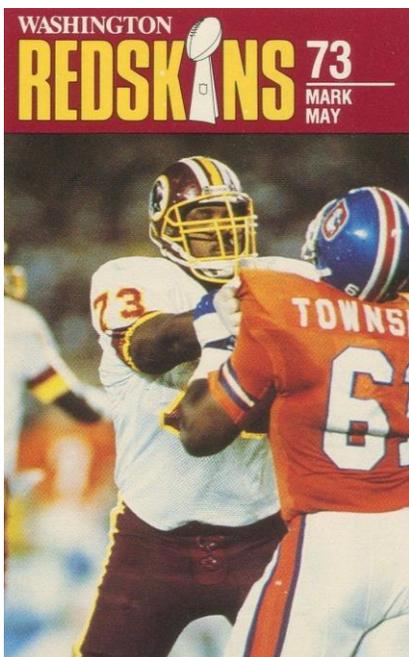




Mark May

This article was written by Matt Keddie.

Mark May is only seven letters, and it's no coincidence he won eight during his time as a high school athlete. Mark Eric May (b. November 2, 1959) was a standout athlete at Oneonta High School in New York, starring on the track, football, and basketball squads. In 2007, 30 years after he graduated, May was inducted into the school's Athletic Hall-of-Fame, which carries a Wall of Distinction that recognizes the greatest athletes in school history.¹ May's athletic success translated to college, when he was offered a scholarship to play at the University of Pittsburgh, part of one of the greatest recruiting classes in program history.²



May was a massive part of the success on the team's offensive line during his four seasons (1977 to 1980) at the University of Pittsburgh. On rushing plays, he walled off the opposing defensive line to create running room. When the quarterback dropped back to pass, he nearly guaranteed the defense would not touch his quarterback. The talent level around him was tremendous, as many teamed with future NFL stars and hall-of-famers in Dan Marino, Jimbo Covert, Russ Grimm, and Rickey Jackson.³ His teams accrued a 39-8-1 record in his four years, yielding three top-ten finishes, and berths in four major bowl games (Gator twice, Fiesta, and Tangerine). The 1980 and 1981 squads each went 11-1, and were the last Pitt teams to post consecutive seasons with double-digit



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victories. May earned unanimous first-team All-American status in his senior season, while winning the Outland Trophy, given to the nation's best interior lineman.⁴ Upon winning the award, May stated, "I'm ecstatic. It's something that I can give back to the university because they have given me so much. Now, future Pitt offensive linemen know that the Outland is not just a dream."⁵ He was the first Pitt player to win the award, and to date, still is the only Panther to have won the award. One of his most astonishing feats was that he did not yield a sack during his junior and senior seasons. His ability, speed, and strength were highly touted by pro scouts. Pitt offensive line coach Joe Moore praised Mark's skills, "Pro scouts tell me that he is the finest offensive line prospect in the country. His size, speed, agility and intelligence are unbelievable."⁶ Gil Brandt, who worked with the Dallas Cowboys at the time commented, "He looks like a pro lineman right now. He is so big and so strong and obviously a great pass protector."⁷ Following his senior season, May took the opportunity to play in the Hula Bowl and Japan Bowl all-star contests to showcase his play. In 2001, the university retired his number 73, becoming the eighth Panther to achieve the honor. Later in 2005, May was inducted into the College Football Hall-of-Fame.⁸ One of May's proudest athletic achievements was having his collegiate number retired, "Without a doubt, this is one of the highest athletic achievements of my career and I've been to three Super Bowls, played in the Pro Bowl and was on some great teams at the University of Pittsburgh. It is even more of an honor to have your number retired at a school with the football tradition of Pitt."⁹

Best known for his years in the NFL as a member of the Washington Redskins, May was drafted 20th overall in 1981. He was a part of the famed "Hogs" offensive line during the 80s and 90s, a time when Washington enjoyed some of its glory years.¹⁰ May, who started at right guard, teamed with future hall-of-fame left guard Russ Grimm, center Jeff Bostic, left tackle Joe Jacoby, and right tackle George Starke, who all formed one of the most formidable offensive fronts in NFL history. The group was known for their undeniable will to control the line of scrimmage, leading the Redskins to four Super Bowl appearances, including three victories. The unit averaged nearly 280 pounds, and their size made it simple to provide protection for quarterback Joe Theismann, and clear running lanes for back John Riggins, who routinely ran wild.¹¹ With Washington, May switched roles between left tackle and left guard during his nine seasons with the team.¹² From 1982 to 1986, Washington routinely ranked in the top 10 in rushing offense, winning 55 regular season games during that time. May started in 142 of 159 games in his Redskins' career. He was an All-NFC selection by Pro Football Weekly in 1988, the same year in which he made the Pro Bowl.¹³ May missed the 1990 season due to injury, and in 1991, he became a free agent, signing with the San Diego Chargers.¹⁴ With San Diego he played in a backup role, appearing in just nine games. May played his final two seasons with the Phoenix Cardinals in 1992 and 1993, starting in all 27 games at left guard, before retiring.¹⁵ May was named as one of the 80 Greatest Redskins, and won two Super Bowls (XVII, XXII) in Washington.¹⁶



After football, May jumped into sports broadcasting in 1994, returning to his alma mater. May joined commentator Bill Hillgrove as the color analyst for Panthers broadcasts.¹⁷ From 1995 until 2001, May was a studio and game analyst for NFL contests, serving stints on TNT for *Sunday Night Football* and CBS Sports as a game analyst. He returned to calling college games in 2001, joining Lou Holtz on ESPN, making appearances on the *College Football Scoreboard* and *College Football Final* shows. May was laid off by ESPN in 2017, after working for 23 years in the industry.¹⁸

Off the field, May is known to be a philanthropist. In 2019, May returned home to co-host a fundraising charity event, the Mark May Golf Tournament and Concert, with Lou Holtz, who worked alongside May as a broadcaster at ESPN, to support the local YMCA.¹⁹ In 1981, he made a \$10,000 donation to the University of Pittsburgh football program as a gesture for his education. “It just seemed like a good gesture. I did it mainly to contribute back to the program. The program has done an enormous amount for me, coming from a small town in upstate New York, going to the University of Pittsburgh, getting the opportunity to play there, getting the exposure I got there, and getting treated the way I was treated by the people of Pittsburgh”²⁰

End Notes:

- 1 “Athletic Hall of Fame,” Oneonta High Alumni, accessed November 1, 2021, <https://www.oneontahighalumni.org/athletic-hall-of-fame/>.
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- 5 “May Reported As Outland Winner,” *The Robesonian*, November 21, 1980, 17.
- 6 “May Reported As Outland Winner,” *The Robesonian*, November 21, 1980, 17.
- 7 “May Reported As Outland Winner,” *The Robesonian*, November 21, 1980, 17.
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- 10 Klein, Greg. “Ex-NFL star, ESPN host Mark May to return home to help YMCA,” *The Daily Star*, accessed November 1, 2021, https://www.thedailystar.com/news/local_news/ex-nfl-star-espn-host-mark-may-to-return-home-to-help-ymca/article_917b9842-69bf-5bcd-80b0-b3581905388d.html.



- 11 "History of the Hogs," The Hogs, accessed November 7, 2021, <http://www.the-hogs.net/blogs/history-of-the-hogs/>.
- 12 "Mark May," ProFootballReference.com, accessed November 7, 2021, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/M/MayxMa00.htm>.
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- 14 "Mark May," ProFootballReference.com, accessed November 7, 2021, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/M/MayxMa00.htm>.
- 15 "Mark May," ProFootballReference.com, accessed November 7, 2021, <https://www.pro-football-reference.com/players/M/MayxMa00.htm>.
- 16 Klein, Greg. "Ex-NFL star, ESPN host Mark May to return home to help YMCA," *The Daily Star*, accessed November 1, 2021, https://www.thedailystar.com/news/local_news/ex-nfl-star-espn-host-mark-may-to-return-home-to-help-ymca/article_917b9842-69bf-5bcd-80b0-b3581905388d.html.
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- 18 "Mark May," CBS Sports, accessed November 7, 2021, <https://web.archive.org/web/20010405143803/http://cbs.sportsline.com/u/cbs/mmay.html>.
- 19 Klein, Greg. "Ex-NFL star, ESPN host Mark May to return home to help YMCA," *The Daily Star*, accessed November 1, 2021, https://www.thedailystar.com/news/local_news/ex-nfl-star-espn-host-mark-may-to-return-home-to-help-ymca/article_917b9842-69bf-5bcd-80b0-b3581905388d.html.
- 20 "Sports of all sorts," *Beaver County (Pa) Times*, September 23, 1981, C-3.