

Brashear multi-purpose athlete sets lofty goals for 2009 season

**By Josh Funk
For PA Football News**

When you ask Brashear's Manasseh Garner about his goals for the upcoming football season, he's honest and straightforward about them.

He wants to go out on top.

"My goals, personally, are to have over 100 receptions. I'd like to have over 1,000 yards of offense, over 100 tackles on defense, and about six interceptions," Garner said.

Those certainly are big numbers, but don't think that just because he'd like to hit triple-digits in receptions means he's got "Terrell Owens" syndrome. Before he listed his goals, he made certain to point out that the team comes first.

But his rationale for setting such high standards for himself is quite simple.

"I've set my goals high because if you set them high, then you can't become satisfied," he said. "Those are my goals and I'm going to reach them."

Garner could go out on top numbers-wise, but to truly go out on top, one could make the inference that that means winning a PIAA title. That has been a tough task for City League teams in the past. Only the Perry Commodores have played in a PIAA final representing District 8, doing so in 1989 and again in 1997.

And Brashear, winners of 9 City League football championships, all since 1979, has never won a PIAA playoff game.

The Bulls used to compete in the "AAAA" classification, and had been eliminated from the PIAA playoffs by Erie Cathedral Prep in 2006 and 2007. Last season, Brashear was eliminated by Clearfield Area, 24-21, on its home turf of Cupples Stadium.

Garner, a multi-purpose athlete and one of three potential Division-1 prospects returning to the Bulls in 2009, has a theory why the Bulls haven't yet won that long-sought PIAA playoff game.

"It's all mental," Garner said. "Once you get into States, you can get caught up in the hype that this athlete is one of the top athletes or this or that. I think it's kind of like a stigma that (some players) are just satisfied with winning a City championship. But you've got to be willing to push forward and not get satisfied.

"(Like I said), it's all mental," Garner continued. "I just keep telling myself, 'There's nobody better than me.'"

Garner might be right about that last statement. He's one of the most versatile athletes returning to the City League this season, and he may be one of the more versatile players in all of Class "AAA." When you look at Garner's stat line from a season ago, you'll understand why that assessment is true:

For starters, he can play quarterback. He completed 6-of-12 passes for 206 yards and two touchdowns with zero interceptions. Garner can be used as a rusher, too. He averaged nearly 5.5 yards per carry and scored two rushing touchdowns last season.

He's very dangerous as a wide receiver, and that's where he did the majority of his damage last season. Garner hauled in 50 passes for 702 yards and seven touchdowns last season, averaging 14.04 yards per catch and 58.5 receiving yards per game. He broke the 100-yard receiving mark against Langley and Westinghouse.

Defensively, he posted 84 tackles (65 solo), six sacks, three interceptions, and two fumble recoveries. He averaged seven tackles per game, and twice recorded 10+ tackles in a game, tallying 14 against Schenley and 11 against Clearfield.

As a sophomore, Garner played mostly defense, racking up 67 tackles and two sacks.

Heck, as versatile an athlete as #5 was last season, the only thing he didn't do was man the concession stands at Cupples Stadium. But doing a variety of things on the football field is nothing new for him. He's been playing a varied role since Day 1.

"I was always moved around because of my height," Garner said. "Playing a whole bunch of different positions – it's easy for me because I've been doing it for so long.

"I love to catch passes," Garner continued. "I love offense. But, at the same time, I always like to hit and play defense, too."

Rivals.com lists Garner as a multi-purpose athlete, and he's generated six Division-1 offers to date, with numerous schools showing interest. Maryland, Minnesota, Pitt, Wisconsin, Akron, and Toledo have offered the 6'2, 205-pounder. Boston College, Connecticut, Illinois, and West Virginia are also showing interest, but haven't yet offered.

Garner continues a string of recent D-1 attention for the program. At least one Bull athlete has gone on to a Division-1 college each of the last two seasons. Garner could make it a third year in a row.

Also, Brashear, owner of a 22-3 record in the last two years (29-8 in the last three years), could win its third consecutive City League championship in 2009. The Bulls have never won three consecutive City titles in its history, but did win three titles in a four-year stretch from 1979-'82 and four titles in a five year stretch from 1984-'88.

If Brashear wins the City League title this season, it will be the 10th in school history. Brashear would join Perry (15) and Westinghouse (34) as the only other City League schools with double-digit championships.

While all of that would be nice for Garner and the Bulls, he said that he'd like to be remembered as more than just an athlete.

“Mostly, I want to be remembered as a leader and a respectful young man who was raised well,” he said.