

# Where Are They Now • Tem Lukabu '04

## Legendary linebacker

By Jim Leach

The Lehigh game always held special meaning for Tem Lukabu '04, three-year starter at inside linebacker and co-captain the 2003 Raider team that won 15 games on the way to the NCAA championship game in Chattanooga, TN.

"I will always remember Lehigh games," Lukabu said recently. "You knew they were a natural rival. My first two years we lost to them. That sticks in the front of your mind. The competitor in you says you have to raise your level of play." He was a key figure in holding Lehigh's vaunted running attack to 75 yards when Colgate topped the 16th-ranked Mountain Hawks 28-14 at Bethlehem in 2002. In the '03 matchup at Andy Kerr Stadium, Lukabu recorded eight tackles as the Raider defense limited Lehigh to 39 yards on the ground, 168 overall, in a 17-10 victory.

Those were numbers typical of the two-time Patriot League Defensive Player of the year ('02 and '03), who finished his senior season with a team-leading 105 tackles, five sacks, and three fumble recoveries. And it was not as though opponents were not focused on Lukabu that year. He had also led the Raiders in tackling in '02 with 112 tackles, including 51 unassisted, to be named the team's defensive MVP.

A steadying influence among his teammates and a visible presence on the field, Lukabu became a favorite interview for reporters following Colgate as the team rose steadily in the national rankings on its way to the championship game in '03. At the end of his Colgate career, in addition to league honors, he was chosen 3rd team AP All-America, 1st team ECAC All-Star, and 1st team All-Atlantic Region by the Football Gazette, in addition to being a finalist for the Buck Buchanan I-AA Defensive Player of the Year Award.

Recruited by defensive coordinator Ed Pinkham, Lukabu said he found Colgate to be "the absolute perfect mixture of football program and academics." A National Honor Society student at Colonia High School in Avenel, NJ, he settled into a history major with a minor in political science at Colgate. "I didn't want to just have a degree, I wanted to be accomplished," Lukabu said of his academic work. "History required a lot of

reading and writing, but it was intriguing to me to learn from the stories of the past." Among his favorite faculty members was Jim Berg, now retired from the history department as professor emeritus.

Born in Kinshasa, Congo, Africa, the son of a diplomat, Lukabu moved to the United States in 1988 when his father was posted to a permanent mission at the United Nations. The family settled in New Jersey in 1992. Lukabu began his athletic career as a soccer player, but soon switched to football and starred as a linebacker, wide receiver and running back in high school.

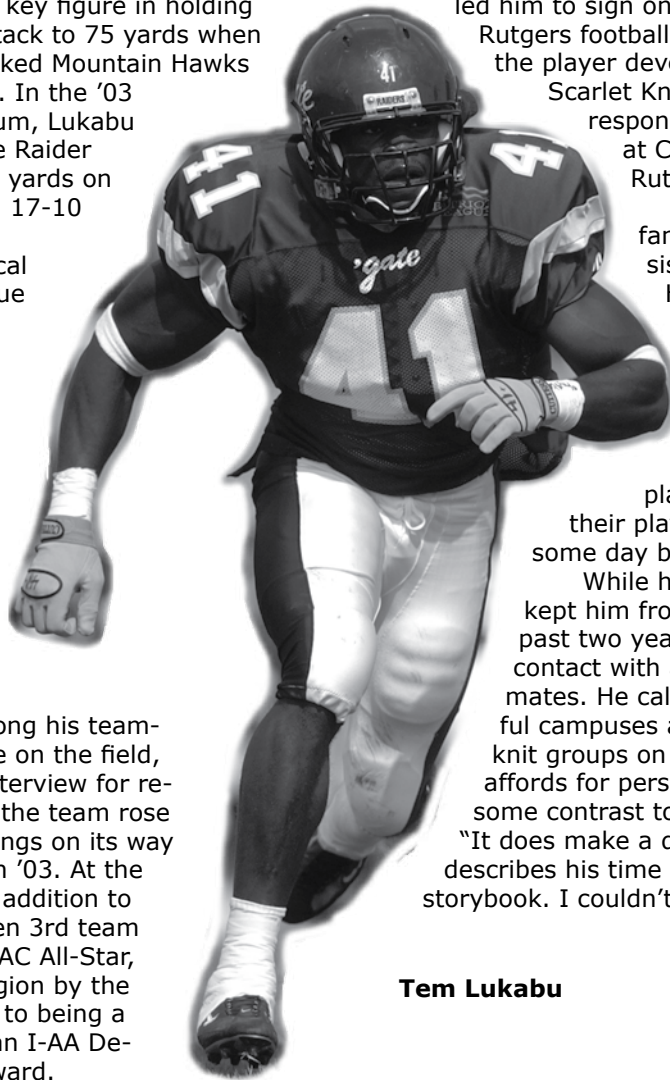
After Colgate, Lukabu worked in the financial markets for two years before his continuing interest in football led him to sign on as a graduate assistant with the Rutgers football team. There, as a member of the player development staff, he works with the Scarlet Knights players on their academic responsibilities. His former position coach at Colgate, Bob Fraser, coaches the Rutgers linebackers.

Lukabu comes from a Rutgers family – his two brothers and four sisters all attended there, he said. He has high praise for Rutgers head coach Greg Schiano and the rest of his staff. "They are some of the hardest workers in the business," he said, "and the work is finally starting to show."

Working with Rutgers players on both their academics and their playing skills is a great step toward some day becoming a coach, said Lukabu.

While his responsibilities at Rutgers have kept him from seeing Colgate in action for the past two years, Lukabu said he is in regular contact with a number of his former teammates. He calls Colgate one of the most beautiful campuses anywhere, and speaks of the tight-knit groups on campus and the ability the college affords for personal interaction. That stands in some contrast to Rutgers with 40,000 students.

"It does make a difference," said Lukabu, who describes his time in the Chenango Valley as "almost storybook. I couldn't have written a better experience."



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