

Logan Still a Safety for Troubled Youths- Faith in Action

Ex-Eagle Star Logan Still a Safety For Troubled Kids

By Don Leypoldt

Randy Logan walked into a mess.

The collegiate All-American, the team captain at Michigan who was voted the Wolverines' MVP his senior year, found himself starting in the Philadelphia Eagles' 1973 opener.

Across Pennsylvania at this time Pittsburgh's notorious "Steel Curtain" began to re-define great defense.

The 1973 Eagle defense was not a Steel Curtain. They were more like a Shower Curtain. The Eagles ranked second to last in the NFL in scoring defense en route to an ugly 5-8-1 finish.

But coaches liked the hard hitting 6'1" safety from Detroit who started the opener, and the next game, and the next game....and who ultimately played in 159 consecutive regular season contests. It is the second best mark in Eagles' history.

No start was more important than Super Bowl XV. That Shower Curtain of his rookie year had morphed into an NFC championship unit by 1980, a year where Philly's D allowed the fewest points in the NFL. Logan- who amassed 23 interceptions in his career- was a huge reason why.

Going from (second to) worst-to-first teaches you something about redemption.

But Randy Logan knows far, far more about redemption...and about seeing possibilities in people when others write them off...then we will ever know.

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Randy Logan is still walking into messes. He sees them every day in the home lives of his students.

For the last ten years, Logan has served as the Assistant Dean of Students for St. Gabriel's Hall in Audubon. "Simply put, I make sure that the teachers can teach and the students can learn," Logan states. It's a job where he is dealt the trump cards of Ugly Society on a daily basis.

There is no way to sugarcoat the students at the residential school. "Judges send them here because they are too young to go to Graterford Prison," Logan comments stoically.

The school has capacity for 210 students. The students range from 12 to 18 years old; they are sent to St. Gabe's by a judge for usually a nine to twelve month term.

These students personify that heart-wrenching paradox of being worldly enough to commit a serious crime while still being too young to see an R-rated movie.

While there are commonalities among the students, their education levels run the gamut. Logan is committed to tailoring the education to the students' individual needs. "We want to meet him where he is," he comments.

Logan worked for Electronic Data Systems (EDS) after retiring from the Eagles; over time, his responsibilities at EDS shifted from the business side to Community Outreach.

Logan's wife Janice, who chairs the school's Character Education committee, got hired by St. Gabe's 12 years ago. Seeing Janice's enthusiasm for the school, when combined with the Logan family's bedrock-solid Christian faith and sense of mission, led him to accept his current role. Logan has never looked back.

"There are so many positive stories," Logan noted. He described how one alumnus just earned his Microsoft Certification while a second, now a social worker, recently came back to St. Gabe's to talk with the students on staying straight.

Logan is ideal for his position- a man with a big heart for students while having the toughness of, well, a Pro-Bowl caliber defensive back. He has frank conversations with all of St. Gabe's residents, allowing him to impart life lessons.

"We ask them what their goals are. If they could have three wishes, what would they be? You'd be surprised at their answers," Logan observes.

"Most wish that they had never done what they had done, and that they could re-do life over so that it never occurred. They wish that they could go to college. We try to get them to believe that it is possible to achieve those things.

"We have enough time to open the door to a child's heart," Logan concluded. "If he takes what we say, it can revolutionize his life. The key is getting him to trust us."

After a year's worth of education, tough love, discipline and values, students leave St. Gabriel's Hall and head home. This is where Logan's biggest challenge- and vision- emerge.

When a student returns to their home environment- lacking support- it is easy for him to revert back to his past bad habits. Logan feels that there needs to be a two-pronged network in place for when kids do come home.

The first is a partnership with local businesses, so that students can see tangible, legal economic opportunities. The second is a mentorship with other people who can re-enforce positive values in the student.

Without those two in place, it is easy to see why America has such a high recidivism rate. Logan points out that students leave St. Gabe's changed and wanting to stay changed. Wanting to change, and staying changed in a negative environment, are two different stories.

Maybe society is content to be dulled by the horrifying statistics around troubled youths. Logan isn't one of them. He may have worn #41, but he knows these kids are hurting people-not numbers.

Fans cheered when Logan stuffed a John Riggins or a Tony Dorsett. They cheered when Logan intercepted Roger Staubach twice in one game, like he did in 1977. Take nothing away from Logan's great athleticism, but his accomplishments during his old job at Broad and Pattison pale compared to his work now.

Now, in 2010, is the time for humanity to cheer on Randy Logan and his work with everything they have.



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