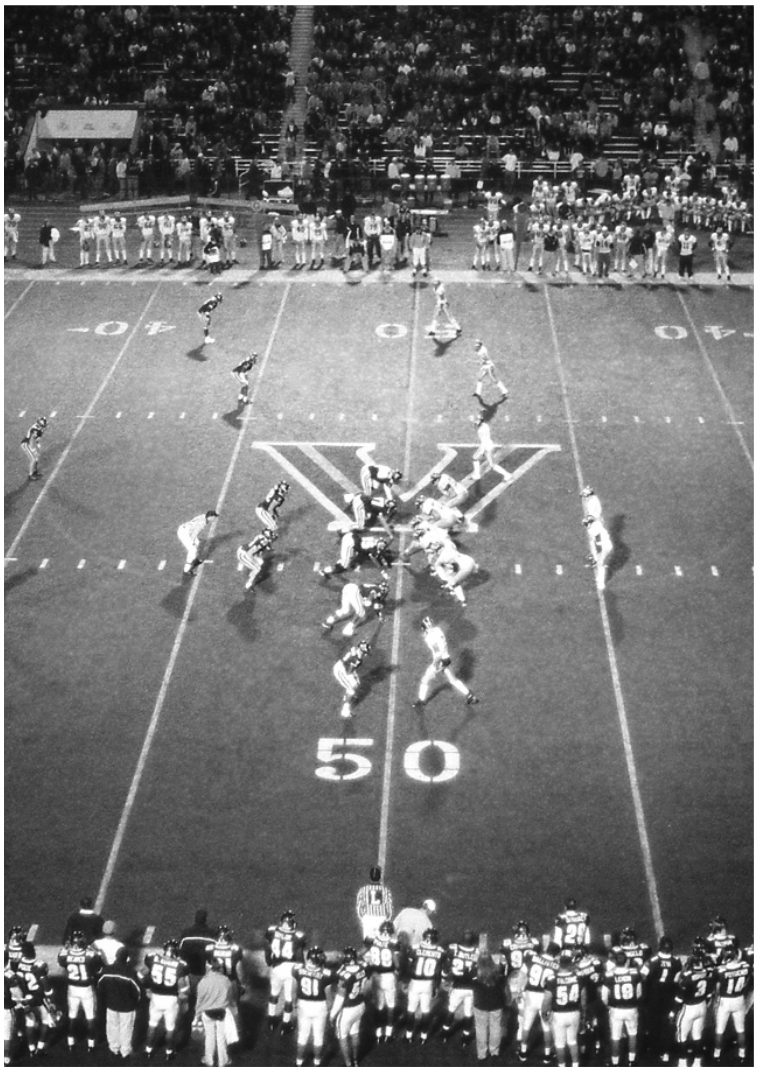
VILLANOVA



Newcomers

#22 Angelo Babbaro

Freshman • Running Back • 5-10 • 190
Youngstown, Ohio • Canfield

Canfield High School: Earned four varsity letters in track and three in football; Made 270 carries for 1,931 yards rushing; Totaled 2,135 yards of offense; Registered 36 touchdowns and scored 218 points; First team All-Northeastern Ohio and All-State running back … Rivals.com Ohio Division II Defensive Player of the Year; OhioPrep.com All-Ohio team at defensive back; Winner of the Mike Dinero Award as Tri-County Player of the Year; Mahoning County Player of the Year; MAC Offensive Player of the Year and a first team all-conference choice; Earned the Bob Dove Memorial Award as the Male Athlete of the Year; Team offensive MVP and back MVP; Presented the United States Marines Distinguished Athlete Award; Named the top playmaker by Channel 27; Holds state of Ohio Division II record with a 92-yard kickoff return; Second leading scorer and seventh leading rusher in the state; Holds four school records; Played in the Grange Insurance Ohio North-South Classic; Member of the National Honor Society, National Honor Roll and Who's Who Among High School Scholars; Recipient of the President's Award and National Football Foundation Scholar Athlete award; Academic all-conference first team in football and track.

Personal: Born 4/26/88 in Youngstown, Ohio; Oldest of three children of Angelo and Lisa Babbaro; Siblings are Frankie (14) and Michael (14); Plans to major in Business.

#25 Aaron Ball

Freshman • Running Back • 5-9 • 180
Los Angeles, Calif. • Cabrillo

Cabrillo High School: Three-year letterwinner in football and track; Played tailback and defensive back; Two-time All-Moore League and All-CIF selection; Named his team's Offensive Player of the Year as a junior; Chosen as Hardest Practice Player as a sophomore; Tallied 227 carries for 1,300 yards his senior year; Had 150 carries for 1,297 yards as a junior; Ran the 100-meter dash in 10.67; Member of the Honor Roll.

Personal: Born 9/5/88 in Los Angeles, Calif.; Son of Dennis Ball and Monique Turner; Siblings are Danielle (15), Isiah (10) and Marc (10); Plans to major in Business Communications.

#54 Travis Benson

Freshman • Offensive Line • 6-1 • 275
Herndon, Va. • Langley

Langley High School: Lettered in football and basketball; Two-time all-district and all-region selection; Named to the All-Examiner and All-Gazette squads as a senior; Recipient of the Coaches' Award; Two-time regional power-lifting champion; Winner of the Saxon Award for weight training and conditioning; Runs a 5.05 40-yard dash.

Personal: Born 10/6/87 in Herndon, Va.; Older of two children of Shawn and Kathy Benson; Has a sister, McCaul (15); Father played football at the University of Maryland (1979-83) and was an offensive guard; Has three uncles that also played collegiate football, including two who went on to play in the NFL with the New York Jets and New York Giants, respectively; Undecided on college major.

#15 Isaac Bailey

Freshman • Quarterback • 6-2 • 200
Fayetteville, N.Y. • Fayetteville-Manlius

Fayetteville-Manlius High School: Lettered in football, basketball and baseball; Earned first team all-league and All-Central New York honors; Second team All-State honoree; Selected to play in the Governor's Bowl pitting New York all-state players against a team of New Jersey all-stars; Voted Most Valuable Player in the sectional final; Threw for 1,531 yards, completing 102-of-143 for 21 touchdowns; Also gained 400 yards rushing with five touchdowns; Mamber of the National Honor Society; Recipient of a Scholar-Athlete Award from the National Football Hall of Fame.

Personal: Born 4/29/88 in Albany, N.Y.; Youngest of three sons of Paul and Phyllis Bailey; Has two older brothers, Joshua (26) and Andrew (23); Plans to major in Finance.

#72 Imer Bauta

Freshman • Offensive Line • 6-3 • 270
Brooklyn, N.Y. • Poly Prep

Poly Prep: Lettered in football, wrestling and track; Holds the record for most tackles for loss in a game (9) and a season (36 in eight games); All-State selection and member of the Golden Top 50.

Personal: Born 3/12/88 in Brooklyn, N.Y.; One of six children of Mel and Myra Bauta; Siblings are Luman (26), Lav (21), Izzy (19), Ferdesa (15) and Faton (12); All four of his brothers play football, including Lav and Izzy for Villanova; Luman played football at Bucknell and Indiana; Plans to major in Civil Engeineering.

#60 Brian Brannigan

Freshman • Offensive Line • 6-4 • 270
Clementon, N.J. • St. Joseph

St. Joseph High School: Four-year letterwinner; First team All-State and All-South Jersey selection; Named to all-conference first team and All-Parochial first team; Runs a 5.13 40-yard dash; Member of the honor roll.

Personal: Youngest of three children of Brian and Debbie Brannigan; Has two sisters, Dana (24) and Alicia (21); High school teammate of current Wildcat senior Bryan Adams.

#97 Buddy Buckner

Freshman • Defensive End • 6-3 • 225
Lorton, Va. • Bishop Ireton

Bishop Ireton High School: Lettered twice in football and track and once in basketball; Two-time team Defensive MVP; Alexandria Player of the Year and a two-time All-State selection; Registered 20 sacks his senior season; Member of the National Honor Society; Graduated magna cum laude; Recipient of the President's Award for academic excellence.

Personal: Born 12/11/86 in Lorton, Va.; Older of two children of Buddy and Brenda Buckner; Has a sister, Lindsey (17); Plans to major in Business.

#90 Christopher Farmer

Freshman • Defensive Line • 6-5 • 265
Philadelphia, Pa. • West Catholic

West Catholic High School: Lettered in football and basketball; All-State and All-City all-star team selection.

Personal: Born 10/15/88 in Philadelphia, Pa.; Son of Larry Morris and Sharon Farmer; Has a sister, Christina; Undecided on college major.

#59 Keane George

Freshman • Defensive End • 6-2 • 235
Hermitage, Pa. • Kennedy Catholic

Kennedy Catholic High School: Two-year letterwinner; All-League defensive end and member of the academic All-State team; Member of the National Honor Society and the school honor roll; Scholar-Athlete of the Year recipient.

Personal: Born 3/4/88 in Hermitage, Pa.; Second of four children of Fred and Judy George; Siblings are Kali (21), Kirsten (16) and Kelsey (10); Father was a wrestler at Brown University; Plans to major in Business.

#56 Tim Kukucka

Freshman • Defensive Back • 6-3 • 240
Manasquan, N.J. • Wall

Wall High School: First team All-Federal Division and All-Shore selection; Named first team all-county and second team All-Group 3; Chosen as one of the top 100 players in New Jersey.

Personal: Born 8/26/88 in Toms River, N.J.; Youngest of three children of John and Deidre Kukucka; Has two sisters, Jill (22) and Allison (19); Plans to be a Liberal Arts major.

#35 Jarred Corey

Freshman • Defensive Back • 5-10 • 185
Davie, Fla. • Western

Western High School: Lettered in football and track; Received first team all-county and third team All-State honors; Was fourth in his district in the long jump as a track athlete; Presented with the American Vision Award in the state of Florida and a national silver medal at Carnegie Hall for a piece of artwork.

Personal: Born 7/21/88 in Hollywood, Fla.; Younger of two sons of Richard and Lisa Corey; Has an older brother Richard (19); Undecided on college major.

#43 Ryan Fentin-Thompson

Freshman • Defensive Back • 6-2 • 200
Del Mar, Calif. • Torrey Pines

Torrey Pines High School: Lettered in football and track; Voted team captain as a senior; Division I San Diego County CIF Runner-Up in championship game; First team San Diego County Division I All-CIF Defensive Team; First Team All-Palomar League; First Team All-North County; Named a first team performer by the San Diego Hall of Champions; Recipient of a Scholar-Athlete leadership award from the San Diego County Chapter of the National Football Foundation; Team was Division I San Diego County CIF champion; MVP of the track team and an academic first team All-Union Tribune pick; Gold medalist at the Palomar League Championship in the 4x400 relay; Silver medalist in the 110-meter high hurdles and the 300-meter intermediate hurdles, as well as the high jump.

Personal: Born 12/4/87 in San Diego, Calif.; Younger of two children of Michael Thompson and Hildy Fentin; Has a sister, Nicole (21); Plans to major in Business.

#45 Brian Janiak

Freshman • Linebacker • 6-1 • 200
Hilton Head Island, S.C. • Hilton Head

Hilton Head High School: Senior season: 86 tackles (53 solo, 33 assisted); 28 tackles for loss; Two forced fumbles, three fumble recoveries, four sacks and one blocked punt; Team co-captain and school's Male Athlete of the Year; *Island Packet-Beaufort Gazette* All-Area Team; Winner of the Seahawk Award for outstanding leadership and athletic and academic accomplishments; Recipient of the Outstanding Linebacker Award; Also played lacrosse and baseball.

Personal: Born 2/7/88 in Nantucket, Mass.; Second of three sons of Peter and Jane Janiak; Brothers are Christopher (21) and Steven (16); Father attended the University of Massachusetts and was a decathlete; Plans to major in Communications and Media Studies.

#39 Michael Lynch

Freshman • Defensive Back • 6-1 • 165
San Diego, Calif. • St. Augustine

St. Augustine High School: Lettered in track and football; Second team all-league football player and winner of the 2006 Excellence Award; 2005 MVP of Track Events and the 2006 Track Athlete of the Year; Four-time all-league and All-CIF selection as a track athlete; Honor Roll student.

Personal: Born 12/1/88 in San Diego, Calif.; Oldest of three children of Michael and Gertrude Lynch; Siblings are Lauren (13) and Ashley (11); Undecided on college major.

#12 Travis Miller

Freshman • Quarterback • 6-2 • 200
Danville, Pa. • Danville Area

Danville Area: First team All-Conference quarterback as a senior and second team as a junior; Honorable mention All-State selection; Also lettered for four years on the track & field team; Top mark in the javelin is 212 feet; Also threw the discus.

Personal: Born 3/28/88 in Lewisburg, Pa.; Older of two children of Rich and Jolee Djaraher; Has a sister, Rachel (12); Plans to major in Civil Engineering.

#47 Sean Morrissey

Freshman • Long Snappper • 6-2 • 205
Rockville, Md. • Our Lady of Good Counsel

Our Lady of Good Counsel High School: Lettered in football, lacrosse and wrestling; Honorable mention All-WCAC selection.

Personal: Born 9/16/88 in Bethesda, Md.; One of five children of Richard and Maryellen Morrissey; Siblings are Kelly (24), Chris (23), Matt (21) and Jenny (11); Brothers Chris and Matt each played collegiate football and Dickinson and Middlebury, respectively; Undecided on college major.

#38 Ben Schwartz

Freshman • Defensive Back • 5-11 • 215
San Diego, Calif. • Cathedral Catholic

Cathedral Catholic High School: Lettered in football, wrestling and baseball; *Union Tribune* first team selection; All-league pick as a junior and senior; Named Best Linebacker during senior season; Led his team in tackles as a junior and senior; Four-year member of the Principal's Honor Roll and three-time selection to the Union Tribune All-Academic Team.

Personal: Born 3/22/88 in San Diego, Calif.; Only child of Matthew and Donna Schwartz; Plans to major in Business.

#13 Martel Moody

Freshman • Defensive Back • 6-0 • 185
Tampa, Fla. • Thomas Jefferson

Thomas Jefferson High School: Lettered in football and track; Second team all-county football performer; Team was a 2004 Class 3A runner-up in the state championship; Also was a district champion three straight years from 2003-05 and a regional champion in 2005; Regional finalist in the 4x400 meter relay in 2004; Member of the National Honor Society and National Technical Honor Society; President of the Distributive Education Clubs of America in 2006.

Personal: Born 3/4/88 in Warner Robins, Ga.; Younger of two sons of Stanley and Cynthia Moody; Has an older brother, Marcus (27); Undecided on college major.

#95 Gene Oakley

Freshman • Defensive Line • 6-3 • 270
Harrington Park, N.J. • Old Tappan

Old Tappan High School: Lettered in football, basketball and baseball; All-State selection and team's Offensive MVP as a senior; Also an all-county and two-time first team all-league selection.

Personal: Born 8/14/87 in Westwood, N.J.; One of four children of Thomas and Tara Oakley; Siblings are Thomas (24), Ryan (21) and Amy (15); Undecided on college major.

#10 Tom Teel

Freshman • Running Back • 5-10 • 205
Dumont, N.J. • Dumont

Dumont High School: Lettered in football, baseball and track; 2004 and 2005 Team MVP; Two-time first team all-league and all-group running back; Selected for the Super 100 All-State Football Team by the New Jersey Football Coaches' Association; Totaled 2,600 yards and 43 touchdowns during his high school career; Averaged nine yards per carry; First player in school history to rush for over 1,000 yards in two seasons.

Personal: Born 10/19/87 in Westwood, N.J.; Younger of two children of Tom and Dauren Teel; Has an older sister, Nicole (21); Undecided on college major.

#48 Will Thompson

Freshman • Long Snapper • 6-2 • 225
Glen Arm, Md. • Loyola Blakefield

Loyola Blakefield High School: Lettered in football and lacrosse; Started on the offensive line his senior year; Served as the team's long snapper as a sophomore and junior; Member of the National Honor Society; Earned First Honors status at his high school all four years; Recipient of the Visual Arts Award as a senior.

Personal: Born 1/26/88 in Glen Arm, Md.; Older of two children of Timothy and Holly Thompson; Has a younger sister Kathryn (16); Plans to major in Accounting.

#83 Zach Ugarte

Freshman • Punter • 6-0 • 205
Ocklawaha, Fla. • Trinity Catholic

Trinity Catholic High School: Earned all-county honors for punting; First team all-area and all-state selection; Team was a Class 2B state champion; As a senior averaged 46.8 yards per punt during the regular season and 43.8 yards overall; Tallied 25 punts for a total of 1,096 yards; Net punt average of 43.2; Longest punt was 68 yards; Landed 11 punts inside the 20-yard line; Average hang time of 4.17 seconds; Maintained High Honors status during his senior season.

Personal: Born 9/28/87 in Orlando, Fla.; One of four children of Julio and Cindy Ugarte; Siblings are Chris (25), Serena (19) and Katrina (16); Plans to major in Computer Science.

#18 J.C. Unitas

Freshman • Quarterback • 6-0 • 175
Baldwin, Md. • St. Paul's School for Boys

St. Paul's School for Boys: Senior captain; Overall passing rating of 127.0; Member of the school Honor Roll all four terms as a senior.

Personal: Born 5/27/88 in Baltimore, Md.; Older of two children of John and Christine Unitas; Has a younger sister, Jillian (15); Undecided on college major.

#42 Jacob Wade

Freshman • Linebacker • 6-0 • 205
Silver Spring, Md. • Montgomery Blair

Montgomery Blair High School: Lettered ini football and basketball; Two-time team MVP; Recipient of the Outstanding Senior award and the Sportsmanship award; Winner of the Jesse Owens Athletic Award and the Montgomery Blair Outstanding Athlete Award; Scholar-Athlete in both basketball and football.

Personal: Born 5/17/88 in Washington, D.C.; Son of Kwame Parker and Elizabeth Wade; Siblings are Jamal (35) and Idris (32); Undecided on college major.

Walk-On Success

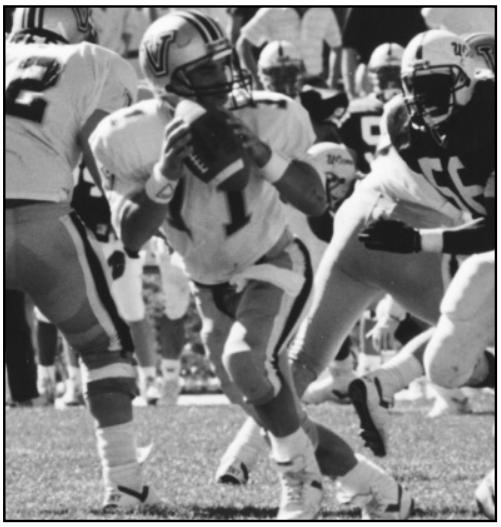
Every college football team around the country is filled with players who come to school looking for a shot to be a contributor to the team. While not offered a scholarship coming out of high school, these individuals known as walk-ons, join the team in hopes of earning a scholarship through hard work and determination. On each and every college football roster across the country, there are numerous walk-ons chasing a dream on the gridiron.

At Villanova, it has become the norm that a walk-on's dream becomes a reality.

Throughout head coach Andy Talley's tenure on the Main Line, recruited walk-ons have not only earned a scholarship, but in many cases, these players have turned into starting players and sometimes even developed into bona fide superstars.

There is no greater walk-on success story than former Wildcat Jay Strippoli who graduated in 1999. Upon graduation from Mater Dei High School in New Jersey, Strippoli joined the Villanova squad as a walk-on linebacker. After struggling to earn playing time, Strippoli moved to fullback where he again was not able to find his way on to the Wildcat depth chart. With the Villanova tight end spot lacking depth during pre-season practice in 1996, Strippoli was converted to his third position in three years. Through hard work, Strippoli climbed his way to No. 2 on the depth chart by years end. Also, that season, Strippoli became a valuable member of the Villanova special teams.

During summer camp in 1997, Villanova's starting tight end was injured and lost for the first six weeks of the season. With this, Strippoli became the starting tight end. Strippoli flourished in his starting role and occupied the starting tight end for the entire season for a Wildcat team that went 12-1, captured the Atlantic 10 Championship and was ranked No.1 for the final six weeks of the regular season. In 12 games, he made 19 receptions for 127 yards and two touchdowns. At the conclusion of the 1997 season, Strippoli was awarded for his tireless work ethic and unselfish attitude as he was granted a full scholarship, in addition to be voted team captain by his teammates.



Tom Colombo began his career as a walk-on and finished with 5,825 yards passing.

"Jay Strippoli is the epitome of the many walk-on success stories we have had here at Villanova," said Talley. "Jay came to Villanova as a walk-on and through hard work and dedication he became a starter and earned himself a scholarship. It is not everyday that a former walk-on is voted team captain by his teammates."

Another former walk-on success story is running back Todd Golemi, who finished his eligibility in 1998. In 1995, Golemi arrived on the Main Line from Kenner, Louisiana as a walk-on running back who was adding depth in the Villanova backfield. When the season was over, Golemi had gained 624 yards on 130 carries and led the 'Cats in rushing. In addition, he made 23 receptions for 184 yards. For his efforts, Golemi was given a scholarship for the remainder of his three years. As his career has progressed, Golemi also became one of the team's top special team performers.

As a walk-on in 1995, Todd Golemi led Villanova in rushing with 624 yards on 130 carries.

Two former Villanova walk-on success stories who deserve mention are quarterback Tom Colombo and offensive lineman Chris Okano. Colombo showed up at Villanova in the fall of 1989 as a five foot, seven inch quarterback looking for a chance. Growing up as a coach's son in Brockton, Mass., Colombo had a dream of being a college quarterback. However, due to his size, Villanova was one of the few schools to give the "Diminutive Dynamo" an opportunity. Through hard work and dedication, Colombo started under center for three seasons, leading the Wildcats to two NCAA I-AA playoff appearances and currently rates third on Villanova's all-time passing yards list. In 1991, Colombo finished ranked 19th in the country in passing efficiency en route to earning second team All-Yankee Conference honors.

Okano made his way to Villanova as a walk-on from his native Hawaii and served as a backup for three seasons. In 1996, Okano's perseverance paid off as he started every game at guard and helped Villanova return to national prominence and garner a bid to the I-AA playoffs. Okano played so well in 1996 that he was named third team All-Yankee Conference.

The latest walk-on success story is Ryan Breeden who finished his eligibility in 2003. Breeden arrived on the Main Line as a walk-on linebacker and through hard work he was given a full scholarship during the 2001 season. As a senior in 2003, he played in all 11 games and tallied 40 tackles, three tackles for loss, three sacks, a team-best three forced fumbles and one fumble recovery.

"We have never turned away a walk-on player here at Villanova. The great thing about Villanova walk-ons is that they many become starters and achieve star status," stated Talley. "At Villanova, we view the walk-on player as an extremely integral part of our program."