

A game changer left unchanged by the game

Jamarkus McFarland, a 6-foot-3, 285-pound defensive tackle, is ranked as the country's top 2009 defensive recruit by Rivals.com. Just where he will end up attending college - he says he is looking at Louisiana State, Oklahoma and Texas, among others - is the subject of intense speculation in college football circles and has brought attention to this old railroad town of 36,830 in East Texas. But in an era when the nation's top high school prospects increasingly seek out the trappings of taking handouts and traveling with entourages, McFarland, 17, stands apart.

Beyond his dominance as a player, his off-field exploits include everything from being senior-class president at Lufkin High School to making \$6.50 an hour working part-time at a local Kmart. McFarland also has an academic average of 92.4 on a 100-point scale and can recite his class rank (103rd out of 607 students) more easily than his football statistics as a junior (67 tackles, 18 tackles for a loss and 6 sacks).

"He's the full package," Lufkin Coach John Outlaw said by telephone. "But if he never played another down of football, he'd still be successful. He doesn't need football. Don't take that the wrong way. A lot of kids do for various reasons. He could be a doctor, a lawyer or whatever he wants to be and never take another snap."

McFarland has bigger dreams than football. Even though he is considered the best defensive tackle to hail from Texas in more than a decade, he plans on having 12 to 15 hours of college credit before his freshman year and intends to graduate in four years with a kinesiology degree. McFarland wants to be a physical therapist or a strength and conditioning coach.

"I want people to know I'm more than a football player," McFarland said. "I've got what I wanted as far as being able to go to college with it paid for. Football is an extra. It's a bonus. I'm not going to college to play football. I'm going to college to get what I'm going to need for life regardless of whether I make the NFL or not."

A Lufkin native, McFarland knows his father, but he was reared by his mother until third grade and then lived with his grandmothers. Because McFarland spent much of his youth playing baseball, his first love, for traveling select teams, he did not start football until sixth grade. By then, his football debut had become much ballyhooed.

McFarland began at quarterback, and after a growth spurt in middle school he moved to fullback and defensive end. As a sophomore, McFarland started for Lufkin and established himself as the best defensive tackle that Outlaw had had in his 33 years of coaching. McFarland, who also competes in shot-put and discus, is thinking of playing baseball again.

McFarland has unofficially visited Louisiana State, Oklahoma and Texas, but does not have a favorite and has not set a timeline for making his commitment. His mother wants him to attend Texas, but she said she liked the Oklahoma coaches. McFarland's grandmother believes he should go to Oklahoma. When asked where he will attend college, McFarland says, "I don't know. That's all everyone wants to know."

By Thayer Evans, The New York Times, June 30, 2008

Hitting a grand slam in sportsmanship

Bench-sitter Sara Tucholsky had never been known as the cleanup batter for Western Oregon University's women's softball team. But in a tight May game with rival Central Washington University, the diminutive player knocked her first homer right over the center-field fence, clearing the bases. But as she rounded first base for her victory lap, Tucholsky collapsed with a knee injury, unable to continue. When she crawled back to the bag, the crusty first base umpire informed her that she would be called out if her teammates tried to help out. The other choice was to bring in a pinch runner, in which case the home run would count only as a single. Central Washington's first baseman Mallory Holtman, who happens to be the college league's all-time career home-run hitter, asked if there was a rule preventing the opposing team from helping out. There isn't, so she and two of her teammates carried Tucholsky around the bases to home plate, icing the homer. By the time the trio reached the dugout, the entire Western Oregon team was in tears at the act of generosity. Alas, kindness doesn't necessarily pay off, at least in the hardball world of softball. On the strength of her three-run shot, Tucholsky's team went on to win 4-2. "In the end," opined Holtman, "it is not about winning and losing so much. It was about the girl. She hit it over the fence and was in pain, and she deserved a home run." - *The Edmonton Journal*, June 1, 2008

Parents need to weigh risks of sports-related injuries

More than 65,000 children younger than 15 received treatment in an emergency room for skateboarding-related injuries in 2006, according to estimates presented recently by the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. In an effort to promote safety, the agency released data on sports-related injuries incurred by kids younger than 15. The authors, extrapolating from a sample of 100 hospitals across the nation, estimate nearly 240,000 kids 14 and younger were treated for bike-related accidents, the highest number for any sport. Football resulted in about 221,000 injuries for that age group, and baseball almost 85,000. "We wanted to make the point that with any outdoor activity, parents need to be thinking about safety as well as the activity itself," says Nancy Nord, acting chairman of the commission. "Parents should not send their kids out to bike, roller blade or scooter without helmets, wrist guards, elbow pads or whatever is appropriate for their sport." Experts estimate that more than 30 million children participate in sports each year in the U.S. About 3 million children ages 14 and younger get hurt annually participating in recreational activities, according to the American Academy of Orthopedic Surgeons. - *By Azam Ahmed and Jo Napolitano, Chicago Tribune, June 2, 2008*

Michigan prep sports participation remains stable

Overall participation in Michigan prep sports remained fairly stable this school year, despite a shake-up in scheduling sparked by a court order. Overall participation in 2007-08 fell 1.97 percent in sports for which the Michigan High School Athletic Association runs postseason tournaments, the group said Monday. Participation in girls sports dropped 2.8 percent from the prior year, while participation in boys sports dropped 1.4 percent. Spring sports participation was down about 1 percent. The MHSAA hasn't drawn conclusions from the effects of schedule changes caused by a federal court ruling. This was the first year of the new schedule, which included flipping the girls' basketball and volleyball seasons to conform with the schedule used in colleges and most of the nation's high schools. The MHSAA reports 306,924 participants this school year. The total counts students once for each sport in which he or she participates, meaning students who are multiple-sport athletes are counted more than once. Overall participation has topped 300,000 four straight years, despite falling enrollment at many of Michigan's high schools. While overall number remained steady, a few sports saw significant changes in participation rates. Participation in girls cross country rose 15.2 percent, while participation in girls Lower Peninsula golf fell almost 9 percent. Participation in boys Lower Peninsula tennis fell 11.4 percent. Participation for girls volleyball, which moved from winter to fall, was down 3.1 percent. Participation for girls basketball, moved from fall to winter, fell 3.6 percent. Prep sports scheduling changes were made for this school year in the aftermath of a lengthy court fight that began in 1998. A group called Communities for Equity sued the MHSAA, saying some of its season scheduling practices discriminated against girls. - *By Tim Martin, Chicago Tribune, June 9, 2008*

Why parents go nuts on the sidelines

A recent study found the level of rudeness and rowdiness of parents depends mostly on parents' personality types. Overall, about half of parents in the study reported getting angry during soccer games, and nearly 40 percent of the angry parents made their emotions known. These sideline expressions ranged from muttering or yelling comments to walking toward the field. Sports psychologists at the University of Maryland Jay Goldstein and Seppo Iso-Ahola surveyed 340 parents before and after soccer games in which their children participated. The kids were between 8 and 15 years old. The questionnaires measured, among other factors, stress and pressure, levels of anger and aggression and aspects of their personality related to "what makes them tick." The research focused on two personality types: control and autonomy orientations. "The control-oriented personality is the parent who would be more apt to need to keep up with the Joneses," Goldstein told *LiveScience*. "They feel controlled by external forces." Individuals who are self-motivated would be considered autonomy oriented, Goldstein said. About half of the parents reported getting angry during the soccer game, though on average, anger levels were relatively low. The referee and their child's team topped the list of sources of anger, followed by rude opponents, hostile remarks or gestures, coaches and illegal play. Parents with the highest scores on control-oriented measures were more likely to view a mishap on the field as a personal affront. Control-oriented parents were also more likely to get red in the face and behave badly. To keep sideline aggression in check, parents will need some self-control. Goldstein suggests "adult" spectators need to create some emotional distance between themselves and what's going on in-play. For parents wondering if they are prone to turning into monsters at youth sports events, Goldstein suggests checking out your driving behaviors. The underlying psychological mechanism that triggers screaming parents on the sidelines also is responsible for road rage, Goldstein said. The findings are detailed in the June issue of the *Journal of Applied and Social Psychology*. - *MSNBC, June 13, 2008*

Arm injuries soaring in little league pitchers

Since 2000, doctors at the American Sport Medicine Institute in Birmingham, Alabama, have seen about a 5- to 6-fold increase in the number of serious shoulder and elbow injuries in young baseball and softball players. "Youth injuries that occur during baseball or any other sport to the cartilage growth plate can cause permanent damage in these young people that can affect their future growth and also the future health of their joints," said Dr. E. Lyle Cain, Jr., with the Institute. Overuse injuries are also common in gymnastics, cheerleading, swimming, tennis, soccer, football and other sports, he said. In a recent study, Cain and his colleagues followed 476 little league pitchers, aged 9 to 14, for one season and found that 50 percent had elbow or shoulder pain during that one season and most had to see a doctor because of the pain. So why is this occurring? "Kids are becoming one-sport athletes as early as age 8 and being an 8-year-old one-sport athlete promotes repetitive overuse of the same muscles and joints without enough rest between seasons," Cain said. The trend toward year-round sports without a rest period is another factor, as is "seasonal overuse" -- that is, throwing too many pitches per season -- and "event overuse," defined as overuse at one particular event or series. Another "major problem" in youth sports, Cain said, is use of the radar gun. College scouts and professional scouts emphasize speed and maybe not proper mechanics or learning how to pitch, causing young athletes to over throw and risk injury. Cain thinks the radar gun should be banned in youth sports. One-day talent evaluations or "showcases" run by colleges or professional teams also encourage overuse. "The young athlete comes to the showcase and basically has half a day to impress the recruiters, and they are encouraged to throw as hard as they can at maximum intensity," Cain said. "How do we stop this? Educate parents, coaches and athletes," Cain said, and don't go over the pitch counts recommended in the USA Baseball 2006 Safety Guidelines. It's also important to encourage young athletes to play for fun and discourage early specialization. "There is no study or documentation that starting baseball at a high level at age 8 contributes to a long career in baseball," Cain said. - *By Megan Rauscher, Reuters, June 26, 2008*

Few student-athletes survive sudden cardiac arrest

Just one in 10 U.S. student-athletes who suffer sudden cardiac arrest survives, a new study found. Sudden cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death in young athletes and the leading overall cause of death in the U.S., claiming more than 250,000 lives annually. It occurs without warning, when the heart's electrical system stops working, so no blood is pumped throughout the body. Approximately one case of sudden cardiac death occurs every three days in organized youth sports, according to background information with the study. There is a trend toward improved survival, said study co-author Dr. Kimberly G. Harmon, of the University of Washington Department of Orthopedics and Sports Medicine. "This is probably due to improved access to external automatic defibrillators (AEDs). As we study this over the next several years, we are going to find that survival will improve as emergency plans and AEDs become more available and used." Access to defibrillators within three to five minutes could save lives, Harmon said. For the study, published in the June issue of the *HeartRhythm Journal*, Harmon's group did an online search looking for cases of sudden cardiac death from 2000 to 2006. They found a total of 486 cases in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools and colleges. The overall survival rate was 11 percent, ranging from 4 percent to 21 percent a year. Of all cases of sudden cardiac death, 83 percent involved males and 17 percent involved females, the researchers found. "Schools and places where there are large gatherings of people, where there is potentially going to be an arrest, need to have an AED, and an emergency action plan on how to use the AED," Harmon said. Harmon thinks all students should be screened for heart problems before being allowed to participate in sports. In Italy, where a screening EKG is mandated for students participating in sports, the incidence of sudden cardiac death has been cut 90 percent, Harmon said. - *By Steven Reinberg, US News and World Report, June 27, 2008*

A Tribute to MCSC Board Members

Over the past four years I have had the privilege of working with Walter Abbott, Julie Treadwell, Barbara Eretzian and Larry LaBrie. Four professionals who have dedicated their time, efforts, and expertise to advocate on behalf of Maine's student-athletes. Abbott, Treadwell, Eretzian and LaBrie participated on the Select Panel that founded *Sports Done Right* and continued to be directly involved with the program as members of the MCSC Board of Directors. It is with great respect and admiration that I announce the retirement of these four members from the MCSC Board of Directors. On behalf of students throughout Maine who have benefited from their work - "thank you."

Karen Hawkes

Director, Maine Center for Sport and Coaching

Due to summer break, the next *Sports Done Right* newsletter will be available August 2008. **Enjoy the summer!**

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