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His name has been mentioned around the country and in countless publications. He is considered one of the best football recruits in the nation. He is also a member of the Penn State Nittany Lions. So who is this guy? Ladies and gentleman, here is Derrick Williams.

Williams' resume is filled with accomplishment. Physically speaking, Williams is a gifted player. He is not a tall player, only 6 feet 0 inches, but he is incredibly fast; 40 yards in 4.31 seconds is pretty fast. Williams comes from Eleanor Roosevelt High School in Greenbelt, MD where he literally did it all on the football field. Not only was he a great receiver, he was also a good quarterback and a kick returner.

The numbers on this kid really do speak for themselves. As a quarterback in 2004, Williams passed for 972 yards and 13 touchdowns and also rushed for over 1100 yards and 12 touchdowns. It does not stop there; Williams also caught 11 balls for 203 yards as a wide receiver and also played on special teams and in the defense. It is safe to say that there is a lot of potential for Derrick Williams at the college level, where he will be primarily used as a wide receiver.

It is an interesting story wondering why Derrick Williams verbally committed to Penn State. Joe Paterno was not the only coach vying for his services. Schools like Florida State, USC and Ohio State also were trying to lure Williams in. But why Penn State? Why choose a team that has struggled to not only compete for a national championship, but has struggled to even compile a winning record in the last few years?

For Williams, it was Joe Paterno. Even though the coach has been criticized recently, Williams looked at Paterno's past accomplishments for his decision. Williams made that clear in a December news conference where he verbally committed to Penn State.

For a player like this to make a commitment to Penn State, it is a major win for Paterno. And maybe the formula to recruiting great high school players has been found. Let's face it, trying to recruit against schools like Florida, Miami or USC is very difficult. Not only do those schools win almost every year, they are also located in ideal areas for playing outside.

Joe Paterno now knows that he does not have to sell Penn State on its location or how sunny it will be throughout the year. He also some ammunition for recruiters that say he (Paterno) is getting too old and has lost touch with his team. All he has to do is sell players on the winning history that the program has and the fact that the team does already have a solid team for 2005. Paterno also has almost the entire state of Pennsylvania on his side. There are many good football programs at all levels of college, but Penn State foot-

Hershey Bears start strong

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Newfound scoring ability gives the team an extra edge

The Hershey Bears' 67th season started off well with back to back wins against division rivals Binghamton and Norfolk. However, that would be a few of

the rare times the Bears would reach the win column in the early part of the season. Those two wins were followed by four straight losses to division opponents and the Bears began to plummet to the basement of the East Division. With just five wins in 13 games in November, the season was already looking like a lost cause.

The Bears improved slightly in December, winning six out of 12

games before the Christmas break. Since the Bears returned to action on Dec. 26, they have yet to lose a game and are now suddenly knocking on the door of the leaders in the East Division. What makes this charge to the front of the pack all the more impressive is the fact that the teams in front of the Bears have also been on winning streaks. If those teams had been struggling, Hershey might be in first

place.

A big part of the Bears' recent success has been their new found scoring. Before Christmas, Hershey hadn't scored four goals in a game all season; they have done that in four of their last six games. Also, goaltender Peter Budaj has turned up his game. In the first game of this six game winning streak, Budaj made 50 saves in a 5-0 victory over Norfolk. He has now won his last

eight starts to improve to 13-9 on the season.

The East Division is probably the toughest and most talented division in the AHL. The NHL Lockout has sent plenty of highly skilled, young players to the minor leagues and the teams in the East have benefited quite a bit from the added talent. Philadelphia, who has led the division from the start of the season, has had several NHL players added to their roster. Most notable have been Patrick Sharp and Joni Pitkanen. Sharp spent parts of the last two seasons with the Flyers in the NHL and definitely would have been on their roster this season. Pitkanen, a first round draft pick in 2002, skipped the minors and went straight to the NHL last season and had a very successful rookie campaign.

The Wilkes-Barre/Scranton Penguins and Binghamton Senators also got big boosts in different departments courtesy of the lockout. The Penguins now have goaltending phenomenon and number one overall pick Marc Andre Fleury guarding the nets while the Senators' leading scorer this season is number two overall pick Jason Spezza. Both players saw no time in the minors last season but now find themselves in the AHL.

While the Bears received no high profile NHL players like Spezza or Fleury, they continue to push towards the front of the pack. As the All-Star break nears, the Bears may not be the flashy big name players in the All-Star game like the rest of their division rivals. The Bears are in these teams' rearview mirrors for right now, but the gap is closing fast.



Photo courtesy of Hershey Bears Web site

Darce tries to go short side against the Worcester Icecats on Jan. 2, 2005. The Bears won at home 5-1.

Herb recounts NFL's greatest historical defenses

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Greatest Defenses Ever

5. 2002 Tampa Bay Buccaneers
4. 1972 Miami Dolphins
3. 2000 Baltimore Ravens
2. 1985 Chicago Bears
1. 1976 Pittsburgh Steelers

During the 1970's, the Pittsburgh Steelers won four Super Bowls. While you can't forget the offensive talent of those teams that included Terry Bradshaw, Franco Harris and

Lynn Swann, a major part of those championship teams was the defense. Known by many as the "Steel Curtain Defense," the Steelers terrorized opponents. "Mean" Joe Greene anchored a defensive line that preyed on any quarterback foolish enough to play against them. If a team somehow got past "Mean" Joe and Co., the linebacker duo of Jack Lambert and Jack Ham would destroy any receiver who dared enter their territory. Mel Blount rounded out a solid secondary.

Picking one of the Steelers' defensive teams is hard work. Basically, any of their teams from the 70's could have made the list. The 1975 Steelers were a good candidate. That team lost two games all season, leading them to their second straight title. Of course the 78 and 79 teams were also candidates. The reason all these teams were so good was because they were able to stay together. Free agency was almost nonexistent at this time in the league; so this was the same group of players year after year shutting teams down.

The 1976 Steelers didn't even win the Super Bowl, unlike the four teams below them on this

list. In 1976, the Steelers lost in the playoffs to John Madden's Raiders. But the fact that this team didn't win the championship is not that important. Why? Because this team, head and shoulders above the rest of the Steelers' teams and the rest of the teams on this list, dominated the league like no team had done before or since.

In that year, the Steelers allowed a league record 138 points over a 14 game season. That averages out to less than 10 points allowed per game. In five games in 1976, the Steelers didn't allow a single point; in three other games they allowed less than a touchdown. That is more than half the season's games allowing less than a touchdown. Only two teams all season broke the 20 point barrier against the Steelers. The talent of that defensive unit can be seen in awards they were given; that team sent 8 of 11 defensive players to the Pro Bowl. So far, four of those eight Pro Bowlers are now enshrined in the Pro Football Hall of Fame with a few more to join them eventually. So although the 1976 team didn't win it all, their defense was the best that ever played.

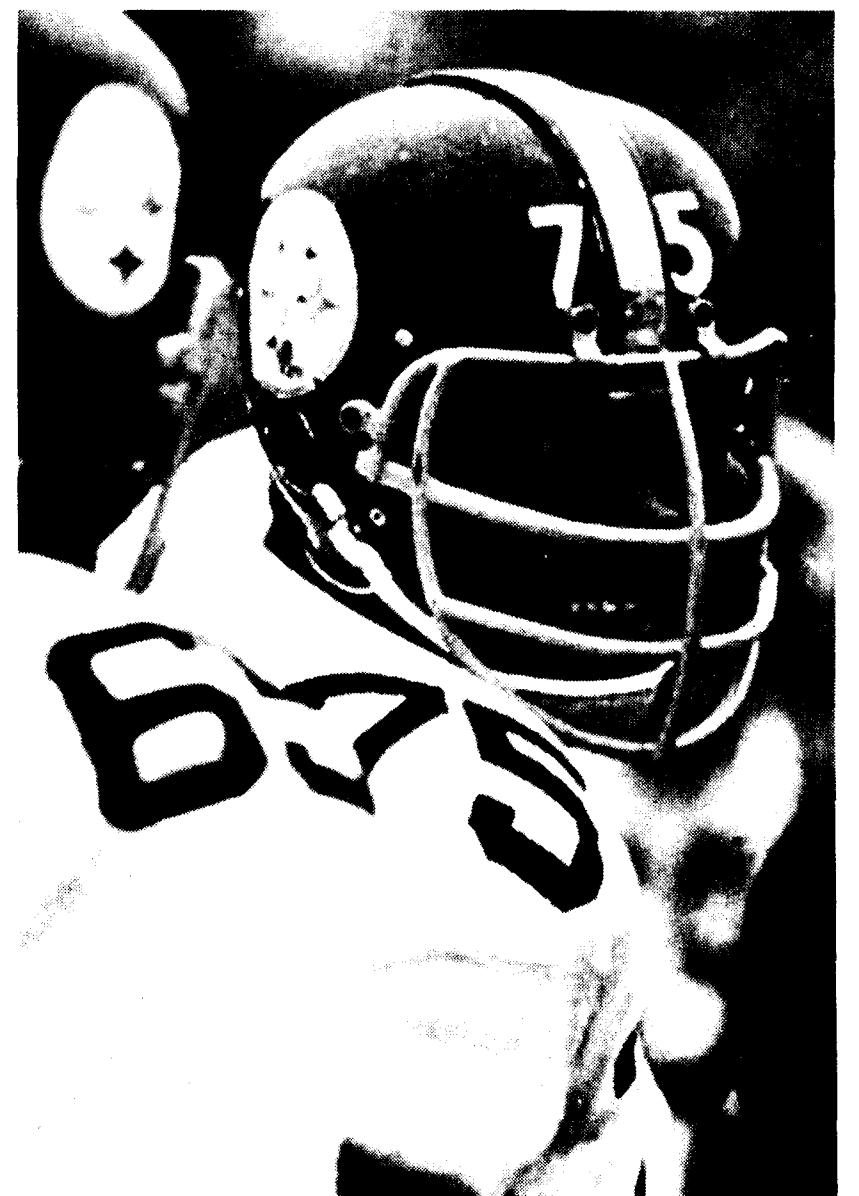


Photo courtesy of www.pittsburghsteelers.co.uk

Joe Greene before he became "mean."