

INDUCTEE PROFILE

Practiced safety first

Geishauser set goal early, lived up to it

By John Hartsock
Altoona Mirror

From the time that he first set foot on a football field as a young boy playing with and against older kids in pickup tackle games at Altoona's Prospect Park, George Geishauser was laser focused on attaining an NCAA Division I football scholarship.

"I just thought that (playing football) was the normal thing to do -- playing high school football, getting a scholarship, and playing in college," said Geishauser, who is one of five individual 2026 inductees in the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame. "By the time that I got into the ninth grade, it was crystal clear to me -- my goal was to get a Division I college scholarship. I didn't want my parents to have to pay my tuition."

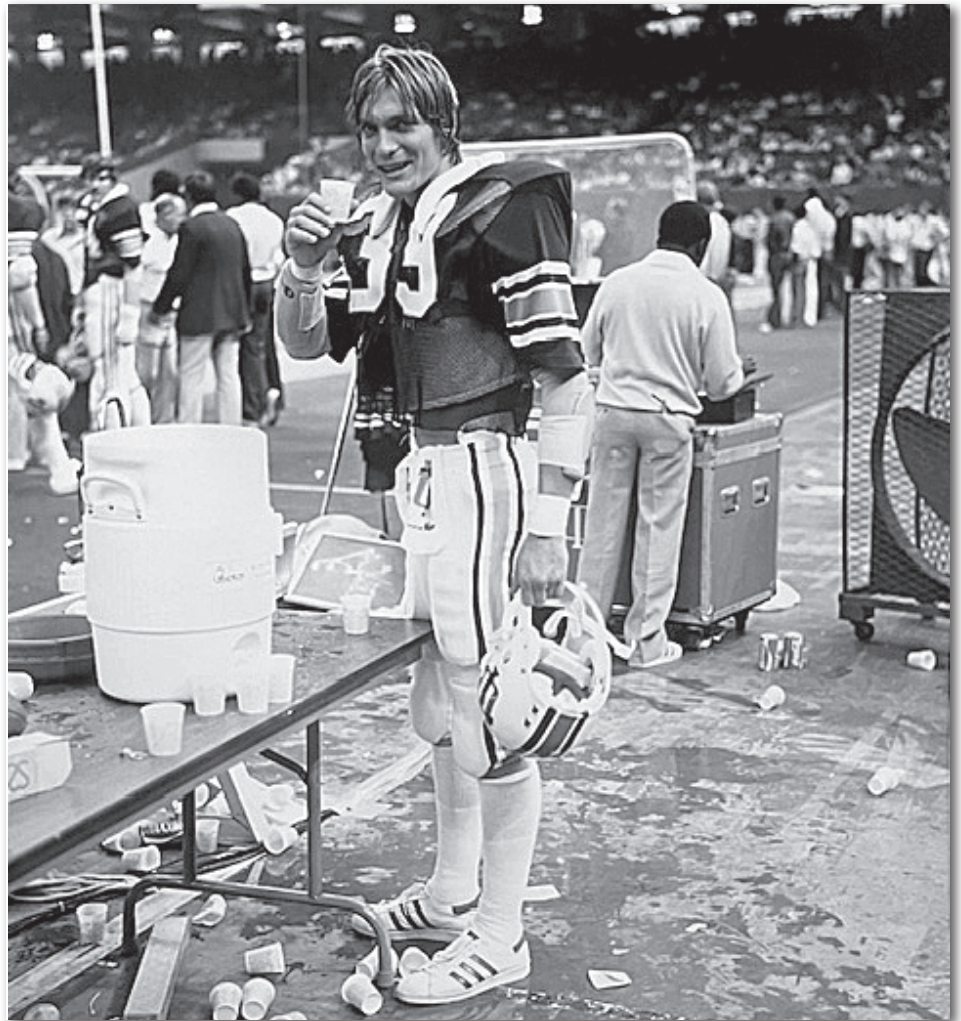
Geishauser's goal was achieved, in spite of the road to it becoming somewhat circuitous, when he joined the football program at Tulane University.

After a standout football career as a running back and defensive back at Bishop Guilfoyle High School (now Bishop Guilfoyle Academy), Geishauser graduated from BG in 1977 while attracting a host of Division I college football offers.

Tony Lepore, who was a running backs/defensive backs coach on the BG staff during Geishauser's high school days -- and whom Geishauser has chosen as his Blair Hall of Fame presenter -- admired Geishauser's determination.

"The thing that I noticed about George is that even when he was very young, he had goals set for himself, and he knew what he wanted to do," Lepore said. "He knew that he wanted to get into the college football scene, and he wanted to try out for the National Football League. He had goals in mind, and he worked very hard as an athlete to achieve those goals."

Lepore said that Geishauser's speed



George was a two-year starter as a defensive back for Tulane in the early 1980s.

was one of his most positive assets on the football field.

"Even though George stood 6-foot-3, he had tremendous speed and could run like a deer," Lepore said. "He was also a physically tough all-around athlete. No matter what side of the line of scrimmage that he played on, he possessed tremendous athletic skill."

Former Brigham Young University coach Lavell Edwards visited the Geishauser home personally to talk with George and his parents. Arizona State's

then head coach Frank Kush, a Windber native, made a trip to Bishop Guilfoyle to meet with Geishauser, who also drew heavy interest from Colorado State.

Geishauser became smitten with BYU after making a personal visit of his own.

"After I visited BYU, I signed with them," Geishauser said. "That school was so nice, right on the base of the Rocky Mountains. (BYU) was going to let me play running back -- all of the other

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schools that were interested in me wanted me to play defense.”

But fate threw Geishouser a curve ball in the summer following his high school graduation.

“I was going to BYU the whole way up until July – they were communicating back and forth with me,” said Geishouser, whose older brother Thom, a former BG and West Virginia University football standout, was inducted into the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame in 2016. “Then all of a sudden, something happened. They sent me a letter, and (the scholarship) fell through. I couldn’t believe it. And at that point, all the other schools that had been interested in me informed me that their scholarships were gone.”

It was then that the late Altoona native and fellow Blair County Hall of Famer Wayne “Buddy” Geis, who had a long-time coaching career in both the National Football League and major college football, came to the rescue.

At that time Geis was a defensive coach on the Tulane staff, and he threw Geishouser a football lifeline.

“I had a priest friend who was also friends with Buddy Geis, and after they talked, Buddy came up here and watched me play in an all-star game,” Geishouser said. “He actually offered me a scholarship the next day, and that’s how I ended up going to Tulane. To be honest, Buddy Geis actually saved me.”

After redshirting his freshman year, Geishouser eventually worked his way into a starting position in the defensive backfield during his final two seasons at Tulane, but his indoctrination into life with the program and the university was a challenging one.

“Most recruits get wined and dined before signing with their schools, but when I got down there to Tulane, most of the people there didn’t even know me,” Geishouser said. “I just kept fighting and fighting to earn a spot on the field, and finally, in my third year, I had a real good offseason of practice and that’s how I earned my starting position.”

Geishouser’s Tulane career was highlighted by playing against Stanford quarterback John Elway, who went on to a Hall of Fame career in the National Football League with the Denver Broncos.



George closes in to make a tackle against Clemson in a 13-5 loss in 1981 -- the year Clemson won the national title.

“I played the whole game against him, and that was kind of cool,” Geishouser said. “Our playbook on him was that once he broke containment and got out of the pocket, he was the most dangerous, (because) he would scramble around and find his open receivers. I think that we had a pretty good game against him though.”

During Geishouser’s days at Tulane, he and the Green Wave had two bowl appearances – against Joe Paterno’s Penn State team in the 1979 Liberty Bowl in Memphis, Tenn., and against Arkansas in the 1980 Hall of Fame Classic in Birmingham, Ala.

Tulane lost both of those games but battled Penn State tough in a 9-6 defensive struggle.

“I didn’t start in that game, but I did get to play on special teams and a little bit of defense, which was kind of fun,” Geishouser said.

Geishouser possessed a blend of speed and physicality that served him well on defense at Tulane.

“I played both strong safety and cornerback at Tulane, and I liked playing strong safety a lot better,” Geishouser said. “I was fast enough to play the cornerback position, but I liked to go for the big hit on defense, and the thing about playing strong safety is that you were involved in (defending against the opposing team’s) running game.”

Dave Hilton, who was an outside linebacker at Tulane during Geishous-



Geishouser bio

Sport: Football

High school: Bishop Guilfoyle

College: Tulane

Hall of Fame achievement: Three-year letterman and two-year starter as a defensive back at Tulane. Helped get the Green Wave to a pair of bowl games -- 1979 Liberty Bowl vs. Penn State and 1980 Hall of Fame Bowl vs. Arkansas. Signed with the Oakland Raiders and played in three exhibition games in 1982. Older brother Thom is a 2016 Blair Hall of Fame inductee.

er's playing days there, became one of Geishausers's closest lifetime friends.

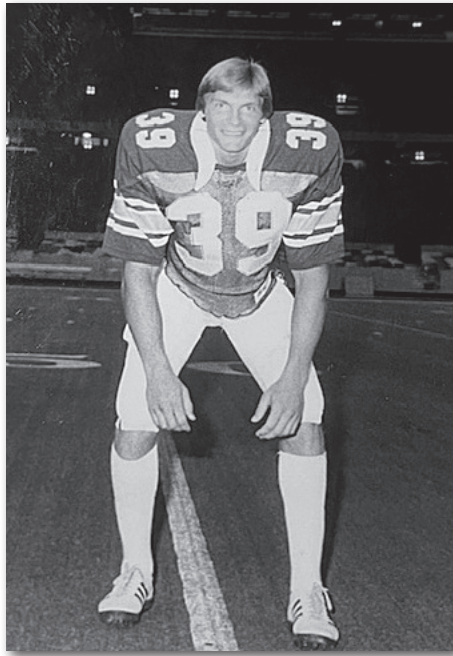
"George is the greatest guy, and I'm proud and blessed to have had him as a friend in my life," said Hilton, who is still a practicing dentist in Louisiana. "George was loved by everybody on the Tulane team."

Along with Geishausers's friendly personality, his gifted athleticism served to further endear him to his Tulane teammates.

"In my assessment, one of the reasons that George was such a great defensive back was because he just had so much God-given athletic ability," Hilton said. "He ran the 40-yard dash in 4.4 seconds, bench-pressed 400 pounds, and could dunk a basketball. And physically, he loved to bring it -- he could hit an opposing ball carrier like a freight train."

According to Hilton, Geishausers embraced the cerebral side of football as well.

"George was extremely smart and always prepared," Hilton said. "He was one of those guys who, after practice, would go back up and review game film of the next opponent. He always knew down, distance and the opponents' tendencies in different situations. He would study the body language of opposing receivers and backs, so he could anticipate the play before it happened."



George helped the Green Wave to a pair of bowl games.

After graduating from Tulane in 1982, Geishausers made his bid to make the NFL's Oakland Raiders as a free agent. He attended the team's mini-camp and played three exhibition games with the Raiders -- who played their home games that season in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum -- and was the last defensive back cut that year, which was marred by an NFL players strike.

"It was a great experience," said Geishausers, who broke up a pass at the goal line by future NFL Hall of Fame quarterback Joe Montana during one of the exhibition games. "Tom Flores was the Raiders coach at the time, and he told me that I had the ability to play on the team, but with the looming strike, the Raiders couldn't hold on to players that they didn't draft. That's how it works sometimes. It's a business."

Geishausers is married to his high school sweetheart, Beth (Brunhuber).

"We've been together since we were both 15 years old. She was a cheerleader at Bishop Guilfoyle, and I was a football player," Geishausers said.

The couple are the parents of three grown children, and they have seven grandchildren.

After his tryout with the Raiders in 1982, Geishausers returned to Altoona and began an exemplary 35-year career in food service sales, first with Sky Brothers and later with the Kraft/Heinz company, earning a national award in his profession.

The Raiders liked him so much that they invited him back for another tryout the following year, but Geishausers and his wife had started their family by then, and his focus was on his family and his sales career.

"When the Raiders called me, I ended up passing on the invitation, because I knew what it was going to take to make that team, and I just wasn't ready. I had been in an office for the past year," said Geishausers, who later had a brief tryout with the Oklahoma Outlaws team in the fledgling United States Football League but decided to remain in the business world.

Geishausers is thrilled to join his brother in the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame.

"Being inducted into the Blair County Sports Hall of Fame is certainly a privilege, and being a member of this exclusive group is a terrific honor," Geishausers said. "I've had plenty of role models from this area who motivated me in my athletic pursuits, and I will always be thankful for and treasure my selection."



After his days at Tulane, George played in three NFL exhibition games with the Oakland Raiders.