

UNI getting a model player in Carr

Written by Tom Fruehling

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On the football field, Alex Carr is as tough as they come.

Small for a tailback, he still carried the ball on nearly every play for the Washington Warriors last fall, usually into the middle of the line and beyond.

In one game, Alex had an almost unheard of 49 carries.

But he'd always pop right back up, never mind the beating.

Then he'd switch sides and play every down as a defensive back.

He was a vocal leader, too, as if his non-stop cheering would make everyone play even harder.

Off the field, on the other hand, he's soft-spoken, as polite-as-you-please and as serious as any 17-year-old can be.

"I'm grateful," he says, "for all the people who have helped me be a better person."

Imagine his embarrassment, therefore, when his mom, Jenny, mentions that they're going to California in a couple of weeks for Alex to pose in a nationwide modeling competition.

He'd much rather talk about playing football next fall for the University of Northern Iowa

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Panthers, which is why he and his mom, his dad Albert, sister Jordan, other family members and classmates were seated at tables eating cake Thursday afternoon in the Washington cafeteria.

It was a chance for the school to recognize the six Warrior seniors who this week signed letters of intent to play college athletics:

Brandon Besong, first team all-state in soccer (Missouri State), Morgan Bjornsen, first team all-MVC in soccer (UNI), Dakota Freese, first team all-state in baseball (LSU-Eunice), Trent Hoekstra, honorable mention all-MVC in golf (Iowa Wesleyan) and Ashley Piper, honorable mention all-MVC in basketball (Colorado Christian).

And then there was “Cadillac” Carr, as he came to be called this season as he scooted for 1,925 yards rushing and 28 touchdowns.

Among an exceptional crop of Division I running backs, he earned second-team all-state honors.

He ranks second on Washington’s single-season rushing list behind Andre Dawson, who gained 2,200 yards the year before and is now at UNI. Carr was an understudy to Dawson last year, but that’s not likely to be repeated as a Panther since he’s pegged as a college defensive back.

But Warrior Coach Tony Lombardi says it’s not the stats that make Alex special.

“He’s really a humble kid. But he’s one of those kids who others look to as a leader. He’s got a tremendous work ethic. And he just makes others around him get better.”

Those, of course, are the kind of words any parent loves to hear.

Alex’s folks are also proud that their son is a solid B student, that he has a weekend job at Burger King, that he looks up to his older brother Albert (a defensive back at Luther College)

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and that he's close to sister Jordan, who will join him as a freshman at UNI.

They're thrilled that Alex is a starter on the Warriors' basketball team and that he's twice been the anchor on state champion track relay teams.

All that's good.

But this upcoming modeling gig, well, that's nothing to sneer at.

Jenny explained that after her son's senior pictures were taken at Read Photography, owner Jon Read asked if he could submit them to a national contest.

Out of several hundred entries, Alex was chosen among 50 finalists.

Read shot a new portfolio, some with Alex in football gear and another bare-chested in a leather vest sitting on a motorcycle wearing sun glasses.

Those photos got him in the top 10, so he, his mom and Jordan will spend three days in Palm Springs later this month for more picture shoots and even a shot at a part-time modeling contract.

Mom and Jordan -- and even Coach Lombardi -- think it's exciting.

As for the reluctant teenage heartthrob?

He silently polished off his third piece of cake in the school cafeteria, strapped on his backpack

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and sheepishly excused himself to head for the gym.