

BLACK LION AWARD



2009 YEAR-END REPORT



The Black Lion Award
1503 NE 6th Ave
Camas WA 98607

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June 14, 2010

To Black Lions and Friends of the Black Lions:

As I write this, the Black Lion Award has wrapped up its ninth year of honoring men who bravely served our country by recognizing football players who have impressed their coaches as young men of character.

Since 2004 the Army Football Club has presented the Black Lion Award to an Army football player, and this year, defensive tackle Mike Gann, a four-year letter winner from Atlanta, joined previous honorees Will Sullivan, Scott Wesley, Mike Viti, Ryan Brence and John Plumstead, pictured on the cover. As was Will Sullivan, our very first Black Lion, Mike is a graduate of Atlanta's Marist School.

The military-football connection represented by the Black Lion Award was brought home in poignant fashion by the South Sound Shockers, a semi-professional team in Lacey, Washington, many of whose players are stationed at Fort Lewis. In October, the Shockers chose Staff Sergeant David Gutierrez as their Black Lion Award recipient, but since by then he was in Afghanistan, the award presentation was delayed until his scheduled return in January. Sadly, Sergeant Gutierrez was killed on Christmas Day when insurgents bombed his patrol.

That's Sergeant Gutierrez and his family pictured on the cover of this report.

As evidence that America continues to produce top-quality youngsters, I have shared letters that coaches have written in nominating their players.

I hope that everyone reading this letter will have an opportunity to reach out to a football coach in his area and urge him to enroll his team in the Black Lion Award program.

If I can provide you with any further information to help you do so, please contact me <coachwyatt@aol.com>, and for further information on the award, go to www.coachwyatt.com/blacklionhomepage.htm

Thank you for your service to our country and for your support of the Black Lion Award.

Black Lions!

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hugh Wyatt".

Hugh Wyatt
Administrator

BLACK LION AWARD LETTERS OF NOMINATION – 2009 FOOTBALL SEASON

Back in 2003 --- Coach Wyatt; Please accept Tom Kessel as our nominee for the Danville Panthers A-Team for the Black Lion Award.

Tom is a three-year starter for our A-Team. Tom always does what is asked of him and leads the team from his linebacker position on defense. Tom is truly dedicated to the Danville Panthers A-team. He has been asked by several of his friends to join another team, but, he always says that he is a Panther. His dedication to his team and self sacrifice to put the team above his own statistics has showed us that he has heart and dedication. Tom played quarterback last year, but this year, stepped aside from his position there because he felt that another player was better and asked what else he could do to help the team.

Tom is truly a deserving candidate for this award.

Sincerely

Danny Green, Head Coach

Danville Panthers A-Team, Danville, West Virginia

Fast-Forward to 2009- Hello, my name is Beverly Mosteller and my son Tom Kessel had received this award when he was younger and played for the Danville Panthers in Danville, WV. We had to put a lot of stuff in storage a few years ago and when we got it out there had been some water damage to a lot of my sons things and his certificate was one of those things. He is 18 years old now and when discussing what to do with all his trophies recently he told me that all of his "trophies" didn't mean anything and that I could just throw them away if I wanted and that the only thing that meant anything to him had been ruined and he was referring to the Black Lion Award. I was wondering if there is any way I could get a replacement? I will pay for it if that is necessary.

thank you,

Beverly Mosteller

Rossville, Georgia

(Replacement sent!)

Coach Wyatt and Black Lion board members,

I sent an earlier letter with a different player. Coach Wyatt informed me that the award is not for a player that doesn't complain or is always at practice or is just a good team mate. I sat back and read what Don had done and what this award does stand for. Coach was absolutely correct.

The player that I would like to nominate is a player who does give his all every play. He is our leader on defense and is usually playing hurt as he plays middle linebacker and full back. When he speaks everyone listens because they know he has something good or important to say for our team. I did not want to nominate him as I did not want others thinking that I was be biased. The player I would like to nominate (who should of gotten it last year) is my son Chase Carpenter.

Chase is always hitting players hard! But what I really like is he always helps them up and tells them "good job " or "that was a great play" if he got beat.

He will take a weaker player off to the side and give him some tips. He played a game this season with a 101 temperature. I told him to sit out but he said "they need me coach I will be fine".

At the beginning of the season we had a couple players that were new and you could tell not really too sure if this was such a good idea. Chase went out of his way during water breaks or after practice to talk, to get to know them so they felt like they were part of the team.

Chase doesn't get to many touchdowns but he made many open field blocks so we would get a touchdown. He is also our utility player, he has played every position on the offensive line when another player went down. He knows the roll of every position on offense, and would let the other players know what to do if they did not know.

He really is a true leader and makes me very proud.

Thank you for your consideration...
Steve Carpenter, Woodinville Sophomore Green
Snohomish Washington

To whom it may concern,

It is my pleasure to nominate Marcus Hemker for the Black Lion Award. This young man has been one of our best success stories in my nine years at Melrose High School.

When Marcus was in 8th grade he lost his father to cancer. He never let his loss slow him down, even though we all knew he was hurting. Marcus is not very large in stature, but the size of his heart to improve himself for the betterment of the team is immeasurable. The commitment to success that Marcus has is truly inspirational to all the members of our football family. He joined the wrestling team to improve his football skills, he committed himself to the weight room 3 days per week, he trained at facility 40 miles away three days per week to improve his running speed last spring and summer.

When fall camp started in August, Marcus arrived to camp in the best shape of his life. He was so much stronger and faster than he had ever been before. He clearly was able to win the starting fullback job and has rolled up over 800 yards rushing with one game left to go.

The efforts that Marcus put in did not go unnoticed. He clearly puts all of his teammates before himself. He is always trying to help the younger athletes in our program. He always has a smile on his face and is determined to work hard to improve each day.

Marcus's biggest commitment is not on the football field either. The commitment that he has to his family and the family businesses is amazing all on its own. His family owns a small wild animal preserve that was started by his father before he passed. This animal preserve is very time demanding and full of jobs that are very physically demanding. Marcus is always there to help his mother and sisters manage and keep up this animal reserve running, yet he maintains a 3.3 GPA and is a huge part of our football and wrestling programs at Melrose High School.

Without reservation, I nominate Marcus Hemker to be the 3rd recipient of the Black Lion Award at Melrose High School. Marcus is a model of what this award stands for.

Respectfully Yours,

Jay DeCann
Head Football Coach
Melrose, Minnesota

Dear Coach Wyatt-

The South Sound Shockers proudly submit fullback Sgt. David Gutierrez as our Black Lion Award nominee. David Gutierrez is a tremendous leader on and off the football field, playing a position not known for gridiron glory or star treatment.

David epitomizes the "team" mentality doing anything and everything he can to help his team. During practices he is the consummate lead by example player. During wind sprints and drills, while other players are starting to lose focus and making mental mistakes, David is clear headed, dedicated to perfection and cheering on his teammates to finish strong and ignore the fatigue. During off days, David led voluntary conditioning workouts on base with other soldiers playing for the Shockers.

On game day David has been the starting fullback two of his three seasons and a member of every special team formation, never complaining about playing time in our pass-happy offense, or about play selection. But he takes full advantage of his opportunities as the second leading scorer in the backfield, and second leading tackler on special teams. Improving his game every year is no easy task at our level of football as most players are on their downhill slide of their athletic abilities, but David continues to improve his mental game, conditioning and performance. Even during the 2009 season, as his wife Patty went through a difficult pregnancy and silent birth of their daughter, David never missed a practice or game and had his best season ever, dedicating the season to his family whom he would leave behind immediately after the season for a 12-month deployment to Afghanistan.

A tough player, David also played through ankle, wrist and thumb injuries without complaint. The Shockers would be unstoppable if the entire team could have the drive, dedication and desire to excel that David has. The Shockers will miss David's leadership in 2010 as he serves his country.

Thank you for the opportunity to nominate Sgt. David Gutierrez whom we feel upholds the ideals of the Black Lion Award in all aspects of his life including football.

Respectfully,

Coach Stephen Matychowiak,
Olympia, Washington

Coach Wyatt,

My name is Aaron Amthor, I am the head football coach at Lawrence High School in Lawrence, Michigan. We have participated in giving the Black Lion Award for several years now and would like to continue the tradition. This year, I would like to nominate Kelsey Poirier. Kelsey is a senior who has been an asset to our team for the past two years. Last year we went 0-9, a year that tested us physically, emotionally and mentally. In that season, Kelsey played 4 different positions, without asking why, as we tried to find the best fit for him and our team. More importantly, in the off season of 2008-2009, he was part of a senior class that vowed to change things around for the program. He never missed an off season workout, practice, or game this year. When things started to get rough, he kept a positive attitude and pushed his fellow teammates to be better. Through his efforts, our team indeed turned things around, and finished with a 4-5 record, an incredible feat, since no one thought we would win a game. Kelsey is not an all conference player, in fact he is not an impact player, but an average football player at best. What sets him apart from his teammates, is his overall character, work ethic and integrity. He is a 3.8 student and will have a positive impact our society in the near future. Around the school, Kelsey is respected by all students, and works with our younger student/athletes, both on the field and in the classroom. When evaluating the criteria for actions that best fit the Black Lion Award and Major Hollender's character, there is not another player that I would endorse.

Thank you for your time.

Aaron Amthor
Head Football Coach
Lawrence High School
Lawrence Michigan

Coach,

I would like to nominate Kyle Lewis for the Black Lion Award. He has played OG/ OT/ and TE for us in the last 4 years. He is a captain (all 13 seniors are) that always puts the team before himself. He will play any where he is asked to. Never a complaint. He is what a coach calls a dream player. He never thinks of himself. Always team first. He even hosted tape sessions at his house. He also plays our Will LB and makes all the calls for the defense - a defense that has greatly improved over last season. He is a leader both on and off the field. As you know we haven't had a Black Lion award winner in a few years and the last one is a cadet at the Naval Academy (doing well). In my personal opinion, which doesn't mean much, Kyle ranks up there with all the others we have nominated. As a former Air Force officer, he is one of the few that I want in my foxhole when it comes down! He is what this award has been designed to recognize. Please consider Kyle Lewis of Murray County Central High School when

awarding the Black Lion Award this year. He will not let you down. He doesn't have it in him to let his team down. .

Sincerely,

Chris Davis - HFC
Murray County Central High School
Slayton, Minnesota

Sirs: On behalf of the Scottsbluff Bearcat football team, the coaching staff would like to nominate Jon Decker for the 2009 Black Lion Award.

Jon is a leader on and off the football field. Off the field, Jon was a leader in our weight room program. Jon did not miss a session and would make house visits, or make phone calls to those athletes that would miss weight room sessions. The reason he would take the time to go to athlete's homes and make phone calls was because, as he put it, "I want those individuals to get better. Whether they are freshmen or seniors, I want them to get better for our program not just for this football season."

On the field Jon was a "lead by example" football player. Jon would always seem to come up with a "big hit" in our games to get the other athletes fired up. Jon would always be the first athlete to celebrate with other teammates if they made a good play or came up with a turnover. When I asked Jon about this characteristic he had (of ALWAYS being the first to celebrate with a teammate) he replied, "I would be considered a 'front runner' or a football player that only worried about himself if I didn't do that; besides seeing my teammates make a good play gets me fired up."

Jon is an unselfish football player also. After a recent football game where Jon had a fumble recovery, and an interception, the coaches awarded him with a game ball after the football game. Jon told the coaches "thank you, however, if it is alright, I am going to give this game ball to the offensive and defensive line. Those 2 squads make our jobs a lot easier if they are clicking."

For these reasons the Scottsbluff Bearcat football coaches would like to nominate Jon Decker.

Mike Fisher
Scottsbluff High School
Scottsbluff, Nebraska

I just wanted to thank you for giving me this award. This is a big award and I hope I was the right choice for it. The Black Lion Award means a lot to my family and I. It was a great honor to receive this award. I worked hard my four years of high school and it finally paid off. I put in tons of long hours and dedication in the weight room and it showed with receiving this award. I will always remember the day I received this award and it will stay with me forever.

Sincerely,

Jon Decker
Scottsbluff, Nebraska

Dear Coach Wyatt,
Thank you for allowing me to submit my Black Lion letter of nomination to you and the board.

As I began my second season as head coach for the Our Lady of Peace Junior Varsity Squad, I looked to one young man to lead the team. He was part of a returning class of eleven. Eleven boys that had a very tough losing season last year, and yet all were very eager to begin this season in early July.

Entering the 2009 season, my nominee was joined by twelve new fifth graders. The team was now set at twenty-three, and one your boy was prepared to show his team one hundred and fifty percent effort —one hundred percent of the time.

The 2009 OLP –JV Black Lion nomination goes to Lucas Kubilius. A two year starter at fullback, line backer, corner, safety, and kick return. In his two seasons at Our Lady of Peace, Lucas was presented and learned two different, yet complete playbooks. Last year, the double wing and this season we ran a spread offense. He was played in and has mentored teammates in all wing/back positions with knowledge and skill. Lucas is challenged in size and his speed is average, but what he can see and feel on the field is something special. His true strength is his heart; strong, passionate and giving. The strength to play multiple positions on both sides of the ball with a fight that gave his teammates the confidence to play harder. Lucas provided the big play- tough blocks to spring teammates to touchdowns, hard fought middle runs to supply a must needed first down and hard hitting, text book open field tackling on opponents' drives. Play after play, with very little substitution, Lucas was called on and produced results. His passion was always evident on both practice and game fields. Hot, cold, wet or dry he revels in the spirit and work ethic of the game. Lucas plays in a "walk soft and carry a big stick" role. He practices what is preached and his effort spurs on his team.

OLP -JV football played for a championship this 2009 season, and Lucas Kubilius supplied the fuel for the team's fire. Lucas wore number thirty-two for work and a humble smile, before, during and after football.

Coach Wyatt, when you are asking of leadership, courage, devotion and self sacrifice for the team, you are asking to see Lucas Kubilius play this great game.

Best Regards,

Todd J. Valliere
JV Head Football Coach
Our Lady of Peace Catholic School
Darien, Illinois

Coach and Board,

I would like to nominate one of my players as a candidate for the Black Lion award. The player's name is Jimmy Barron and he is an 8th grader who was my starting quarterback.

Jimmy demonstrated all those characteristics we would like to have in a field general such as decisiveness, focus, and athleticism.

The boys were rallying around him and all was going well when 9 plays into our first scrimmage where Jimmy was running an option, got tackled and broke his collarbone. He did not react to the normal pain I have seen in other collarbone breaks and we finished the day without him, greatly missing his presence.

We knew it would be an uphill battle with 17 boys this season and now to lose your best tackler and field general was another tough blow to lead the boys through. We came back in our first practice after the scrimmage and Jimmy was there. He spoke to the boys about his desire to be out there with him and about the importance of working hard. Jimmy was at every practice leading drills even though he could not run for the first few weeks. Once Jimmy could run with the doctor's clearance, he was leading the running drills and throwing the ball. I have seen many kids in his situation hang it up, but that was not Jimmy. He could have stayed home since he was not playing but he made a commitment to the boys and team and did not miss a practice all year. He is one of the few that I can say that about.

The first day in pads we did more contact drills than normal. Jimmy had a number of picture perfect hits and raised the level of those that were going against him. The boy who stepped up to be the QB was a past Black Lion award recipient and had been growing on the field as a QB. I told Jimmy that he would have to earn his starting QB role back with this play and that he could start at End on offense. There were no complaints and Jimmy started right on blocking and running his routes like he was doing it all year. With his work ethic, Jimmy encouraged his teammates to do their best and get ready the upcoming game against the first place team. We were win less to that point so it

was set up to be a Cinderella story. I would like to say that we won but we did not. With Jimmy on the field, our team played their best game to that point. The opposing coach told me that he was a special player after the game and I said that it was his first game of the season. He was amazed and thought that he was playing all year. We continued to grow and finished out with two wins, due in large part to Jimmy's leadership and play.

For his dedication to the team in working through the adversity of an injury, selflessness in doing the role that the team needed, and overall leadership, I would like you to consider Jimmy Barron for the Black Lion Award.

Thank you,

Chris Royer
Head Coach
Our Lady of Peace Varsity Football
Darien, Illinois

Coach Wyatt:

It is my distinct pleasure to nominate FB/MLB Michael Lamon for recognition as the Severna Park Green Hornet 100LB Select team's Black Lion for the 2009 Season. This nomination is one that has been a long time coming; however it is no less deserving than any of the more instantaneous kinds of recognition.

Mike Lamon has played football for the Green Hornets for 5 seasons in which he has grown from a 65LB - 6 year old child in a football uniform into a 100LB - 10 year old football player and on-field leader. Always one of the team members gifted with above average talent compared to his peers, Michael has grown into a leadership role that was thrust upon him by his coaches, peers and family almost from day one of his football career.

Starting out as a QB on teams that were just beginning to learn how to block and tackle, Michael quickly learned the concepts behind a flexible offense and proved he was able to lead his teammates to victory more often than not. However, it was soon determined that QB was not where his skill sets made him most valuable on the football field, and he was soon shifted to the Fullback Role due to his size and knowledge of the Offense. Over the last two years he has taken to that position as both a powerful blocker for the other Running Backs in the backfield and a bruising runner in his own right – typically through the middle of an opposing team's defense. At times he has picked up the team and carried it on his back.

This season was a break out season for Michael as he developed the vision to find the open running lane and the will to run over an opposing defender when necessary. His success in these areas has lead to other teams having to scheme to stop him to the advantage of other aspects of the success of the offense.

Defensively, Michael has always been the backbone of the Green Hornet defense, however this season a new and very experienced Defensive Coordinator installed (in stages) a fairly complicated defensive system. It was Michael, who as the leader of the team, who stepped up to the challenge and willed his fellow players into learning the system as well as he did and made the unit highly successful more times than not. He was the glue that bound the entire unit together.

In the finest traditions of this great award, Michael Lamon has demonstrated time and again why he is the leader of this team – he has driven his fellow team mates to be better as a whole at practices and games; he has sacrificed personal glory by giving up the role as a Quarterback to instead find a home as a Fullback where he was blocking for others as much, if not more than running the football himself; he has become a role model for all the members of the team, especially the younger ones, as to what it takes to help a team be successful on the football field.

I can think of no other player that honors the commitment and memory of Major Don Holleder more than Michael. For these reasons and so many more, I have chosen him to receive the title and the award of The Black Lion.

Respectfully,

Mark Gibson
Head Coach
Severna Park Green Hornet
Severna Park, Maryland

Dear Black Lion Selection Committee:

Please accept my nomination of Ryan Erps as the Black Lion Award recipient for Pinckney High School in Pinckney, Michigan. Ryan will be the second award winner from our school. I have known Ryan for many years and have always been impressed with his intensity and work ethic. Other players look to Ryan as a leader, whether it is in the classroom, the weight room, the wrestling mat or the football field. He leads by both example and words. I feel Ryan Erps' character and personal qualities are the traits that the Black Lion Award exemplifies.

Ryan was overwhelmingly elected captain of the Varsity Football Team this year. His leadership was recognized by both his coaches and his peers. He is definitely an inspiration not only to his teammates but to the younger members of our program. Other players stop what their own workouts to watch when it's Ryan's turn to lift. They marvel over his play on the field. But no one has ever said a negative word about Ryan; his teammates know that Ryan is there for them for either physical or emotional support. He pushes his teammates. Everyone respects Ryan's toughness and work ethic.

I first met Ryan when he was very young, maybe 6 or 7 years-old, when he was on my son's soccer team. Ryan left an impression on me from the beginning as he played so hard and intensely. I remembered Ryan over those early years, always happy when I saw he was on my son's team or in his classroom. I knew back then that he had admirable characteristics of leadership and character. He also has a presence in the way he carries himself and his demeanor. People look for Ryan to lead and he does so in a dignified and positive way.

Ryan has huge aspirations for his life. He would like to continue his education by attending the Naval Academy. I have met one other young man who was fortunate to be selected for service in the Naval Academy. While I met this other young man only casually, he and Ryan have not only similar physical characteristics, but they both left the same impression on me; character, integrity, leadership and honor.

The Black Lion Award candidates must complete an essay of application to be considered for the award. I find Ryan's concluding statement quite fitting, "It is hard to compare myself to men who paid the ultimate price for freedom, and each other. The least I can do is to say that I think that I and the men from the Black Lions would get along very well."

Thank you for your consideration,

Dan D. Burkholder
Head Football Coach
Pinckney Community High School
Pinckney, Michigan

Hugh,

Not sure if you received my previous email regarding our Black Lion Award recipient at Cardinal Stritch High School. If you did get it and replied to my home email address I will check it. If you didn't receive my email please be advised that David Szymanski, a junior two-way starter for us is our Black Lion Award nominee.

David epitomizes what the award is all about. He is one of the most unselfish players I have coached, and as you know I've been coaching for awhile. He played three different positions in the offensive line (including TE); played two different positions on defense (linebacker and NT); and was on EVERY special team (at his request), and never came off the field because as he put it, "I want to do anything I can for this team." And he never asked to be taken off, or complained that he was too tired. He was elected by his peers and the coaching staff as a junior captain for his leadership. He was always willing to help the younger players learn more about their positions, and the game itself. He was a positive role-model, a 3.9 GPA student, and when he learned he had received all-conference second

team honors his first comment was "That's awesome, but I don't think I deserve it."

Anyway, I emailed you about a week or so ago so to let you know our awards ceremony is this Sunday and I was hoping you might be able to get the award to me by then. Hopefully you can, but if not I will make certain he receives it with an appropriate presentation. Thanks.

Joe Gutilla
Cardinal Stritch High School
Oregon, Ohio

Black Lion Committee,

This is my first year as head coach at Waupun High School. I was not hired until June of this past year, which put me at an organizational disadvantage because I was not able to meet with my team before school was let out before this summer. Many football players were enrolled in a summer school weight training class. I was able to meet many of the players there before the season formally started in August. During these weight training sessions I was able to assess the character and ability of many of the players I would be coaching in the fall. For a variety of reasons there was a limited number of players who displayed a commitment to training all summer long. One of those players was Nate Hopp. Nate is only a sophomore but he showed a commitment to the team that rivaled any player we had during these summer workouts and the rest of the season.

Nate played wide receiver as a freshman. I am a flexbone triple option coach and I decided due to his athleticism I wanted to try him at quarterback. On the second day of practice I moved Nate to QB. He agreed to the move although he has had no experience at quarterback. Nate went through some struggles trying to learn the intricate mechanics of playing the position. Nate is very intrinsically motivated and a joy to coach. Although he struggled at first he stood strong and tried very hard daily to improve his form and ability although he knew he was green at the position. His dedication to doing what was best for the team outweighed his desire to play a more familiar position.

As preseason practice wore on we realized that Nate was our best option to start at cornerback. Although we allowed Nate to continue to practice at quarterback during offensive practices we had him concentrate on honing his craft at the cornerback position. Nate started at cornerback for us all season long. Again he initially struggled initially but trusted his coaching and worked diligently day after day to get better.

As a high school coach you are well aware of the struggle a coach can face fielding a quality scout team during practice. Nate volunteered on scout teams whenever he could be a help, even if it meant he was playing out of position. Nate always gave 100% even during this portion of practice because he knew it was benefit the team if he would play hard and "give us a look". We never had to question where he was. He was always on the field, even during these practice sessions when more arrogant players would be reluctant to participate on a scout team.

This is not all we asked of Nate however. Due to injuries during the season was asked Nate to learn the slotback position on offense as well. In our offense this position is one of the most critical and demanding positions we have because we not only ask these players to carry the ball, but to identify the proper defenders to block, to communicate with the receivers and to carry out their blocking assignments against players usually larger than they are. On top of that we ask them to run many route conversions in the passing game. One coach even made a comment to me the first day we put Nate there for practice. He said, "Dont worry about Nate, give him a day or two, he will get it, because thats how he is." Again Nate showed his commitment to the team through his willingness to learn yet another position, and his desire to succeed at it immediately.

Nate showed his devotion to duty in yet another way. During a road game against our most physical opponent Nate injured his ankle. He refused to come out of the game on his own and did everything he could to play at 100%, until we forced him to come out. Although he was doing everything he could his injury was too severe to continue. During the next week of practice Nate wanted to practice although he was in severe pain. I have a rule where I require kids to practice on Wednesday if they want to play Friday. I don't want any "Game Day" players. By the time Wednesday rolled around Nate was still injured but wanted to practice anyway because its in his nature to compete and do whats best for the team. He showed his unselfish concern for his teammates throughout the week. By the time Friday rolled around his injury had not gotten any better. He came up to me and said, "Coach its fine when I walk, I just cant run." I then replied to him, "Nate, if you are telling me you cant play, then you cant play. I

know you are one guy on this team that won't lie to me on a matter like this" Nate was willing to play although he was physically unable to do so. We held Nate out of that game, although it pained us to do so. We knew he wanted to play and would have done anything to be able to. He was just physically unable to do it. Nate is a leader by example, and displayed courage like this all season long.

Nate saw yet another position change as well. Not only did he get playing time during the season at cornerback, slotback and quarterback, but due to some personnel changes Nate also played some at free safety. Like his other position changes throughout the year he took it in stride and immediately set out to do the best job he could at his new position. With a player with the character and desire that Nate has, we were always looking for ways to keep him on the field, and put him in a position he could help us best.

I want to assure you that although I've only known Nate since June, the evidence I have provided is but a portion of the true character that Nate possesses. Given the information I have presented, I would like to humbly nominate Nate Hopp as Waupun High School's first Black Lion Award recipient.

Respectfully,

Scott Jazdzewski
Head Football Coach
Waupun High School
Waupun, Wisconsin

Coach Wyatt and Board of Advisors,

On behalf of the John S. Burke Catholic High School Varsity Football Staff, I would like to nominate one of our players, Joseph Mazzucco, for this year's recipient of the Black Lion Award.

I have had the opportunity to coach Joe for the past three (3) years, 2 on the JV level and this past season on the varsity level. Joe is not the biggest player – standing at about 5'7" and weighing approximately 140 lbs, Joe is not the fastest player – running his 40 in about 5.0 seconds, however, what Joe has brought to our team, especially this past season, would make Major Don Holleder and his family proud.

Joe contributed to our team on the field on Special Teams, Offense and Defense. Although he was not a "starter", Joe was prepared to give his all at any time, whenever the opportunity was presented. Joe is a player that coaches love to coach. He understands the concept of being a team player, he understands the self-sacrifice of placing his own wants behind the needs of the team. Joe was selected several times throughout this season as our "Scout Player" of the week, as he never rested or took time off from pushing the starting offense or defense from doing their best.

Joe throughout the year, was a quiet leader, a leader by example. He was always the first to practice and the last to leave. Always taking care of the small details such as, picking up the locker room, cleaning up the weight room, making sure all of the practice equipment was brought up from the field – while never once pointing to himself to draw attention for what he was doing – he was doing it for the love of the game and for the love of the team and his football family.

Joe carried the same work ethic that I pointed out earlier, into the weight room during the in season and off season workouts and always put forth an incredible desire to get better, to get stronger and to push his teammates through pushing himself. He is one of the hardest workers that I have ever coached. He is a mature, intelligent and humble person.

Joe just loves to play the game and doesn't need the personal recognition that many other players his age require.

I cannot think of a more deserving person to receive this award. It has been an honor, to be able to coach Joe, as well as to be a part of his growth into a mature young man. Because of this, it is my pleasure to nominate him for this year's Black Lion Award.

Sincerely,

Ed Van Curen, Jr.
Head Football Coach
John S. Burke Catholic High School
Goshen, New York

Dear Coach Wyatt,

I would like to nominate Matt Press for the Black Lion Award. Matt is a second year starter on our Junior Varsity team who spent his Freshman year as a guard in a Wing T offense and an outside linebacker on our defense. Though undersized, he is extremely strong and quick. In 2009 we completely changed our offense and no longer needed quick guards. However, what we did need was a fullback. Matt embraced the opportunity to make the switch to a new position. True to form, Matt succeeded, not only playing fullback but playing tailback, outside line backer and kick returner. This at 5'5" and 150 pounds.

Matt was voted Team Captain by his peers. He continuously worked harder than anyone even with injuries and being pulled from the team to be backup for select Varsity games. He took the team on his shoulders and carried the ball thirty times a game as well as playing defense. It would have taken the Army to get him off of the field because Matt did not want to let his team down. He fought through a broken thumb and dislocated finger injury, never asking to come off of the field.

One morning on his way to school the Varsity fullback was injured in a car accident. Not only did Matt step up, he stepped up with the same intensity, heart, leadership and drive he had shown on J.V. He ran with the opportunity and when the injured Varsity player returned Matt rejoined his J.V. team with the same - team first - attitude he had always shown.

Our school has very strict rules as well as a dress code. When many other students are being disciplined for poor behavior or dress code violations, Matt never once was in trouble. He set an example off the field as well as on the field.

Matt Press is a special player who would run through walls for his teammates and his coaches. He is intense, exciting and determined, with the heart of a lion. Please accept Matt Press as my nomination for the Black Lion Award.

Sincerely,

Chris Lazzaro
Head J.V. Football Coach
John S. Burke Catholic High School
Goshen, New York

Coach Wyatt,

This years recipient of the Black lions Award at Ridgeview High School is Senior Fullback Jacob Hastings. Jacob is very deserving of this award because of his Team First attitude and his work ethic that he carried with him for four years of Mustang Football. Although Jacob was not the most talented player to come through Ridgeview, he was certainly the most deserving.

One example of Jacob's leadership is in the classroom where he has maintained a very high grade point average. Jacob spent lots of his own time tutoring some of our struggling players in Math the last two seasons. Jacob has played Guard, Tackle, Wing-back, Tight end and Fullback on offense and Cornerback, Defensive end and Safety on Defense since he has been here. Jacob was always willing to change positions for the good of the team and he was a smart enough kid to figure out the new position. Nothing was beneath Jacob as he very often stayed after practice to help us with clean up and other various duties.

Ridgeview is a rural district that includes five small towns and Jacob would always volunteer to take younger players home after workouts even if they didn't live in Cooksville (Jacob's home town).

I as well as the Mustangs coaching staff are very proud of Jacob Hastings and feel he is a worthy winner of this years Black Lions Award.

Respectfully,

Coach Mike Benton
Ridgeview High School
Colfax, Illinois

Dear Coach Wyatt,

I am pleased to nominate Cole O'Brien for our 2009 Black Lion Award. Cole played nose guard for us this year as a junior. He is only 5'10" and 215 lbs (well undersized for our league). Cole was constantly getting double-teamed. (I tell the defensive linemen a double-team is like a prize or trophy on your shelf. It takes two of their men to beat one of ours.) Cole was not often on the tackle (29 for the season) in our defensive schemes, but he never complained about his role and responsibility. Cole just kept coming to practice each day, working hard, and improving every day. He always went hard; when it was our defensive time in practice and when it was offensive time and he was the scout defensive lineman. Cole always had a smile on his face and seemed to thoroughly enjoy coming to practice each day. His work ethic in the offseason is just as exemplary. Cole is not a loud vocal leader, but his quiet determination and positive attitude are great examples for our team.

Sincerely,

Mark S. Hundley
Head Football Coach
Dublin Jerome High School
Dublin, Ohio

It is with great honor that I am writing you to nominate Andrew Etheridge as our winner of the Black Lion Award at Wichita Northwest High School for the 2009 season. Andrew is a talented young man who showed great leadership throughout the season. He was a vocal leader for his teammates and coaches. Andrew exhibited courage by publicly supporting his team and coaches when some people questioned their actions. He has been dedicated to his team, on and off the field. As the season began, Andrew, a strong safety for the past three seasons, was moved to outside linebacker by the coaching staff. He never complained. As the season progressed, it was determined that Andrew needed to be moved back to strong safety. He accepted the move just fine, doing what the coaches wanted and what was best for the team. Also a talented tailback who would be the starter on any other team, Andrew backed up a team mate at that position who was better than him. Andrew never said a word. He unselfishly accepted his role without asking for anything. He also played fullback and flanker when asked with the same attitude. Andrew's greatest desire is to be with and support his team mates. He has played through injuries to maintain this desire. Also being a state caliber hurdler, Andrew has never thought about specializing in track, an increasingly unique characteristic for today's high school athlete. He is the ultimate football team mate. These reasons are why our coaching staff has nominated Andrew Etheridge for the Black Lion Award for the 2009 season.

Weston Schartz
Head Football Coach
Wichita Northwest High School
Wichita, Kansas

Hugh

Our season ends this week and although we have struggled on the field, there is no struggle regarding our 2009

Black Lion nominee. Last year we introduced the Don Holleder story to my new school and it made a huge impact on our kids. I want to again thank you for helping to create the Black Lion Award and for all you have done to keep Don Holleder's spirit of sacrifice and dedication alive.

This year our Black Lion nominee is Patrick Kalbac. Patrick is a senior running back and safety and also serves as one of our captains. It is in this area that Black Lion qualities are seen the most. As I said, this season has been a tough one. We graduated 17 seniors from last year's State Playoff team so we started the year with a real void in our leadership. Patrick was one of the very few returning starters and he immediately picked up the leadership baton. He was already seen by his team-mates as a fiery competitor (tough kid in an undersized package!) but now another side emerged – Patrick would challenge his team-mates to give their all, and in the next minute, he would pat a younger player on the back or offer some positive words of encouragement to all. His work ethic and heart were never in question – by player or coach – and because of the example he set, we became better than we really were.

As the weeks went by, and the losses began to mount, Patrick never backed off – either in challenging our players to strive on, to give their best, or in his never ending encouragement to everyone, starter and back up alike! We took some serious defeats, and yet Patrick stayed true to being a positive leader. When we FINALLY scored our first touchdown, an 80 yard run by Patrick, he turned around and congratulated every team-mate on the field and continued to do so when he got to our sideline. It was one of the finest acts of sacrificial leadership that I have seen in a long time! The same scene was repeated – and then some – during our first victory which happened 2 weeks ago, and again last week, when we were pummeled by a far superior opponent. Whether ahead or behind, in victory or defeat, Patrick has remained true to this team. He has been our rock – its inspiring as a coach to see this degree of positive leadership!

Patrick could have bailed on this team when things first started to turn, or he could have stayed and taken the easy route of complainer and team cancer. His perseverance over this season's challenges has been highly commendable and his exemplary leadership has simply been outstanding. It is with great honor that I present for nomination – Palmer Trinity's Black Lion Candidate, Patrick Kalbac. I know that Jim Shelton and Steve Goodman will be proud of this young man.

Thanks again Hugh, for helping to create this great award to help honor the memory of Don Holleder.

BLACK LIONS, SIR!

Jake von Scherrer, Director of Athletics

Palmer Trinity School
Palmetto Bay, Florida

Dear Coach Wyatt,

On behalf of the coaching staff at Vancouver Christian High School, I would like to take this opportunity to nominate one of our players for the annual Black Lion Award. In our minds this player definitely fits the criteria exemplified by Major Holleder and the men of the 28th Infantry. The player we would like to nominate is Caleb Millay

Caleb is a four year letterman for VCHS. As a freshman, Caleb demonstrated a lot of courage and determination. He was a backup cornerback and quarterback. He learned the quarterback position due to the prompting of the coaches. It was not his first choice, but as coaches we saw the potential and we wanted to develop a young athlete to be our future QB. Following his freshman year is when we saw his determination and drive to develop as a quarterback really take off. He spent time during the spring and summer working with coach Wyatt on his personal skills as well as the offense. Caleb also organized practice sessions with other players. Athletes would gather together to work on offensive skills during the spring and summer due to Caleb's leadership.

Caleb was starting at QB his sophomore, junior and senior year. He also played some cornerback his junior. During his senior year he was a starter at quarterback and cornerback. There is no doubt that Caleb's leadership

skills and his confidence has grown from year to year. He was and is devoted to being the best that he can be. Throughout his high school career he has sacrificed personal time to be better for the team. His training and football ambitions were for the team not his personal gain.

Caleb Millay exhibits the character traits of a Black Lion winner: leadership, courage, devotion to duty, self-sacrifice and an unselfish concern for the team. His constant pursuit of the teams growth and success is why Caleb Millay is our 2009 nominee for the Black Lion Award.

Sincerely,

Roger Miller, head football coach
and coaches of Vancouver Christian High School
Vancouver, Washington

Members of the Black Lion Award Selection Board,

It is an honor and privilege to be able to recommend one of my players for the Black Lion Award. His name is Justin Nambo, and it has been very satisfying coaching this young man and watching him develop from the ages of 14 to 18.

Justin did not come into our high school as a star player. In fact, he didn't even start on the freshman team. However, through his dedication and sacrifice (and some physical maturity) he made himself into, arguably, the best defensive lineman in our conference.

He was not only dedicated to making himself better, but led the charge during off-season training. He helped and encouraged others who were less confident and was definitely a key figure in boosting our off-season workout attendance and intensity.

Being a captain sometimes requires that you do the unpopular or uncool thing. Justin had the courage to do the right things when others would not have. He helped to keep his teammates focused and made the right thing to do into the cool thing to do. We had a very tough schedule, facing 5 state ranked teams from larger classes, and we had some tough nights. Justin wouldn't let anybody hang their heads or quit. That fighting spirit helped our defense keep us in those games.

This past season, he switched from nose tackle, where he was all-conference as a junior, to defensive end, a position he had never played. He knew it was to get another player on the field and that it was for the betterment of the team. He embraced this move. Justin unselfishly wrecked traps and did a lot of dirty work in our 3-3 that inspired teammates and coaches, but would not often get him noticed by reporters or radio announcers. Justin never complained.

Justin also took on the challenge of learning every offensive line position so he could serve as a top back-up on that side of the ball. All too often, kids view themselves as defense or offense only and won't put forth their best effort in becoming a capable player on the other side of the ball. Just as he embraced the defensive position change, he came through for us on offense when we needed him. He did his duty.

Knowing how much we needed him, Justin played through a lot of pain this year. He broke a bone in his hand during the first game and it was too swollen to cast for the second game. The doctor put a splint on him and explained the risks of playing to Justin and his father. Justin played in week 2 and found out the next day that the bone had moved and that he would now need surgery. We were lucky to schedule the surgery for that Monday and he missed only one game. The doctor begrudgingly gave Justin a release so he could come back against our conference rival in week 4 - and he had monster game.

I have no other player on my team who is more deserving of this award than Justin Nambo.

Thank You,
Jason Bland, Head Coach

Hall High School
Spring Valley, Illinois

The 2009 nominee for the Black Lion Award from the Danville Panthers B-Team is Bryson Levi Justice.

Bryson is truly a deserving candidate. The award specifies criteria and I will touch on Bryson's contributions to the team within the award criteria.

Bryson provided leadership to the team as a senior player in the age category. Several children were playing in their first year and Bryson would always tell them to try as hard as they could. Keeping them motivated and helping them up when they were down. If one missed a tackle in practice, Bryson would provide them with positive words, like "you can do it" "Keep working", several young children would always look for Bryson at the beginning of practice just to hear him encourage them to do their best. Bryson would always help get the practice gear ready and be one of the last kids off the field, by helping pick up our equipment, and pick up trash that others had left behind.

Courage-Bryson is a small child, and sometimes he would have to go against some of the biggest children in the league. Bryson would always go at his assignment with full attentiveness. Which will bring us to self-sacrifice. When Bryson would face an opponent that was bigger and better than he was, he would come to the coaches and ask them to play someone that could handle the situation, one that could make a block that he couldn't. No matter how bad he wanted to play in the game, he knew if he was not making the block, the team could not succeed. His self sacrifice of putting his team above his wants was second to none. If he didn't start a game, he understood that someone had worked harder in practice, and he knew that he had to work harder to get to EARN his position. He NEVER second guessed the coaches decision to start another kid in front of him.

Bryson's devotion to duty was apparent in his attendance of practice. Bryson only missed one practice out of 56. He would come in early to practice to work on things that he knew he needed to work on, and would ask for instruction at every practice if he felt that he needed to work on something that was giving him trouble. He studied every game film that his mother taped, and at 10 years-old, understands what it takes to succeed as a football player.

As a last year player on our B-Team, Bryson knows that he must study and work to get better to play on the A-Team (10-11-12 year olds) next season. He continues to watch and study the game of football, from the Middle School team to the High School Team. He will go to every game and while most children will be up walking and playing, Bryson will sit in the stands and watch the game.

We hope that this letter will be approved and Bryson will be awarded the Black Lion Award. He is truly a deserving candidate. We look forward to hearing from you.

Bryan Justice
Danville Panthers Midget Football League
Danville, West Virginia

To whom it may concern,

I would like to nominate Bobby (BJ) Berry for the Black Lion Award. This is our third year being a Black Lion team and we are honored to be a Black Lion team. I really feel that BJ's leadership and character qualify him for this award.

This was my third year coaching 11-12 year old age group. This year the league decided that we would have no returning players. BJ had played for a friend of mine last year. After watching him pass over BJ three times, I decided to draft BJ. I am very happy with my decision. BJ is easily the life blood of our team. He may not be the biggest kid or the fastest kid, but he plays with more heart than any one else on the field.

BJ never missed any practice time. At practice, he would be the first player in line for any drill that we ran. He would also help explain the drills to his teammates. He would also be seen offering words of encouragement to his teammates as well. After making tackles during our drills or during practice he would help the players up. This is a practice that he would also demonstrate during the games as well. He played in the backfield for us as our C Back. He never complained about getting enough carries and he always blocked for his teammates.

We knew that BJ was a high character kid when during our jamboree, he fumbled the football. After the jamboree, he apologized to his team and coaches for fumbling the football. He did not fumble again the rest of the season.

Please accept the nomination of BJ Berry for the Black Lion award. BJ's dedication to the team and his attitude are evidence that he exemplifies the character of Major Holleder.

Thanks,
Brad Usry, Head Coach
Columbia County Recreation Department Bears
Martinez, Georgia

Coach Wyatt,

I would like to nominate Matthew Nathan for our 12 year old/7th grade Atlanta Colts Black Lion Award for 2009. He is an exceptional kid that clearly demonstrates what we believe to be the character traits of the Black Lion Award. He is selfless in his play and his leadership on and off the field. He puts team above self at all times. He sacrifices his own wants and desires for the betterment of the team. There are many small examples of this that we witnessed throughout the season but the one that sticks out is that he had played QB at another park (he transferred to the ACYA prior to this year) and his teams had had very little success. When asked where he preferred to play this year he stated that he would play anywhere that helped his team to win. So he went from the glory position of Quarterback and we put him at Offensive Guard and LB. All the kids on the field respect him including his teammates and opponents. Even the parents in the stands make comments about his abilities and his great attitude. When he talks to the team they even answer to him as Yes Sir and No sir. That is coming from a bunch of 12 year olds! I feel that there is not a better candidate for your prestigious award and here by request that the committee strongly consider awarding this fine young man a 2009 Black Lion Award. He is a great kid and a great leader on this team and we feel he is very deserving of this great and prestigious award. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Thank you,

Coach Dave Fleming
Head 7th Grade Football Coach
Atlanta Colt Youth Association
Atlanta, Georgia

Coach Wyatt,

This award as it is dedicated to a great warrior and leader and is in place to recognize players of all ages, for striving above all and overcoming the complexities of being young men. The Black Lion Award is meant for players like Kyle Riley. Kyle is an exceptional young man who puts his team and teammates above all during the season. This award was made for players like Kyle who puts aside all personal gains for the success of the team. This year was the year for Kyle, a real chance to move into a running back spot and carry ball. However, early in the preseason when the prospective center injured his leg and was out, Kyle stepped in and offered himself to the team. Kyle put his personal goals aside for the better of his team. He is the ultimate leader, never a bad word to his or about any of his teammates. Kyle, never talks down to his teammates even when times were tough. He often took a lot of blame and responsibility for bad things happening. You can often find him giving the players words of encouragement. When his teams have been in those spots where they need a big play or in a big game it's always seems to Kyle Riley who stands up for the "call to duty". All of his teammates past and present will miss Kyle when

he is no longer playing on their team. He has on many occasions played hurt without notifying the coaching staff showing he always puts his team and game above himself. He is not only a great athlete but a scholar athlete. Kyle is an excellent example to many younger players in our organization on how to conduct you as a player and a person. This year was a special year with the DYFC Midgets and there could have been a half a dozen players to receive this award, it was Kyle whose sacrifices most benefited the team. This award couldn't go to a better young man.

Coach Jeff Clay
Midget Coach
Dixon Rams
Dixon, California

Dear Coach Wyatt, I nominate Devan Turner for the 2009 Dixon Ram's Black Lion Award. Devan is one of the most valuable players on our team. Devan's character, leadership, courage, devotion to duty, self-sacrifice, and his concern for his team ahead of himself has exemplified the character of Don Holleder.

Devan is a great athlete but what sets him apart from others is his attitude, work ethic and his dedication to the team. Devan is committed to excellence, and puts forth the extra effort needed to achieve it. Devan does not talk much but he leads by example. Devan's work ethic, positive attitude and silent confidence has allowed him to earn the respect of his coaches, team and opponents.

During practices, Devan always puts forth "GAME DAY" effort. Devan is a true "PLAYMAKER". Devan's work ethic, positive attitude and dedication to his team is refreshing and appreciated by all. Devan plays offense, defense and special teams. He is an outstanding running back, safety and special teams player. It is not uncommon for Devan to make numerous devastating blocks, spectacular runs and touchdown saving tackles during our games.

Devan understands "Dixon's Three D's" (DEDICATION, DESIRE and DISCIPLINE) are the key factors of success. Devan's commitment to his team is only second to family, faith and education. Devan's other areas of interest are second to football during the season. It is obvious that Devan has a wishing or longing for success in football. Devan understands if you desire something, you are willing to do whatever it takes to get it and he is willing to sacrifice other areas of interest for the aim. For Devan; just being on the team is not enough. The desire to contribute because he loves the game drives and pushes him to do better because perfection is his goal. Devan has discipline and he pushes himself to the limit. Devan does whatever is asked without question.

Devan "HONORS THE GAME" of football. He honors the letter and spirit of the rules without complaint. Rather than demeaning a strong opponent, Devan honors strong opponents because he knows they challenge us to do our best. Devan understands that athletes can be both fierce and friendly during the same competition (in one moment Devan gives everything to get to a loose ball, and in the next moment he helps an opponent up). Devan always shows respect for opposing coaches, players and the officials and this sets the tone for the rest of the team.

Coach Troy Fry
Dixon, California

Coach Wyatt,

Black Lion Award Jonathan Ross Lapham

Jonathan's story is very similar to that of DON HOLLEDER; Jonathan is one of the best athletes on the team but considering we field freshman and sophomores only playing a varsity schedule in our first year. We needed help on the offensive line, we now start 5 freshmen on the line including our tight end the only sophomore playing is our captain and center Nathan Alvarez. We asked Jonathan to move to left tackle even though he was a major standout in all of our passing leagues games and passing tournaments at tight-end.

We knew that being undersized and inexperienced we would need to control the clock, we are now running a balanced full spin single wing offense. Jonathan has really taken to the "O-Line brotherhood" thing and has embraced his new role; he has stepped up as a true leader on the field and in the classroom and community. Our last

game we ran for 433 yards and Jonathan was the main reason we were so successful.

Jonathan would do anything for his team and is a true leader and is on our school honor role with at 3.6 g.p.a. (5 A's and 1 C)

Thanks

Pete Smolin
Head Coach
Citrus Valley HS Blackhawk Football
Redlands California

To Whom It May Concern:

As Head Football Coach at Shenango High School in New Castle, PA, I would like to nominate Vincent Malz for the Black Lion Award. We have participated in the Black Lion program ever since I was given the job two years ago. Our kids receive information on it during two-a-days and a special ad is taken out in our program for the winners of the award. It has become our most prestigious post-season award.

Vincent makes an outstanding candidate because he meets all of the requirements. He is a starter at inside linebacker and fullback. He was fourth on the team in tackles despite missing two games with a dislocated shoulder. In addition to serving as the blocking fullback, he was our backup center because he's started nine games there the year before. He did this despite only being 175 pounds. Secondly, he meets the virtues that the award represents. He had perfect attendance at summer conditioning. He helped instill the toughness and work ethic that our program has been seeking. Along with our other seniors, he helped turn us from a 3-7 (1-6) football team into a 5-4 (3-4) team. The younger kids look up to Vinny because he is a self-made player. If not for his dedication in the weight room, Vinny would have been a career backup. However, due to his dedication, he has experienced a lot of success.

Thank you for considering my request. We are proud to be apart of the Black Lion family.

Sincerely,

Coach Ryan Mayo
Shenango High School
New Castle, Pennsylvania

Coach:

I would like to formally nominate Dyllon McKinney as the candidate from Crystal Lake Central for the 2009 Black Lion Award. Whenever I think about people who are deserving of this great award I use three basic criterion - unselfish character, loyalty to team, and finally who I would want to see sitting next to me in a foxhole when the bullets are flying (trust).

Dyllon McKinney missed the majority of his freshman year due to a kidney operation. He worked so hard in the weight room in the off-season that he became the fourth strongest kid on the VARSITY team prior to his sophomore season. We brought him up to the varsity as a sophomore and he spent about 50% of the varsity snaps at right wingback. He had a long way to go and much to learn but he took it in stride and never once complained about the lack of carries and the major bumps and bruises he took from the bigger and older kids.

Needless to say we were expecting big things from him as a junior wingback starter this fall. In June, he broke his foot in two places and had to be in a walking boot. He missed almost all of the summer workouts but still got in all upper body lifts and completed 1.5 hours of cardio each day (6 days a week) on the exercise bike (with the boot on).

As doubles started he was able to get back to full strength and helped us get out of the gate fairly strong. During the week 4 game he tore up his knee and the doctor said he was probably out for 5-7 weeks. He would not accept the diagnosis and began rehab sessions with a local doctor. He came back in 2 weeks and played week 7, 8 and 9 to

finish up the regular season. In week 8 the kid broke small bones in his right hand and played the rest of the season and all playoff games taped up and with his hand basically useless.

Despite three injuries that would set most kids back, he rushed for over 550 yards and led the team in receptions. He never complained about the pain or the adversity in front of him, but rather always focused on what he could do to get back on the football field with his teammates.

Of course on top of all these fine traits, the young man is a leader and great all around kid. 3.75/4.0 GPA in the classroom as well. For all of the above items I feel that Dyllon McKinney is fine and deserving candidate for the Black Lion Award of 2009.

Thank you for all you do with this award as well as the Black Lions and the Don Holleder family members who I know are also actively involved.

Bill Lawlor
Crystal Lake Central High School
Crystal Lake, Illinois

Coach Wyatt:

I would like to nominate Brenden Tustison for the Black Lion Award. Brenden is the Bulldawg's heart. When he's pounding the ball and opposing players, our team is assured a victory. Brenden started out second in the depth chart at running back, but quickly moved up to first string due to his unrelenting pursuit of excellence and his devotion to execute the coaching at 100% effort. Brenden is not the fastest running back that we have, but the team knows that when he gets the ball we are going to get positive yards.

Brenden's quiet calm at practice moves to furious leadership during game days. When Brenden gets pumped, the team gets moving. I can always count on Brenden to motivate his teammates to achieve. Showing a true understanding of the team effort it takes to play football, whenever he gets a good play running the ball, he congratulates his offensive line and his lead blocker.

The guiding theme for this year's Bulldawgs was Team, Respect, and Effort x 2. We always say that effort takes no talent and Brenden gave 100% on every play, whether he was the ball carrier, blocker, or tackler.

He was a shining example of respect, showing it to not only his teammates, but to the coaches, opposing players and referees. Brenden is a true ambassador for Ramona Bulldawgs football.

Finally, he showed a true devotion to the Team, willing to play any position to make the Team better. Brenden played at running back, wide receiver, quarterback, and even guard on offense and safety and linebacker on defense. I knew that no matter where I put Brenden he would be an impact player.

With a respectful devotion to hard work and 100% effort, Brenden has shown his team that a never quit attitude can carry you a long way. He leads through both words and, most importantly, actions. I look forward to watching Brenden grow into a great leader both on and off the football field.

On behalf of the Ramona Pop Warner Midgets I thank you for your time and consideration.

Matt Lisowski
Head Coach
Ramona Midget Bulldawgs
Ramona, California

Dear Coach Wyatt:

The following pages are write ups describing our Black Lion nominees for the 2009 season. I registered for this season a couple of weeks ago, and am now sending the write-ups from their coaches. All of our teams are called the Junior Black Knights and we have five teams: Mighty Mites, Division 1 Gold, Division 1 Black, Division 2, and Division 3.

We have an annual awards banquet where we have all of our players and cheerleaders together. It is about 450 people total. To tie in with the Black Lion, our guest speaker every year since we have been part of your program has been Army's Black Lion winner. Quite an experience for our kids.

Thank you again for providing this opportunity to the kids.

Sincerely,
Ben Liotta
President
Junior Black Knights Youth Football
Fort Montgomery, New York

MIGHTY MITES:

Bryan Jones is a six year old boy playing the game like a sixteen year old. Not because of his physical prowess, he is not one of the bigger players on the field. Not because of his incredible skill, he is only six, after all. He stands out above the rest because of his love of the game, his enthusiasm for the game, and his attention towards his teammates. Bryan is always looking after his teammates, and as impressionable as kids are at this age, they feed off of the way he goes about playing the game.

Bryan plays wherever the coaches want him to. He wants to carry the ball but plays the line because that's where the team needs him, and he plays the position with passion. Bryan is the type of kid, even at this young age that respects his coaches, and does what is best for the team. Bryan shows he has the characteristics of Major Holleder of leadership, courage, and team above self, and he is the perfect choice for the Black Lion award, and will bring honor to the award.

DIVISION 1 BLACK:

After reading what the Black Lion Award symbolizes, and taking in its true intent, it is my pleasure to have Benny Storms represents our team as black Lon winner. This was Benny's 3rd year playing football. In his 3 years he has shown what it takes to be a leader of his team, not only being the quarterback or safety, but by being a football player that other players look up to and turn to him when they need help.

Benny makes sure everybody is in the right positions before a play starts. He plays every play like the game's on the line and never gives up. Benny plays every play of every game, and refuses to let fatigue pull him out of the game. The other players feed off of his enthusiasm and hard work, and dedication. He has the heart and desire to be a leader, and truly plays for the team and not for himself. Benny exemplifies the characteristics, and qualities of Don Holleder, and these attributes make him a worthy candidate for the Black Lion Award.

DIVISION 1 GOLD:

While reading and understanding truly what the Black Lion Award represents a few of the kids stood out, but one of them stood above the rest and not because he was one of the biggest players on the team.

Jack Kelly, all 2'4" 46 lbs of him, was always at practice playing every position asked of him to play. Jack took on all comers no matter the size; he took some of the biggest hits from some of the biggest players.

Jack also conducted all warm up drills for practice without waiting for coaches to start; once the drills started he commanded the other players' attention and respect. Jack has never been shy about sticking his tiny frame in on a player to make a tackle or block no matter the size of the other player.

Jack definitely exemplifies the character of Don Holleder, and he is very deserving of this honor of being selected as a Black Lion.

DIVISION 2

Tristan Ryan is a 10 year old on the Junior Black Knights Division 2 team. He is in his first season at this level, where the games gets faster, the kids get bigger, and the hits get harder. Tristan showed from day 1 that he was ready for this challenge. He played both offense and defense, delivering the blows and absorbing the blows.

As the fullback in our Single wing offense Tristan was responsible for getting the plays from the sidelines, calling it in the huddle and getting his teammates together to run the right play. Many times as the fullback he was asked to get the tough yards, up the middle. He took shot after shot from the defense; got back up, ready to call the next play. Whether he fumbled, scored a touchdown, or executed a block, after we turned the ball back over to the opposition, Tristan was ready to switch to defense.

On hot days, cold days, rainy days when asked if he was alright, the answer was always yes, with a scowl on his face, ready to execute on the next down.

Tristan exemplifies the character of MAJ Don Holleder of leadership, courage, and team above self by the way he carried himself on the practice field, and game field. He will wear the Black Lion patch with honor, and will be a great ambassador for what the Black Lion Award stands for.

DIVISION 3:

As the Head Coach of the Division 3 Junior Black Knights, it is my honor to nominate Kyle Kilner for the Black Lion Award. Of all the players I have coached, Kyle's leadership, determination, attitude, and skill stand alone.

The son of an Army Officer, it is obvious that Kyle understands the core Army values and the meaning of teamwork. As the team's tailback, Kyle is a dominant force on the field. When he is heard screaming and dragging defenders down the field, he motivates all our players to give it their all for their team, and brings fear to his opponents. As a full-time running back and linebacker, Kyle refuses to let injury or fatigue take him from the field.

The team sees Kyle as a rallying point on every play, whether he is running, tackling, or clearing a hole for one of his teammates. I believe Kyle Kilner will bring honor to MAJ Don Holleder by proudly displaying the Black Lion Emblem on his Jersey.

To Whom it may Concern:

I have nominated P.T. Vercher as our Black Lion Award Winner for 2009. He shows everything you could want in a football player. He loves the game as much as any player on the team. He has the brightest smile on the field, and it truly lifts all of his teammates up.

He started out as a 2nd string player and eventually worked his way up to starting at Defensive Tackle on our team. He also played a little Defensive End, too. Even though he was a backup to start the season, his attitude never faltered. He was always positive from day one, and truly made it a joy to coach this team. He is one of our bigger players, who doesn't have all of the athletic ability, but has the heart of a Lion, which happens to be our mascot.

He would seek me out and thank me personally after every practice, which shows discipline and respect. He would get kids fired up after a big play by celebrating. He never once complained about only playing defense. When he got his chance, the one defensive lineman that would always track down a ball carrier, was #8. He didn't always make the play, but even when facing better opponents, he would always be near the ball at the end. His courage, leadership, respect, and true unselfishness is what youth football is all about and I wish I had about 10 more just like him. We had a few that fit that criteria, and his joy to play football is what sets him apart. I look forward to coaching him for the next two years until he reaches middle school.

Sincerely,

Chris Rasco, Head Coach
2009 105 lb. Cahaba Valley Lions
Pelham, Alabama

Dear Coach Rasco:

I am happy and humbled to receive the Black Lion award for the 105 pound Cahaba Valley Lions football team. We have a number of great players who are all worthy of winning this terrific award. Thank you for choosing me.

The best thing to me is winning an award given in memory of a true American hero, Major Don Holleder. As I read the story of Major Holleder and his service to our country, I realized that his sacrifices long ago allow me the opportunity to play football today.

I hope that I will be able to show the same courage, leadership, dedication and sacrifices as I grow older not just in sports but in life. If I am able to accomplish even a small fraction of the things Major Holleder did, then I will be grateful and consider my life a success.

I thank God for Major Holleder and the Black Lion Regiment and I proudly accept this great honor.

Sincerely,
Paul (PT) Vercher

Dear Coach Wyatt,

It is my pleasure to nominate Drew Michelson as this year's Black Lion Award Recipient.

Drew exemplified everything the award is about during our season. We had a difficult season, finishing with an 0-8 record. We moved up to playing teams that are normally part of Division 1 and 2 and that regularly fielded 35 to 50 players. We had 22 and as the season progressed were down to 16 by the end due to injuries.

Despite our setbacks, Drew showed up to play every single game and practice and gave 110%. He never lost his enthusiasm for the game and actually built on our situation to really step into a team leadership role. He was a real leader who always inspired his team mates with his guts, physical play and positive attitude.

Throughout the season Drew was asked to play several different positions as we attempted to adjust to the competition and gave an outstanding effort ALL of time. So much so that we noticed the other teams intentionally running their offense away from him as games progressed. We had him adjust to both left and right sides of the line depending on the play so we could run off his blocks late in the season and had much success. It is a special lineman that is feared and noticed by opposing coaches, and Drew was that player every game, on both sides of the ball.

It was a real pleasure coaching Drew this year, he is what all the youth players should aspire to be in a football player and teammate.

Sincerely,

Coach Jeff Pilon
Plymouth, Massachusetts

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of Coach Mike Glennie and the entire Hornet Coaching Staff I would like to submit Jarrod Mahoney as our recipient of the Black Lion Award for the 2009 Saline Football Team. It has been our privilege to have Jarrod on our varsity team the past two seasons.

Jarrod has been a quarterback in our program since 7th grade, working hard every year to improve his skills and be the best teammate he possibly could be each and every year. As a junior he was a back up quarterback to our senior and spent the majority of the season running scout team quarterback and giving his absolute best effort in everything

he did for the betterment of the team. As it came time for his senior season our team had a senior move in quarterback and a junior a year behind him that are both elite quarterbacks. Jarrod did not play one down at quarterback this season. This has not changed the way Jarrod Mahoney has conducted himself. He has continued to bring a positive attitude, work hard and come to practice, workouts and school with the mentality of "Team First". This season, Jarrod played tight end and receiver while also continuing to work as a quarterback and scout team leader.

From the second his junior year ended Jarrod assumed the leadership role for the team in the offseason, he led and organized the morning workouts for the QB's/ Receivers, and weightlifting. He helped organize our fundraising efforts, and insured that everyone did their parts. When people questioned his speed he joined the track team and worked as hard as possible at developing his speed. As the head track coach I have no problem with football kids coming out to use us for speed development but demand that they give proper respect to the sport. Even though he was a rookie in track, he became one of the juniors I could count on to lead the warm up drills, and instruct younger sprinters on the proper running technique.

To me he is the kind of kid that we all yearn for in this me first generation. He is a yes sir no sir type of kid.

Although he was replaced at QB by 2 more talented QB's (The transfer kid is an elite 11 qb that has a full ride to Michigan State and will be playing in the east west all star game in San Antonio. When Joe Boisture (the transfer student) moved in, Jarrod was the first to welcome him onto the team and was instrumental in getting the new guy acclimated to the Saline way of doing things. He spent countless hours teaching the new QB the steps to our offense and helped teach him all of the protection schemes that he had to learn. Although no longer playing QB, Jarrod was still the team leader. He moved to TE and was a monster blocker for our offense. Having a new guy come in could have been very divisive in the locker room but Jarrod would not let that distract the team from preparing for the season.

Jarrod works hard to make those around him a better player, a sign of an unselfish teammate. The qualities demonstrated by Jarrod Mahoney make it a pleasure to nominate him as our recipient of the Black Lion Award for 2009.

Al Leslie
Saline HS
Saline, Michigan

IRVINE CHARGERS, Irvine, California

Dear Irvine Chargers Board of Directors and Black Lion Committee:

It my pleasure to nominate RJ Villamar as a Black Lion award recipient for the Irvine Chargers Jr. Pee Wee team for 2009. RJ has been a selfless and committed team player for several seasons within our organization; however, this year his level of commitment, leadership, and selflessness have demonstrated to his coaches that he is worthy of the title "Black Lion."

More than any other single attribute, RJ demonstrates "an unselfish concern for the team ahead of himself." Similar to Major Holleder, RJ was asked to play a new position this year – one which with he was both uncomfortable and unfamiliar. He did so willingly and with a focus on helping his team improve. In truth, RJ would have excelled this year in his original position, but he responded to my request and his team's need, and did so willingly and without complaint.

RJ is a quiet leader among his teammates, but willingly helps others whenever and wherever he recognizes a need – often this is done by example. I've found that in coaching youth sports, it is at times difficult to identify how young players demonstrate leadership with each other and they learn this new and subjective characteristic. However, RJ's leadership and influence has never been a question in my mind or his teammates'. RJ's teammates voted him as their team representative to our league's all-conference game played at the end of the season. This is an honor voted on by the players based on who they would like to have represent them in the game; it is not based on the most valuable player on the team. I can't think of a greater honor for a leader than to know his teammates view him as such.

Finally, RJ demonstrated his commitment to his team by staying with his team this year. RJ's weight at the beginning of the season made it so that he would be required to move up a division. Knowing that he could contribute to the team as a leader and example at the lower division, and wanting to play with the teammates with whom he had played throughout his brief football career, he made this sacrifice to lose weight and played at the lower level. RJ is absolutely confident that he made the correct decision to help his team, even though the upper division team won their league title and our team did not.

I am convinced that RJ Villamar demonstrates the characteristics of a Black Lion. Namely, these attributes are courage, leadership, devotion to duty, and a commitment to team ahead of himself. It is my honor to nominate this young man for this important and meaningful award, and I hope you will award RJ the title of Black Lion.

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Humphrey
Irvine Chargers
Jr Pee Wee Head Coach

Dear Irvine Chargers Board of Directors and Black Lion Committee:

It my pleasure to nominate Johnathan Schiazzano as a Black Lion award recipient for the Irvine Chargers Pee Wee team for 2009.

The Black Lion website states: "The Black Lion Award is NOT an individual award in the same sense as a Most Valuable Player award, because it is intended to go to a player who personifies team play - "who best exemplifies the character of Don Holleder: leadership, courage, devotion to duty, self-sacrifice, and - above all - an unselfish concern for the team ahead of himself."

No player on my team better exemplifies the meaning of team play than Johnathan. Known as Schizz, Johnathan prepared the entire off-season to play quarterback by attending camps and working with trainers. Nevermind the fact that Schizz is our second team quarterback and the first team quarterback is all-league – he worked to improve and prepare himself just in case he was needed. In the meantime, Schizz works as our jack of all trades, filling in at whatever position he is asked to play on a given day and receiving limited playing time in games. He does all of this with a smile and tremendously upbeat attitude that forces his teammates and coaches to take notice. In every possible way, Schizz puts others before himself and demonstrates a commitment to team before all else.

In addition, he leads by example without uttering a single word of complaint. He demonstrates courage as he faces our first defense as a scout quarterback (often receiving bruises for his effort) and competes on a daily basis with our number 1 quarterback. His commitment is second to none, and I don't recall him being absent for a single practice this year, which began the last week of July.

Any team or individual could benefit by associating with an individual who demonstrates the character, desire, motivation, and attitude that Johnathan Schiazzano displays for our team and it is my great pleasure to nominate him for this award.

Respectfully submitted,

Lavance Northington
Irvine Chargers
Pee Wee Head Coach

Dear Irvine Chargers Board,

It is an honor and privilege to nominate Brent Miller for the 2009 Black Lion Award.

Once I researched the criteria and read about Don Holleder Brent's name immediately popped in my head. Brent's unselfish, team first attitude and work ethic make him the ultimate teammate. Brent has one speed, full speed, and

has lead by example since the first day of practice, pushing his teammates to go harder. His hard nose, no fear play allows him to play much bigger then he is. Brent is our full back and linebacker, at 75 pounds!!! He blocks linebackers and tackles running backs 15 to 20 pounds heavier then him every day in practice and every game, never backing down, showing great courage.

He is the perfect example of "it's the size of your heart, not your body, that makes you a football player." Brent is a quite leader who speaks volumes through his actions on the football field, sacrificing touchdowns for blocking the way, making big hits on defense, stepping up and volunteering first for any drill, against any player, and finishing strong at the end of each practice during conditioning drills.

Most importantly, off the field Brent is a polite, respectful boy, who will live up to the honorable qualities of this award.

Respectfully submitted,

Coach Steve Morini
Irvine Clinic Gold Chargers

Dear Irvine Chargers Board,

While this was a difficult choice with so many players showing selfless devotion to the team, courage in the line of fire, and strong leadership on and off the field, Jonathan Daniels (JT) stood tallest among his teammates.

In drills, JT leads by example, working as hard as anyone on the team. At quarterback, JT has maintained his composure in situations where doing so meant he would expose himself to getting hit by the defense. When JT does get hit, he shakes it off and gets back into the game, playing at full speed. And on defense, JT's aggressive play at defensive end makes it difficult for opponents to run against him.

JT's mental toughness, strong work ethic, and coolness under fire have earned him the respect of his coaches and teammates. It is for these and other reasons that the Irvine Charger Clinic Blue Team is proud to make JT Daniels its Black Lion Award recipient.

Regards,

Steve Daniels
Head Coach
Clinic Blue

Dear Sir/Madam:

Parker Weisrock is my nominee for the Black Lion Award for the Irvine Junior Clinic Chargers.

Parker is a true team player. Not only did he play key positions on offense, defense and special teams, but he did it with full effort every time he stepped on the field. Offensively he played tight-end and was always a key blocker in our schemes. Defensively he made tackles, sacks, fumbles and even scored at TD. Special teams he was our kicker when we needed him to be and if I moved him from kicker he would never ask why, he would just do what we needed him to do.

More important than his contribution on the field in fulfilling his assignments, Parker does everything with a big smile. I can always look at Parker and see a smile on his face.

Parker has proven himself to be a leader on our team. His leadership qualities include: always giving 100 percent, listening to his coaches and setting the example. He lead our team quietly by example from the first day of practice.

Parker's unselfish commitment to the wellbeing of the team is the strongest reason for his nomination.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Bautista, Jr.
Head Coach
Irvine Chargers, Junior Clinic

Dear Irvine Chargers Board,

I would like to nominate one player for the flag 7-8 team for the Black Lion award and that player is Robert Knibb (RJ). Before I start, I want you to know that I know this is not an MVP nomination. With that being said, he is hands down the best player on our team, which is full of talent.

I believe that he is easily the best player in the entire conference for his age group. He's been blessed with natural speed, strength and athleticism, but this isn't why I'm nominating him. RJ Knibb works harder than I've ever seen a youth work at his age. I'm a very demanding coach and through the hundreds of sprints and drills we have put these boys through, he has never performed one at anything less than 100% of his effort. His work ethic is phenomenal and he leads his team by example.

He has the highest respect from all of his coaches and every one of his team mates. His team mates all want to do better and try harder every time he's near them. It is my sincere wish that RJ Knibb be awarded this honor for the Flag 7-8 team. Please feel free to call or contact me via e-mail if you have any questions.

Highest Regards,

Coach Nick Aguirre

Dear Irvine Chargers Board,

As head coach of the Jr. Flag division for the Irvine Chargers, I recommend Michael Mathews as the Black Lion Award recipient.

Michael Mathews embodies what a Black Lion award winner should be. As Jr Flag division leading running back, Michael is the consummate team player. He is always willing to give his teammates a helping hand or an additional word of encouragement. When asked to do something other than run the ball, he does it at 100% with no complaints. Although he is one of the best running backs for his age group, he is a devastating blocker who is not afraid to go against players twice his size. Michael plays every play in a game full speed and never tells you that he is fatigued.

Michael is not afraid to play hurt which has happened a couple times this season. He is well liked by all his teammates and a pleasure to have on our team. Many opposing coaches comment on how fun Michael is to watch and they go out of their way to compliment his effort. I believe that Michael has a wonderful future in the sport of football. For these reasons, I believe that Michael Mathews represents what the Black Lion award symbolizes.

Regards,

Tim Warady
Head Coach

I would like to nominate Griffin Starr from the 2009 Irvine Chargers Midget Team for the Black Lion Award. I believe that Griffin best exemplifies the character attributes that are the Black Lion Award. Leadership, courage, devotion, self-sacrifice and an unselfish concern for the team ahead of himself, describes Griffin to the core. If all my players shared his attitude and commitment to being better people, loyal friends and a dependable teammate, my team would be big winners in the game of life.

Griffin has been a two-way starter at Fullback and Middle Linebacker this season. As the season has progressed we have asked Griffin to fill in at other positions, he has done so without question and performed to the best of his ability. Griffin doesn't worry about how many times he gets the ball or how many tackles he makes, Griffin gets his satisfaction from the overall success of the team and his teammates.

From training camp to this late point of the season, Griffin has shown his desire to succeed by learning every aspect of our offense and defense. He is always early to practice and one of the last to leave. He pays close attention to details and is always working hard to get better each practice and each game.

Griffin's work ethic is second to none and he never quits. Griffin always works hard to better himself. He has never complained. As a two-way starter, Griffin never leaves the field on game day, he has never asked to be taken out from being tired or injured. Griffin is always a leader that cheers on his fellow teammates. Griffin also leads by example. His actions on and off the field are an inspiration to those around him. When a fallen teammate is down he is the first to render assistance. He works hard to encourage those who struggle and he always has something positive to say. When a player is not sure of an assignment, Griffin is always there to point him in the right direction. He is truly a leader on our team.

No matter what the conditions, he always gives his all. Griffin has played with pain and suffered through his share of minor injuries, but doesn't use that as an excuse, he knows how to block out the pain and competes hard to get the desired results.

Griffin is the true example of what the Black Lion Award stands for. It has been a great honor to have the chance to coach and get to know such a great young man.

Respectfully,

Robert Busch
Head Coach
Irvine Chargers Midget, 2009

Dear Irvine Chargers Board,

It is my pleasure to nominate Jacob Nash as the Junior Clinic recipient of the 2009 Black Lion Award. Jacob is a first year player and I'm sure has aspirations in playing other positions. He is a leader by hard work in practice and games. When we condition he works hard. When we do drills he works leads by example. When we have fun he shows a big smile.

He has never complained about playing where he plays, even though he would like to play another position. He makes the best of it and for a kid who sometimes plays half the game, he leads our team in interceptions.

This is not about stats, but Jacob makes his time in the game count when given the opportunity. You can always see this kid in the huddle with a smile, he just enjoys being on the field. When you coach, you really enjoying coaching young kids like Jacob.

Regards,

Rick Bautista
Head Coach

Dear Coach Wyatt,

I would like to take a moment of your time and tell you about Colton "Colt" Kielbasa, an exceptional young man that I have had the privilege of knowing and coaching the last two years while serving as the Head Coach of the Queen of Martyrs varsity football team. Colt may quite possibly be the finest football player I have ever had in my twelve years of coaching football at Queen of Martyrs. He is an absolute beast when he steps on the field and an absolute gentleman off the field. A fearless player if ever there was such a thing in youth football, Colt was a player

who was always willing to do whatever the TEAM needed for a victory. Colt is also a young man who gets it and is a person worthy of being considered part of the brotherhood of Black Lion Award recipients. I am positive that Colt will honor the legacy and memory of Don Holleder if he is fortunate enough to be chosen worthy of the esteemed Black Lion Award.

Colt started the on the football team the last two years; first as a defensive back and running back during his 7th grade year, and then again playing both ways this past year as our cornerback and wingback. Colt never left the field, he was on every special team, in on every play, and was always giving his best effort to help the team. Colt was one of the two team captains from the day the season ended when he was a 7th grader, and Colt never disappointed in his role as a leader of the team. Colt could be counted on going against the other teams best receivers and lined up to the wide side of the field to help stop any outside runs. These were the areas in which Colt excelled at as he would take down runningbacks on sweep plays with punishing tackles and he was always flying to the ball in pursuit on the other side of the field. After each game, during film review, it was evident that Colt was always our top performer, making plays all over the field and always flying to the ball. His effort and dedication were inspiring to the team, and he helped lead the Wildcats to our first 7-0 season in over 40 years.

I can honestly tell you that Colton Kielbasa is a selfless person; a young man of integrity, and a young man who is willing to do whatever his team needs in order to win. Colton displays a never quit attitude and he has the work ethic to back that attitude up. Finally, Colton is a true leader; a person who others follow based his leadership qualities, his untiring effort, and his commanding presence, things that come naturally to Colton. I cannot think of any other player who would honor the commitment, the memory, and the sacrifice of Major Don Holleder better than Colt and that is why that I respectfully ask that you consider Colton Kielbasa for the Black Lion Award.

Respectfully,

Bill Murphy, Head Coach
Queen of Martyrs
Chicago Illinois

Dear Coach Wyatt,

This letter of reference is being written on behalf of Jordan Goelz whom I have known for the past Seven years. He has been a tremendous student and an asset to our school. I would like to take this opportunity to recommend Jordan Goelz for the Black Lion Award program.

Jordan is very intelligent and a coachable student athlete who earned the respect of all his peers and teachers. Jordan is a leader among his classmates and sets the trademark on and off the field. His work ethic is constant and unmatched as he constantly strives to improve his leadership skills.

Jordan played both ways for us this year as a RB and DB. Jordan also returned kicks and punts. He never left the field. Jordan played the entire year with a torn meniscus. What makes Jordan special is that he never complained about it. Jordan had touchdowns of 90, 28 and 37 yards that were all called back because of penalties. You would think Jordan would be disappointed, but he wasn't. That is the type of player every coach would love to have.

Surely, this junior self-sacrifice raises the level of play of those around him by demanding a high level of excellence from himself, and by offering words of encouragement and support to others when needed. Jordan Goelz truly leads by example.

I cannot think of any other student athlete that we have had that would be a better recipient of the Black Lion Award.

Sincerely,

Tim Knudsen
Head Football Coach
Maple Lake High School
Maple Lake, Minnesota

Coach Wyatt,

It is my honor once again to nominate a very worthy young man for the Black Lion Award from Beloit High School. In a season that was very challenging for our team yet also successful and rewarding, this player took on a leadership role when we desperately needed it and became a role model for our team. Without his daily "leadership by example," I am not sure where our team would have ended up this year. Our Black Lion nominee is a pleasure to coach because he exemplifies the Black Lion characteristics of leadership, courage, devotion to duty, self-sacrifice, and an unselfish concern for the team ahead of himself.

In the area of leadership, this player always leads by example. He sets the tone at practice with a positive attitude, and he hustles at full speed in whatever drill we are doing. He encourages younger teammates and holds all teammates accountable for their efforts. At the conclusion of each game, he is exhausted because he gives all he has on each snap of the ball.

This player has never been the biggest, fastest, or strongest on our team, but he consistently demonstrates courage on the practice field and in games. No matter the opponent, our Black Lion has accepted the challenge of being the hammer and has displayed courage in his approach to the game of football. He has played through the pain of various nagging injuries, and I don't believe that he ever missed even one snap of a game in four years because of injury.

In regards to devotion to duty, this player never missed a game or a practice and rarely missed an off-season workout in his career. He was always eager to take advantage of opportunities to improve as a football player, and our program has been a priority in his life over the past four seasons. He pays strict attention to detail in practice and in film study, and this has allowed him to perform at a very high level.

Because of a low number of players on our roster this season, we didn't have the luxury of getting starters off of special teams. While others often asked for a break during games, this player continually sacrificed for the team by staying on the field for every play of many games. While I know he didn't want to let the team down by taking a play off, I also suspect that he didn't want to miss a chance to hit someone.

In the time that I have known this young man, I have never questioned his concern for the team. Whatever was needed he was willing to do. While he has won individual accolades in his Trojan Football career, I have no doubt that he would gladly trade those individual awards for even greater team victories. He has become a model for what we expect in a Trojan Football Player.

In recognition of his outstanding efforts and with no reservations, I am most pleased to nominate Kaleb Moeller for the 2009 Black Lion Award at Beloit High School.

Sincerely,

Coach Greg Koenig
Beloit High School
Beloit, Kansas

The Black Lion Award nominee from Woodburn High School is Nevin Blem.

It's rare when a player transfers into a school for his senior year and has the impact on his team that Nevin did. Nevin's effect on his team was to help elevate it from the perennial league doormat to a potential playoff contender.

Yes, Nevin is a gifted football player. There are not many things he can't do on the football field. But of far more importance, Nevin exerted an influence on his teammates that raised their belief in themselves and made them play better.

Woodburn has not been good for a long time. This was my first year there, and we were in need of the kind of player who could help change the culture. For us, Nevin turned out to be such a player.

Nevin had played in a good program in Reno, where he'd been living, and he did everything he could to impart a winner's attitude to his new team. He is fiercely competitive. He constantly worked hard to get better, and as he grew more comfortable with doing so, he began to ask the same of his teammates.

He did not shrink from taking on responsibility. In crunch time, Nevin was always the one to step up and say, "I'll get it done."

Stuck in midseason in a slump that seemed as if it might not end, we were barely into the first quarter of our seventh game when we lost our quarterback to injury. We had no replacement for him, and had no recourse but to turn the offense over to Nevin. Without a moment's hesitation, he stepped into the breach and on the very next play took a direct snap from center and ran 25 yards for a touchdown.

From that point, you could sense the feeling among the rest of the kids that suddenly we had a chance – that winning was possible. Nevin fought like a tiger, and his teammates stepped up their games to match his.

We went on to win that game, and then the next one – our first league win in eleven years. We were 3-5, the most wins by our team in any season since 2003, with a chance to finish .500

It would be nice to say that we won our final two games, but we didn't. But we played hard and played to win, and lost them both by only a touchdown. I am convinced that it was Nevin Blem's fighting spirit that turned our season around and turned us into a group of kids who suddenly began to see themselves as winners.

Nevin Blem was a tower of strength, the kind of player who was willing to step up in the toughest of action and take the bull by the horns, and his teammates drew strength and confidence from his strength and confidence.

Nevin was a very good player and as we began to win he got his share of media attention but there was never a sign of conceit about him. He remained coachable. He loved to play football and he came to love his new teammates. It was very impressive to see him stand up in front of his teammates before our final game and hear him tell them what it honor it was to be able to play with them.

Tracy Jackson
Head Football Coach
Woodburn High School
Woodburn, Oregon

To Whom it May Concern:

I am the Head Football Coach for the Southeastern High School Trojans. I had the privilege to coach Brad Roberts over the past 2 seasons.

I am honored to recommend to you Brad Roberts as a possible Black Lion Award Winner. It is my understanding that this award is designed to recognize young men and women who have displayed leadership, courage, devotion to duty, self-sacrifice, and a demonstrated concern for his team ahead of himself. This is what Brad Roberts is all about.

Brad was voted Captain by his Teammates this season. After we went on a two game skid in the middle of our season, Brad took it upon himself to continue to push the other players in order to meet our big goal of 2009, get to the OHSAA Playoffs. We did just that, making it to the 2nd round. Brad motivated his team with talks, and effort on the field. When Brad spoke, it was to everyone. It was not about me, me, me, but we, we, we.

Brad created problems in the opponents backfield this season from his Defensive end position. He played with reckless abandonment for his body, and would not shy away from any challenge. He is a true player in regards to doing things to help the TEAM, and not backing down from any challenge.

He is a teacher of the game, and gets satisfaction in helping the younger players develop in hopes of starting a dynasty at Southeastern. Play after play, he works to improve himself and the team by making them do things until it is perfect.

As a coaching staff, I decided to get the criteria put on the back of our coaches practice t-shirts. We talk about the award every week. It drove the kids to work hard, and it drove Brad Roberts to become the best he could be and display all the characteristics of what the Black Lion Award stands for!

Whether in the weight room, on the field, or in the classroom, you are not going to find a person that works as hard as Brad Roberts. He will do whatever it takes for his team to be successful. It has been my privilege to write this letter and recommend him for the award.

Greg Bonifay
Head Football Coach
Southeastern High School
South Charleston, Ohio

Black Lion Award Review Committee,

Please accept this nomination of John Iredale, a senior at Zama American High School, Camp Zama, Japan, as a recipient of the Don Holleder Black Lion Award. John has been a member of the Trojans football team for each of the two seasons he has lived here. He has been a major contributor for both seasons as he has started on both offense and defense and played on special teams. John was an integral part of this season's turn around from zero wins last year to Far East Champions this season.

John is one of our team captains and is a person I could rely on to provide quality leadership for the team. One of his trademarks is, when appropriate, to sincerely say "focus" to redirect the team to the business at hand. To support this vocal leadership, however, John is definitely a leader by example. He is always at practice on time and is ready to go to work. During practice he is willing to step up and fill whatever role needs to be filled.

John always gives 100% and is very coachable as he makes every effort to execute the techniques he has been taught. A prime example of his selflessness is the fact that he plays offensive line. Even though he would prefer another offensive position he gladly takes on the role of guard and takes pride in what he is able to contribute to the team in a position that often receives little praise.

John is certainly a physically and mentally tough individual. He is not afraid to get involved in any play, whether blocking on offense or tackling from his linebacker position on defense. In addition, he will play through pain and try to play when ill. He is the type of player that a coach doesn't have to question or doubt when he says he is injured or not feeling well. One day when we had a bout of illness going around I had to tell John to go home and get some rest – when he felt the need to be at practice. On another occasion, when injured in a game and told to sit out by medical staff, he sincerely wanted to get back in the game. I definitely respect John's desire to give everything he has for the team.

It is comforting for a coach to know that he has players like John on the field because there is no question as to whether he will be playing hard all of the time. John is focused during practice as well as during meetings and film sessions. The look in his eyes shows that he truly wants to learn and be the best player he can be. He is a great example to young players as well as those his own age. Undoubtedly John Iredale is an unselfish football player who leads by example and is devoted to helping his team in any way possible.

It is with great pride and enthusiasm that I nominate John Iredale for the Don Holleder Black Lion Award. I appreciate your consideration of this deserving young man for this prestigious award.

Sincerely,
Steven S. Merrell
Head Football Coach
Zama High School
Camp Zama, Japan

Dear Coach Wyatt,

On behalf of our coaching staff, I am honored to submit Cody Wilkins as our choice for the Black Lion Award. Cody is a senior on our football team and we believe he exemplifies the characteristics you look for in selecting a recipient for this great and honorable award.

As a junior, Cody had been a running back and defensive back of sufficient quality but had two seniors ahead of him on the depth chart. During a junior varsity game in the middle of the season last year Cody sustained a hairline fracture of his hip and was sidelined the rest of the season. It was through this injury that Cody's leadership qualities began to emerge. Showing great dedication to his team, Cody attended every meeting, practice and game continuing to learn and assist the coaches and his teammates in anyway he could.

This past season fully healed, Cody came to camp in shape and ready to go pushing himself and his teammates to be their best. Cody was slotted to move up to a starting position this his senior year. Even though we had a quality starting quarterback, we had no back ups. Since Cody was one of the few kids we had that showed a decent ability to throw the ball we asked Cody to consider switching from a starting role as a running back to a back up role as a quarterback. Cody demonstrated his willingness to sacrifice for his team when his response was "Whatever you need coach". He went to work learning that position. We have always carried four captains and we had two from the previous year. At the end the first three weeks of camp the team voted on two additional captains. As it turned out, Cody was not voted in as a captain, narrowly losing to two other worthy candidates.

To his credit this did not set Cody back one bit. He continued to demonstrate his dedication to the team by continuing to stay positive, lead, encourage others, and work hard at honing his new position. As it turned out, we lost our starting quarterback and Cody had to step into a starting role. It would be great to say that he led our team to victory after victory, but he did not; we lost every game. However leadership comes easy when all is going well, and everyone is happy. In the face of an adverse season behind a weak offensive line, game after game Cody would bravely step up to battle the week's opponent as he fought off the negative vibe that resonated throughout his team. He never complained, his attitude was always "let's work to make our team better" and his actions spoke louder than his words.

There is no question in our mind that Cody exemplifies the character of Don Hollender, leadership, courage, and devotion to duty, self-sacrifice and an unselfish concern for his team. We ask that the Black Lion Committee approve this worthy nominee. We sincerely thank you for your efforts.

Respectfully,

David Grant
John Stark High School
Weare, New Hampshire

Coach,

Just wanted to let you know, the award arrived today in great shape. Thank you so much for your efforts. This award has been very well received over the past few years, and the recipient usually gets a standing ovation.

Enjoy your holidays as we reflect on our blessings.

Dave Grant

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pride and honor I nominate Chad Wilbur for the Black Lion Award.

Leadership is defined as a position or guidance of a leader and dedication is defined as wholehearted devotion. The two words described above are how Chad leads his life on and off the athletic field at Wilsonville High School.

This exceptional young man knows that preparation and self motivation is the key to effective results and success. He leads by example and motivates his teammates in a number of ways, such as exhibiting the utmost respect for the

total game of football and all the participants, from the towel boys to the head coach, as well as the people who support the athletic events. Then, he has a positive influence on all his teammates by showing them no task is too small for him to address.

Chad has been an outstanding student of the game and has taken the time, off the practice field, to learn many of the different positions on the team. With this knowledge he has been an additional coach on the field by helping and assisting other players at those positions. He is a go-to teammate on our football team.

Chad started the 2009 football season as one of our outstanding quarterbacks and a defensive back. As the season progress we had a wide receiver injury problem, so Chad stepped up, without hesitation, and became one of our leading receivers. Chad loved the quarterback position, but he has always been willing to put the team first and individual accomplishments second. During his role as wide receiver, Chad sustained an ankle injury, but was willing to play through the pain and help our team to a playoff position.

What sets Chad apart from others is his unselfish attitude both as a person and an athlete. This shows in the class room, on the athletic field, and in the community.

This award exhibits, pain, courage, and accomplishment for those individuals willing to step up to the task so, what better way to acknowledge what Chad means to this team than to award him with the Black Lion Award.

Sincerely,

Doug Sommer
Head Football Coach
Wilsonville High School
Wilsonville, Oregon

It is my pleasure to nominate an outstanding young man named Brandon Fowler for the 2009 Black Lion Award at Thomas Jefferson High School in Council Bluffs, IA. Brandon was a role player for the Thomas Jefferson Yellowjackets his senior year and spent most of his high school career as a scout team player and stood on the sidelines. During our first season at Tee Jay we were conference champions and every player, parent, fan and administrator was on board with the program. However, in our second year, due to injuries, illness and a lack of leadership we struggled and many of our seniors looked for excuses and started pointing fingers. Not Brandon. Brandon never once complained and always asked what more he could do to help the team get back on track. He did everything that was expected; he held true to the traditions established in year one and tried to improve himself everyday, both in the class room and on the field. Brandon was not our best player, but he worked like he was trying to be and that attitude is contagious. It is without hesitation that I nominate Brandon to join an outstanding group of young men that have been recipients of this prestigious honor.

Sincerely,

Steven L. Cozad
Head Football Coach
Thomas Jefferson High School
Council Bluffs, Iowa

Coach Wyatt, It is my pleasure to nominate Cam Smith for the Duxbury Youth Football's Div. 2 Mite football team.

More than anybody else on our team this year, Cam personified the values of the award. Even before the season began, Cam put the team ahead of himself. Starting back in the spring, he was always watching his weight. He would pass up ice cream and desserts so he would make weight for football. He was not real excited about playing center when it was proposed to him. From Cam's dad: *...After he thought it over for a few days he said "If Coach Davis thinks the best thing for the team is for me to play center then I will do it."* Once the season began he embraced the position, trying to be the best he could be at it. I think the results show that he did everything we expected of him and more. If Cam had his way, we would run the wedge about 3 of every 4 plays. The center position that was such an issue last year was no longer a concern with Cam playing that position.

Cam always came to practice ready to do whatever was asked of him. He absolutely loved the contact drills, and he did a great job on the king of the boards drill as usual. He continually set an example for the other boys by always paying attention to the coaches, always giving his all on each and every drill, and never taking a play off in either a practice or a game. He never was bugging the coaches with "I want to run the ball" or "when are we going to run a pass play", he just focused on being the best center or defensive lineman he could possibly be. At an age where sometimes kids can be unfocused (9-10 year olds), a coach never had to tell Cam to pay attention, or stop goofing off. And although he may never be the most talented athlete on the field, you will not find a kid who is more enthusiastic or loves the game more than Cam.

From his dad (also one of my assistant coaches): *"Having spent time in the military myself, I take seriously the qualities that are the foundation of this award. Always putting the team first, honesty, integrity, caring about the needs of others before your own, and leadership are qualities that you look for in members of your team. Cam displays these qualities each and every day, whether it is on the sports fields, at school, at home, or just playing with his friends. More than once he has stuck up for a smaller friend when that kid was being picked on. I could not be more proud of Cam, and frequently I am amazed by his character and maturity."*

From another one of my assistant coaches: *"Cam has been a warrior all season long. His drive, fierce determination and highest standard of play, brought our team to a whole new level. Throughout the season, Cam played center. When I think of the center's position I immediately think of Cam Smith. Coaches on the opposing team would come up to me after our games and say, "your center plays his position very well. He absolutely dominates". During practice, Cam came ready. He was focused, prepared and made certain that each of his snaps were done with perfect execution. Without question, Cam always put 100% effort into his practice of the game. Cam's leadership qualities came through as we approached playoff season. When our season was on the line our team looked to Cam and made sure each and every player did their best the moment they stepped on the field. I cannot think of a more deserving nominee for this award."*

As a head coach, I wish I had a whole team made up of individuals like Cam. One measure of a player is how he performs when the game is on the line, under pressure, when the chips are down, etc. We had a number of games that were decided in the last minute or 2, after long drives, where we needed to score or lose. I'll never forget in one of those games, with about 30 seconds to go, behind by 2 points, 4th and goal from the 2 yard line...I call a time out and Cam (not our fastest kid) sprinted over to the sideline ahead of the team and yelled "Coach Davis, run a wedge, I'm going to crush the nose guard!"...I couldn't argue with that. After we scored on a QB wedge, I looked and there was Cam driving the kid to the back of the end zone. Whenever we were 3rd or 4th and short, I'd look over at the huddle and I'd see Cam looking at me on the sideline, pounding his fist slowly into his hand, which I took to be the universal signal for me to run the wedge. In our playoff game, when others chose to play hockey at 5AM as a warm-up, Cam played ill (we had a number of kids miss 2 weeks due to the flu)...Cam looked like death warmed over. But he refused to let his teammates down....any RB we could have managed without, but Cam knew his importance to the team and his fellow line mates. He played both ways and our line dominated. We had 3 long drives for scores and our line, led by Cam, dominated, even with 10 in the box. Cam's dad said that when they went home on Sunday at 1pm, he basically slept until late Monday afternoon to recover from the game and his illness.

Cam never let his team down when they needed him most, worked the hardest in practice, and raised the standard of effort and determination for the whole team. I cannot think of a more deserving member of our team for the Black Lion Award than Cam Smith, who is the only unanimous choice for this award (based on Coach's input) that I have ever had.

Respectfully,

Rick Davis
Duxbury, Massachusetts

Dear Coach Wyatt, Once again I'd like to thank you for the opportunity that you present with the Black Lion Award. We have been including the Black Lion Award as our sole individual award each year and once again have had the opportunity of coaching a player who fits the profile of a Black Lion.

Ammon Savage has played in the Alta youth program as a quarterback for the past two seasons, having won a

championship last year. Because of the size of our league and our particular district (950 kids) we have numerous teams at each age level, up to 9 or 10 different teams per grade. The Alta district where we play is broken up into an A team, B team, C team etc. and as coaches we always contend with how to select the best players for our top division while balancing the talent to keep all of our divisions competitive. Ammon is a perfect example of a star qb on our B team with the ability to help our A team at a different position, far less glorious. We allowed Ammon the option of playing on our team this year and explained where we felt he could help us. With unfortunate pressure from his parents to be a star player Ammon chose to play mostly on our offensive and defensive lines and rotated at both of his positions with other players. Ammon embraced his role and not only became a solid blocker for us, he knew every position on the field and helped our team in every game by recognizing where players needed to be and calling out offensive plays to the defense based on formation and motion. Ammon understands what being a great teammate is all about and I feel honored as a coach to have him as our nomination for Black Lion in 2009 for the Alta Hawks Pee Wee A team.

Thank you for your time and efforts.

Coach David Harrison
Draper, Utah

I would like to nominate Trent Befort for the Black Lion Award. Trent is a fine young man who displays many of the leadership qualities of Major Holleder and the Black Lions. With only three seniors returning on a team that didn't win a game last year, we needed leaders on and off the field. Starting in the first week of their summer vacation, the team selected captains that would lead them through summer workouts. Trent was selected as one of these captains, and for the next ten weeks he helped motivate his teammates to show up at 6 AM four days a week and have an attendance of 90%. No small task for teenagers on their summer break that generally go to work on the farm for 12 hours a day.

Throughout the last three years, Trent has established himself as a solid leader on the field as well. Starting first as an offensive lineman, where he was sure to become all league, necessity moved him to the backfield as a fullback, tailback, and quarterback. He took all of this in stride, knowing it would help us be a better team. This year, starting three seniors and only one junior, Trent helped lead the Skyline Thunderbird football team to a 3-6 record. Quite an improvement over the previous two years of 1-17. Trent was our vocal leader as well as a leader by example. Often he would get practice started before I got there, and any new drill we introduced he was the first in line. In the locker room during pregame, Trent would be the one to speak up and motivate his teammates. During the game he rarely came off the field, taking punishment as a ball carrier and giving it as a linebacker. Trent knew the team needed him on the field.

I have known Trent his entire life, and can not think of a better young man to nominate for this award. He is a special individual that has a very solid foundation and a bright future ahead of him.

Respectfully,

Jon Novotny
Head Coach
Skyline High School
Pratt, Kansas

Dear Coach Wyatt, After wrestling with the decision for a couple of weeks, I have decided that I cannot nominate a player on my team. I feel I have several deserving, but one didn't stand out above the rest as to say he was the most deserving of such a great honor. I look forward to being able to graciously give out this award as a coach and veteran in the future.

Thanks for such an opportunity,

Keep up the great work.

Head Coach Tony Moody
Jackson County Mustangs (2009 Midgets)
Silva, North Carolina

This year I would like to nominate Drew Hadley as my team's Black Lion Award winner. This boy his first year of football at the age of 8 scored 160 points in 8 games , but his number one concern during several games that year was that his friend and back up got in to the game and played as much as he did. At that time Drew was the fastest boy in the league , he played quarterback ,tailback and safety and any other position I asked of him. He also came to me as a 8 year old and asked if he could come out of the game , I asked if he was hurt or tired he said no ,his friend needed to get into the game . As time went on other players caught up to him speed wise as they matured, Drew still a competitor and good football player started to play more defense than offense . Finally ,6 years later as a 8th grade player , played only on defense never complaining he did not get the ball just asked how could he help the team . Finally , our last week of the season my quarterback and wide out got injured , my back up for both was Drew. Another boy played qb, but Drew played wide out and caught his only TD of the season to end our season winning the Superbowl. I couldn't have written a better script ,he is the ultimate team player . He would play any position on the field and give it a 1000 percent. Every time he scored a TD his first year he acted like a gentlemen handing the ball to the referee , and went and congratulated his line men. At the age of 8-14 he could show a few college and professional athletes' the way to act. He was such a pleasure to have on my team ,I hope you consider him for the Black Lion Award.

Sincerely
Rick Lippard
Duxbury, Massachusetts

Coach Wyatt: It is on a rare occasion that I am given the opportunity to write a letter of recommendation for a student athlete that is as respectable as Tyler Brooks-Lambert. I have had the honor of knowing Tyler for the past four years as a teacher and as a coach. Tyler is what you would want out of all of your athletes, in the community, classroom, on the field and as a teammate. He is a leader, competitor, and a well rounded individual. Tyler has a great work ethic and would be a great addition to any program, in the classroom and on the field.

Tyler has enjoyed great success academically throughout his high school career and he has maintained an overall average in the 90s. He has received recognition by being placed on high honor and honor roll. He has also served as a mentor to a troubled student in the middle school. Whenever this young individual would be having a bad day and refusing to cooperate with teachers, Tyler would be able to relate to this student and help him get back on track. Without Tyler's help this individual would not have been able to be successful in school. Tyler has also served as the treasurer of the Midlakes activity club for the past three years. Tyler's duties with the Midlakes activity club ensured that the fundraisers were started and finished on time. With all that he does during the normal school day and maintaining a high academic average he still has found time to dedicate himself in the weight room to excel in three sports. The only person that beats me into the school every morning is Tyler. He is here every morning at 6:00am to ensure that he makes himself and his team better by working harder than the competition. This work ethic demonstrates he has the management skills needed to handle a tough academic schedule and still excel on the field.

Tyler has enjoyed the success of all of his hard work over the past few years. Tyler has been a member of the varsity wrestling program since eighth grade. He wrestled through a very tough bracket to win sectionals as a junior. While working with Tyler in the wrestling room I have seen him mature into a natural leader. He has been a very successful lacrosse player starting on Varsity as a freshman. Tyler was a started on our varsity football team as a sophomore. This year Tyler was a team captain and our quarterback. He was instrumental in turning our football program around from a 2-5 regular season record to this year's season record of 6-1. Tyler helped motivate kids to attend extra summer practices during the week. He did a great job of calling his teammates and getting them involved in summer workouts. Through his hard work and dedication to the team we had the highest turn out for our off season program than any other year. Tyler acts like a coach on the field. He earned second team honors as a junior and first team honors as a senior. Tyler has recently been nominated for the Eddie Meath Senior all star game. Tyler is the type of kid that every coach wants on their team and someone every player would want as a teammate. I have no hesitation in strongly recommending Tyler for the Black Lion Award.

Sincerely,

John Lombardi
Varsity Football Head Coach/Assistant Wrestling Coach
Midlakes High School
Clifton Springs, New York

Black Lion Award Speech – Queensbury Football Banquet – 2009

“We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal” -- This phrase by Thomas Jefferson is on one of the most revered / sacred statements in our history. I have a question relative to this statement – and a challenge for it –

First – the challenge – I submit that all men are not created equal – and that becomes very apparent on a football field. I believe the equality he alludes to refer to opportunities and rights.

Second – the question – why are these values so important? Where do they fall on the priority scale?

As coaches we try to instill in our players a solid work ethic, sense of pride, commitment, determination, etc. Along with learning the game you hope to transcend the athletic arena and aspire to edify your young charges with lifelong values. For me, these values are the very pinnacle of importance.

In a world that worships winners -- yet expects certain decorum and behavior in defeat – participants, fans, and coaches can find themselves entangled in a culture that preaches a paradoxical set of values. In a day and age when it is in vogue to “talk” about values like honor / commitment / integrity / unselfishness / etc – they really seem to be embraced only when you don’t win – like a default mechanism on a computer – and if these values are treated as a default – then they are not a primary priority – and generally the result is not nobility of character – but bitterness.

This year – our team has again been included into a very select national fraternity – That of the Black Lions – an award – or recognition – of a player who exemplifies the Character of Don Holleder

Holleder’s priorities relative to values & victory were prioritized correctly (in this coaches opinion) before his junior season – before his senior season – before he rushed in to save his comrades on the battlefields of Vietnam. His behavior is not measured by scoreboards or KIA stat sheets – but rather speaks to the highest – most important attributes of the successful, noble man.

The following is a description of this award that honors Major Holleder.: ***The Black Lion Award is not intended to recognize great talent - although the winner may be very talented. It is not intended to go to the Most Valuable Player, or the Highest Scorer, or the Leading Tackler - although such individuals certainly might qualify. It might not even go to a starter. It is meant simply to go to the sort of person America needs more of, the sort of person all coaches wish they had more of - the player who leads, who inspires others with his courage and effort, who puts the team ahead of himself.***

--We have such a player on this team--

On a team with imposing & respected leadership & talent, choosing one black lion award proved to be a most difficult task – and after very difficult deliberation – we narrowed it down to two candidates – who ironically have chosen very similar career paths. But the nomination process is crystal clear – there can be only one –

This team was composed by two very distinct groups. A veteran group of seniors who possessed a plethora of leadership and skill. When I think of the Peyton McKinney’s/ Jeremy Magner’s / Sean McAllister’s/ Matt Varney’s and the rest of our senior group, I marvel at their capacity to shoulder a profusion of attention so gracefully – with a full understanding that their abilities collectively and individually garners great expectation. The other group was a dynamic mix of sophomores and juniors with immense talent and potential.

The combination of youth and veterans had the potential to create a line of demarcation if you will – the potential to create an adversarial rift between veterans who in their eyes had “paid their dues” and these talented but untested young upstarts.

In order to make the team a cohesive unit, we needed a conduit / a catalyst / a player who could seamlessly bridge this gap and turn 30 odd individuals into an effective – directed unit.

--- We have such a player on this team.---

This player was not in the limelight – he was understated & unsung – much like Major Hollender. The genesis of this player's character came into my field of vision 4 years ago – and I have been privileged to watch his integrity / honor / effort flourish in that time. He has made difficult decisions and shouldered sacrifices in order to fulfill principles that superseded personal gain.

The most sterling example of his personal deportment can be described in the firmness he displays relative to his beliefs – If he had to stand alone – for the sake of a principle – he would – and he would be unwavering. But, I don't think he would be standing alone for long – because among his gifts is his ability to communicate. When he speaks to his team or teammates – his words echo from the very depths of his soul – and they listen.

He speaks to and embodies a commitment that transcends the scoreboard – difficult to put into words-- but easy to recognize when you see it – like the – 1980 US Hockey team – the 1971 Marshall University Football Team – Tim Tebow's speech to the press after the loss to Mississippi.

So – I ask again --- where on the scale of priorities do values & victory reside?? Perhaps the answer lies in this most insightful quote - by Coach Vince Lombardi -- he said “the measure of who we are is what we do with what we have.” This player has lived up to a seven point measuring stick – And those points are: 1) Courage 2) honor 3) integrity 4) decency 5) compassion 6) effort -- and perhaps most impressive – 7) unmitigated unselfishness.

These are the measures that the Black Lions hold sacrosanct – and the attributes Dan Hanchett epitomizes. Ladies and Gentleman - The 2009 Black Lion Award winner ---Dan Hanchett.

John Irion
Queensbury High School
Queensbury, New York

Coach Wyatt, I would like to nominate Victor Lowe for our 2009 Black Lion award. As you know we are a military boarding school so a young man's actions are constantly under the microscope. There is always a negative associated with military schools because so many people think of our school being for troubled kids or a high priced reform school, there could be nothing farther from the truth. Victor is here because he expressed an interest in becoming an Army officer. When Victor's dad realized he was serious he enrolled him here. Since that time Victor has excelled as a young man, student and football player.

Victor has a 4.1 GPA and has excelled in all his classes. Because of his hard work in the classroom he is a teacher's favorite. What most on campus don't know is his tutoring of weaker students both on the team and those in the general corps. Victor rose rapidly through the ranks to his current rank of Cadet Major and serves as Executive Officer which is the second highest position in the Corps. The Senior Army Instructor a retired Green Beret who served several tours in Vietnam, says that it is Victor that keeps the Corps on track. His leadership is evident in the classroom and on campus.

Victor only played 2 years of organized football here at the Academy. He played Rover and Wide Receiver. This past year Victor started in every game on both sides of the ball, he was also on all our special teams. It was very rarely that Victor came off the field. Victor was one of our captains and set an example that few will be able to match. I have supplied some of his stats but they don't even begin to tell the tale of this young man's impact on our team. When our tight end went down he willingly moved to T.E. and tore it up. When many of our guys allowed themselves to be sick and take the most important league game off because they really didn't want to pay the price, Victor never came off the field while playing with a temperature 102. In our playoff game he was one of the few seniors that played his heart out (one guy sat out because of jock rot!).

What I forgot to add is Victor has applied to attend West Point. Our school president is Steve Bliss USMA '65 and he is pulling ALL his strings to help this young man to gain entrance to the Academy. Thanks for your consideration.

Bert Ford Jr.
Head Football Coach
Army and Navy Academy
Carlsbad, California

Coach Wyatt: My name is Bob Scott – I am the Head Football coach at Los Alamos High School, located in Los Alamos, New Mexico.

Our nominee for the 2009 Black Lion Award is Nate Robbins. He is a sophomore offensive and defensive lineman. Nate's leadership began the summer of his freshman year. His enthusiasm and participation in the summer conditioning program encouraged Nate's peers to commit to the same type of drive and focus. His willingness to work with all team members regardless of position or physical ability helped unify our team to a common goal.

His willingness to sacrifice his personal desire for the benefit of the team demonstrated his devotion to a "Team First Attitude".

As examples, he spent the entire summer working at the Los Alamos National Laboratory position only give up his spot of defensive line to improve the team. When our team suffered a series of injuries to the offensive line, Nate willingly moved from center to tackle to guard and back to center in a six week period.

Nate shows the same devotion in the classroom where he is a member of the National Honor Society, to his family, and to the community that he proudly represents. This was evident when we as a team went through a four game losing streak and some of Nate's fellow teammates had thoughts of giving up. Nate continued to work in a determined manner for the success of our team. His peers seemed to follow his lead and helped us to a district record of 3 and 1, and District Runner Up.

Nate is a very mature young man for his age, he shows great integrity and it is with great pleasure that the coaching staff of Los Alamos High School nominate Nate for this prestigious award.

Sincerely yours,

Coach Robert Scott
Los Alamos High School
Los Alamos, New Mexico

Coach Wyatt,

I would like to nominate Sherrod Poole for our 2009 Black Lion Award. Sherrod played a variety of positions, based on what we needed. His size, speed and skill dictated that he should probably play the position of Fullback. However, since we already had a Fullback, we used him instead at Wingback. He would rotate between being our Left Wingback, to also running Wedge and making the kick-out block at Fullback. Late in the season, our starting Right End was injured with a high ankle sprain. I asked Sherrod if he was willing to move from the backfield to the offensive line. Without hesitating, he said that he would be glad to. Like Don Holleder, Sherrod was willing to move from his "more natural" position to where the team needed him most. He also occasionally kicked off and kicked extra points and was our regular punter, as well as a linebacker on defense. Academically, Sherrod is excellent but where Sherrod really excels is in how he carries himself. He is a "yes sir, no sir" type of young man. At the end of each practice, Sherrod always made it a point of coming over to shake my hand and thank me for practice. Those are the tools and the type of skills that make you remember a young man long after you have finished coaching him.

Sincerely,

Dave Potter
Head Football Coach
Durham War Eagles
Durham North Carolina

Coach,

Another year has gone by along with another youth football season, so it is time for me to hand out the Black Lion Award again.

This year, I get the great privilege of writing to you that my son, Caleb Carswell was chosen by the coaches as our team's Black Lion recipient. Over the past few years, he has been nominated a couple of times but in the end we have chosen one of his teammates as the winner. This year he went out of his way in number of ways that put him ahead of his teammates.

Prior to this year, we have run more of a power offense based on I, wishbone, and your double wing formations. In these formations, he had played the fullback position - which in itself was a pretty thankless position with few chances to carry the ball. This past season we moved to more of a wide open spread formation and moved our larger tailback into the fullback position, leaving him scratching his head of what to do on offense and me quite happy because I wanted him to concentrate on defense.

As background, in our league ball carriers have to be below 105 pounds and my son came in at 103, so he was eligible to carry the ball. When the coaches came to me and said they would like to play him at guard, I told them to talk to him, which they did. He stated it didn't matter to him as long as it helped the team. He took over the left guard position until the center began to struggle with snaps at which time they switched positions and he then played center for the rest of the season. Despite being the smallest lineman on our line, I don't believe that he was beat the entire season.

On defense, he has played linebacker the last couple of years, though we would occasionally spin him down to the line. After our first game this year, our starting nose tackle, who had a ton of talent and size, decided he did not like practicing and quit the team. Once again, Caleb moved to the vacated position to take on kids much larger than him. In the first game that he started as nose tackle were down 12-0 with 5 minutes to go. We scored and then went out on defense. Things looked very bad with 3 minutes to go and we had just given up a first down. On one of the next plays he shot the gap, grabbed the qb while pitching, disengaged from him, knocked the tb out of the way, and recovered the fumble. A few plays later we scored and won the game 13-12.

On other issues, he went out of his way for his teammates. Prior to the season, he met one of the new kids that Caleb realized would be one of our running backs. When the kid wanted #21, which was Caleb's number, he offered it up and proceed to #0. Later in the season, when a group of his teammates started picking on one of new players, he stood up to them and took up for the new player. Finally when discussing the problems that the new player faced, Caleb said "dad you should give the Black Lion to because he has had a hard time". Upon hearing that and knowing how hard he has worked to win this for four years, I realized that he come to truly understand what this award means.

I have been extremely lucky that each year this is a tough decision and that I always have a number of kids who can be considered for the award. Thanks for your time and all you do.

I have included a picture below of Caleb and some of his teammates which was taken after the game mentioned above.

Sincerely,

Bob Carswell
Chesterfield Bears 5th Grade
Chesterfield, Missouri

Black Lion Committee,

I am writing this letter to recommend Carson Mund as a Black Lion Award winner for 2009. He is from Box Elder High School in Brigham City, Utah. Carson is a senior Tight End and Linebacker.

Carson is a team captain. I am a new coach this season at Box Elder and I changed the entire scheme. Carson was instrumental in leading the team especially the seniors. Because of the change in coaches and scheme, I asked Carson to change positions to allow us to be successful. He was a very successful Center and I needed him to move to Tight End and also to play defense and on special teams. He did so without hesitation. He wanted success for the team.

Throughout the season he was asked to take different roles because of injuries and he was always willing and eager to help out where he could. He worked very hard in the offseason to increase his speed and his ability to catch the football. He was like an assistant coach in the weight room and in his ability to get the players together to workout and run.

Carson was voted a team captain by his teammates for his dedication to helping his teammates be their best. He has an ability to make those around him better. He draws the best out in his teammates and even his coaches. He was our second leading tackler and 2nd leading receiver even though he had never played either position and was not “naturally gifted” to those positions.

Sincerely,

Coach Robbie Gunter
Box Elder Bees
Box Elder HS
Brigham City, Utah

Hugh,

I realize I am a bit late, but the season went long and I was waiting until after the championship game. **Our selection for the Black Lion Award this season is our A back and Linebacker Marcus Lomas.**

Marcus wore number 33 this season, and those double digits did more than double duty. He was on all special teams, offense and defense. He was a quiet leader, mostly leading by example, however as the end of the season neared, he became more vocal and worked hard to insure that all players, starters and back ups, prepared for the final run.

Early in the season, I asked him to play B back. While he wanted to play A back, he accepted his role and played B back for the first half of the season. Once we were able to develop another B back, he returned to his preferred position. He made the most of it, rushing from both positions for a total of 126 carries for 926 yards and 9 TDs. On defense, he led the team with 70 tackles.

His attitude was one of dedication, respect and honor. He displayed unselfish play, outstanding sportsmanship and always helped the smaller less experienced players to get better.

We are proud to select Marcus Lomas as the 2009 Tracy Cougars Black Lion Award recipient.

Richard Scott
Tracy, California

It is my honor to nominate Cameron Herrera (Manzano Monarch Rookie Division Albuquerque New Mexico) for the 2009 “Black Lion Award.” Cameron has shown his team mates what it is to play with heart and enthusiasm, as a result his team mates look up to him as a leader. Cameron’s loyalty and integrity has been an inspiration to his team. Cameron has shown his team mates that effort and hard work rather than individualism is the key to success not only on the football field but at school and at home. Cameron understands to achieve the goals of a team, he would have to sacrifice his own goals. Cameron’s talent as a player could have landed him a running back position on any football team. However, the coaching staff asked him to play the offensive line. Cameron the “yes sir, no sir” young man that he is said “yes sir, what ever it takes sir.” Cameron has never blink an eye or ever complain, because he knew that playing the line was best for the team. Cameron has excelled as an offensive lineman, and loves to block for his teammates. His speed and toughness has made the offense a big threat. This is Cameron’s third year with the Manzano football organization, and his devotion to God and his team, gives me the honor to nominate him for the 2009 recipient.

Coach Gary Baldonado
Manzano Monarch Rookie Division
Albuquerque, New Mexico

Dear Coach Wyatt and the Black Lion Award Committee,

Mount Pisgah Christian School is proud to be a participating school in the "Black Lion Award". We would like to recommend Jordan Lewis as a recipient of this distinguished award. Our staff has been at Pisgah for three years and Jordan has been with us from the beginning. He has been with us during a transition from a very small independent school association to a very large and arguably one the best high school associations in our country. His first year we only had 22 players and were very lucky and proud to finish the season 3-7, the next two years we were playing the last game of the season for an opportunity to be in the playoffs. Jordan's efforts were an integral part of our successes.

Jordan is one of 3 seniors on this year's team. He has played center, tackle and defensive end. He would always play wherever he was asked with maximum effort. He might not have been the strongest, fastest or biggest player but he was a hard worker. He made all of his required workouts during the summer and became a member of inaugural class of the "Iron Patriot" award which is given to those athletes that make the sacrifices needed to attend a specified number of workouts during the summer. Jordan was also elected captain by his peers. This is an example of the influence he had on his teammates.

Jordan exemplifies the character of Major Don Holleder through his "leadership, self sacrifice and unselfish concern for the team ahead of himself". His example keeps live the spirit and memory of Don Holleder and the tradition of the Black Lions. For that reason, Jordan was the unanimous selection by our coaching staff to receive the prestigious "Black Lion Award".

Sincerely,
Doug Dixon
Head Football Coach/Asst. AD
Mount Pisgah Christian School
Alpharetta, Georgia

Dear Coach Wyatt,

Thank you for the opportunity to write on behalf of JACK RIKER as The Lawrenceville School's nominee for the Black Lion Award.

Jack is one of only eight seniors who have been with the football program for three or four years. At 5' 10" and 170 pounds, he is modest in size. He is not very fast, he does not have great hands and he is not particularly strong. Nonetheless, he *fought* his way into the starting lineup over the past two years. He simply refused not to be a varsity football player. Jack first caught my eye when I took a group of football players to a summer camp three years ago. Jack was the only new student to Lawrenceville to take up the invitation to attend the camp. As a sophomore, he was even smaller than he is as a senior. However, right from the first drills of the camp, I knew Jack was going to be one of our toughest players. In the first seven-on-seven drill, Jack was matched up against a senior from another school (who would eventually go on to earn a 1-A Scholarship). Jack's technique was terrible, but he did a great job on this excellent receiver simply because Jack was tougher. Jack continued to do great things during the week of camp. Later in the summer, when we started our full team double sessions, Jack immediately caught the eye of the other coaches and, more importantly, his teammates. Even though he was only a sophomore, it was clear to everyone that Jack was the team's inspirational leader of the future. And he has been. For three years Jack has made his teammates better by working harder – on the field, in the weight room and in film sessions -- than any of his teammates.

Despite Jack's prodigious efforts, he never really became a great football player. Some of those players he helped to become better actually became better football players than Jack. As a result, we ended up moving Jack around quite a bit. At various times he was a free safety, a corner back and strong safety and a running back. At one point, his only position was as a nickel-back in passing situations. While Jack certainly saw a lot of playing time, he was not on the field as much as he would have liked to be. Yet, he never complained. He simply kept working hard, often times jumping in - on his own - when the scout team became depleted. Jack's level of commitment was an inspiration for his varsity teammates this season and a model for younger players who were learning to become varsity football players. The success of our team *next* year will be positively influenced by Jack - even in his

absence. As the many younger players transition to veteran status, they will remember how hard Jack worked to improve himself and help his team. For his leadership and his dedication to his teammates, despite modest personal success, I respectfully nominate Jack Riker for the Black Lion Award.

Respectfully submitted,

Ken Mills
Head Coach of Football
The Lawrenceville School
Lawrenceville, New Jersey

It is with great pleasure that I present the 2008 Black Lion Award to Lorel Morton.

Lorel was a returning Triple A player from last season and from the moment he stepped onto the football field he separated himself from the pack. He walks onto the football field with a confidence that rubs off on his teammates.

Lorel has made great strides over the past year in developing as a young man. He has grown in confidence, ability and leadership. He has become someone who sets the example for his teammates to follow. When his teammates are disciplined after practice, Lorel stays behind with them and runs extra sprints to show his support for them. At the end of every practice, he helps the coaching staff by cleaning up the field and packing all the equipment.

Lorel is a quiet leader. He is never boastful, but plays and practices with every ounce of energy he has. Basically, wherever we need a great player, we put Lorel, knowing that he will "lock-down" the position. He has played whatever position has been asked of him on the football field. On defense, he has played defensive end, linebacker, cornerback and safety. On offense, he has played multiple running back positions, quarterback and end. He quickly became our go-to receiver for big plays this season.

He is a good student and well liked by his team mates. There is no limit to Lorel's potential, either on or off the football field.

John Bell
Antioch, Tennessee

Dear Coach Wyatt, members of the Black Lions, and members of the Holleder family,

On behalf of Head Coach John Hower, I am proud to nominate Logan Forsythe for the 2009 Black Lion Award. Logan is a member of the Millard Athletic Association Patriots, a 13-14 year-old team in the Nebraska Midget Football League. During our season, Logan clearly demonstrated the qualities of courage, effort and unselfishness called for by this award.

This year, the Patriots were blessed with a large roster, and many very talented athletes, including Logan. We started the year playing Logan at B-Back and Will linebacker, where he performed very well. Two games into the season, we experienced a few injuries to our offensive line, and had to call on Logan to switch positions. Even though he knew he would be face-to-face with defensive linemen who outweighed him by 20-40 pounds (or more), Logan quickly accepted this assignment and worked hard to learn our plays. Although the rest of the line had several weeks to learn our blocking schemes, Logan was "ready to go after a couple of practices". In addition to shoring up the Guard position, Logan helped to push the rest of the linemen to get better in their play. About the same time during the year, we switched Logan to Sam linebacker, so his "homework" doubled.

A few weeks later, our linemen got healthier and we thought we could move Logan back to his original position. However, the injury bug hit our ends, so we went to Logan with another "opportunity". While other young men his age would be tempted to ask "why?" or suggest someone else, Logan smiled and agreed to his third offensive position assignment. Logan gave us the same effort in practice that he had all year long, adding new blocking

assignments as well as pass patterns to his repertoire.

In our sixth game of the season, we played the undefeated Papillion Monarchs. The Monarchs had a good team with a running back who was "just under" the weight limit for carrying the ball. Late in the game, with the score tied 0-0, the Monarchs' running back took the ball wide, trying to get outside our defense. Logan led the effort to bring him down for a short gain, but broke a bone in his hand in the process. The Patriots went on to win the game, 6-0, with Logan cheering from the sidelines.

Although Logan was out for the rest of the season, he continued to come to practice each night, and support his team during games. He carried equipment on and off the field, he kept track of kicking tees, and he helped bring water to players during time-outs. He even traveled with the team for our post-season tournament in Kansas.

For his courage, effort and unselfishness towards his team, we believe that Logan has earned the 2009 Black Lion Award. Thank you for your consideration.

Coach Wyatt,

Thank you for the work you do with this award. Each past Patriot winner has been truly honored to receive it. If this nomination is deemed appropriate, could you advise how soon the award would be available? We will make sure our year-end banquet is scheduled accordingly.

Dan Lorraine
MAA Patriots
Omaha, Nebraska

Black Lion Award Committee,

The coaching staff of the Lower Cape May Raiders is proud to nominate Joshua Fredrick as our Black Lion Nominee.

Josh anchored the offensive line as our center, and made the calls needed to match the defenses' alignment. Josh played both ways for us. Josh was also one of the best, most durable centers and down tackles that have ever played for us.

Josh was a Captain and exemplifies the true meaning of a leader. In the two years he played with us he ***never missed a practice, or a day of school***. He was the true "Coaches player" as you will see in his essay. He is also an Honor Student.

We feel he will be a good leader and a great asset to the community as well as his next level of football. Josh has made it very clear that he would like to pursue a career through a military academy. With his outstanding work ethic, I have no doubt he would make a great candidate.

Thank you for your consideration,
Lower Cape May Raiders Coaching Staff
Head Coach Frank Simonsen
Cape May, New Jersey

Acceptance: It is a privilege to be nominated for this award. I was brought up to never brag about my accomplishments, how good or better than someone at something I was. So I would like to use a couple of words to describe everything.

Commitment

This is a strong word, it covers a broad amount of things in my life. If you are going to do something you should give it 100%. There is no shame in losing if you go all out, but if you hold back just a little you let your team and yourself down. At an early age I was taught that if I miss a day of school then I miss a day of learning something. So I have never in nine years (8th grade plus kindergarten), missed a day of school. I applied this to football by never missing a practice. What fool would not take advantage of having the best

coaching staff in the league, from the basics to the special things. Coach Flash worked with us teaching us everyday. giving us the best chance to axccel on the football field. Which brings me to my next word.

Respect

As part of championship wrestling teams, (both for Teitleman school and the Recreational Center), I have learned respect not just for myself, but also for my opponents, and coaches. Respect is really where my heart comes into play. All the coaches are out there helping us (the Raiders) grow as a family. However for some reasons, some teammates found it okay to talk during a speech, talk back to the coaches, or let their mom and dad fight for them. This is disrespectful and something I would never do. I was not happy to be substituted out in some games, but I would never disrespect the coaches or my team by making a scene.

Accountability

Kids growing up in my age group are void of this, however I am not. You have to answer for yourself and your own actions. If I go to school and fail a test, that is not the teacher's fault. It is my own fault. If we were in a game and I miss a tackle it's not the coach's fault it's mine. Not giving everything you have in a game, faking injuries, not showing up to practice, and having your battles being faught by your mom and dad are all examples of not being accountable for your actions. Taking the easy way out, letting everyone who is depending on you without being blamed is actions someone unaccountable for their actions would do. As people (without accountability) the world would be a mess .People would be able to steal, lie, and cheat. Since I am part of the Teitleman Marching Band, accountability is the biggest part of teamwork. If I miss my count all the practice, training doesn't matter if we sound terrible, but if I just handle my part (and everyone else does to) then we make the music we are able to make.

Honor and Pride

Yet another word that means so much for me. The thing about being a lineman on both sides of the ball is you have to take pride in what you do.45 snaps a game you smash your head against your head against someone else at certain times two or three other kids. Just to accomplish your assignment. Hold up two linemen so the backs can get the tackle, block two kids so the running back can break a seventy yard run, while we hit one knee and prepare for the next play. Honor, without it my job on the football field would be thankless but I take great pride in my job. I take the punishment like the bruises, cuts, guys diving at my knees .I still picked myself back up and get ready for the next play.

In conclusion

Thank you for the best two years of football that I have had in my career. Thank you for teaching me not in just football, but in life. Thank you for never giving up on me. Most of all thank you for nominating me for this award.

Thank You,
Joshua Frederick
Cape May, New Jersey

Dear Coach Wyatt,

I am writing to nominate my player, Jai Brown, for the Black Lion Award.

I am in my first year as a head coach here at Monarch High School. Obviously, one of my first goals was to try to get our players, particularly our seniors, to believe in my vision for the program. I instituted a Character Development program in which we focus on a different value each week such as responsibility, family, hard work, etc. While these classes resulted in some snickers and rolling of the eyes by some of our seniors at first, Jai went all in. Each practice he would remind the players of our theme for the week and tried harder than anyone to live by what he had learned. Soon, the other seniors began to follow his lead.

Jai did not start any games for us at tailback, but never once hung his head or complained. He worked hard each practice, and offered to contribute on special teams which he did with passion and tenacity. He cheered when those starting over him performed well, and was the first one to cheer them up when they did not. He was the epitome of a positive teammate.

While not our best player, Jai was the moral and spiritual leader of team. He led our team in prayer before each pre-game meal and was the first to step up and “rally the troops “ at halftime if we were losing. Win or lose, Jai was the

first to stick his head in the door of the coaches' office after the game and say good bye to the coaches and tell us that he loved us.

I know Jai wished he had played more, but despite this he stayed positive, never gave up, and found ways to contribute to this team beyond the football field. My nomination for Jai is NOT a consolation prize to a nice kid that I feel guilty for not playing. The Black Lion Award recognizes young men that show courage in the face of adversity and place the needs of their team above their own desires. No player on our team did this more than Jai.

It is with great enthusiasm and sincerity that I nominated Jai Brown for the Black Lion Award.

Sincerely,

Chris Cunningham
Head Football Coach
Monarch High School
Coconut Creek, Florida

Dear Coach Wyatt, members of the Black Lions, and members of the Holleder family:

Please forgive my tardiness with this nomination. It is my privilege to nominate Charlie Prentner, one of our senior football players, for the Black Lion award.

Charlie has been a cornerstone for us over the past three seasons, leading us to three straight state semi-final appearances, and back to back undefeated conference championships, the first two in our school's history.

I believe that Charlie qualifies for the Black Lion award for a number of reasons. We moved him to fullback this year after two years on the offensive line. As you know, the fullback is one of the key positions in our offense and Charlie embraced this challenge with gusto. He selflessly accepted the role of glorified guard and produced some of the most devastating kick-out blocks we've seen in a long time.

Charlie is a scrapper. He gives his all on every play. Despite having injury problems over the past three years, Charlie took every significant offensive snap at fullback this season. He courageously played in a critical league game despite severely bruising his shoulder early in the contest.

Charlie is an intelligent kid and is respectful of the game. He never questioned his role on the team and was our most aggressive player.

Charlie possesses the qualities associated with the Black Lion award: courage, determination, and the willingness to lay it on the line for his teammates.

Thank you again for sponsoring this award and thanks for allowing me the opportunity to nominate Charlie Prentner.

Sincerely,

Mike Schmidt
Head Football Coach
Platte Canyon HS
Bailey, Colorado

To Whom It May Concern:

On behalf of the Coachella Valley High School Coaching staff I would like to nominate Edilberto Cabrera for the 2009 Black Lion Award of the Coachella Valley High School Football Team.

It has been an honor to have the opportunity to coach Edilberto the last two years. He is not very big, 5'8 165lbs, but he plays outside linebacker like he was 6'2 230lbs and his heart is even bigger. Last year as a junior he saw limited play time on defense but played a lot of special teams, because of this he made a commitment to getting stronger and faster by getting into the weightroom and attending all of the speed training workouts. His comment was always, "I have to get faster & stronger to make my team better." When we changed the defense this year we asked him to play outside linebacker instead of inside linebacker and he took on the challenge head on and became one of our best defenders and more importantly he became a team leader.

Edilberto epitomizes what a Black Lion Award recipient should be, someone that always puts his team ahead of himself. He also showed courage, honor and devotion to duty all season long and it was contagious because the rest of the team followed him. It is with great honor that I nominate Edilberto Cabrera for the 2009 Black Lion Award.

Respectfully,

Juan "Ramon" Ruiz
Head Football Coach
Coachella Valley High School
Thermal, California
"Home of the Arabs"

Coach Wyatt:

On behalf of our Head Coach Cade Lambert and the rest of the Des Moines Christian Lions football coaching staff, I would like to nominate Stephen Troll for the Black Lion Award.

I have had the great privilege of coaching Stephen for the last four years. This year being his senior season was challenging because we asked him to be open and flexible to where on the field he would play. It was also challenging for Stephen as we installed the wishbone on offense and on defense we moved him from a middle linebacker to a down linemen depending on down or if someone was hurt. He NEVER complained.

There are a few things that set Stephen apart from your typical senior football player. First, before his senior season we have never won more than 3 games in one year. This year we had our first winning season in school history and were district co champs. Second, Stephen played along side our other middle backer who was the top tackler in the entire state in for two straight years yet would sacrifice his own stats for the betterment of the team. When most would look at their own stats Stephen could care less. All Stephen cared about was bettering himself, those around him, and glorifying God. It is this selfless sacrifice that sets him apart from others.

I am a member of the United States Army and I know what the army values means to me and my fellow soldiers. Stephen lives these values also in life, school, and on the football field. His sense of **loyalty** to our school goes beyond the field as he can be seen cheering all sports and activities for Des Moines Christian no matter if it is high school, middle school, or elementary. His sense of **duty** to the team was never questioned as he was always willing to do whatever it took to better his team. His **respect** for others showed in his ability to look at the coaches and take criticism or praise and just say "Yes Coach!" or "Thank you Coach!" and go on. His **selfless service** was stated earlier for his lack of caring for stats just glorifying God. **Honor** is shown in his everyday life. His **integrity** is what I believe sets him apart from others. He is one of the most honest and straight forward teenagers I have ever met. The last value he shows is **personal courage**. Almost everyday at practice we do a tackling or blocking one-on-one drill. He always goes against the biggest guys we have. He never backs down from anything we put him in to do.

Stephen's value system reminds me of what I believe Don Holleder and the Black Lions would search for in a recruit. This is why the coaching staff has chosen Stephen Troll to receive the Black Lion Award.

In His Service,

Officer Candidate Brad Green
Science Teacher/Coach/Soldier
Urbandale, Iowa

Coach Wyatt,

We would like to nominate BJ McCullough for our 2009 Black Lion Award. BJ was a 5-8, 170 lb. freshman who was the starting Center for our varsity football team. Needless to say, at that size he took his licks this year. Being in our initial season, we played in a "league" that had little accountability in terms of the age or experience of the participants. As a result, BJ not only competed against kids who were several years older but much bigger. Despite the pounding, he never quit.

BJ took extra time to perfect not only the QB/Center exchange but to work on his deep snaps, as well. To this end, he would come out early and stay late. If he didn't understand the objective, he asked questions. And as a leader, he made suggestions. We didn't anticipate him becoming a starter because of his size, but his willingness to work hard, be dependable, and especially his toughness determined his place as a starter.

There are many factors that stand out about BJ. First of all, he is polite. He offers his hand to you when he greets you. He always has a "yes sir / no sir" response. He arrives early and stays late. He makes sure the field is picked up and that no equipment is left behind. He is respectful and consciences at all times. He works hard on his game and wants to know the position and understand its responsibilities. However, it is his determination, along with his physical and mental toughness where he has garnered our greatest respect. Playing at the most demanding of all positions, BJ is regularly outsized by others. In his first year, he was thrown in to the deep-end of the pool where simply surviving was the goal. However, BJ not only survived but excelled. In game after game, he would fight, claw and scratch with every ounce of his ability to "win the objective." When he was hurt or injured, he would refuse to come out. He worked too hard to leave the field or sit on the bench. BJ leads by example and is an inspiration. If "exhaustion makes cowards of us all," then BJ defied the cliché. While he got tired, he never quit, he never backed down. His physical toughness was exceeded only by his mental toughness. In game after game, BJ would be bruised, bloodied and battered, but he would not come off the field of play. Like Don Holleder, his determination and toughness inspired others. He stayed cool under pressure. He led by example. Pain took no toll on him. He never let down his teammates, nor himself.

There is a respect, maturity and determination that is rare in young men of his age.

Sincerely,
Dave Potter
Kestrel Heights Hawks Football
Kestrel Heights Charter School
Durham, North Carolina

Coach Wyatt,

I need to first apologize for not getting this letter to you in time. I misread the FAQ as please do not submit until Jan 1 of 2010. If this prevents the award from the committee I understand. We have already presented a "placeholder" award that was presented at our banquet by Sergeant First Class Jeff Martin of the National Guard North Georgia recruiting Command. I am a former Marine as is Sergeant Martin and we knew each other previously. He did a heckuva job and there was a nice picture and write-up in our local paper, the Dahlonega Nugget concerning the award winner and the presentation of the award. All of the coaches were given two votes. Will Speir was the only player to receive 3 votes from the coaches. We had 6 different players receive votes, coaches were not allowed to vote for their own kids, if one played on the team, and were not allowed to "swap" votes by voting for each others' kids.

Will Speir is our recipient of the Black Lion Award. Will is a kid that any parent would be proud to claim as their own. Will possesses a compassionate heart and a competitive spirit that we all strive to cultivate in our children. He is adventurous and self assured while remaining humble and firmly grounded. As Will's head coach I would like to address the individual award criteria so there is no doubt that Will is a deserving recipient of the Black Lion Award.

Will demonstrated leadership by providing a hard working example for the other players to follow. Will is very dedicated to physical fitness, was pound for pound our strongest player, and embraced any and all physical challenges thrown his way. Will demonstrated tremendous leadership through his unending positive spirit in a season which saw many ups and downs. He motivated others through his infectious can-do attitude which spurred a higher level of performance from his peers. He also

demonstrated leadership in the manner in which he exhibited all of the other award criteria.

Will is not the biggest player. In fact will would probably fall in the 25% - 30% in weight for our age group. Yet, Will demonstrated exceptional courage by never showing any fear when tasked with one on one competition against far bigger players. However, Will entered such competition with his positive attitude intact and often prevailed in these tests. The courage demonstrated helped others overcome their own doubts and raise the level of their play and thus immeasurably helped the team.

Will showed a devotion to duty unlike any other on our team. Will was tasked with playing the strong side cornerback position and primarily containing the run. We never had to worry about Will's side of the field. Anyone attempting to block Will would have a difficult task on their hands. Will consistently evaded the opposing blocks and maintained a solid presence on the edge of the formation. Will also did an exceptional job covering receivers, making one outstanding interception and return in an important game and defending many other passes.

Will also showed an unusual concern for his team by postponing a vacation to visit his grandparents so he could play in a pivotal game mid-season. The swine flu and injuries had thinned our ranks and he approached his parents with the idea of postponing the trip for the good of the team. His concern was primarily for his teammates. In countless hours of film review I personally saw Will selflessly celebrate the achievements of teammates far more than he celebrated his own achievements. His unbridled passion for the accomplishments of his teammates, more than any one other thing, motivated me to vote for him with one of my votes.

I hope this recommendation finds the committee in a willing spirit and leaves you with no doubt as to the worthiness of this recipient.

Sincerely,

Alex Denard
Head Coach,
Lumpkin County #1 Pee Wees 2009
Dahlonega, Georgia

2009 Dunellen Destroyers Black Lion Award Recipient

It is an honor to nominate Josh Zeloof for the prestigious Black Lion Award. Josh came to us after being home schooled for two years and having never played organized football before. He ended up starting at tight end and did a tremendous job with double teams, down blocks, and shoeshine blocks. Josh is into strength training and has a tremendous grip from bending metal bars and coins. He won 15 bouts while wrestling for the first time this past winter. I've had the opportunity to coach a number of great kids who possessed tremendous character and leadership skills.

But I've never had a kid quite like Josh before. He appears to have been born to lead. His work ethic is second to none and he displays all the qualities that make him the perfect choice for this award. Unlike other years, this year we had several quality kids we considered for this award, but Josh stood clearly head and shoulders above them. He is a quiet leader and leads by example. On several occasions he took it upon himself to stop by my house and knock on the door and request I work the team harder. When he finished his portion of conditioning he would always go back to help the other players who were struggling and made sure they completed the tasks. His attitude and example were contagious, especially among our younger players. He was always the first one on the field and last one off. He helped with off field duties that were not his own. I just can't say enough about the type of person he is and I believe that I'm a better person and coach and the team is better because of the time we spent with him. Josh has enlisted in the Army and will head out to serve his country upon graduating high school.

It is his goal to one day become an Army Ranger.

Thanks for all your help,

Dave DeNapoli
Athletic Director
Head Football Coach
Dunellen HS
Dunellen, New Jersey

