

Hamburg's Bill was best in the Trenches

By Mary Jo Monnin
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In what was the closest vote in its 11-year history, Hamburg senior Jeremiah Bill graciously accepted the Trench Trophy at a banquet held Wednesday night before 220 at the Lancaster Elks.

The 6-foot-2, 265-pound Bill was presented the award, given annually to the top lineman in Western New York, by retired NFL offensive line coach Jim McNally, a native of Kenmore.

“It means a lot of hard work paying off,” Bill said. “It shows anyone can achieve what they put themselves out to do. It’s also an award for my teammates. It was all of us working together and we had a lot of young guys step up.”

Winning the Trench Trophy also comes with a \$1,000 scholarship named for the late John Gebhardt, one of the Trench Trophy’s founders. Bill is undecided on his college choice but is considering the University at Buffalo, the University of Rochester and Cornell.

Bill becomes the first player from Hamburg to win the honor. The Bulldogs finished 2-3 this season in Class A South.

Linemen from all 78 high school football teams in Western New York were eligible. Bill, an offensive tackle and defensive end, was also recently named second team All-WNY on the O-line. The guest speaker for the event was 2009 Trench Trophy winner Jasen Carlson, a graduate of Southwestern, who played left guard for the University at Buffalo.

This year’s vote was so close there were five linemen within three points of each other. A committee of 50-plus members scouted games during the season eventually narrowing their list down before choosing Bill.

Trench Trophy scout Dave Hajduk said he saw Bill play in person and also watched plenty of film.

“If you look, he was the complete package,” said Hajduk. “He could box somebody and look to make another block. He’s got the right attitude. He played to the whistle. The word for him was aggression under control.”



John Hickey / Buffalo News
Trench Trophy winner Jeremiah Bill, right, is flanked by former NFL offensive line coach Jim McNally.

Trench Trophy co-chairman Ed Sciera said Bill was identified early as a possible winner. Bill scored high grades for technique and consistency.

“We had him in our data base from last year so we had a little heads up,” he said. “We had guys watching him early as potential finalist. We liked his consistency on both sides of the ball, subsequent scouts confirmed that, but it was the close vote. In all the years this was the closest vote.”

The third annual Underclassman Awards, sponsored by Dave Hack’s Be the Best Football camp, were also part of the event. First team All-WNY selection George Attea of Williamsville North and third team OL Michael Bowers of Randolph and were this year’s recipients.