

= Nikita Whitlock =

Nikita Nehemiah Whitlock (born May 16 , 1991) is an American football fullback for the New York Giants of the National Football League (NFL) . He was signed by the Cincinnati Bengals as an undrafted free agent in 2014 . He played college football at Wake Forest . Whitlock has also been a member of the Dallas Cowboys practice squad .

Whitlock had a standout high school career at Wylie High School , earning AP Defensive Player of the Year honors in 2008 . After playing defensive tackle and linebacker throughout high school and college , the undersized Whitlock switched to fullback in the NFL . He won the starting fullback job for the Giants in 2015 after strong special teams work in the pre @-@ season .

= = Personal = =

Whitlock is the son of Raymond and Genny Whitlock . Whitlock was originally going to be named Sergio Nehemiah Whitlock , but his grandmother did not like the name . His father , who worked for Yellow Pages , opened up a phone book to a random page and put his finger down to select his name , ending up with Nikita . Whitlock graduated from Wake Forest with a Health and Exercise Science major .

= = High school career = =

Whitlock attended and played football at Wylie High School . He was named the AP Texas Class 5A Defensive Player of the Year in 2008 . The Dallas Morning News named him the All @-@ Area Defensive Player of the Year . Whitlock 's height made it difficult for him to get noticed by college recruiters . As a freshman , he was 5 ft 9 in (1 @.@ 75 m) , 175 pounds (79 kg) . He grew to 5 ft 10 in (1 @.@ 78 m) , 240 pounds (110 kg) by his senior year . His high school coach said , " If he was 6 @-@ foot @-@ 3 , he 'd be the No. 1 defensive lineman in the country " . Mesquite Horn coach Rodney Webb called Whitlock " the best defensive player he had seen at the high school level " . Whitlock set the school bench press record at 405 pounds (184 kg) as a senior . Dallas Morning News sportswriter Matt Wixon called Whitlock " one of the most dominant high school linemen " he has ever seen .

He was offered scholarships to play football for SMU and Northwestern State , and also received interest from TCU and Utah State , before committing to Wake Forest .

= = College career = =

Whitlock played college football at Wake Forest from 2009 to 2013 . At Wake Forest , Whitlock played nose guard . Whitlock redshirted his freshman year in 2009 , practicing as a linebacker .

As a redshirt freshman , he was named second @-@ team freshman All @-@ American by College Football News and Rivals.com. Phil Steele named him fourth team All @-@ ACC in 2012 , as well as second @-@ team pre @-@ season All @-@ ACC in 2013 . He earned second @-@ team All @-@ ACC defensive honors in 2011 and 2012 . In 2013 , he was on the Bednarik Award watchlist .

= = = College statistics = = =

from Wakeforrestsports.com

= = Professional career = =

= = = Cincinnati Bengals = = =

On May 12 , 2014 , Whitlock was signed as an undrafted free agent with the Cincinnati Bengals .

Upon signing with the Bengals , Whitlock was moved from defensive tackle to fullback . At 5 ' 10 " , 250 pounds (110 kg) , Whitlock was considered too small to play defensive tackle at the NFL level .

He was released by the Bengals on August 30 , 2014 .

= = = Dallas Cowboys = = =

After being released by the Bengals , the Dallas Cowboys signed Whitlock to their practice squad on September 1 , 2014 . He was then released on September 9 . The Cowboys resigned Whitlock to the practice squad on September 16 . He was then released again on November 3 .

A week later , Whitlock worked out for the Baltimore Ravens but was not signed . While a free agent , Whitlock was suspended by the NFL for four games on November 21 ; the league did not announce why he was suspended .

= = = New York Giants = = =

On December 17 , 2014 , Whitlock was signed to the New York Giants practice squad . He worked as both a fullback and a linebacker during practice . On December 29 , 2014 , Whitlock signed a futures contract with the Giants .

In the 2015 NFL season , Whitlock defeated incumbent Henry Hynoski for the fullback spot after surviving final cuts . Whitlock won the roster spot by his special teams play , as well as being younger and less expensive than Hynoski . In the final preseason game , Whitlock took snaps at both fullback and defensive tackle . He performed dual duty again during the Giants game against the Washington Redskins on September 24 , 2015 . On December 23 , 2015 , Whitlock suffered a knee injury in the week 15 game against the Carolina Panthers , and was placed on season @-@ ending injured reserve .

He finished the season playing 132 offensive plays , 61 defensive plays , and 276 special teams plays .