

BY DEEDEE MILLS

Bentley's Best

Bernadeau Takes Road Not Traveled



YOU MAY NOT HAVE HEARD OF BENTLEY COLLEGE. It's a small, private school located in Waltham, Massachusetts, 10 miles west of Boston. It ranks #30 on *Business Week's* top 100 undergrad business schools. All of the athletic teams compete in the Northeast Ten Conference at the NCAA Division II level except the men's hockey program, which was one of the original six founding teams of the Atlantic Hockey at the Division I level. Maybe that's why it is no surprise a Bentley College Falcon had never been drafted in the NFL Draft since the football team's inception in 1972. On Sunday, April 27, 2008 that all changed when Mackenzy Bernadeau's name was taken off the board at the 250th pick in the 7th round, the last of Carolina's compensatory selections.

At 6'4" and 298 pounds, offensive lineman Bernadeau grew up in Waltham, so he was very familiar with Bentley College. After all, it was just around the corner from his high school, where he played for former Bentley assistant coach Paul Mayberry and earned 2003 Daily News Tribune Player of the Year and team MVP honors while serving as squad captain. He also participated in the Shriners All-Star game. So, when it came time to decide where to continue his football career, it wasn't a hard choice. But, it was more than meets the eye.

Bernadeau grew up with three siblings. After his oldest brother and sister moved out of the house, he lived with his Haitian mother, grandmother and younger sister, and his family responsibilities grew to include, among other things, attending his younger sister's high school parent/teacher conferences.

Bernadeau's obligation to this role led him down the street. Bentley offered him a full ride to play football and get an education at the small but prestigious college. Bentley offered him an opportunity, and he took it.

Bernadeau took over left tackle duties as soon as he arrived on campus, posting 58 knockdowns and six touchdown-resulting blocks.

The offense averaged 458.2 yards per game. All the while, his family could come to all of his home games and Bernadeau could continue to attend his sister's parent/teacher conferences.

As a sophomore and second year starter at left tackle, he earned first-team All-Northeast Ten Conference and Northeast Region honors. Bernadeau collected 61 knockdowns as the Falcons offense averaged 440.7 yards per game.

As a junior, Bernadeau split time, starting five games at left tackle and six games at left guard. Again, he was named All-Northeast Ten Conference first-team and he was honored as Offensive Lineman of the Year.

Bernadeau wanted to continue his success and come out strong his senior year, which he did, registering 48 knockdowns and grading 84.17 percent for blocking consistency in the first six games. His banner senior campaign was sidelined though during game six when he tore his meniscus in his left knee. Despite his setback, Bernadeau had made such an impression on opposing coaches that the AFCA awarded him All-American honors. He also earned Northeast Ten Conference Offensive Lineman of the Year honors for a second straight year. He immediately began rehabilitating his knee to prepare himself for a chance to get in front of NFL scouts who would hold the key to his future.

Needless to say, Bentley doesn't have a pro day. Instead, an athletic Bernadeau was added to the list of players trying to impress NFL scouts, coaches and general managers at the Boston College pro day. Impress he did, enough to get a phone call from John Fox on the second day of the NFL Draft. That phone call secured Bernadeau's place in Bentley College history. Now, he hopes to secure a spot on the Carolina Panthers roster. And, since his little sister is graduating from high school this year, the only conferences he'll have to focus on are in the NFL. 🏈

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