

Interview with Zach Gauthier

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IN: Zach, I chose to interview you not only because you just completed your senior year of football for Northern, but you also just celebrated the birth of your 3rd son. I'm just going to ask you a few questions about your college life, your family life, your experience as a football player, and more importantly your experiences as a dad going through a college football career. To start things I'd just like to say hi, ask you how you're doing, and if you could give us a little bit about your childhood, your upbringing, and your family life.

ZG: I was born in Ishpeming, Michigan not too far from Marquette here. I guess my childhood was as any, very family oriented family, so everything we did was basically together. I have two brothers, Jason and Tyler, both being older than me, I'm the youngest in the family. My brother Jason is currently an architect, he went to Lawrence Tech University downstate. My brother Tyler who is 26 is an insurance sales rep. Growing up with my family, my mom and dad always had us doing things together. We played sports throughout our entire lives, unfortunately I've never had the opportunity to play high school sports or things of that sort with my brothers, but they were always playing together. We kind of grew up around the same timeframe as far as going through high school and things of that sort so we had a lot of opportunity to do different things together. My brother Jason and I wrestled, my brother Tyler played basketball, I guess for the most part it's the same as most anyone that grows up here in the UP.

IN: Was... You said you and your brothers were pretty close in age. Was it pretty competitive playing sports with your brothers or competing against them, was it pretty intense?

ZG: Everything we did was basically competition, I don't think you'll meet one family that's much more competitive than what my family is, especially between my brothers and I being so close in age. All the way up to high school my brothers were always bigger, faster, and stronger than me, however, once I hit my sophomore year is when I surpassed them. I'm the biggest of the family now, so it's kind of fun to be able to beat my brothers in most everything we do, and to have that kind of competitive edge against them.

IN: Okay, so you ended up graduating from Ishpeming and you, unlike many college kids, well not many... it's more uncommon nowadays... you decided to get married earlier in your college career. Do you want to talk about that a little bit?

ZG: Yeah, Megan and I met what was my sophomore year, the first time I met her in high school. She at the time actually had a boyfriend so we just kind of were friends, because she had transferred from a different high school to my high school. By my junior year was when we first kind of hooked up, went on a couple dates, it's kind of like that love at first sight type thing. A couple years later, by my senior year I had asked to... I had proposed to her. We ended up getting married on July 11, 2006 at the age of 20 I believe I was. Shortly thereafter we had our first son, then we...

IN: Backing up a little bit, you say you got married in your senior year and you were the youngest of three brothers, where either of your brothers married at this point?

ZG: Tyler had been engaged at one point, however their engagement broke off shortly thereafter. My brother Jason was married before me, actually kind of ironic that he was married to my wife's sister, however I met Megan before he met Becky. So, Jason was married, he also had his first kid. Then, going back to where we were at when I married Megan...

IN: How long after you got married would you say you had your first child?

ZG: He was predicted to be conceived 25 days after our actual wedding, so within nine months we had our first son.

IN: Okay, and at this point you were through your senior year... after you proposed you were going through the recruiting process as a college athlete and you were well into your first year as a college football player, how did things start to balance out for you? Was it difficult or did you handle it pretty well?

ZG: I think we handled it real well. My first year I had went up to Michigan Tech University and Megan was staying at home with her parents here. So that was kind of difficult being away from each other, however Michigan Tech being not that far I was able to come home often. I came home just about every weekend to see her or else she would come up there. Every once in a while I'd make that surprise visit where I'd come during the week and go back that night, but we managed to get through it. After my first year of college at Michigan Tech I decided to transfer down here because it was best for our family after we had debated on whether we should live in Houghton or live here in Marquette, but with our family being close here, both her parents and my parents, we figured it would be best if we moved here, get a little bit of help seeing as we were young parents, it was our first time going through having a child and things of that sort. So, I moved up here. We ended up getting a duplex in Ishpeming and I went to college at Northern Michigan University, sat out my first year of football due to transfer rules, and then soon after I was in my redshirt freshman year here at Northern playing football. Then, I had my second child real soon after that, so right into my sophomore year I think is when I had my second son.

IN: Okay, so you guys got married at a young age, were figuring out where you guys were going to settle down as a family. As you said, you were young parents, did you guys have a lot of support from both sides of your family, her parents and your parents and brothers and sisters and things...?

ZG: I think that's the best part about my family is that they're always there for us, including Megan's family, which is awesome because my family and her family get along real well which makes things a lot easier on us. So, the support was there, whenever I need something or she may need something our families will be there to give it to us, or whatever comes with that. I guess going into that a little bit is when... when I first moved up here to Marquette, I was trying to juggle the whole married life with work and school at that time, which a lot of people kind of wondered how we did that, but what I started out doing was I ended up getting hired at Menard's as a morning shift worker trying to work from 4am-9am every day. Then at 10am I'd go to school, and living in Ishpeming I wouldn't get to see Megan anywhere from 4am till probably sometimes 7pm, so it was kind of difficult with that. But, as time moved on and we learned a little bit it kind of worked out, and we figured things out, and the scholarship off the football team helped out quite a bit, so...

IN: Yeah, I'd imagine it would. So you're... fast-forwarding a bit... you went through your college career here and now with your senior year at the beginning of this fall... your junior year you started to take the

leadership role especially on the defensive side of the ball and a lot of your teammates looked at you as a role model. The coaches considered you a hard worker. How did you manage to keep yourself going... being the same happy guy at home and being able to take all of that stress and come to football and still hold up the leadership mentality?

ZG: I think that kind of goes back to my upbringing by my parents and with my brothers. The competitive aspect kind of allowed me to be the leader I needed to be with the football team just because the way I was raised I can't stand losing, and I guess that kind of drives you through the offseason and through the season to compete and be the best person that you can be, and I guess I never was much of a verbal leader, but a lot of guys see me as a leader by action.

IN: More kind of doing the right thing?

ZG: Exactly, just being in the weight room every single day, running everyday as hard as I could, doing everything I could. Then everybody had that side respect for me that I had a family at home, and was trying to juggle that with school and things of that sort. So, just kind of... it was awarded to me by my teammates that I'd be a captain of the football team through action, as opposed to where you see sometimes people being leaders through what they do verbally and things of that sort.

IN: Right, and me myself, having a child while playing football, what people didn't realize was coming home to a family and especially a little boy wanting to play football, you kind of had a little added motivation, did you feel that at all? You'd come home and while you're out on the field you're worrying about your family at home and you're doing things for them and it gives you the extra push sometimes.

ZG: Yeah, the thing I noticed the most was here in my senior season when my two oldest children were old enough to understand what was going on as far as football, and they kind of grew loving the sport per say, as a young kid. Seeing what they would imitate as me being a father kind of made me proud in a way. So, I guess just seeing that and seeing that it's paying off with my kids there to support me, my wife there to support me, made it a lot easier and a lot more motivating for me to push harder and be the better person.

IN: Another thing I wanted to ask you about was, now that you're done with football, depending on how far along you are in your degree, does the focus kind of shift more towards getting to stay at home with the kids more? Are you finding more time to play with them, be with your wife, spend time as a family man; or is the college still keeping you busy?

ZG: Well, my attention has completely shifted from being a lot on football and athletics and schoolwork, to being more on my children and more on just graduating and providing a better life for my kids. So, being so close to the end of the tunnel here with graduation coming up in May for me, it redirects my focus to be motivated to get out of college and find myself a profession that I can support my family better with.

IN: Right, now going back a little ways, as a young high school kid did you imagine you'd be going through your senior year of football with three kids or was that something you couldn't even fathom?

ZG: That was something that was way out of the realm of what I thought would be my lifestyle. Growing up in high school and coming from Ishpeming, if you were to ask any of my good friends that I grew up with, they would probably say that I was the last one that would have kids. Even a lot of the guys here

on the football team here at Northern Michigan, always commented that it was ironic that I'm the one to have the kid because I know how to take my life of football, and enjoy it, and use my immaturity and things of that sort at that time, and then go home and be...

IN: Being part of the guys so to speak?

ZG: Yeah, and then going home to be a good father-type figure. I guess I kind of know how to turn it on and shut it off when needed.

IN: Alright, well you finished up your senior season, you were part of the big turnaround that Northern's been waiting for, so congratulations on that, congratulations on the birth of your son here; you've got three boys at home now, so it's kind of like your upbringing. Do you see a lot of similarities between the way you and your brothers were raised and the way that you're going to try and raise your children?

ZG: As far as what I'm going to try to do with my kids is to give them exactly what they were able to give to me and that's to always be around and be supportive of what they love to do and what they want to do. If they can grow up in half the household I was I know that they'll be raised real well. I definitely try to imitate the way my family raised me, and I know if I do that my kids will have a good upbringing.

IN: Alright, well thanks well giving us your time, I know you're busy with three kids at home. You're an inspiration to a lot of your teammates, you're a good role model. Good luck in the future, and good luck with finishing up your degree this May.

ZG: Thanks.

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