



There's a certain level of leadership that a senior on the Williams football team is expected to exhibit. Senior lineman Ben Wertz has put it on himself to do just that. "As a senior on this team, I want to make sure the younger guys, particularly the freshmen, know how much of a privilege it is to play Williams football and how much the seniors care. I want the play of the seniors at practice everyday to raise the level of the younger guys. I also want the young guys to realize how much fun they get to have during their four years here off the field," noted a humble Wertz. As a seasoned veteran and starter, Wertz is no stranger to the high pressure of a NESCAC football game. However, he knows that in order to put Williams back on top of the conference standings, the team will need to improve certain elements. Wertz claims, "We frankly have to increase our level of play across the board. We must win both sides of the line of scrimmage, make throws, catches, break tackles, make tackles, and cover better in the defensive secondary. Each guy has a certain amount of attempts per game to make a positive play and those percentages must

## *The Wily Veteran*

increase for us to be successful. We have to keep it fun and try to physically dominate our opponents." With Coach Raymond at the helm now, Ephs players truly believe that the team is making positive steps already. Coach Raymond seems to have every player exuding new energy. "I am really excited to play for Coach Raymond. I can tell he really cares about the guys on our team as people and wants us to be successful both on and off the field. I think Coach Raymond will bring discipline to our team and I'm fired up to go to war with him and my best friends eight final times," declared Wertz.

Winning a Pennsylvania state championship as a senior in high school provided a memorable experience for Wertz. Certainly, nothing would mean more to him than winning a championship again as a senior, but this time with his collegiate teammates and a new Eph coach poised for a breakout season.

Wertz has been an integral part of the Williams offense for almost his entire career. As a freshman, Wertz saw his first varsity minutes in a game against Hamilton in October of 2013 - a game in which he recovered a key fumble downfield on his way to helping his Ephs to a 24-0 blanking of the Continentals. Over the years, Wertz has gained respect from all of his coaches because of his play on the field and how he conducts himself in life. Ephs assistant coach Kyle Smesko says of Wertz: "He started last year at center and has the ability to play all three of the offensive line positions. His position at center makes him the quarterback of the offensive line. He calls out the defensive fronts and makes the correct blocking scheme calls. He has good work ethic. He uses his knowledge of leverage from wrestling on the football field which allows him to recover well when his anticipation of defensive line movements has gone awry."

As Wertz has bettered himself year by year, his presence on the line has become more and more valuable. As with every season, pass protection will be key. With the help of hardened veterans like Wertz and fellow senior Eric Davis, Ephs quarterbacks should have less pressure as they drop back in the pocket "As an offensive player, my biggest strength is my physicality and desire to win the win of scrimmage. I'm good at winning the hand fight to gain the better leveraged position and love to finish a block by putting my opponent on the ground," noted Wertz. While Wertz's specific strength is his meticulous ability to gain leverage, he believes his team's biggest strength is its tenacity. Wertz said, "I think this year's team will find strength in our tenacity. We have a pretty young team that will have to rely on both our veterans and guys seeing varsity time for the first time playing with extreme toughness in order to be successful."

Reclaiming the summit of the NESCAC is undoubtedly a difficult task. If the Ephs were to complete that assignment, it would be the first time since 2010. Wertz realizes the challenge of chasing a championship and how little time he has left to do so. "I've been playing this game since I was seven years old. It saddens me that I only have eight more games to run out of the locker room and play for the purple and gold. I know we can win more games this season and my brothers on this team will leave it all out there to make it happen. I just want to enjoy every rep I get in both practice and the games, enjoy every moment I have left with my teammates from team meetings to the locker room, and try to slow down the time and enjoy every last sunset I get as practice winds down on Farley-Lamb field. Football has given me so much; I want to show the utmost respect to the game for one final season."

