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Former NFL QB shares story of mental health problems and drug abuse with students

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By Kelvin Reynolds, Reporter [CONNECT](#)

TUSCALOOSA, AL (WBRC) - Ryan Leaf said his professional career isn't the April Fool's joke some people took it for.

"April was always a difficult month because my name got brought up in a negative tone," Leaf said.

Monday, the former number 2 overall NFL draft pick and pro quarterback shared his story on how he used drugs to mask mental health issues that eventually cost him his career and later his freedom.

"I just self-medicated with the only drug I knew. It's the only drug I've ever taken and it's the drug doctors prescribed to me for orthopedic issues and it worked for my emotional pain when I needed it as well," Leaf explained.

Dozens of students listened to Leaf's message about the problems that brought him here.

"The second pick in the NFL draft or the drug addict. They're not mutually exclusive. You can be both," he added.

He's the first speaker in a series arranged by the University of Alabama's Collegiate Recovery & Intervention Services to promote recovery to the entire campus community.

Leaf hopes others are more willing to get help for themselves after he talks about the problems he's lived through.

"I feel like I've taken a bit of that power back when I'm using it to help and being a message of inspiration or truth," Leaf said in conclusion.

Leaf said Alabama head football coach Nick Saban had invited him to speak to the football team last year.

That led to today's visit to talk to other students.

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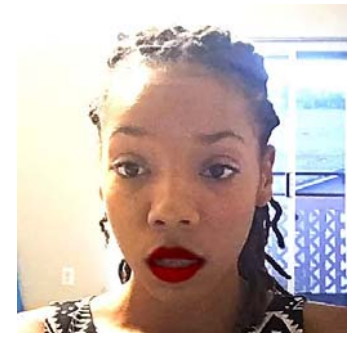
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