

Silver is pure gold for Warriors

Written by Jim Ecker

Monday, 21 October 2013 22:10 - Last Updated Monday, 21 October 2013 22:26



Royal Silver has a distinctive name that's easy to remember, evoking colorful images of precious metals and befitting a British monarch, but he wasn't always fond of it.

"In elementary school I didn't like it, because I thought it was an odd name," he said Monday. "But I like it now."

Silver is a 6-foot-3, 275-pound nose guard on the Cedar Rapids Washington football team, a stalwart on the defensive line and one of the reasons the Warriors have won five straight games and are heading for the Class 4A playoffs.

And he's not simply Royal Silver.

"I'm Royal Silver the 3rd," he said. "It's my grandpa's name and my great grandpa's name."

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Silver does not know how the family name got started, but he wears it proudly now. And he's making a name for himself in high school football as one of the top defensive linemen in the Mississippi Valley Conference as a junior.

He's already received letters from Iowa State, Kansas State and others. "I can't remember them all," he said. "I'd like to go to Iowa State."

Washington Coach Paul James thinks Silver has the potential to play college football for a Division I school.

"Definitely," the coach said before practice Monday. "He's got a lot of ability and I think the sky is the limit. He's getting better and better."

Silver has collected 20 solo tackles and 22 assists this season, with four solo tackles for loss and three solo sacks. He's accomplished all that despite getting extra attention from blockers.

"The first two games, nobody really knew about me and I wasn't getting double-teamed that much," he said. "But now, teams know about me. Sometimes I get triple-teamed, but usually it's just a double-team."

Silver takes the extra attention as a compliment, knowing it frees teammates to make plays if he cannot get to the ballcarrier himself.

"You're not going to get a lot of stats at nose guard usually, but I just try my best," he said.

Silver helped the Warriors stop Cedar Rapids Prairie on a key 4th-and-1 late in the game last Friday with the score tied. "He was right in the center of it," James confirmed.

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Washington got the ball and drove for the winning touchdown in the final seconds for its fifth straight win during an incredible streak that's included two last-second victories and a 26-10 upset of then-No.1 Xavier.

The Warriors host Dubuque Wahlert Thursday night at Kingston Stadium in the final game of the regular season, then will head to the playoffs next Wednesday. Silver thinks his team can do well in the postseason if they're clicking from the start of games.

"If we can play in the first quarter like we've been playing in the fourth quarter, I think we can win state," he said.

Silver was promoted to the varsity last year as a sophomore, when he weighed 255 pounds. He's gained 20 pounds since then.

"Lifting. Eating a lot," he said. "I don't eat junk food anymore. I eat just good home-cooked meals."

He'd like to hit 285 pounds or 290 as a senior.

The Warriors also use Silver as a blocking tight end on offense, especially in goal-line situations. And in the spring, he throws the discus and shot put for the Washington track team.

"He's strong," said James. "He's a pretty lean 275. I think he's caused some problems for the opposing centers that we've faced. People are aware of him."

Silver is a soft-spoken guy, but he's certainly gotten his message across on the football field.

"He's just a little shy, I think, and introverted a little bit around other people," said James.

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"Yeah," Silver confirmed, "I'm pretty quiet around people I don't know."

Opponents have learned to watch out for the quiet young man with the distinctive name who patrols the middle of Washington's defensive line.

This Silver is golden.