "I want us to come together as a team. Everybody works hard in the weight room so we can shock some people this year. We're fired up. We're working hard in the weight room and buying in to what coach (Ray Nelson) has to say. It's been like one big family."

Pickens knows his remarkable skills are a big part of the team's plans this year and he says he's ready.

"It makes me try to work harder. I just want to keep making plays for my team and do whatever my coach tells me to do. Wherever my coach tells me to play, I'll do it."

Pickens' uncle is NFL wide receiver Sammie Coates, he of Leroy and Auburn University fame. He said their relationship has helped him greatly.

"We've been close ever since he was in high school. He's taught me how to stay focused and don't let nobody bring you down, keep working for what you want and don't let nobody tell you that you can't do something."

Despite his relatively diminutive size (5-foot-7, 160 pounds), Pickens benches 290 pounds, but it's his 4.5 40 speed that gets the attention of opponents.

Now he wants to improve on the little things he did wrong last year.

"I love working out," he said. "My (defensive backfield) coach told me I had trouble running with some wide receivers, so I've been putting in the work to get better in that area. I like lifting weights and putting in extra work.

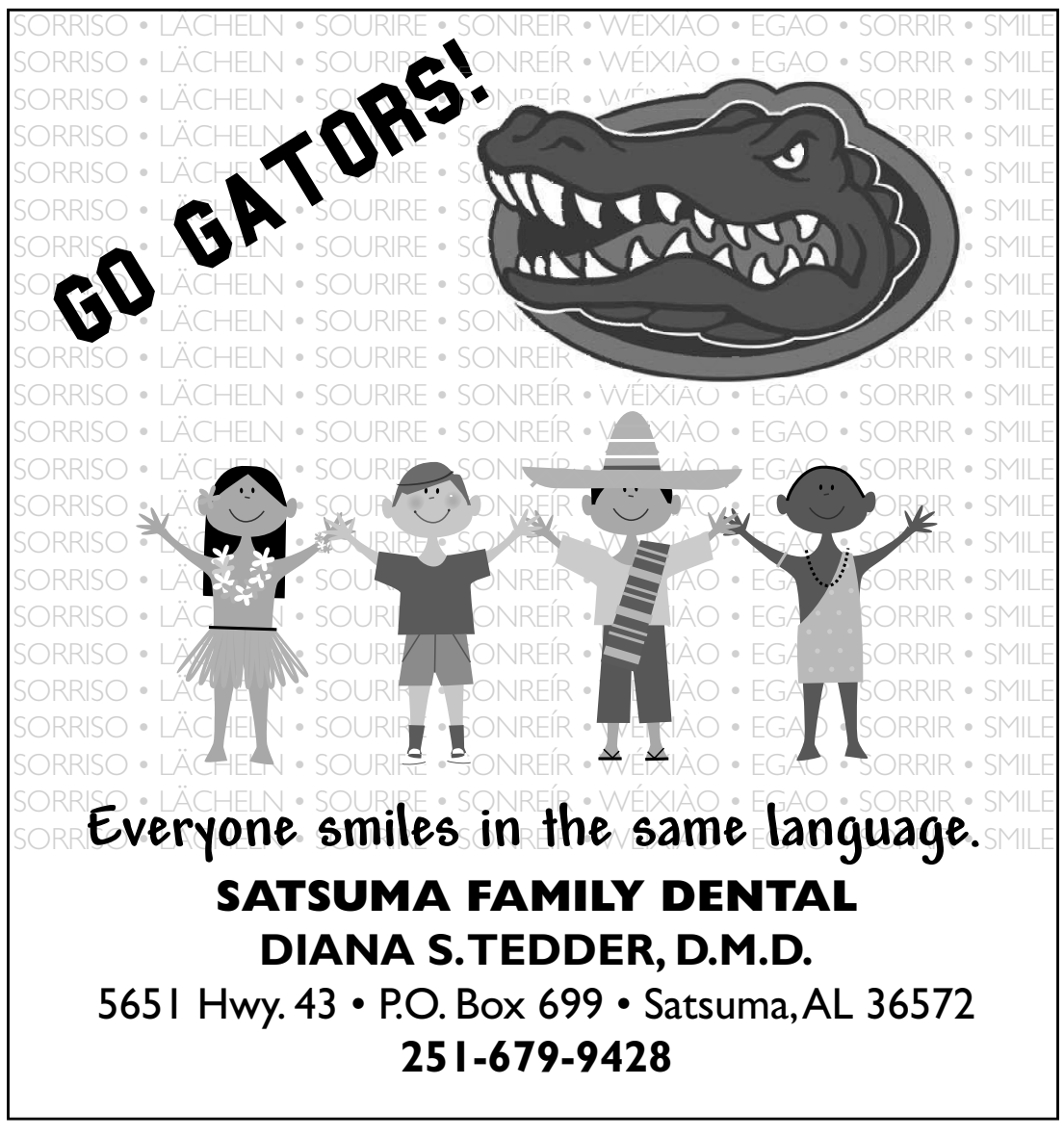
"I also learned that you should never underestimate anybody, take nobody lightly, treat all opponents the same and work hard no matter who's watching. I'm ready for every Friday night. I treat them all the same."

He said he's impressed with his new head coach and can't wait to get the season going.

"I love coach Nelson," said Pickens. "He's smart, intelligent and he holds everybody to the same standard."

And does he have a preference on what's next? Any particular college he'd like to go to?

"Whoever gives me the best opportunity," he said.



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