



Written by [Isabel Lyman](#) on February 3, 2012

Facing the Giants? A Snap for Danny Woodhead

Danny Woodhead (left) is a mini Tim Tebow ... sans the hype. Heralding an article with a never-give-up theme about undrafted and cut players who will be playing in Super Bowl XLVI, USA Today put Woodhead, a running back for the New England Patriots, on its front page.



On February 5, he gets to play on the biggest sports stage in the free (and unfree) world, but his underdog, family-oriented story begins in a railroad town in Nebraska.

At North Platte High School — where his dad, Mark Woodhead, was one of the football coaches — he was an explosive, record-setting running back, but the University of Nebraska (and other football powerhouses) didn't offer him a scholarship. Why? He was an excellent student, had a tremendous work ethic, and was selected Gatorade Player of the Year, but Woodhead is 5'8" tall — in short, he was deemed too short.

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Despite the snub from Division 1 schools, he went on to be a star at Chadron State College (a Division 2 school which his parents attended), located in the Nebraska panhandle. At Chadron State he not only got to play with his older brother, Ben, but he shattered enough records to be selected — twice — as the recipient of the [Harlon Hill trophy](#) (D-2's Heisman) in 2006 and 2007. A press release notes how his personal best was also one for the stat books: "Woodhead, a Hill candidate for the fourth straight season, broke the NCAA all-division's career rushing record with 7,962 yards, and his 9,479 career all-purpose yards is second best in college football history."

Snubbed again, this time by the NFL (no team drafted him), in 2008, Woodhead managed to sign with the New York Jets as an undrafted free agent, where he spent time on the injured reserve list. He was eventually cut from the team in 2010, and he headed back to Nebraska.

Woodhead's career, however, was just beginning. [The New England Patriots](#), who were familiar with him, signed him not long after he was waived.

Woodhead quickly became a fan favorite, known for his jitterbug moves, playmaking skills, and more great stats. In his two years with the Patriots, Woodhead played in 29 games, carrying the ball 174 times for 898 yards (an average of over 5 yards per carry) and 6 touchdowns. He also had 52 catches for 536 yards and a TD.

He is also known for being well-grounded and self-deprecating.



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At 27 years old he has been married to Stacia since 2008, a registered nurse and his hometown sweetheart. Last year he became a first-time father to a [baby girl named Gia](#). He stars in a delightful video for Modell's Sporting Goods in which he goes incognito in retail for a day, selling his Patriots jersey. (See it [here](#).) There is also an inspirational children's book called [Danny Woodhead: A Football Dream Come True](#), by Jon Goode.

Perhaps the secret to Danny's confidence and humility, and even good fortune, lies in his upbringing.

Danny [and his four siblings](#) were raised in a working-class home in which Mom — Annette Woodhead — homeschooled the children until the ninth grade. Mr. and Mrs. Woodhead imparted more than sports skills and book learning to their brood.

As Danny himself told [Sharing the Victory](#), the magazine of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, "They were a great example of what it meant to have a relationship with Christ." He told ESPN that God, not the number 39 on his jersey, is number one in his life.

Of course, the entire Woodhead clan, including the grandparents, will be cheering for North Platte's favorite son in Indianapolis.

One wonders what Scripture verse Mrs. Woodhead will text her son before the big game as is her custom.

But it is entirely fitting that this David, this son of Middle America, will be playing against the Giants — the Goliaths of New York.

Game on!

Isabel Lyman blogs at The Castillo Chronicles <http://thecastillochronicles.blogspot.com>



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