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Former OSU, NFL player opens AAMCO Transmission and Complete Car Care

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The Eagle-Gazette Staff

LANCASTER - A former Ohio State football player and NFL free agent is aiming to make a big footprint in the automobile care industry, and he's started in Lancaster.

"Big Daddy" Dan Wilkinson recently opened AAMCO Transmission and Complete Car Care, 1430 B Collins Road N.W., across the street from Meijer.

Wilkinson will open a second franchise shop in Chillicothe in the next several weeks and plans to open five more locations in the state in the next three years.

"I've always been an automotive guy and a fan of classic automobiles and muscle cars," said Wilkinson, 34.

AAMCO provides complete car care from minor and general automobile maintenance to major transmission and engine work.

Wilkinson, a No. 1 overall draft pick in 1994, played 10 games with the Miami Dolphins in 2006. He also played for the Cincinnati Bengals, Washington Redskins and Detroit Lions.

While football is his forte, Wilkinson said he began thinking about life after football early on.

"When you walk into the National Football League, your plan is to have that Chapter Two in your life because the NFL is never promised," he said. "You may have a major injury on the first day and never play again. My game plan in playing was to plan for life after football."

Wilkinson, who also owns real estate, said the automotive industry naturally appealed to him because he enjoys restoring old cars. He's now restoring a 1959 Cadillac. He said AAMCO appealed to him as a business venture after he researched the company's history and about expanding services for customers. He also liked the fact that the company is eco friendly.

"We are a certified green building," Wilkinson said. "We have no waste products leaving our facilities, nor do we drain any into sewer and water (systems). We're the only ones in the automotive business that do this."

Wilkinson said deciding to set up his first franchise store in Lancaster was relatively easy.



Dan Wilkinson cuts the ribbon on his Aamco transmissions franchise at the corner of Collins Road and North Memorial Drive in Lancaster. Wilkinson, a former Ohio State tackle and NFL No. 1 overall draft pick is opening a series of AAMCO shops in central Ohio. Submitted photo

"Looking at many different markets around Ohio, I thought Lancaster was an attractive market," Wilkinson said. "The town is growing and evolving, and it has a working class of people who travel to Columbus to work."

Having someone like Wilkinson, "who is so recognizable around the state," invest in the community is exciting, said Chris Agnitsch, president of the Lancaster Fairfield County Chamber of Commerce.

"Dan is obviously dedicated to his family and his business, and we look forward to him doing business in our community," Agnitsch said.

Wilkinson, one of the few minority business owners in the city, doesn't mind being in the minority. When it comes down to it, he said all people really care about when it comes to getting their automobiles serviced is a business they can trust.

"They want someone who stands behind their work," he said. "That's one thing I preach and demand of everyone who works for me. We'll be honest and do it the professional way."

(The Web site <http://sports.yahoo.com> contributed to this article.)



Bio box

The 4-1-1

- **Name:**"Big Daddy" Dan Wilkinson
- **Age:**34:
- **Hometown:**Dayton
- **Career:**Owner of Aamco Transmission and Complete Car Care in Lancaster; NFL free agent; former Ohio State football player
- **Family:**Married to Tamora; five children

Eagle-Gazette staff writer Tamara L. Kulemeka asked "Big Daddy" Dan Wilkinson to offer his take on this year's Ohio State football team, especially in light of his former college team heading to the BCS National Championship on Jan. 7:

"They have been tremendous each week. As I watched them develop this year, they've just gotten better and better. You've had guys step up and really fulfill their roles as a team. The quarterback role is always substantial, and he has really come along and progressed. ... I certainly believe they are deserving of the position that they're in.

Coach Tressel has done a tremendous job, and the program couldn't be in any better hands than it's in. ... My message to them is, 'Hey, you've got your bride up to the altar, now you just got to put the ring on and get your name down in history.'"

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