

Up close: John Warren

by: MIKE BROWN World Sports Writer
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John Warren is one football player who can truly say he's been almost perfect in his college career.

Warren is the University of Tulsa's deep snapper, responsible for centering the ball when the Hurricane attempts a punt or placekick.

It may not be the most glamorous job on the team, but it's one that has to be done right.

TU special teams coordinator Bill Blankenship said he can't remember when the senior from Phoenix, failed to execute flawlessly. Warren remembers one time.

"It was my first year here, against Rice (in 2006)," Warren said. "We lined up for a punt, and I don't know if I went through my mechanics too quick, or what. But it bounced and skipped. That's my one bad snap."

How does one become a deep snapper?

I was a basketball guy in high school because my dad coached for 25 years. I found that a coach I had in high school (Ben Bernard) had sent 15 or so guys to Division I, and one into the NFL, for snapping. I was a fullback and linebacker, but I figured it would be a good thing to pick up. I actually stopped playing basketball to pursue snapping.

What did your dad, the basketball coach, think about that?

He was thinking, "You're kind of crazy." But now, he thinks I obviously made the right decision.

Is deep snapping like anything else you've done in athletics?

I relate it to shooting a basketball. It's all about repetition and muscle memory. You shoot 50 free throws and make 50. I would say I had to make 20 free throws in a row before I could leave practice. It's the same thing with snapping. I have to do 25 short snaps and they have to be perfect, and then I have to do 25 long snaps and they have to be perfect.

With your head over the ball before you snap, unable to see rushing opponents, do you ever worry about getting plastered?

You're more concerned about that when you first start out. But you start getting used to the little tricks people try on you. I'm about 230 pounds and I'm lining up against guys who are 6-foot-5 and 300 pounds. But when you have big guys like Rod Thomas (6-5, 355) and Tyler Holmes (6-4, 305) next to you, you get comfortable in there.

How did you wind up in Tulsa?

I never had aspirations to snap in college, but I snapped and played fullback (at Glendale, Ariz., Community College) for a year and then I went to a combine in Las Vegas for snapping and kicking, and that's where I got recruited.

Coach Blankenship said your musical interests are unusual for a guy of your age.

I'm a big fan of Frank Sinatra. He's probably my favorite vocalist of all time. I think I've got six or seven of his CDs.

What was his best song?

"Young at Heart."

WARREN FACTS

Position: Deep snapper

Class: Senior

Height: 6-0

Weight: 230

Hometown: Phoenix

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Associate Images:



TU special teams coach Bill Blankenship (left) says he can't remember when John Warren failed to execute as deep snapper during punting situations for the Hurricane. STEPHEN HOLMAN/Tulsa World



TU special teams coach Bill Blankenship (left) says he can't remember when John Warren failed to execute as deep snapper during punting situations for the Hurricane. STEPHEN HOLMAN/Tulsa World



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