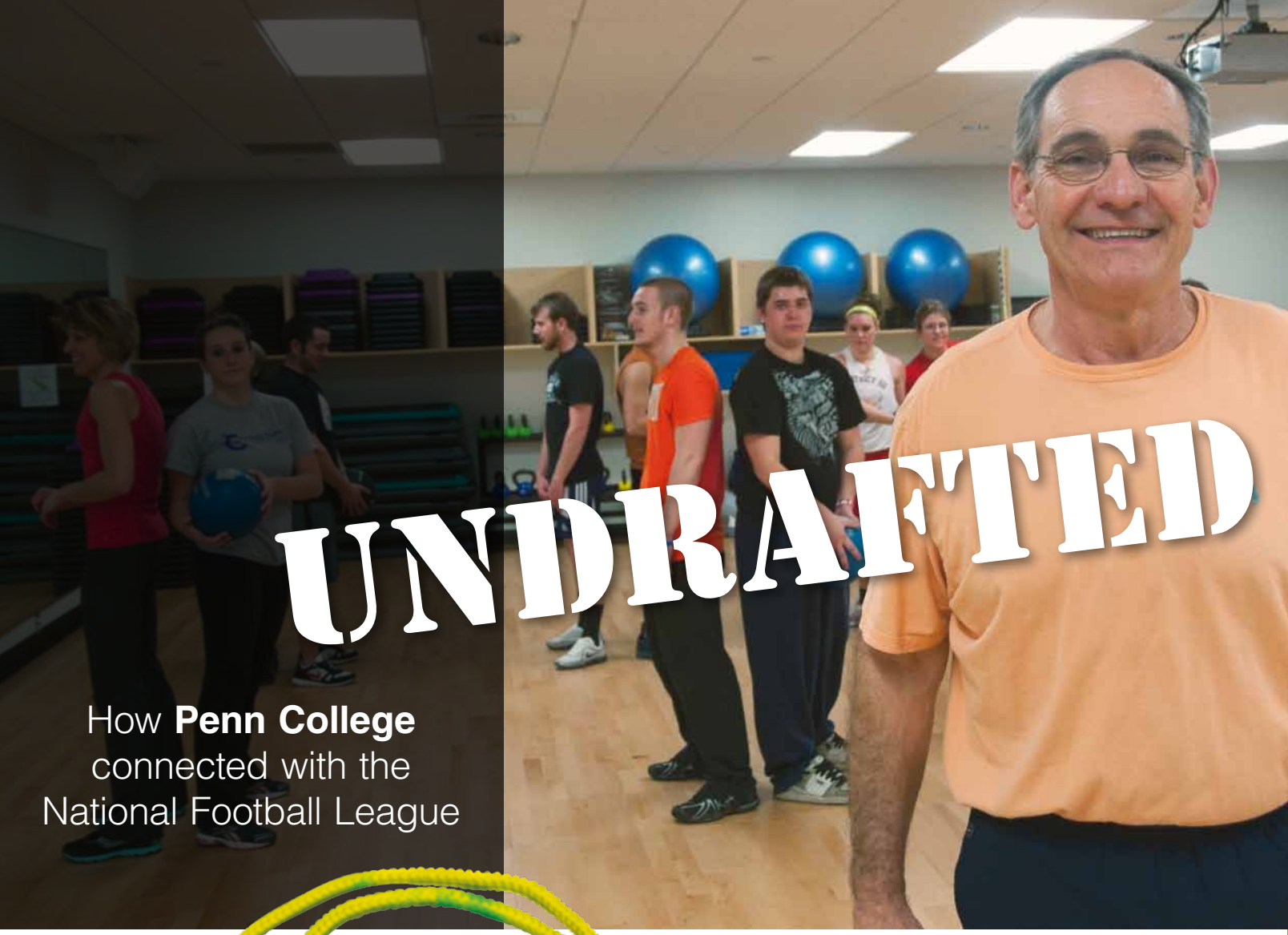
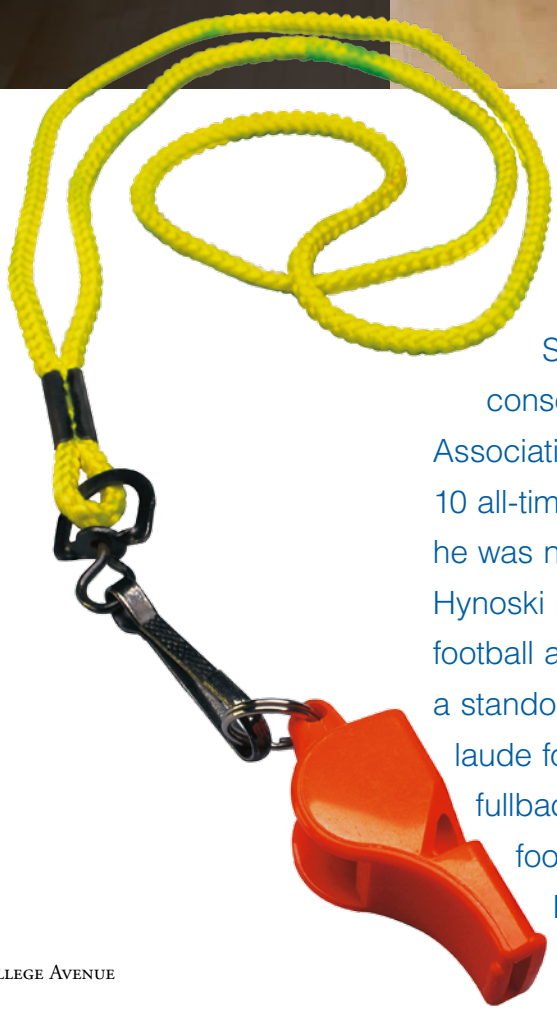


UNDRAFTED

How **Penn College** connected with the National Football League



by Babe Mayer, associate professor of fitness and lifetime sports

HENRY HYNOSKI IS A FAMILIAR NAME AROUND THE PENNSYLVANIA FOOTBALL COMMUNITY. At Southern Columbia High School, he was a starting running back on four consecutive Pennsylvania Interscholastic Athletic Association State Champion football teams; he is a Top 10 all-time PIAA leader in total career rushing yards, and he was named to the Pennsylvania Big 33 All-Star Team. Hynoski received an athletic scholarship to attend and play football at the University of Pittsburgh, where he became a standout NCAA Division-I fullback and graduated cum laude following his junior season. Rated the top collegiate fullback in the country, he forwent his senior year of football at Pitt and declared his eligibility to enter the NFL draft. That's where the story begins.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MIKE STAUGAITIS/THE NEWS ITEM





PHOTOS COURTESY OF KATHY HYNOSKI

Above, Elysburg native and New York Giants starting fullback Henry Hynoski poses with members of the Ralpho Raiders midget football team, the team he played for as a child, while visiting home during the Giants' bye week. At left, he catches a pass against the Carolina Panthers. Hynoski spent the summer training with Babe Mayer, opposite page, associate professor of fitness and lifetime sports. Physical fitness specialist majors learn to teach the same functional training techniques Mayer used with Hynoski.

THE NFL DRAFT

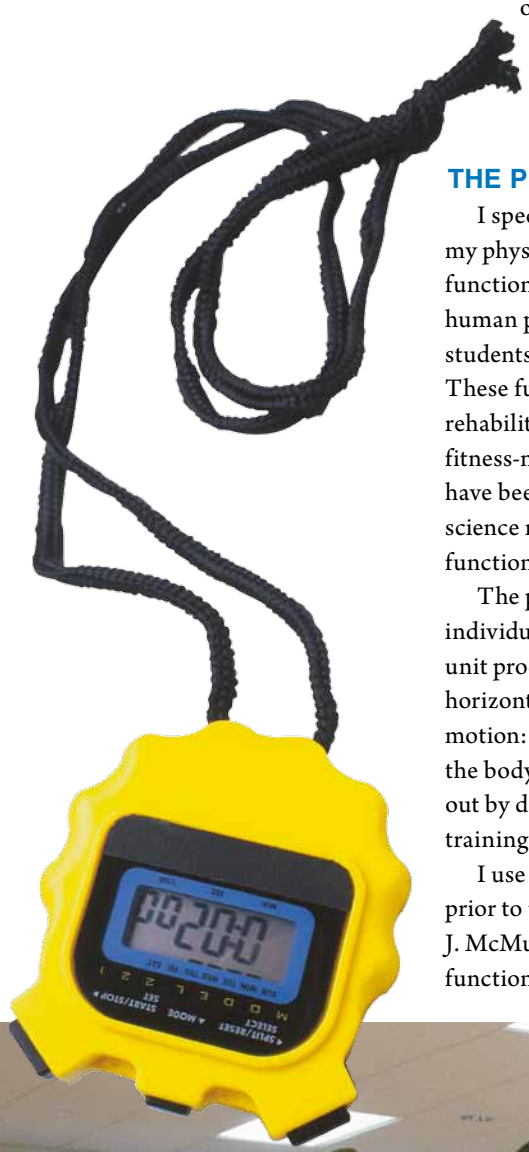
In February 2011, NFL draft-eligible Hynoski was invited to participate in the NFL Scouting Combine in Indianapolis. The Scouting Combine is a showcase where top-rated draft-eligible collegiate football players demonstrate their physical and mental skills for NFL coaches and owners. Like all combine participants, Hynoski's agent hired a professional trainer for the upcoming event. He chose an established Pittsburgh-area trainer in early January and trained for two months prior to the combine testing. In late February, while running the combine's 40-yard dash test, he pulled a hamstring muscle in his left leg and was forced to withdraw from the remainder of the combine testing. The injury would later prove to be a major setback to his NFL draft hopes and dream of playing professional football. On April 28, the worst would happen. The once highly regarded draft candidate would not be selected by any of the 32 teams as one of the 224 selections in the 2011 NFL draft, a disappointment to both Hynoski and his family and the possible end to what otherwise was a celebrated football career.

"NEVER, NEVER, NEVER GIVE UP" – WINSTON CHURCHILL

Following his spring graduation from the University of Pittsburgh, Hynoski decided to return to his Elysburg home and prepare for his future. Prior to his return home, Hynoski's mother, Kathy, contacted me. The Hynoskis were familiar with my unique training techniques and my work with athletes. Hynoski had trained with me at the Mayer Sports Training Center from ninth through 12th grades, prior to attending the University of Pittsburgh. Kathy Hynoski inquired whether I would consider once again working with her son in preparation for the possibility of Hynoski being picked up by an NFL team as a free agent. Free agency means a team invites an undrafted player to try out during their preseason camp. It was a long-shot opportunity, but it was Hynoski's last option to play in the NFL. He began working with me in late spring. >>

THE LOCKOUT

Prior to the NFL draft, players had voted to strike over a contract dispute, and the NFL owners, in turn, closed their preseason camps, locking out the players. This postponed the free agency draft, shortened teams' preseason training camps and set back Hynoski's last opportunity to make an NFL roster. Hynoski would again have to demonstrate patience and wait to find out if he would get another opportunity to play professional football.



THE PENN COLLEGE CONNECTION

I specialize in a unique form of physical training referred to as "functional training." I instruct my physical fitness specialist majors in the biomechanic philosophies and methodologies of functional movement, training specifically designed to reduce the risk of injury and improve human performance. At Pennsylvania College of Technology, our physical fitness specialist students learn how to incorporate functional training techniques into training protocols. These functional-training methodologies are designed to be effective whether used for injury rehabilitation, or for training professional athletes like Hynoski, amateur athletes, or health-and-fitness-minded individuals of any age. This year, special classes in Functional Fitness Training have been added to the college's fitness and lifetime sports curriculum, designed to give health science majors in occupational therapy assistant and physician assistant programs a foundation in functional fitness training techniques.

The philosophy behind functional training is to view the body as one large muscle, not individual muscles as in traditional training. The methodology views the body as one integrated unit producing coordinated, powerful movements flowing vertically from head to toe and horizontally from fingertip to fingertip. The training involves exercising in all three planes of motion: forward and backward, side to side, and mostly in rotation, while always maintaining the body's structural and proprioceptive balance. It focuses on training the body from the inside out by developing core strength first and the outer muscular system second. Or, simply stated, training the body in the manner in which the body is designed to function.

I use my Williamsport training center as my research lab to test the quality of training methods prior to teaching my Penn College classes. Gene L. Haupt, Ron E. Kodish, Emily B. Miller, Erin J. McMurray and Judy Quinti, members of the physical fitness specialist faculty, also incorporate functional training concepts into their courses.





Penn College physical fitness specialist students practice some of the functional training techniques Hynoski used during his summer training regimen, which included exercising with simple pieces of equipment like stability balls, medicine balls and agility ladders. Left, agility ladder work helps to develop descending strength, agility and quickness. Right, stability ball glute extensions help to develop hip extension strength and stability. Opposite page, stability ball push-ups develop shoulder stability and strength.



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TRAINING FOR THE NFL

For more than two months, Hynoski traveled 50 miles each way from his home in Elysburg to Williamsport to train, not knowing if he would get picked up by an NFL team or get a fair chance to make the team due to the lockout-shortened preseason. He patiently waited for a call while focusing on his daily three-hour functional-training workouts. Hynoski also lifted weights to maintain his muscle mass and worked with a physical therapist to strengthen his injured hamstring.

His functional training regimen focused on performing proper movement patterns, increasing joint stabilization and developing core strength and power. For football-specific training, he focused on how to keep the body low while keeping his feet moving. The program included exercising with simple pieces of equipment like stability balls, medicine balls and agility ladders. His heaviest resistance was moving his 265 pounds of body weight through functional movement patterns. He utilized the same training techniques that make Penn College physical fitness specialist graduates more marketable by learning these cutting-edge skills, addressing the Penn College theme "degrees that work." The workout routine was recorded so Penn College students now have a video of Hynoski's training to use as an educational resource. (View the video online at **oca.pct.edu/workout**.)

THE PHONE CALL

On July 29, the NFL lockout ended. As Hynoski returned home from his Williamsport workout, the phone calls he had been waiting for over the past three months finally came. Sixteen teams requested that Hynoski sign with them as a free agent. He and his family, including his father, Henry Sr., who played in the NFL in the mid-1970s, decided his best opportunity would be with the New York Giants. With no bonus money from the draft, Hynoski reported the next day to the Meadowlands Sports Complex in East Rutherford, N.J., where the Giants held a modified preseason camp. He joined nine other free agents and seven drafted rookies.

Hynoski completed the Giants' training camp without missing any practice time due to injury. He performed at a level that impressed the Giants coaching staff so much that they placed him on their final 48-man roster for the beginning of the 2011 season. He made the team!

During the remainder of the preseason camp, he was so impressive that he was named the Giants starting fullback, and on Sunday, Sept. 11, Hynoski's long journey to the NFL finished when he was named the starting fullback in the Giants' regular season-opening game against the Washington Redskins.

He missed five mid-season games due to a neck injury but returned to not only finish the season as the Giants' starting fullback, but on Feb. 5, roughly nine months after not being drafted by any NFL team, Hynoski blocked, caught two passes for 25 yards and recovered a critical fumble as he and his teammates defeated the New England Patriots in Super Bowl XLVI. ■