

OP's Leach powers his way to Trench Trophy

By Mary Jo Monnin
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Devon Leach couldn't be beaten on the field and on Wednesday night he couldn't be beaten off of it.

The Orchard Park senior came out on top in a field of 10 finalists to land the ninth Trench Trophy. A punishing run blocker on an undefeated team, Leach was presented the annual award recognizing the top lineman in Western New York before an estimated 250 at the Lancaster Elks Lodge.

"It was quite a surprise and I'm honored to get it," said Leach, who is 6-foot-3 and weighs 290 pounds. "I had four great guys play around me, and they made me look good. We worked really hard together. We're good friends, we spent a lot of time together and had really great chemistry."

The handsome trophy also comes with a \$1,000 scholarship named for the late John Gebhardt, one of the Trench Trophy's founders. After a year of prep school at Bridgton Academy in Maine, Leach is planning to attend Yale and continue his football career while majoring in pre-med and biology.

Leach becomes the second Orchard Park lineman to win the award, joining Jason Weber, the 2004 recipient.

"One-on-one blocking, there was no one who could take him on," said longtime OP line coach Bob Ferrentino. "As far as run-blocking, he's right up there with the best. He moves pretty well and is also a good student."

Ferrentino said this was the biggest and strongest line he's had in his 18 years. "Not only did they have size, they moved very well. They were like 300-pound ballerinas," he said.



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Devon Leach of Orchard Park was presented with the Trench Trophy by former NFL line coach Jim McNally.

Leach, who can squat 650 pounds and bench 350, anchored a line from his left guard spot that paved the way for gifted running back Okoya Anderson to gain 1,705 yards and score 33 touchdowns. Leach was at his best in short-yardage or goal-line situations. He was named the offensive line MVP of the Class AA state championship game.

Trench Trophy scout Dave Hajduk watched hours of film of Leach from four games and voted for him. He was one of 43 Trench Trophy scouts who saw at least three games.

"The biggest thing I liked about Leach was he was good at going after the linebackers and defensive backs," said Hajduk. "In high school you don't see a lot of that. He was very good at getting the right angle and taking them out. For a big guy like that, that was unusual."

Orchard Park's O-line averaged 267 pounds. Joining Leach with his hand on the ground were senior Matthew Dolan (RG), sophomore Adam Belica (C), junior Michael Senn (RT), senior Chris Eisenhut (LT). Leach and Senn were first team All-Western New York selections while Eisenhut was third team.

Other Trench Trophy finalists were: Dan Austin (Southwestern), Nathan Anderson (Frewsburg), Miles Bartholomew (St. Francis), Josh Chase (Alden), Kyle DiPirro (St. Mary's), Brandon Lathrop (Kenmore West), Mike Morganstern (Cheektowaga), T.J. Scamurra (Williamsville South) and Andrew Burgio (Depew).