

HOME PAGE MY TIMES TODAY'S PAPER VIDEO MOST POPULAR TIMES TOPICS My Account | Welcome, zgoodnj | Log Out | Help

The New York Times In the Region

N.Y. / Region Search
All NYT

WORLD U.S. N.Y. / REGION BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY SCIENCE HEALTH SPORTS OPINION ARTS STYLE TRAVEL JOBS REAL ESTATE AUTOS

THE CITY **IN THE REGION**

JERSEY

Entrepreneur's Act of Faith Bred on the Gridiron

By KEVIN COYNE
Published: June 1, 2008

[Newark](#)



Jim Cummins for The New York Times
PROPRIETOR Altarik White in his Subway restaurant in Newark.

In the Region

Long Island, Westchester, Connecticut and New Jersey

[Go to Complete Coverage »](#)

ALONG a chain-link stretch of Frelinghuysen Avenue, in the shadow of an old red-brick housing project in a far corner of the South Ward, the brightest, freshest block is a new strip mall of the familiar variety that would hardly draw a second glance in many other places: a dollar store, a coin laundry and a Subway owned by a man everybody seems to know, even if they don't.

Mr. White's name has been widely known across the city for more than two decades, ever since he was a star running back for Malcolm X Shabazz High School who once scored five touchdowns in a single game and was, as he said, "bigger, stronger and faster than everyone else." He set school records for rushing and scoring at William Paterson University, packed away his pro dreams after separating his shoulder at the Miami Dolphins' training camp, and then came back home to teach and coach football. In 2006 he led the Weequahic High School team to the state championship in its group, a jolt of good news at a school that had endured too much bad.

"Everything's beautiful," Altarik White said on a recent rainy evening to one more customer who hailed him by name. "No problems, no problems."

"When I had a football in my hand, there was nothing that could stop me from reaching the end zone," said Mr. White, 37, as the old-school soul he favors over rap played in the background. "Instead of running over linebackers, I'm tackling business now."

When Mayor [Corv A. Booker](#) gave his State of the City speech in February, some of the loudest applause came when he announced something far less dramatic than the drop in the number of murders: a loan to Mr. White from the Brick City Development Corporation that would allow him to open the Subway he had long been planning. Not downtown, where there were already several others, but in a neighborhood where national chains, and foods that haven't been fried, were in short supply. Mr. White's Subway opened in April, an act of faith in his city as much as of entrepreneurship.

"In our community, there's not a lot of healthy places to go — no Whole Foods, no Stop & Shop, just a bunch of Chinese stores, hamburger joints and fried chicken places," said Mr. White, whose Subway is on the other side of Weequahic Park from the school where he coaches and works as a substance awareness counselor. Next door is Seth Boyden Terrace, a public housing project where a triple shooting took place last year.

[More Articles in New York Region »](#)

TicketWatch - Theater Offers by E-Mail

Sign up for ticket offers from Broadway shows and other advertisers. See [Sample](#)
zgoodnj@hotmail.com
[Change E-mail Address](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

E-MAIL
PRINT
REPRINTS
SAVE
SHARE

ARTICLE TOOLS SPONSORED BY
CHOKO
SEPTEMBER 26

[Advertise on NYTimes.com](#)

MOST POPULAR

- E-MAILED | BLOGGED | SEARCHED
1. The Long Run: Teaching Law, Testing Ideas, Obama Stood Slightly Apart
 2. Findings: 10 Things to Scratch From Your Worry List
 3. Let the Meals Begin: Finding Beijing in Flushing
 4. Discovering How Greeks Computed in 100 B.C.
 5. Editorial: Low-Road Express
 6. Strong Economy Propels Brazil to World Stage
 7. Thomas L. Friedman: Drilling in Afghanistan
 8. With Security at Risk, a Push to Patch the Web
 9. David Brooks: The Biggest Issue
 10. Restaurant Chains Close as Diners Reduce Spending

[Go to Complete List »](#)

The New York Times **THEATER**
nytimes.com/theater

Familiar faces bring the prairie to stage

"Who's to say that people, because they live in Seth Boyden, that they don't deserve good food at an affordable price," he said. "What I say to people who say, 'That's a tough place,' is, 'Yeah, well, guess what — it's a tough world we live in.'" He knows just how tough it is: his father was absent for much of his youth and his mother died when he was in high school.

"So will we all just close our doors and act like it's not happening?" he asked.

Opportunities beyond Newark have beckoned, including coaching in the [National Football League](#), he said, but he has resisted. "I'm not ready for players to tell me what they ain't going to do, and that's what happens when you get there, because you're just the coach," he said. "Now when I bark a command, five or six people pop their heads up and they're ready to do it."

His voice travels far in the store, too. "Keep it wrapped up until she gets back," he told Shakia Standifer, 18, who had just made a roast beef sub for a customer who needed a quick cash-machine visit to pay for it.

"He treats you how life's going to treat you," said Ms. Standifer, 18, a Weequahic senior and the football team statistician, one of four students among his 10 employees. She is headed to [Fairleigh Dickinson University](#) in Madison in the fall to study forensic psychology.

The last year has been tough on Mr. White: His younger brother, Shahib, 29, who played football at Rutgers and was an assistant coach at Weequahic, committed suicide last summer, and the school's beloved principal, Ronald G. Stone, died of a heart attack last fall.

He has lived for the past three years in Piscataway, to be closer to his young daughter from a previous marriage, but he has grown restless counting squirrels and watching deer from his backyard. He owns three houses in the South Ward and hopes to move back soon. He has begun to read the business section of the newspaper more carefully, discovering just how much coaching has in common with selling.

"I could sell white gloves to a nun eating barbecue ribs," he said.

When he was playing football he studied the films of the opposing teams, analyzing the defenses they would try to stop him with, and then lie in bed the night before kickoff, playing the game in his head, making his moves and seeing the yards pile up. What he sees in his head now are mounting sales figures, new stores — he has plans to open two more — and the difference one sandwich shop can make in a neighborhood that never had one.

One afternoon earlier in the week, some neighborhood boys drifted over and, as often happens when Mr. White is around, a football appeared. The parking lot became a gridiron. "I don't run anymore," he said. "I'm the spot quarterback" — the guy who stands in one place and throws passes, hoping somebody catches them.

E-mail: jersey@nytimes.com

[More Articles in New York Region »](#)

[Enjoy the convenience of home delivery of The Times for less than \\$1 a day](#)

Ads by Google what's this?

[Starting a New Business?](#)
Learn How To Start Advertising On Google With Only \$5.
adwords.google.com

[Professional Mentoring](#)
Experience the difference of Certified Professional Mentoring.
www.davenportfolio.com

[10 Rules of Flat Stomach](#)
Cut Down 9 lbs of Stomach Fat every 11 Days by Obeying these 10 Rules.
FatLoss4idiots.com

Tips

To find reference information about the words used in this article, double-click on any word, phrase or name. A new window will open with a dictionary definition or encyclopedia entry.

Also in Theater:

- [Neil Young's "Greendale"](#)
- [Daniel Stewart goes around the world](#)
- [No more Mr. Tough Guy](#)

ADVERTISEMENTS

[Need to know more?](#)
Get 50% off home delivery of The Times.



Ads by Google

[what's this?](#)

[10 Rules of Flat Stomach](#)

Cut Down 9 lbs of Stomach Fat every 11 Days by Obeying these 10 Rules.
FatLoss4idiots.com

[Cheap Flights to Newark](#)

Get the Cheapest Flights to Newark Compare All Major Travel Websites!
www.BookingBargains.com

[Entrepreneurship Schools](#)

Review programs at Entrepreneurship Schools. Find & request info today.
www.WorldWideLearn.com

Past Coverage

[In Newark, Immigration Without Fear; A Neighborhood Remade By Unexpected Hands \(January 16, 1995\)](#)

Related Searches

[Entrepreneurship](#)

[Add Alert](#)

[Newark \(NJ\)](#)

[Add Alert](#)

[Football](#)

[Add Alert](#)

INSIDE NYTIMES.COM



[N.Y. / REGION »](#)

[FASHION & STYLE »](#)

[HOME & GARDEN »](#)

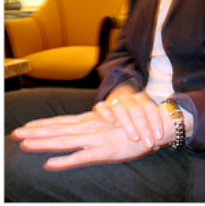
[OPINION »](#)

[ART & DESIGN »](#)

[OPINION »](#)



[Double Dutch Gets Status in the Schools](#)



[Stalked: A Decade on the Run](#)



[Where Foliage Eclipses Flowers](#)

Campaign Stops: Bad V.P. Picks

Who would be the worse selection: Mitt Romney or Tim Kaine?



[Bonding Humanity and Landscape](#)



[Op-Ed: The Laws Cops Can't Enforce](#)

[Home](#) | [World](#) | [U.S.](#) | [N.Y. / Region](#) | [Business](#) | [Technology](#) | [Science](#) | [Health](#) | [Sports](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Arts](#) | [Style](#) | [Travel](#) | [Jobs](#) | [Real Estate](#) | [Automobiles](#) | [Back to Top](#)

Copyright 2008 [The New York Times Company](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Search](#) | [Corrections](#) | [RSS](#) | [First Look](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Work for Us](#) | [Site Map](#)