Eddie Goines ’95 felt out of place in a small New York City theater in January 2001. It was Super Bowl Sunday, and he was backstage between scenes waiting to go on during his first full year of acting. Goines was incredulous at the notion that he was acting in a play on professional football’s biggest day. “I was like, ‘We’re performing on the day of the Super Bowl?’” he says. “We’re trying to do the show, and I’m going back and trying to get the score.”

No other actor in the play seemed to care that the Baltimore Ravens were beating the New York Giants, a sure sign that the theater was a different world than Carter-Finley Stadium, where Goines had shined for NC State as a wide receiver from 1991–95. Late in his senior season, Goines suffered a serious knee injury but was still drafted in the sixth round by the Seattle Seahawks the following spring. But after six major surgeries over the next three years, Goines knew it was time to find something else.

He was in New York City in 1998, after his last NFL stint with the Giants, and was hanging around with an actress who introduced him to the profession. Goines performed in Off-Broadway plays and received praise from professional actors he worked with. “People really responded to what I was doing,” he says. “I could see that I was naturally gifted. I was like, ‘I have this really cool piece of clay, and if I can mold it, I might have something.’”

Goines’ acting career took shape in the Big Apple over the next five years. His work in theater led to roles as a bartender on All My Children and a guard on Guiding Light. He played a police officer on NYPD Blue and was digitized into the main character of the video game Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas. In 2005, he moved to Los Angeles and started acting in independent movies, like the low-budget crime drama Big Bag of $. He landed a small role in American Gangster, where his face meets the end of Russell Crowe’s rifle. He then shot a video with Beyoncé for her single “If I Were a Boy.”

The acting world is less structured than that of football—where Goines went to college, got drafted and played in the NFL. As long as people have a glossy headshot to pass out, he says, they can call themselves actors. And acting gives Goines one thing football did not: “Somewhere there’s a vulnerability and sensitivity you have to have as an artist. If you can’t be vulnerable and compassionate, then you’re not going to take your acting to the highest level.”

Goines says his dream roles include playing a gladiator or detective. He starred as an FBI agent in Celeste Bright, an online Web series, and as a brash criminal in Janked, a film that was screened at Cannes Film Festival in May. Goines still aims at being a lead actor in a big-budget film. “I can’t be average,” he says. “I can’t just be somebody else who just ‘did it.’ I want to leave a legacy.” And he knows in the movie business, he can only depend on himself to do that. “They say if Hollywood is not going to hire you, you have to hire you,” he says. “You have to create your own work.”

—Chris Saunders

Eddie Goines ’95 takes on roles in 2012’s The Coalition, top; and 2011’s Janked, bottom.

Eddie Goines ’95 is attempting to bring a variety show to television or the Internet this fall. Read more about what he calls his biggest project to date on our blog, www.redandwhiteforlife.com.

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