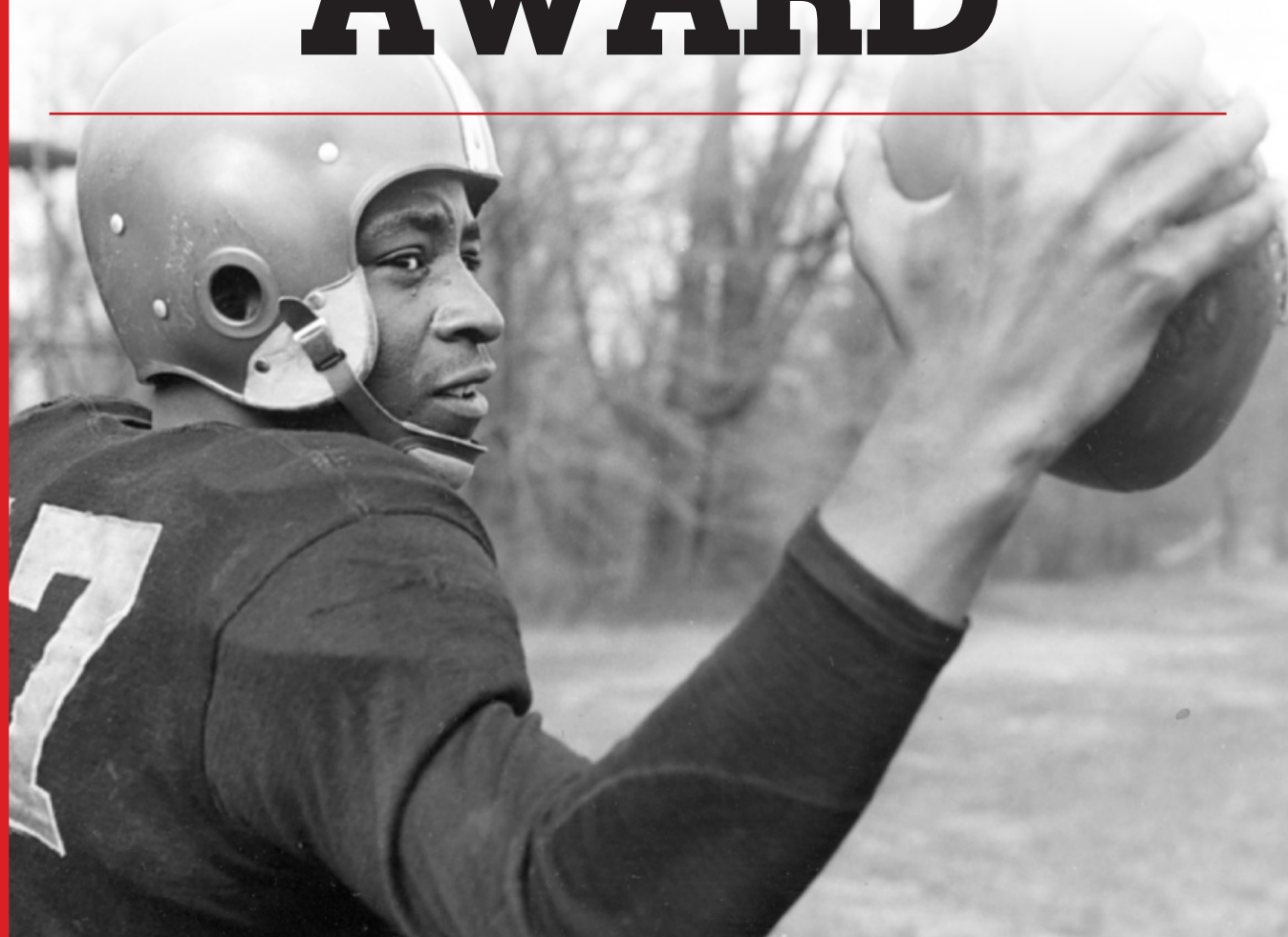


***THE 2020***

# **WILLIE THROWER AWARD**



***PRESENTED BY:***

**THE WILLIE THROWER  
AWARD FOUNDATION**



# **WILLIE THROWER MEMORIAL AWARD FOUNDING BOARD MEMBERS**

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# **WILLIE THROWER MEMORIAL AWARD FOUNDATION MISSION STATEMENT**

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The Willie Thrower Memorial Award, beginning with the 2020 season, will annually honor the best high school quarterback in Southwestern Pennsylvania to memorialize Willie Thrower for being the first Black Quarterback in professional football history.

We want to recognize and pay tribute to the fact that in the storied history of professional sport's most dominant league (NFL) that it was a black quarterback who hails from Southwestern Pennsylvania who broke through that barrier.

The individual selected to receive this award will be determined by the voting of a panel comprised of high school football coaches representing each of the conferences from the WPIAL and City League along with a panel of sports broadcasters and sports writers who cover high school football on a regular basis in the ten-county area of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

Willie played for the former New Kensington High School which has since merged with Arnold High School to form Valley High School. Thrower was known as "Mitts" because of his large hands and arm strength which stood in contrast to his 5'11" frame.

He was part of a 2-time WPIAL Championship team and 1-time WPIAL runner-up squad.

Collegiately, he played at Michigan State University under legendary Spartans head coach Clarence Lester "Biggie" Munn and was a member of the 1952 Michigan State University Division One National Champions. In 1953, after signing as a free agent with the NFL's Chicago Bears, he made his groundbreaking debut against the San Francisco 49ers on October 18, 1953.

The recipient of this award will receive a bronze replica statue of Willie Thrower just like the one that is on display at the entrance to Valley High School's football stadium in New Kensington, Pennsylvania.

***"Whatever it is that you are going to be...be a giant."***

—Willie Thrower, Sr.

**WILLIE THROWER MEMORIAL AWARD HONORING THE BEST HIGH SCHOOL  
QUARTERBACK IN SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA**

# **HOW THE WINNER WILL BE DETERMINED**

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The selection process will be comprised of a panel of high school football coaches representing each of the conferences from the WPIAL and City League along with a panel of sports broadcasters and sports writers who cover high school football on a regular basis in the ten-county area of Southwestern Pennsylvania.

The award will be given to an outstanding high school football quarterback who is a leader both on and off the field. The recipient will be a very talented signal-caller who like Willie Thrower was, is dangerous with both his arm and his legs and makes opposing defensive staffs stay up late at night trying to devise schemes to slow him down.

The recipient must be a dependable and respected teammate and be of good character.

Each participating panel member will at the conclusion of the regular season submit their nominees via email or postal mail to the Willie Thrower Award Committee.

Each participating panel member will rank their top 5 high school quarterbacks that they have either played against, watched play or read about their accomplishments during that regular high school football season. It is recommended that the panel members make themselves aware of their 5 nominees' statistical achievements from the season. For example, passing yards, rushing yards, completion percentage and touchdowns passing and rushing.

Each participating nominator will rank their top 5 high school quarterbacks on the following scale: Their number 1 ranked nominee will receive (10) points, number 2 (8) points, number 3 (6) points, number 4 (4) points and number 5 (2) points.

The top 5 nominees who earn the most points will be invited to an awards banquet in March/April in which they will be recognized and the eventual winner will be announced. The winner will receive a bronze replica statue of Willie Thrower just like the one that is on display at the entrance to Valley High School's football stadium in New Kensington, Pennsylvania.

Additional Criteria for Nominators to Consider in Determining their 5 Nominees:

- A. *Clearly a difference maker* for his team when he is on the field.
- B. Rises to the occasion when his squad *really* needs it most.
- C. Mentally and physically strong.
- D. Wants to win every game but more importantly *"hates to lose"*.
- E. Possesses an exemplary work ethic.
- F. Sets the bar for his team in terms of demonstrating *"good sportsmanship"*.

# **BIOGRAPHY OF WILLIE "THE PRO" THROWER**

by Melvin & Willie Thrower Jr.

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**WILLIE THROWER** was born March 22, 1930 in Little Rock, Arkansas.

Willie Thrower went to Ken High in 1945-1949, known today as Valley High School, in New Kensington, PA. There he helped lead his team the Ken High Raiders to 2 WPIAL Championships in 1946 and 1947.

After graduating high school, Willie Thrower went to Michigan State from 1949 - 1952 where he helped lead the Spartans to win their first National Championship in 1952 beating Notre Dame.

Willie Thrower graduated with a degree in Psychology from Michigan State University. Later on, he went undrafted to the Chicago Bears in 1953 for just one season. Willie then went on to play for the Winnipeg Blue Bombers 1954-1956.

Willie ended his career at the age of 27 due to a shoulder injury. He married Mary Rowe (THROWER) in 1964 at St. James A.M.E church in New Kensington where they became the church's first African American couple to get married. From this union they had 3 boys: Willie Jr., Jason and Melvin Thrower.

Willie Thrower was not only a pioneer who broke the color barrier for quarterbacks, he was a great man who loved his family, community and was loved by many that looked up to him. He was a tremendous inspiration, mentor, and advocate, most especially to those in his community. The famous line he would tell kids when he mentored them was, "Anything you do, always be a Giant."

Willie Thrower passed away February 20, 2002.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS & AWARDS**

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- Allegheny-Kiski Valley Sports Hall of Fame
- W.E.B DU BOIS AWARD N.A.A.C.P (W.E.B. DU BOIS Exhibited Great Courage in His Fight of Social Justice and Equality)
- WPIAL HALL OF FAME - 2011 Athlete/Heritage Award.
- Featured in the ESPN Sports History book: *THIRD AND A MILE - THE TRIALS AND TRIUMPHS OF THE BLACK QUARTERBACK.*
- RIPLEY'S BELIEVE OR NOT: Known for the world's largest pro football hands.

I was very fortunate to have grown up in New Kensington in the Willie Thrower and Don Fletcher era. I was only in primary school when the team and Willie became known nationally.

Willie was written up in Ripley's Believe It or Not column in the Pittsburgh Paper. The team itself started when Will was a freshman starter along with several of his freshman teammates. In the four-year span, Ken-Hi lost in the WPIAL Championship to Donora and did not lose again until the last game of their senior year. They were runner-up that year and won two WPIAL championships in their sophomore and junior years.

All of this occurred under the coaching of Donald Fletcher and his staff. I was fortunate to have played for Coach Fletcher in my football career at Ken-Hi. We did well also, and I was part of his last undefeated team in 1957-1958.

Coach Fletcher came to New Kensington after coaching at Windber High School near Johnstown. Coach went to college in Cumberland, Tennessee and played and graduated from Carnegie Tech College (Carnegie Mellon.)

To say he had an impact on the football team and Ken-Hi is really understated. He changed the whole attitude of the players and created a winning attitude through his no-nonsense and tough approach to playing high school football.

Authored by:

**Gene Collodi, 1958 Graduate Ken-Hi**

Second only to Willie Thrower's accomplishments and conquests as a quarterback was the effort of George Solomon. A New Kensington native himself, like most of us, George knew of Willie's legendary status as the first African American to play quarterback in the NFL. It was George's efforts that compelled the NFL to recognize its history. It was George Solomon who pursued Willie Thrower's admission to the NFL Hall of Fame, George was both catalyst and committee. I liken Willie Thrower's quest to quarterback an NFL team in the 1950s, and let us remember this was one of the founding teams of the league-the Chicago Bears, being akin to walking on the moon in the 1960's. As something that people of all backgrounds would not have anticipated ever happening. Although not nearly as strenuous as the required efforts of Willie Thrower, having to time and time again prove his ability to doubters, George's quest to gain Willie's admission to the NFL Hall of Fame, to force the NFL to recognize its history and Willie, to make it known that the first African American Professional quarterback was well before Marlon Briscoe of the Denver Broncos and James Harris of the Buffalo Bills and Los Angeles Rams in the late 60's and early 70s, that the color barrier had already been broken by no one other than Willie "The Pro" Thrower. Without George Solomon's efforts who knows if Mr. Thrower would have ever received his due.

Because of George's efforts and Willie's greatness we are able to gather here tonight to, not only, honor the "Best High School Quarterback in Southwestern Pennsylvania" but also to further extend back in time Southwestern Pennsylvania's rich tradition of quarterbacking in the NFL to include the NFL's FIRST AFRICAN AMERICAN QUARTERBACK - MR. WILLIE THROWER.

Authored by:

**Korry Alden Greene, Esquire**

# FIRST ANNUAL WILLIE THROWER MEMORIAL AWARD LUNCHEON

**APRIL 10, 2021 NOON**

**NORTHERN WESTMORELAND CAREER AND  
TECHNOLOGY CENTER, NEW KENSINGTON, PA**

Welcome .....	Jonathan Whaley - Foundation Board Member & Master of Ceremonies
Introduce the Head Table and Preview the Afternoon's Events.....	Jonathan Whaley
Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence .....	Bill McGregor - Foundation Board Member
Introduce the rest of the Foundation Board Members and Comments on Mr. Thrower.....	George Guido - Foundation Board Member
Luncheon Begins.....	You will be served at your table

## PROGRAM BEGINS

Audio Excerpt from an interview with Willie Thrower from February 16, 1988

Introduce **Roy Hall** - head football coach Jeannette High School & Brad Birch

Huddle highlight video of Finalist **Brad Birch** - Freshman QB - Jeannette Jayhawks

Introduce **Mike Junko** - head football coach Upper St. Clair High School & Ethan Dahlem

Huddle highlight video of Finalist **Ethan Dahlem** - Senior QB - Upper St. Clair Panthers

Introduce **Mark Lyons** - head football coach Central Valley High School & Ameer Dudley

Huddle highlight video of Finalist **Ameer Dudley** - Senior QB - Central Valley Warriors

Introduce **Anthony Battaglini** - quarterbacks coach Thomas Jefferson High School & Jake Pugh

Huddle highlight video of Finalist **Jake Pugh** - Senior QB - Thomas Jefferson Jaguars

Introduce **Eric Kasperowicz** - head football coach Pine-Richland High School & Cole Spencer

Huddle highlight video of Finalist **Cole Spencer** - Senior QB - Pine-Richland Rams

Introduce our featured guest speaker - **Amy Scheuneman** - Executive Director WPIAL

Introduce our keynote speaker - **Major Harris** - Standout QB at Pittsburgh Brashear High School  
& former star QB at West Virginia University

## ANNOUNCE THE WINNER OF THE WILLIE THROWER MEMORIAL AWARD.

Recipient comes to the podium to receive the award and shares some of his thoughts.

The (4) Finalists then come to the podium to receive their trophies after the winner has spoken.

Closing Remarks



# **The Willie Thrower Memorial Award Foundation Would Like To Extend A Very Special Thanks To:**

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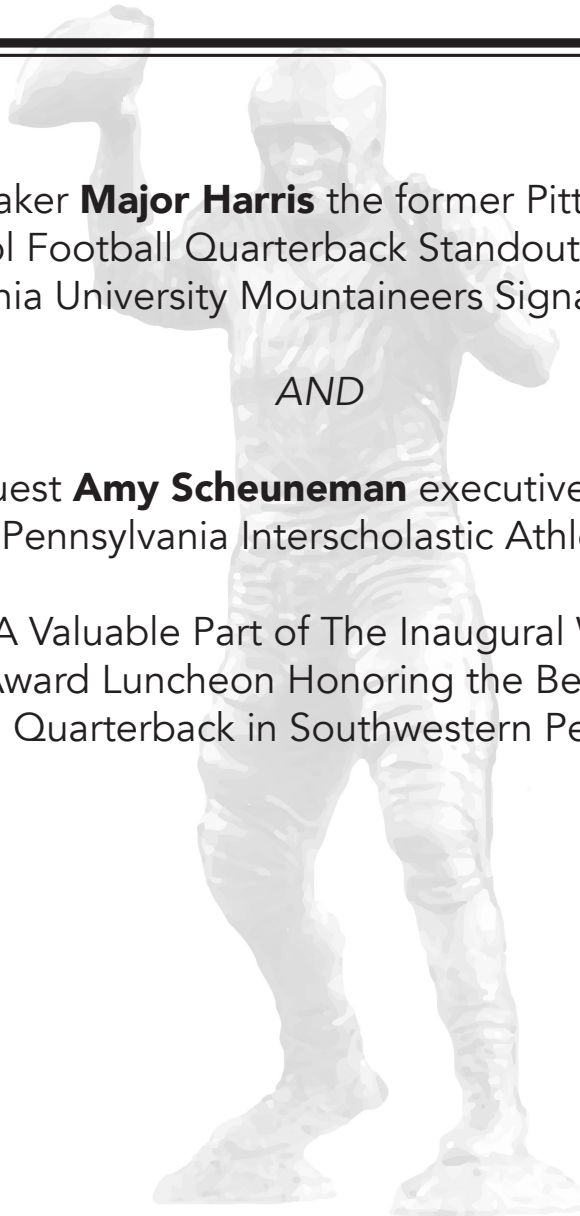
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Keynote Speaker **Major Harris** the former Pittsburgh Brashear High School Football Quarterback Standout and Star West Virginia University Mountaineers Signal-Caller.

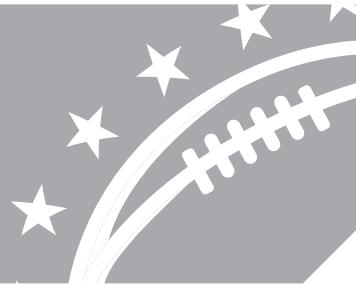
*AND*

Featured Guest **Amy Scheuneman** executive director of the Western Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic League.

For Being A Valuable Part of The Inaugural Willie Thrower Memorial Award Luncheon Honoring the Best High School Football Quarterback in Southwestern Pennsylvania.



# BRAD BIRCH



## FRESHMAN - QUARTERBACK JEANNETTE HIGH SCHOOL

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- 1st Freshman ever to start at QB for Jeannette
- Freshman season threw for 1,643 yards and 30 TO's
- Made National High School Record Books by throwing 5 TO Passes in 1 quarter in a game.
- This ties for 3rd Nationally. In the same game he threw for 7 TO's in one half, tying for 5th Nationally.
- Led team to a WPIAL 1 A Championship beating Clairton in the finals
- He broke a bone in his ankle during the WPIAL Championship game and missed the State Playoffs where Jeannette finished the State 1A Runner-Up
- Named to Max Prep's Freshman All-American Team, 1st Team All-Section & voted KDKA 1A Player-of-the-Year.
- Named 1A All-State
- Recently received his first Division One Offer from the University of Oregon
- Garnering interest from the University of Pittsburgh and Penn State University
- Started playing football at age 5. Started playing QB at age 7 for the Jeannette Midgets
- Won 4 Midget Championships in 6 years. When 11 he guided the team to an undefeated League Championship. The team was then invited to a National Tournament at the Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio where the only game lost was to the eventual National Champions from Georgia. Jeannette placed 3rd in the National Tournament.
- Jeannette doesn't have options for 8th Grade Football so he played at Woodland Hills where the team went undefeated and won the League Championship
- We would like to credit Terry Gregory, a Jeannette neighbor who played QB at Temple University, for teaching Brad Quarterback Mechanics. Terry would work with Brad & the boys whenever they could get the group together to teach him the mechanics of the position.
- Brad also plays basketball and enjoys spending time with his older brother Brett and their group of friends. They play 7 on 7 for 412 Elite and work out with Dwayne Brown at 2/10th's Speed and Agility.
- He is a Volunteer with a program called Educated Athletes First. This is a non-profit group started by Demetrius Cox and his Father Dorsey. The group helps the Jeannette Youth.
- Brad has his most fun competing. He enjoys working out, playing basketball, playing football & seeing his friends.

# ETHAN **DAHLEM**



## **SENIOR - QUARTERBACK UPPER SAINT CLAIR HIGH SCHOOL**

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- 1st Team PIAA All-State QB
- Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Feb 22 All-Star PRE & POST SEASON
- Big 56 Conference 1st Team QB
- Trib 25 All-Star
- 5, 226 career total yards- (3,786) passing yards and (1,440) rushing yards
- 55 Total career TO's (31) passing TO's and (24) rushing TO's
- Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Player-of-the-Week honoree
- Trib-Live Player-of-the-Week 9/13/2019 & 10/16/2020
- AHN Friday Night Rivals Player-of-the-Game 9/6/19
- Upper St. Clair's Sean Patrick Lee MVP Award 2019
- Captain of Football and Basketball Teams
- 2-year starter for Upper St. Clair Boys Basketball Team
- 3.9 GPA
- 4.2 Weighted GPA
- National Honor Society
- Great American Rivalry Series Scholar-Athlete
- Volunteer at USC Fire Department
- Coach for Rec Basketball
- Loves watching movies, playing video games, and working out
- Enjoys spending time with family and friends
- Future plans are to attend Case Western University's Weatherhead School of Management and continue playing football

# AMEER DUOLEY



## SENIOR - QUARTERBACK CENTRAL VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

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- 16 Division One Offers FBS & FCS to play QB
- Harvard University Commit
- Rated no. 2 QB in PA & no. 1 Dual Threat QB C/O 21 (QB Hit list)
- Finalist for Mr. PA Football (1A-3A)
- 2020 PA 3A State Champion & Player-of-the-Game
- 2x PIAA Finalist
- 2020 3A PA Football News Player-of-the-Year (Coaches)
- 2020 3A PA Football News Player-of-the-Year (Writers)
- 2x 3A All-State QB
- Back-to-Back WPIAL Champion (2019 & 2020)
- Central Valley's All-Time leading Passer
- 2x Cover Three Athletics 3A Player-of-the-Year
- Was the 151 Junior in Beaver County History to win Player-of-the-Year (2019)
- 2x Tribune Review Top 25
- 2x Beaver County Times Top 22
- 2020 WPIAL Blitz Player-of-the-Year
- 25-2 record over 2 yr. span, only losses to two State Champions (Thomas Jefferson 19 and to state championship Wyoming 19)
- Since sophomore year led team to 23 mercy rule games. In the 2020 season they fell one game short of being the 2nd team in WPIAL history to mercy rule every team on their schedule through state championship.
- 1st undefeated State Champion in Beaver County in 21 years
- Ameer has missed 30+ quarters of play due to the dominance he was able to lead his team to over the last 2 years. And still was able to put the numbers up he did.
- While maintaining a 4.0+ GPA taking honors classes. Ameer will be the first QB in Western PA to play QB at Harvard, a true trend setter and field general.
- Ameer at 13 years old was followed in the Emmy awarding winning USA Network show "Friday Night Tykes Steel Country" show. The show aired in a prime-time spot after USA's no. 1 show WWE Raw. The show taught Ameer how to deal with criticism, success and failure on a national level. The show's viewership per episode was over 800,000 marking the USA Network's second highest viewed program at that time.
- Ameer mentors Jr. High Students and has been a QB coach for the regional 5 Star Skills Camp youth fb clinic for 3 years.

# JAKE PUGH



## SENIOR - QUARTERBACK THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL

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- Back-to-Back State Champion
- 3-year letterman and 3~time WPIAL Champion
- All-State & All-Conference player
- East/West All-Star selection
- KDKA Super 7- 4A Player-of-the-Year
- 1,881 passing yards & 34 TO's
- 4-year starter & letterman in basketball
- Led team in Assists all 4 years
- 2-time All-Section award winner
- 2014 Knights of Columbus: State Free-Throw Champion
- 3.95 overall GPA
- Highest Honor Roll all 4 years and National Honor Society
- Received several academic scholarship opportunities on the next level. Some include: Branch Rickey Scholarship Recipient at Ohio Wesleyan University; Presidential & Honors Scholarships at John Carroll University; Merit Scholar at Washington & Jefferson University
- 24 Math Challenge Proctor
- Big Jags, Little Cub and Interact Clubs
- Veterans Day Committee Member- T JHS
- AAU teammate of fellow Willie Thrower Award finalist Ethan Dahlem Middle School years
- Loves to Golf. At 13 years of age, registered first Birdie on hole #3 at the Oneida Golf & Country Club in Green Bay, WI- a host to the LPGA TOUR
- Talk football with family: cousin Tyler Bradley (OLSH QB '19) 5th AU-time WPIAL Passing leader, uncle Lance Getsy (FRHS Head Coach), uncle Dan Bradley (OLSH Head Coach) & Father BJ Pugh former High School Football Assistant
- Washes dishes at a local diner, Instacart Shopper, & plans to work his "home course" Riverview Golf Course this summer
- Member of the TJ E-Sports Madden League
- Plans to attend a 4-year college to continue his football career and major in Business Management
- Hopeful to continue education as a Graduate Assistant at a Power 5 School
- Aspires to be an NFL coach, following in the footsteps of his uncle, Luke Getsy

# COLE **SPENCER**



## **SENIOR - QUARTERBACK PINE-RICHLAND HIGH SCHOOL**

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- PIAA State Champion ~ Football
- 2x PIAA State Placer~ Wrestling (4th and 8th)
- 4x WPIAL Champion (2x football/ 2x wrestling)
- 2x WPIAL Runner-up (1x football/1x wrestling)
- 2x Pittsburgh Post-Gazette Fab 22 selection
- 2x Pittsburgh Tribune Review Super 25 Team honoree
- PA Mr. Football Top 5
- PA Coaches SA All-State Player-of-the-Year
- 2x First Team All-State Football
- Pittsburgh Tribune Review Sports Athlete-of-the-Year
- Pittsburgh Tribune Review WPIAL Player-of-the-Year
- Pittsburgh Tribune Review WPIAL SA Player-of-the-Year
- Pittsburgh Post-Gazette WPIAL SA Player-of-the-Year
- Selected to the 2021 Big 33 Game
- 2020 Pine-Richland Rams football team finished ranked in top 25 in the country
- Finished his football career as the 9th All-Time WPIAL passing leader
- Holds the mark for most career wins by a Pine-Richland QB
- Pine-Richland career leader in touchdown passes
- 2x Wrestling National All-American
- Ranked 8th in the country in wrestling
- Over 1 00 career wins in wrestling
- Highest Honor Roll student all years in high school
- Cumulative GPA 4.1
- WPIAL All-Academic First Team
- Will attend the University of Pennsylvania - Wharton School of Business to wrestle
- Cole enjoyed being a part of the Best Buddies program where he had the opportunity to wrestle with special needs kids every week an season and compete with them in a match before his varsity match.
- Cole loves to spend time with his friends and family including playing spike ball tournaments with his brother, going to the lake house with his friends and also refereeing flag football games for a local flag football league.

**THANK YOU**

**The Willie Thrower Memorial Award  
Foundation Would Like Thank And  
Recognize Our Sponsors:**

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THE  
WILLIE THROWER  
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