

WADE DAVIS II

b. July 28, 1977

NFL PLAYER

“Don’t let the love for your sport overshadow the need to love yourself.”

**Wade Davis
is the first National
Football League
player to come out.**

Wade Alan Davis II is the first NFL player to come out. He is a pioneering LGBT advocate who directs the You Can Play Project, an organization that educates the pro sports industry about LGBT issues.

Davis grew up in Shreveport, Louisiana, and Aurora, Colorado, in a devout Southern Baptist family. He played football in high school and for both Mesa State and Weber State in college.

In 2001 Davis made his professional debut with the Berlin Thunder in Europe’s NFL, where he helped win World Bowl IX. Later that year, he joined the Seattle Seahawks before returning to Europe to play for the Barcelona Dragons. In 2003 he signed with the Washington Redskins. A leg injury forced him to retire early.

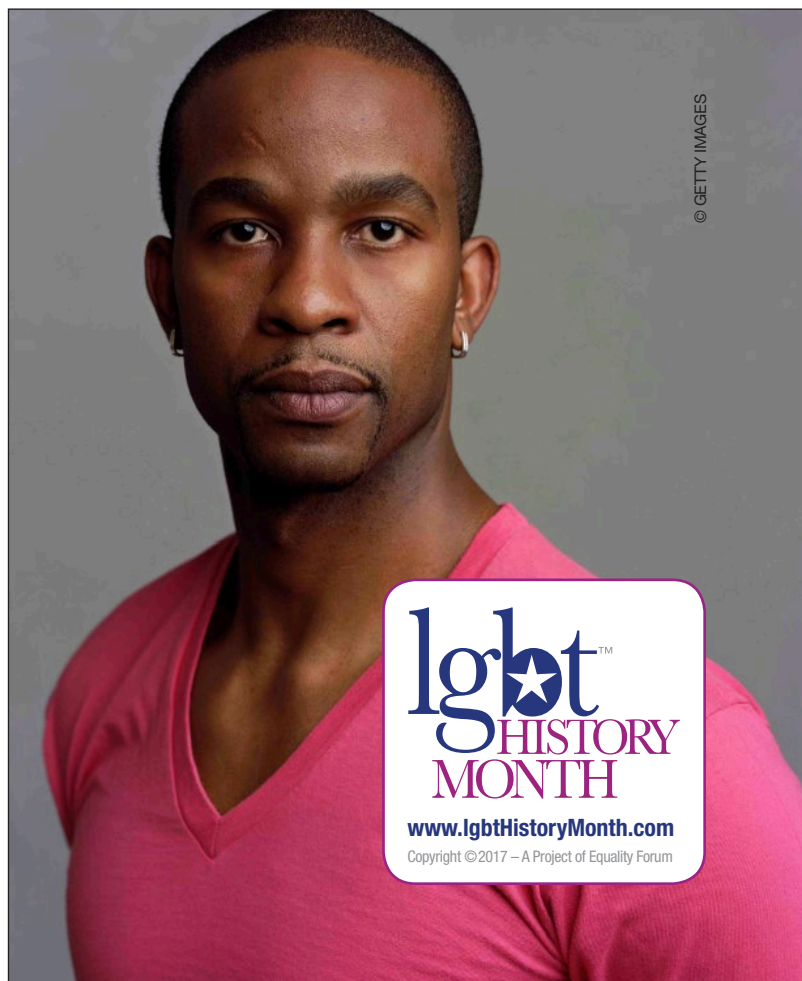
Davis came out publicly in 2012. He has since toured the country, sharing what it was like to be closeted in professional sports and to grow up in a strict religious family. He became a pioneering activist and paved the way for other LGBT players to come out. Davis has spoken at colleges, universities and corporations around the world.

In 2013 when he was named executive director of You Can Play, Davis helped develop training focused on LGBT inclusion and diversity in professional sports. He also worked with the Hetrick-Martin Institute in New York, where he taught life and employment skills to LGBT youth.

In 2014 Davis became a professor at the Tisch Institute for Sports Management, Media and Business in the NYU School of Professional Studies. He cofounded the YOU Belong Initiative, an organization that provides comprehensive training for LGBT youth and allies. His social media campaign, #ThisIsLuv, celebrates LGBT experiences in the black community.

Davis has written about his life and the need for LGBT acceptance in sports for many publications, including The Advocate and The Huffington Post. He contributed essays to the books “For Colored Boys Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Still Not Enough” and “Coming Home.”

Davis serves on the board of the Gay Men’s Health Crisis in New York City and is a member of the sports advisory board for GLSEN. Among other recognition, Northeastern University awarded him an honorary doctorate for public service. The National Youth Pride Services named him one of 50 Black LGBT Adults That Youth Should Know and The Root named him to its list of 100 black influencers.



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