

GOOD KNIGHT

Towanda's Travis Chesla excels on both sides of the ball

By Joshua Funk

For PA Football News

It's not uncommon for athletes at small schools to play multiple sports. Because of smaller enrollment figures, it is usually a necessity.

But for Travis Chesla, a football player and wrestler for Towanda High School, he almost decided against participating in the winter sport.

"I almost didn't even wrestle this year because I wanted to be committed to the weight program a lot more for football and be very committed to football," the senior-to-be said. "That's what I want to go to college for."

Even though he had thought against it, Chesla did wrestle, and qualified for the state wrestling tournament in the "AA" classification. He made it all the way to the quarterfinals.

Chesla, though, is a wrecker on the football field. He's a talented two-way player at running back and linebacker for the Knights, who compete in the Northern Tier League, which features schools like Wellsboro, Athens Area, Troy, and Canton.

And when you examine Chesla's season statistics for the 2008 football season, you'll better understand why he wanted to commit to football a lot more.

Listed as a 6'2, 204-pound athlete, he finished Towanda's 7-4 campaign with 190 carries for 1,272 rushing yards and 20 touchdowns. As a receiver out of the backfield, he added 21 catches for 175 yards and another touchdown.

In one of Towanda's games, Chesla ran for 145 yards and scored five touchdowns in a decisive 40-12 victory over Wellsboro. He opened the season with 156 yards rushing and three touchdowns against North Penn (Blossburg), and surpassed 140 rushing yards in a game five times.

Defensively, he finished the season with 154 tackles (108 solo), three sacks, and six interceptions. He had an impressive 38 tackles in a single game – against Canton. Thirty-six of Chesla's 38 tackles in that game were solos. He had four games in which he recorded 15+ tackles.

It was the defensive side of the ball where Chesla played most of his sophomore year. He finished the '07 season with 70 tackles and four interceptions.

Towanda head coach Craig Dawsey noted that defensively, Chesla was a very good football player.

“His athleticism, as a sophomore, set him apart,” Dawsey said. “And he’s just gotten better.”

The progress is evidenced in the drastic increase in the statistics. The perspective on the numbers, at least from coach Dawsey, is a little bit different than most coaches.

“Those numbers are his (Travis’) job,” Towanda’s head man said. “There are no stars in our house. Somebody’s going to try to make you into a star, but there are no stars in our house. You’re simply doing what you’re supposed to do.”

As a senior, bigger expectations will be coming the way of #19. And, also as a senior, Chesla will be expected to be a leader. He didn’t shy away from addressing the topic.

“I just want to be able to pass down everything I know to other teammates to help them become better,” Chesla said, “and then I want them to pass it on to other athletes (down the road) so they can continue to help others out.”

“He leads by example,” Dawsey said. “And when he has to, he’s vocal about what needs to be done. But he does it in a proven manner – a manner that doesn’t turn kids off.

“Kids watch,” Dawsey continued, “and younger kids know who are the ones that are workers and the ones that are just blowing smoke. Travis doesn’t blow smoke, and the kids know that.”

Overall, it’s not the numbers or impressive stats that Chesla wants to be remembered by. It’s something a little more than that.

“I don’t want anything big,” he said. “I just want to be the best athlete and role model for everyone that comes up (through the Towanda system).”