

The Augusta Chronicle

75 cents

THE SOUTH'S OLDEST NEWSPAPER — ESTABLISHED 1785

Tuesday, November 18, 2008

BUSINESS

Ex-NFL player now is running for Bojangles'

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With his professional football career behind him, Tim Biakabutuka traded in the pigskin for Cajun-flavored chicken.

The former Carolina Panthers running back now lives in Aiken and became a franchise owner for Bojangles' restaurants in the Augusta-Aiken area this month.

His goal is to open three new Bojangles' restaurants in the next few years. In Aiken, he has finalized a location on Pine Log Road and is also considering property on Richland Avenue.

"I had a mentor who was already in the business. I looked at the brand, and Bojangles' offers good food. A lot of people I knew liked it," Mr. Biakabutuka said.

He and his partner, Nancy Whitaker, became franchise owners on Nov. 1.

"Things are going pretty good. Sales are up since we've

taken over," he said of their first Bojangles' location on Walton Way.

They share the Augusta-Aiken territory with franchise owner Pat Landon, from whom they purchased the Walton Way store.

"We're coming in to develop the market with them, as well as Aiken and North Augusta," Mr. Biakabutuka said.

The Charlotte, N.C.-based restaurant chain is known for its Cajun-flavored chicken and biscuits. There are five Bojangles' restaurants in the Augusta area, and Mr. Biakabutuka said he plans to open 10 more.

The city of Aiken is his exclusive territory, he said, and he is sure that he wants at least two in the city.

Ms. Whitaker, who has 29 years' experience in the restaurant business, handles day-to-day operations at the restaurant.

Renovations at the Walton Way restaurant are being com-



JACKIE RICCIARDI/STAFF

Former football player Tim Biakabutuka and his business partner, Nancy Whitaker, began running a Bojangles' restaurant on Walton Way on Nov. 1. They plan to open more in the area.

pleted and the staff level is being increased, the new owner said.

Mr. Biakabutuka has business experience. After leaving the National Football League, he became owner of two jewelry stores in Charlotte, which he sold when he took the Bojangles' franchise.

Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo, formerly Zaire, Mr. Biakabutuka grew up in Montreal and played college football for the University of Michigan.

He was drafted by the Carolina

Panthers, where he played from 1996 to 2001.

He left the NFL because of an injury and decided to become a business owner.

Mr. Biakabutuka said he looks forward to "providing employment and support" for the local community.

Started in 1977, Bojangles' operates more than 420 restaurants, including company and franchise stores, in 10 states.