



## Cardinal Mooney Football

### Nominated by: Joshua Smithers

There are many reasons I believe the Cardinal Mooney Football team are champions. We have more than half of our team with a 3.5gpa or higher. We place our football players in some of the top academic colleges to play football, like, Johns Hopkins, Georgetown University, Furman University, North Central College, and Stanford to name a few. Every player on our team will have well over 100 hours of community service when they graduate. 100% of our senior football players will graduate for the 10<sup>th</sup> year in a row. My team willingly volunteers their time on the first Saturday that football starts in the fall, and instead of practicing, they go to help Habitat for Humanity for a half day. I have starting football players who are also in the school plays, and getting accepted to some of the top Art Schools in the country. All of the above mentioned are things that I am very proud of, but the thing I am most proud of is how they handled the life and death of one of their teammates this year.

One of our Junior student/players, Joey Powers, was diagnosed with Leukemia in July of 2010. This was a very devastating and sad new for our players, especially since he was so very well liked and close friends to many on the team. When this happened immediately my team jumped to help the family. By the end of July a few of Joey's best friends helped organize a prayer service for Joey and his family, The whole team showed up in their jerseys. As the season approached, Joey had ups and downs. The family was starting to get medical bills they couldn't pay, so once again my players wanted to help. They organized a orange out (orange being a color that represents Leukemia) for our first home game. They sold wrist bands with his initials and gave money to the family. Joey was later named home coming king by our whole school. After homecoming, Joey took a turn for the worst. At this point, a few of my players and a few students decided to put on a concert at a local theatre. My middle linebacker is in a very talented band, so they performed for 2 hours. They packed the place with about 300 people and gave all the money raised to the family and Leukemia Research. Shortly after the season Joey passed away 1 day before his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday. The next day all of his teammates organized a birthday celebration for him at our school parking lot. No adults prompted this. Several hundred of Joey's friends showed up. They wrote his initials all over their cars, let off balloons, sang happy birthday, and ate cake. At his funeral, the team all sat together with their game jerseys to support the family. When Joey was buried he took his game jersey with him. My players asked if we could dedicate next season to Joey by wearing his initials on our helmets, so we will honor him that way.

I am so proud of how a bunch of young kids got together and were able to support their best friend and his family in their time of need. No adult gave them any of these ideas. They were all organized and designed by high school kids. Football is so much more than wins and loses. Its about family and creating long lasting friendships. It's about possessing skills that will help them get a degree in college, become succesfull professional, and most importantly be good husbands and fathers. In the face of a tragedy like we faced this year, young kids showed a whole community how sports can be used to pull together and support their best friend and his family. Even after Joey passed away, his best friends (who are his football/lacrosse buddies) visit his parents, and hang out at the house

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to give support to Joeys mom, dad, and little sister. Win or Lose this season, we will be playing to honor Joey and we are Champions no matter what! Go Cougars!

Sincerely,

Joshua Smithers  
Head Football Coach

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