

Q&A with Haloti Ngata

On field, defensive tackle also contributes as a blocker; off field, he's a role model and raises awareness for diabetes

By Edward Lee
October 29, 2008

About this series: Each Wednesday we'll bring you a Q&A with a Ravens player to help you learn more about the team. Today's guest is defensive tackle Haloti Ngata, who recorded his first sack of the season and helped block on Willis McGahee's 1-yard touchdown run in Sunday's 29-10 win.

What was your proudest moment in the NFL?

Just making it to the NFL. Ever since I was real young, I always wanted to be in the NFL. I loved it. When I knew that I was kind of good in high school, I started thinking, 'Oh, this could really happen.' To actually make it here is a great achievement, and now that I'm in here, I just want to stay here as long as I can.

How does it feel to be a role model for Polynesians?

I know I am because a lot of my cousins and their friends talk about me making it here. I want to make the Tongan culture proud. I want to show the younger generation that we can do something and not just be in gangs or lazy. I'm trying to break that stereotype.

What was your most embarrassing moment in the NFL?

Running out of bounds when I got that interception [against the Tampa Bay Buccaneers on Sept. 10, 2006] in my rookie year. I still hear about it every day.

If you were NFL commissioner for one day, what would you do or change?

Probably the fines. Make them a little less. I had that accidental fine last year [when he threw a punch at Cleveland Browns offensive tackle Joe Thomas on Nov. 18]. It was \$5,000. I would make it \$250 or \$300. That's about it.

Do you feel that defensive tackles get overshadowed by linebackers, cornerbacks and safeties?

I just think that's part of the job. We work to hold up guys for linebackers. As long as our linebackers are making plays that we're working hard for them to make the plays, I'm just happy with that. Going through high school and college, a lot of times, linebackers would miss the plays that are supposed to be made. Being with linebackers like Ray [Lewis] and Bart [Scott], they make those plays. It's great to hold up a double-team and hear this 'crack!' That's when you can say, 'Yes! They made the play.' That makes me happy. I'm fine with it. It doesn't matter whether I get the glory or not.

Would you rather have a Super Bowl ring or a Hall of Fame bust?

That's a hard question. Probably a Super Bowl ring because you work so hard to get that, and it's a great team accomplishment to get that ring and know that you got into the Super Bowl. I haven't experienced it yet, but hopefully, I can one day get it.

What's your favorite food?

It's called lu pulu [a Tongan dish]. It's kind of like spinach with corned beef in it. They bake it, and it's something that I really love. That with taro is just so good.

What's your least favorite food?

I love to eat everything, but probably oysters. I can't stand that stuff. It's just so slimy.

You're stuck on an island with one CD, one DVD and one book. What are they?

One CD? Probably something from Bob Marley because I love listening to reggae, he's made great music and I love listening to his voice. The DVD is hard because a lot of great movies have been coming out. It would have to be a funny movie like Superbad. And I really don't read books. I like ESPN magazine because I like reading about sports and seeing what's going on in the sports world.

You sponsor an essay contest for students 18 years old and younger in Maryland, Oregon and Utah in which a \$1,000 prize is awarded for the best essays on raising awareness for diabetes. (Ngota's mother, Olga, died in 2006 after battling diabetes and kidney disease.) How inspiring has that project been for you?

One girl wrote that every time she had to stick herself with a needle, she would have people smack her with a rubber band and that she would have to drink a juice box when her blood sugar was low. A lot of kids had great ideas, and it was great to read their stories.

Copyright © 2008, [The Baltimore Sun](#)