

# Cards' pick arrives with redemption on his 'Dockett'

By **DARREN URBAN**  
TRIBUNE



MATT HINSHAW, FOR THE TRIBUNE

**GETTING TO WORK:** Cardinals rookie Darnell Dockett takes a break during workouts May 18. Dockett was picked in the third round out of Florida State.

Darnell Dockett had just spent a few hours cleaning up trash by the side of the road — community service punishment after getting in trouble with the law at Florida State — when he climbed into the back of the bus that would take him home.

His life needed to change, he thought.

He started with a poem.

As the bus rumbled home, Dockett pulled out a pen and started scribbling an ode to his uncle, Kevin, the man who rescued Dockett from what had been a wretched life. It has since been etched on Dockett's right forearm:

*For believing in me  
when no one else would.  
When the odds were against  
me,  
beside me you stood.  
For being my friend,  
brother, confidant and father.  
Because of you I know  
blood is thicker than water.  
Words can't express my  
gratitude,  
nor any amount of money.  
From the bottom of my heart,  
thank you and I love you*

*Donny*

Darnell Dockett celebrates his 23rd birthday today. That the Arizona Cardinals defensive tackle is even here, finishing up two weeks of rookie workouts, a mere two classes from getting his degree from Florida State, already has validated his journey.

He had just turned 13 when he walked into his house in Decatur, Ga., one July day and found his mother, Cheryl Hambrick, dead with a bullet in her head, blood everywhere.

He moved to Maryland to be with his estranged father, Darnell Sr., who was dying of pancreatic cancer. A couple months later, Dockett was an orphan.

That's when Kevin, Darnell Sr.'s brother, took Darnell Jr. in for good. He probably saved Dockett's life, since Darnell Jr. freely admits that had he stayed in Georgia, he'd either be in prison or dead.

Dockett is hardened but not hard. He has spent the last decade trying to mature, a process made more difficult by the horrors he once saw. He long ago came to a realization that "this is the type of life I'm going to live.

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