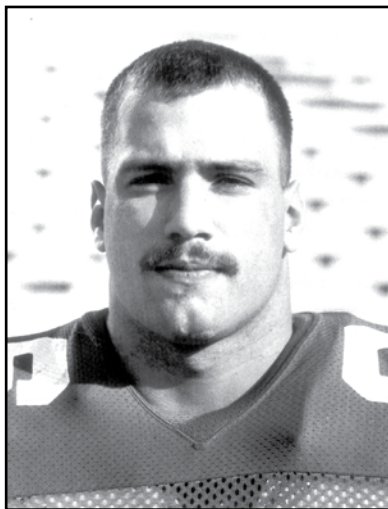


Foreword

Massillon Star, Ohio State All-American and College Football Hall of Famer

My first memory was at a Massillon-McKinley game. I was living in Canton at the time and I had no idea I would be attending Massillon. But for some reason I was rooting for Massillon. Probably because my dad was head coach at another Canton high school. I just remember it felt like the biggest thing in the world at that time. I think I was in the third grade. Massillon won. I was impressed. It just



Chris Spielman went from being the USA Today Player of the Year at Massillon to the College Football Hall of Fame.

PHOTO: OHIO STATE ATHLETICS

seemed so much bigger than any high school game that I had ever been to. And with my dad being a coach, I had been to a lot of high school games. This one seemed bigger than high school football.

That game stuck with me. I wanted to play at the best school I could play at. Fortunately it worked out that we moved to Massillon when I was a freshman and I was able to

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play at Massillon. I was glad to have that opportunity. I wouldn't trade it for the world. It's a great experience being a player there.

Winning is important to the Massillon players. Winning is very important. Winning is important to the whole town. They understand the tradition. They understand what tradition is. They're raised in a belief that they win and they *should* win and they always will win.

One of my best friends in the world was Steve Studer. Steve was a star player for Massillon in the early 1970s. Steve took me in at his house. I knew he worked out. I'm 15, I'm not even driving yet.

I walked by his house every Saturday night trying to get up the nerve to go in there and ask him if he would teach me. And finally I did. He took me in and I guess I became like a younger brother to him, or protoge or whatever you want to call it.

But to this day, without him, I wouldn't be where I am today. I really believe that.

Usually when people find out that I'm from Massillon they'll ask me what it was like. A lot of people shake their heads and can't believe the things I say about all the different booster clubs, how many people go to the games. I remember when I was a sophomore in 1981 they couldn't pass the

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school levy. Then, finally, whoever makes those decisions said, “The stadium needs repaired and it’s not safe to play games in it anymore. If you don’t pass the school levy we’ll have to play our games in the Rubber Bowl.” They had a vote and sure enough the school levy passed. Stories like that. Stories about how many kids go out for football. And how when a boy is born there he gets a football in his crib. All the little traditions. The Obie pins, the live tiger mascot, the swing band. *Everything*. There’s nothing like it. And the fact that the whole town enjoys it makes it special. In Columbus you go over six blocks and there’s another

high school, go over another 10 blocks and there’s another high school. There’s nothing like Massillon.

I met my girlfriend, who became my wife, in Massillon. She was from Jackson Township. We would walk

on Brookside golf course. We would talk about what we were going to do. That’s the great thing about her, she knew

me through all that stuff. She knew me like no other person.

Playing at Massillon taught me to have belief in your team. And confidence. It teaches you confidence. I think that’s the biggest thing that’s stuck with me. And

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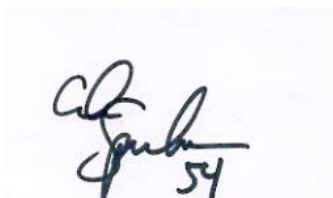
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loyalty. I always tried to represent not only myself and my family, but the city the best way I could. And I think people understand that.

I'm proud to have been able to have the opportunity to play there. I'm proud to say I played at Massillon. That's the biggest thing. Every time they ask where I played high school football, I say Massillon, and a feeling of pride comes over me.

It's like something you've never seen or heard of before.

People have to understand how unique it is. I think in *A Century of Heroes* Scott Shook does a nice job of capturing that. It makes you remember the games, playing in that stadium. Any time you have great times somewhere you almost wish you could go back to it sometimes.



Chris Spielman

College Football Hall of Famer, 2010

Four-Time Pro Bowler, Detroit Lions, 1988-95

Two-time All-American, Ohio State, 1984-87

Two-time All-Ohioan , All-American, Massillon Tigers, 1981-83

ESPN Color Analyst, Since 2001