

Senior aims to walk on at MSU

Markael Butler plans to tryout for the football team for 2016 season

By Sonny Mulpuri & Billy Steigelman
DIGITAL EDITOR & ASSISTANT EDITOR

Becoming a Division I athlete is a difficult task to accomplish, especially when attempting to walk onto a team without a scholarship like senior Markael Butler. Butler is planning to try out for Michigan State University's football team next fall.

Butler has been on the varsity team for two years and quickly realized that he would have to work harder if he was going to be able to walk on to such a prestigious program.

"You need to want it. It's a process that takes a lot of time," Butler said. "You have to spend a lot of your time working out, lifting weights and watching film, stuff like that, just improving yourself as a player."

While Butler has been training for the past two years, defensive coordinator and former student athlete, Charles Kaiser knows all the other work that comes with it.

"Walk-ons need to prove their worth, and they have to go to a lot of morning workouts, can never be late, that kind of small stuff," Kaiser said. "And when they are there, they have to be super hard working, and they can't be a problem."

Butler's mother, Chere Williams, has seen her son's abilities develop as a football player over the last two years.

"I realized (Butler could play in college) in the last two years, how he really developed and became really motivated and just developed more drive," Williams said. "That just showed me how hard he worked and how dedicated he was in these last two years so he could do it."

As for making the team, Michigan State gives their walk-ons two different opportunities to try out—once in September and once in January.

"For me, I've been talking to the coaches, and

so if I want to, I can wait 'till my sophomore year," Butler said. "Or if I make the team in September or January, I can redshirt my freshman year."

The greatest strength Butler has that Kaiser witnessed while coaching him is his football IQ, whether he's helping out his teammates or on the field himself.

"He's like the quarterback of the defense and the secondary, always making calls and adapting," Kaiser said. "So I think his knowledge of the game was definitely his biggest strength."

Sophomore free safety Peter Ciaravino started alongside Butler for much of the season this year and learned many things from him.

"He was really good with pass protection, one of the best on the team and he always made big plays when it counted," Ciaravino said. "He helped show me around because I was new to the team, so he would help me become familiar with the defense, which was really helpful."

Like Kaiser, Williams believes that Butler has certain traits that give him an advantage on the football field and make him an unique addition to his team.

"He's a leader. He's not easily influenced to do what isn't right. He has the right morals and values and he has dreams and is dedicated and hopeful," Williams said. "He wants to be successful, and that's because he has that inner drive and determination that is going to contribute to his success, no matter what he does in his life."

While Butler is excited to receive an opportunity to earn a spot playing for the Spartans, he still wants to stick to his roots and keep his personality the way it is.

"I just want my actions to inspire others to dream more, learn more and become more than they already are," Butler said. "(I want) to be remembered for what type of person I am."

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Markael Butler
SENIOR



Butler stands with his team during the national anthem. "You're going against some of the best athletes in the nation," Butler said. "I mean it's the Big 10, so you go up against teams like Michigan and Wisconsin. It really doesn't get better than that."

Junior leaps to new heights

Daniel Leone strives to break school pole vaulting record

By Michal Ruprecht
STAFF REPORTER

Along, white and green pole gleams in the sun as junior Daniel Leone jumps over the 14'7" mark, just one inch shy of breaking the school record. Since Leone began his pole vaulting career his freshman year, he has dreamed of beating the school record.

However, it wasn't easy for Leone to achieve his goals in pole vaulting because of his stature. "I knew I wasn't going to grow any taller because I'm kind of short," he said. "It made me realize the only thing that I could do is get stronger."

Leone's aspirations to become stronger finally became a reality when he and junior Carter Waldrop began working out together freshman year. They posted two videos about their journey on their YouTube channel, Power of Muscle.

"It was tough. It took a lot of hard work," Leone said. "It was always good to see yourself achieve things you went for, like new goals and stuff, and watch yourself be stronger along the way."

Pole vaulting is in Leone's blood. His brother Matthew Leone (a 2013 alumnus), father Nicolo Leone, uncle and grandfather all pole vaulted in high school.

Daniel first discovered the sport after watching numerous videos on YouTube. He started pole vaulting in the spring track and field season of 2014.

He is currently on the boys track and field team and the Inversion Vault Club. He frequently places first at meets and invitationals. In addition to pole vaulting, Daniel enjoys calisthenics, parkour and gymnastics, which he says plays a part in his pole vaulting success.

"I thought I'd be pretty good at it with my strength, and then the technique for pole vaulting relates to gymnastics bar movements," Daniel said. "People always told me I'd be good at

it, so I just gave it a try."

Nicolo thinks Daniel's growth in pole vaulting symbiotically brings work ethic and passion and that these values will help Daniel achieve his goals in the future.

"Pole vaulting has helped give some structure to his life because he can refer to his goals and then do what it takes to make them happen," Nicolo said via email. "All the training, time, travel and commitment to this sport has shown him what hard work and dedication can produce—a champion on and off the track."

His brother Matthew finds that Daniel's active lifestyle brings many benefits, like new friends and scholarship opportunities.

"I think (sports) have affected him very positively and given him an outlet for a lot of different things. They have given him an outlet to just basically be creative and outgoing, and he's found friends through it, and it's just something that he loves to do," Matthew said. "It's something that he can call his own because not a lot of people do it, and I think it has affected him extremely well physically."

After Daniel gained a passion for the sport, his family realized his talent. Both his father and brother expect him to have success in pole vaulting because of his dedication to it.

"He's doing more than I ever did in pole vaulting, and he's doing more than a lot of people do in pole vaulting. I think he's got a bright future ahead of him," Matthew said. "I hope that he goes forth and does the best that he does, the best that he can do."

Daniel hopes to improve his skills and receive scholarships for pole vaulting in the future. Daniel aspires to pursue pole vaulting after college in pursuit of staying active and fit.

"(Pole vaulting has) made me realize that there's no limits to my potential," he said. "When I fail it makes me more motivated to get back up and try again and work harder next time."



Leone springs himself forward with his pole. "I always watch the really good pole vaulters and they all have a lot of core strength and arm strength," Leone said.



Leone leaps over the bar during one of his track and field meets. Leone placed first in regionals on May 20.