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### **Gardner-Webb Alumnus Coaches for Team USA in Australian Track and Field Event**

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# Gardner-Webb Alumnus Coaches for Team USA in Australian Track and Field Event

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Office of University  
Communications

October 23, 2018

## *J.P. Weaver '07 Follows Example Set by GWU Professors and Coaches*

Although Joseph “J.P.” Weaver ('07) was a successful linebacker on his high school team, recruiters told him that his height (5-foot-9-inches) put him at a disadvantage for playing college football. But the coaches at Gardner-Webb University in 2003—head coach Steve Patton and his assistants, Travis Cunningham and Phil Jones—saw his determination and gave him a chance to join the Runnin' Bulldogs defense.



J.P. Weaver, right, poses with an athlete and another coach at the Down Under Sports Track and Field Championships in Australia.

“It was a great opportunity for me,” Weaver declared. “It drove me to work much harder, because I was always told I couldn't play that position at the next level. Gardner-Webb was a great fit for me.”

According to the GWU athletics archives, Cunningham developed Weaver's linebacker unit into one of the region's most consistent and effective groups. Weaver was selected as a team captain and earned several honors, including Special Teams Player of the Year (2003) and Linebacker of the Year (2005). He also achieved All Presidential Honors (2004-2006).

Weaver decided to major in psychology, because he wanted to support others the way his GWU coaches and Dr. Robert Munoz, professor of sociology, encouraged him to achieve his goals. While he was at GWU, he organized a mentoring program for local elementary students and also volunteered as a reading lunch buddy.

After graduation, Weaver returned to his hometown in Sharpsburg, Ga., and began working at the Fayette County (Ga.) parks and recreation department. He was also defensive coordinator for the football program at East Coweta High School in Sharpsburg and later served on the football coaching staff at The Heritage School in Newnan, Ga. In 2011, he took a football coaching and teaching position at Trinity Christian School in Sharpsburg. He also started Trinity's track and field program, which has won eight regional championships and fielded seven individual state champions. Weaver also mentors Trinity high school students as the Director of Student Athlete Development.

In 2017, a student nominated him to coach for Team USA in the Down Under Sports Track and Field Competition on the Gold Coast of Australia. He was invited back in 2018, and a student from his school also qualified for the competition. “The Gold Coast of Australia is a unique place,” Weaver observed. “It is interesting to see the culture and see how nice the people are. It’s a great opportunity to meet the other kids and coaches. It was very cool to see my student compete and win a gold medal.”

J.P. Weaver, left, poses with high school athletes competing in the Down Under Sports event in Australia.

Whether he’s coaching, teaching or serving on the board of a non-profit organization that supports families of organ donors, Weaver believes his actions have been shaped by his mentors at Gardner-Webb. Because of the influence they had in his life, he takes his job very seriously. “Overall the impact that a coach has on someone’s life in just one season can be more than a parent has,” he asserted. “To be able to share my passion—whether it is on track, teaching or coaching football—is a wonderful opportunity. I am blessed to be in that position.”