

Southington Sports Hall of Fame

All for one Ryan Glasper was the ultimate team player

By JOHN GORALSKI
SPORTS WRITER

Ryan Glasper shied away from the Massachusetts press in 2006, so one newspaper ran a photo taken through a fence when they highlighted the strong safety in an early November issue. Glasper didn't want any credit for the resurgence of the Boston College defense, but fans weren't fooled.

"His fingerprints are all over the place," wrote columnist Karen Guregian in a story for the *Boston Herald*. "They're in the huddle. They're in the film room. They're on the practice field. They're in the defensive backfield on gameday."

Hall of Fame

It had been four weeks since Glasper had returned from an early season injury, and the Eagles had surged to four straight wins, and two shutouts. The defense leapt from last place in the college rankings to 62nd. They went on to finish the season ranked 34th out of 119 NCAA Division I-A teams, and Glasper was at the center of it all.

"He's made a huge impact. He's had as much to do with our turnaround than anything," former BC coach Tom O'Brien was quoted as saying. "He brings a lot of enthusiasm to the practice field. The freshmen see how they're supposed to practice, how they're supposed to study film. He's a major reason why the defense has played so well."

Southington fans just smiled. They already knew about Glasper's impact on anything he attempted. For three fall seasons, he led the Southington gridiron with his passing, rushing, receiving, and special team abilities. For three winters, he led the local team as a fierce defender, and in the spring he led the sprinters. Glasper was more than just a superstar. He was a role player, a coach, and a fireplug all rolled into one.

"Ryan was an excellent athlete in everything that he did. There was no question about that," said former Blue Knight football coach Jude Kelly. "He had speed. He had strength, and he had a tremendous competitive edge. He just loved to compete, and he took a great deal of pride in one-on-one competition. When he stepped out onto the field, he was going to find a way to win."

According to Glasper, sports was more than a way to gain acclaim or prove his superiority. It was a way to fit in when he transferred to Southington High School to get away from the temptations and struggles he faced in New Britain, but he admits that the suburban setting was a sort of culture shock when he arrived.

"I definitely consider it a pivotal moment in my life," he said. "It helped me grow as an individual. It helped me become more diverse with different cultures and different ways of living. People did things a little bit differently. They were more ambitious in a lot of ways, and it opened my eyes up to things that I wouldn't have been able to see if I stayed in New Britain."

As a freshman, Glasper tried to lead separate lives as a part of both communities, but it soon became

clear that something had to change. He was always drawn to sports. He was always athletically gifted, so in his sophomore year he jumped right in. He soon found the camaraderie and friendships that would carry him to a collegiate career, and his impact on his teams was immediate.

"Back then sophomores didn't even step onto the field with the varsity team, but Ryan was one of those kids that moved up pretty quick," said Kelly. "We found all kinds of different positions for him to play. We put him at receiver. We put him at defensive back, and he even played quarterback at one point until we settled him in as a receiver and a defensive back."

Few players can match Glasper's numbers in any position, but nobody can match his versatility. Over three seasons, he accumulated 4,017 all-purpose yards. He ran for 982 yards (6.7 average) and 12 touchdowns. He completed 47-of-99 passes (47.5 percent) for 623 yards and eight scores. He caught 98 passes for 1,916 yards (19.6 average) and 21 scores. He returned two kickoffs for touchdowns his junior year. He returned a trio of punt returns into the end zone and returned one interception.

His quarterback rating of 118.9 is better than most professionals, and it earned Glasper recognition as an all-American in 2001.

"I was just worried about being a member of the team and doing what I was supposed to do," he said. "God gave me some talent. If I could better the team in any way, that's what I did. I don't mind sacrificing. I don't mind playing my role if that's what I want to do, but I'm not worried about taking the reins if I can. I don't mind stepping up and laying myself out on the line for the team. That's life, you know?"

It wasn't just words, Glasper was as happy as a role player or a star. He proved it with the basketball team. In two years Glasper managed just 93 points (3.1 points per game) and just over 1 assist, 1 steal, and 3 rebounds per game. Blue Knight coach Bob Lasbury said that the numbers don't really show his impact on the team.

"He was probably one of the most gifted athletes that I've ever coached. It wasn't just his physical abilities. He brought an unbelievable passion and intensity to our team," said Lasbury. "Defensively, he could lock up anybody. It didn't matter if they were taller than him because he was so strong that he could push guys off the block if he needed to. He had the ability to jump and rebound. He caused havoc for the other team."

Glasper said that he loved the challenge. "The guy that gets glorified is that guy that gets 20 or 30 points per game, but that wasn't me," he said. "My role was to lead by example, play with heart, play hard, and play my role. I was supposed to rebound and get the ball to those guys that can score. Not everybody can be in the spotlight at all times, but you can still play an integral role in the team."

Soon college scouts began to show up on the sidelines. Reporters broadcast his potential. Coaches touted his gifts, and Glasper used that as motivation.

"It really forced me to elevate my game," he said. "If I wanted to



be seen as a division one athlete, I had to play like a division one athlete. I tried to work hard and be the best player that I could be."

In the end, Boston College rose to the top of a prestigious list. Glasper was the first one to sign a letter of intent in what would prove to be a superstar class. Seven teammates went on to NFL rosters, including former Atlanta Falcon quarterback Matt Ryan.

"People knew that he had speed, but it was his competitive edge that allowed him to excel," said Kelly. "I remember when he went up to Boston College for an interview with the admissions people. They were surprised that he was only absent from school one day at high school. It was those kinds of things that set him apart."

Glasper was the only one to earn a spot on the roster as a true freshman, and he went on to start in 29 of his 45 collegiate games. In four seasons, Glasper anchored the Eagle defense with 177 tackles and six interceptions.

"It was a great experience. I definitely had a chance to play with some great competition," he said. "It was so fast that I couldn't figure it out at first. Thank God I was able to adapt relatively quickly. Coaches hate to see a guy that makes mental errors. They don't mind if you get beat physically. There isn't much you can do about that. But if you're blowing coverages, not executing your assignments, or missing signals, they have zero tolerance. That's where I excelled the most."

After college he earned a try-out for the New York Giants, but he was never signed by an NFL team. Glasper went on to a short career with the Canadian Football League and returned to the Blue Knights for a short stint as an assistant coach.

It was no surprise that Southington Sports Hall of Fame officials chose Glasper to be inducted into the local hall. On Thursday, Nov. 14, he was inducted in a ceremony at the Aqua Turf.

"I just want to be remembered as a team player," he said. "Whatever my role was, I was willing to do it."



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Inside the Numbers

SHS Football

- Super Prep All-American (2001)
- All-State (2001)
- Captain (2002)
- 3 varsity letters (2000, 2001, 2002).
- SHS records for longest punt return (92), kick-off return (98), and play from scrimmage (97).
- Career statistics**—2 interceptions for 1 TD, 5 special team TDs, 4,017 all purpose yards, 118.9 career quarterback rating.
- 2000**—625 yds rushing (6.5 avg), 297 yds receiving (19.8 avg), 940 all-purpose, 8 TDs.
- 2001**—211 yds rushing (9.6 avg), 984 yds receiving (20.5 avg), 156 passing yards, 2,043 all-purpose yds, 22 TDs.
- 2002**—145 yds rushing (5.0 avg), 635 yds receiving (18.1 avg), 467 passing yards, 1,034 all-purpose yds, 9 TDs.

SHS Basketball

- 2 varsity letters (2001-2, 2002-3)
- 2001-2002**—22 games, 47 points, 5-for-43 shooting, 25 assists, 48 rebounds, 12 steals.
- 2002-2003**—8 games, 46 points, 17-for-36 shooting, 9 assists, 51 rebounds, 5 steals.

SHS Track & Field

- 5th in the 100m at the Class LL (2003)
- 10th in the 4x100m at Class LL (2003)
- 14th in the 100m at the state open (2003).

Boston College Football

- 4 varsity letters (2003-2006)
- All conference (2006)
- Paul Cavanaugh Award (2006)
- Jay McGillis Scholarship Award (2006)
- Career Statistics**—29 starts, 45 games, 177 tackles, 6 interceptions.

Professional Football

- Undrafted but attended the NY Giants rookie camp as a try-out (2006).
- Hamilton Tiger Cats (CFL, 2007-8)
- Toronto Argonauts (CFL, 2008)
- Edmonton Eskimos (CFL, 2008)
- Hartford Colonials (UFL, 2010)