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Campo Football Star Commits to Yale Despite 'Bigger' Offers

By Spencer Silva



Sterling Strother Photo Gint Federas

With 13 minutes left in the 2014 season, the Campolindo Cougars needed a miracle. With El Capitan (Lakeside, Calif.) ahead 28-7, it looked as though the Vaqueros would cruise to an easy victory. In the process, they would not only foil Campo's hopes of winning a Division III state title, but also of completing a perfect 16-0 season.

Within the next 12 minutes, Campo scored three times, evening the score. Then, in the game's final minute, Adam Remotto picked up a fumble and returned it 85 yards for a touchdown, and with it secured the Cougars the unlikely of victories. This event is now a crystalized piece of school history, and it's a moment offensive lineman Sterling Strother, a senior this fall, will never forget.

"That was the best day of my life," he said without hesitation.

Earlier this summer, the 6-foot-5-inch, 250-pound Strother committed to playing football at Yale - in 2016, that is. This was a surprise to some, as Strother, a three-star recruit, per ESPN, received scholarship offers from several larger football programs, a list that included Cal, Utah, and Vanderbilt.

The reason?

"For me, first and foremost, it's the ability to be a true student-athlete," he explained. "At a lot of high-level, power-five schools - even the schools

that are very well-respected academically - there are definitely times at which you're more an athlete than a student."

According to Strother, it's the 50-or-so years after football that makes Yale so appealing. Like most prospective college students, he's unsure what he wants to study, although he's certain it won't be "aerospace engineering" or "quantum mechanics." Future employment at NASA, it seems, is about the only thing he's ruled out.

It also doesn't hurt that the Bulldogs have made impressive strides in recent seasons. The 2016 class boasts several other three-star recruits and is shaping up to be a special group. Strother predicts they will win at least one Ivy League title during his tenure.

Despite his on-field success, Strother wasn't always set on being a football player. In fact, it wasn't until this past year he decided he wanted to play football instead of basketball in college. Ultimately, it was the camaraderie and brotherhood he experienced on the football field that helped make his decision.

"I started playing football not because I love the sport, but because I love the culture," he said. "Coach Macy compares it to war, how physically and mentally tough you have to be. ... There's no other sport like it."

Interestingly enough, both Campo and Yale employ a zone-blocking scheme that forms the foundation for prolific running games. Campo's standout running back Nick Fadelli is headed to the University of Arizona this fall, which means the 2015 Cougars will be dependent on a host of new

running backs. The rotation is expected to include Jack Cassidy, Branden Bocobo, and Matt Rehnquist.

When interviewed for this article, Strother made a point of mentioning by name virtually every single one of his teammates. The program has emerged as one of the best in Northern California, and its winning ways have even drawn the attention of the Moraga Town Council, which issued a proclamation calling Jan. 25, 2015 "Campolindo Varsity Football Day."

The team is slated for a short break this summer before the season starts. The expectations will be piled high for the Cougars, but Strother isn't worried about all of this just yet. He's fallen in love with football, and knows that, like life, once play has begun, anything goes. "Once the ball is snapped, it's just ... elegant havoc. You never know what's going to be happening."

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[back](#)

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