

Football Taught Me to Embrace Challenges

Tony F. Jones

When I was growing up, football was my game. I was shorter and weighed less than the other kids, but I still made the team and played starting positions for two schools as well.

On offense, I started as quarterback and then tailback. These positions gave me the opportunity to make great plays and to score touchdowns to help my team win. Due to my speed, I was able to burst through the line or run around the end and score a touchdown.

On defense, as middle linebacker, I was able to intimidate guys bigger than me by rushing through gaps. I would interrupt and interfere with their offense and cause them to lose yards and downs. I would cause fumbles, and I would intercept the ball for a touchdown. I never

I never was shy or fearful or doubtful when I faced the other team.

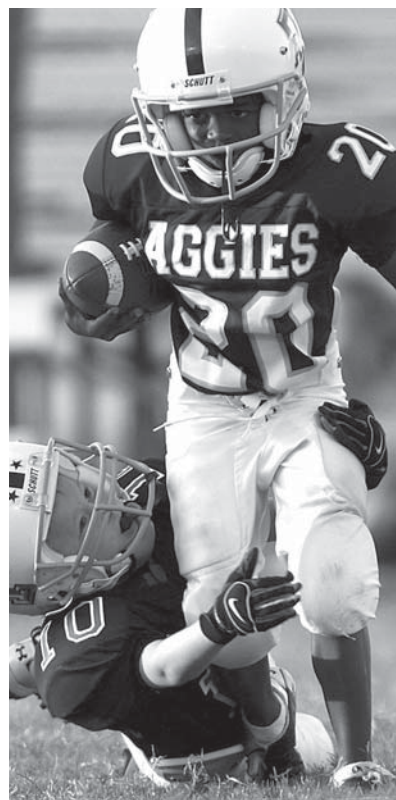
was fearful or doubtful when I faced the other team. I embraced competition and challenges.

Sometimes, however, things did not go as I planned. One time, I got tackled hard, and I fumbled the ball. We lost that game. There were times when my timing wasn't perfect, or I chose a hole in the line to run through but didn't make it. With each loss and each mistake, you have to get back up and keep going.

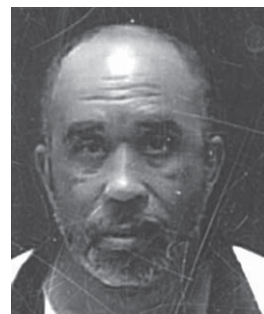
It is the same for me today. Football taught me to be confident in myself. It taught me to face challenges with the resources that I had. Today, I face many challenges. I am trying to get my GED after being out of school for 41 years. (I made it to the 7th grade.) It is a struggle to stay clean and sober, but I have succeeded now for six and a half years. A major goal for me is to restore my broken

relationship with my two sons. I am putting forth all my effort. Each time we lose, we can still grow and develop from that loss. In the game of life, each loss prepares us for the next victory because we can learn from it.

Football taught me to believe in myself and to embrace challenges. Whenever I give my all, in every challenge that presents itself, 100 percent of the time, the results will be great. To me, that's what counts!



Tony Jones was born in Mobile, Alabama. He is a cook and a baker, and his goal is to be a writer. He is the father of four. He is incarcerated in Calhoun State Prison in Morgan, Georgia, and he is using this opportunity to better his life. He has everything to win. He is confident and trusts God as his provider. His sister, Manzanita Jones, helped him write this article.



AFTER YOU READ:

1. According to the author, what did he learn from playing football?
2. Research the physical risks of playing football. Share what you learn. How do you weigh the risks of playing sports with the potential gains?