



December 11, 2009

## Indianapolis Star Indiana Mr. Football: Daniel Wodicka

### Lessons learned from older brother make him a champ

*By Kyle Neddenriep  
kyle.neddenriep@indystar.com*

James Wodicka is the serious older brother. Daniel is the easygoing younger brother.

That personality served Daniel well growing up, when James -- with the physical advantage of three years -- and his friends would gang up on him in backyard football or driveway basketball games at the family home in West Lafayette.

"We were rough on him," James said. "But he'd always want to keep playing."

Never straying from the humility rooted in the memories of those childhood games, quarterback/free safety Daniel Wodicka has been voted the 2009 Indianapolis Star Indiana Mr. Football after leading West Lafayette High School to the Class 3A state championship. He received 22 of 51 votes for the highest individual state honor in the sport as selected by the Indiana Football Coaches Association rating board.

Warren Central running back Shakir Bell was second with nine votes and six other players received at least two votes.

But ask Wodicka how he led the second-ranked Red Devils to an undefeated season and the program's first state title since 1993 and he quickly deflects attention to his teammates, coaches and family.

"Our coach (Marshall Overley) would always tell us to take praise, say 'Thank you' and just keep walking," said Wodicka, who also plays basketball and baseball. "I think that's good advice. You don't get a big head about it. Growing up with a brother three years older than me, I never had to worry about that."

James Wodicka, now a junior studying bio-medical engineering at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, was among those in attendance last month at Lucas Oil Stadium when Daniel rushed for 115 yards, passed for 158 yards and had four tackles and a fumble recovery to lead West Lafayette to a 24-10 victory over Evansville Memorial.

Throughout the season, the brothers would talk on the phone about that week's upcoming game; Daniel at West Lafayette and James at Division III Case Western, where he's a defensive back. In the weeks leading up to the state championship, and then the week of the title game, James said he sensed a shift in Daniel's approach.

"It was like nothing was going to get in his way," James said. "I'd never seen him like that. He's still a laid-back kid, but there was (a) change in attitude. He was going to lead his team to a state championship no matter what."

A three-year starter at wide receiver, Daniel had teamed with Matt Lancaster -- now at Illinois State -- to form one of the steadiest passing combinations in the state.

"Matt got a lot of the credit, deservedly so," said Overley, who started at West Lafayette in 2001 with six straight losing seasons. "But not once was there a hint or a flavor from Daniel of, 'I should be doing

this' or 'I should be getting credit for this.' "

Wodicka made a smooth transition to quarterback as a senior. He completed 60 percent of his passes for 2,181 yards and 26 touchdowns. He also rushed for 1,468 yards and 23 TDs.

"We tried to put a spy on him and weren't able to stop him," said Benton Central coach Doug Nelson, whose team lost twice to West Lafayette this season. "He's just so intelligent."

Wodicka is just as well-rounded and successful off the field. He has a perfect 4.0 grade-point average and is on track to be the class valedictorian -- "If I can pick it up in calculus," he said -- at one of the most prestigious academic high schools in the state.

With a goal of studying engineering in college -- his father, George, is the head of the Weldon School of biomedical engineering at Purdue -- Wodicka is considering schools such as Carnegie Mellon, Case Western, University of Chicago, Johns Hopkins and Washington University in St. Louis.

"I think through James, Daniel realized it was possible to manage his time in athletics and in the classroom," George Wodicka said. "The support he's received from his teachers and coaches has also been just incredible."

Wherever he goes, Wodicka can count on the support of his friends and family, including the older brother who administered a few hard knocks years ago.

"It used to be that he was known as my little brother," James said. "Now when I go back (to West Lafayette), I'm 'Daniel's older brother.' I joke with him that I deserve some of the credit because of those games we used to play. I'm very proud of him and everything he's accomplished."

## Additional Facts

Meet Daniel Wodicka

- **Football:** Four-year starter on offense and defense at West Lafayette. . . . Was named Phil Eskew Mental Attitude Award winner after the Class 3A state championship. . . . Broke Matt Lancaster's school record for total offense in a season as a senior with 3,649 yards. . . . Was named the Army's Indiana Iron Man of the Year for 2009. . . . Is school record-holder in touchdowns (52) and points (312). . . . Threw 215 consecutive passes at the end of the season without an interception.
  - **Personal:** Second of three children to George and MaryJo (Przyborski) Wodicka. . . . Is involved in his school's "Best Buddies" program, where he has strengthened an already-existing friendship with Larry Lane, a classmate with Down syndrome. "I've learned to enjoy life from him," Wodicka said. "He always has a smile on his face." . . . Plays point guard on the basketball team and outfield on the baseball team at West Lafayette. (Younger sister Maggie is in sixth grade and also plays multiple sports.)
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