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# From halftime shows to 4th quarters

*Sahakian makes leap from band to football team*

RYAN BARICH

Executive News Editor

The bell had rung, the hallways were clearing and Micah Sahakian was late to class. It sounds like an insignificant event, but it was the only time in his whole junior year that he would be late. In fact, this would be the first class he had ever been late for as he was homeschooled before coming to Prospect for his junior year.

It was there, in the middle of the hall, during his mad dash to class that head football coach Dan Deboeuf saw him for the first time. Deboeuf saw his massive 6'6 stature, his obvious strength he possessed and his potential to be a top tier athlete. It was there that Deboeuf asked him a simple question that turned an insignificant event into an extraordinary turning point.

"I saw this behemoth of a man and asked him, 'why the heck aren't you playing football,'" Deboeuf said.

Today, Sahakian is a starting right guard for the offensive line of the varsity football team. He has been named to Friday Night Drive's team of the week and was also invited by the University of Illinois to check out their football program on September 21. All this after only playing four weeks of high school football — his first four weeks ever playing football.

Before meeting Deboeuf, Sahakian had never played a day of football in his life and didn't even know how to set up in an offensive lineman stance. Prior to football, he actually was a prominent saxophone player in the school's marching band.

The transition was originally seen as very challenging because of this. Without a real background in athletics, Deboeuf and the coaching staff were worried about building Sahakian into a proper lineman.

There was also the fact of his previous homeschooling that worried them. With football being the center of high school life, they were concerned about how he would handle himself in this extremely new environment.

"You never really know with someone who's never had pads on before," Deboeuf said.

Football has never been foreign to Sahakian, he has been a proud Green Bay Packers fan for his whole life thanks to his grandfather, who immigrated to America from Lebanon and initially fell in love with the sport and the Packers so much he wanted to share that with his family.

"Football has always been a big part of my childhood," Sahakian said. "Some of my finest memories are of me and my grandfather sitting together on Sunday to watch our Packers."

Football served as a medium for bonding in his family and from those joyous moments



**THE DIRTY WORK:** Micah Sahakian (left) blocks Hoffman Estates linebacker Nate Fisher to protect his quarterback. Sahakian loves the physicality of his position (Photo by Abby McKenna)

he shared with them, he was able to learn more and more about the game.

Watching these games gave Sahakian dreams of one day playing football. He knew that his size would be at an advantage, but being the homeschooled student he was, the opportunity never arose.

"Deboeuf opened the door for me and I was ecstatic. It was a sick feeling," Sahakian said.

Sahakian had a lot of catching up to do when it came to where the other football players were at physically. Prior to joining the team, Sahakian barely made any trips to the weight room, but the day Deboeuf talked him into joining the team, he was there ready to lift.

That first day, Deboeuf started Sahakian on an extensive workout routine that he had designed specifically for him. To his surprise, the kid who had rarely lifted weights before in his life took to weight lifting with ease and soon found him working out in the weight room for two hours every day of the week.

This work ethic and drive to catch up with the other players and become a true player is what originally caught the eye of offensive line coordinator Tim Beishir.



**Meet Micah**

**Height: 6'6**

**Weight: 285 lbs**

**Position: Offensive**

**lineman**

**Class: 2020**

**Other talents:**

**Saxophone and**

**piano player**

*Photo by Mara Nicolaie*

"There were a lot of hurdles in the beginning that Micah had to clear to do what he's doing now, and he was doing more than what we were expecting," Beishir said. "I was super impressed with that; the man is a workhorse."

Sahakian was originally being eyed for a spot on the defensive line, but after the team's liftathon, Beishir knew he had to have him on the offensive line.

The liftathon is a combination of a fundraiser and an evaluation of the players' progress in their weight training. It takes place in the spring and players are meant to display their offseason work through completing three lifts: bench press, back squat and power clean.

"Sahakian went in and power cleaned 265 pounds and I was immediately like 'alright, you're mine,'" Beishir said.

However strong Sahakian proved to be, though, both Deboeuf and Beishir knew there were other factors he needed to be the lineman he is today.

Physicality is a trait that any lineman needs in order to succeed in football. Whether defensive or offensive, if you can't hit with a fury then you're hitting the bench.

Beishir worked very closely with Sahakian on this skill when practices began. When a new player comes onto the field, Beishir finds that these really big guys tend to lack agility and flexibility in the beginning, but that was not the case with Sahakian.

Beishir had expected Sahakian to struggle with the lineman stance at first, originally thinking he'd be too rigid. Proving him wrong, Sahakian got in the stance easily and assumed the position perfectly.

From there, Beishir could tell that this kid was ready to hit.

"You watch his highlight tapes and [Sahakian] is laying some guys out and it's so fun to watch," Deboeuf said.

Something Beishir and Deboeuf would come to realize about Sahakian is that the man loves to hit. He has had this competitive spirit in him even when he was a saxophone player.

"I love winning; I've always wanted to compete like this and I love being the guy that gets to block and hit others for the sake of my team," Sahakian said.

Earning the favor of the coaching staff is one thing, but earning the favor and a spot within the

team is another. Captain of the offensive line and center Armen Surenian liked to define the offensive line as a team within a team, stating that it really is a close family in a way.

Upon meeting Sahakian for the first time, it became clear to Surenian that just based on his size, he could be a valuable member.

"My first impression of him was 'holy cow, this kid is huge,'" Surenian said.

Putting size to the side, Surenian began getting to know Sahakian more and more as a player and person, which brought Surenian to the realization that he does belong here.

Surenian took note of just how fast Sahakian was able to understand and then execute their plays after only starting to play last spring.

"I don't know how [Sahakian] learned all the plays that fast. It was super impressive, and I am so proud of him," Surenian said.

Even if Sahakian did waver,

Surenian and the rest of the offensive line were there to help. Surenian spoke about how the line and himself would coach Sahakian on what to expect on the road and the mindset he needed going into big games.

Sahakian found that the offensive line and the rest of the team were more than welcoming and more than happy to teach him.

He recalled his first day in the weight room, not knowing how to do half of his assigned workouts, and how wide receiver Brian Doherty came up instantly to show Sahakian the basics of their everyday leg workouts.

"It was Brian Doherty who showed me the ropes for leg day, and I have to say that was the sorrest I've ever been," Sahakian said.

Surenian and the rest of the offensive line now see Sahakian as one of their best players out there, and more importantly, they see him as family.

"We're basically all brothers, everyone who plays offensive line, and that's because you have this trust with them, and I definitely have that trust with [Sahakian]," Surenian said.

Moving forward, football is now something Sahakian wants to pursue more than ever in his future. He even has been invited to many college campuses such as Illinois State, Eastern Illinois University, Southern Illinois University and the aforementioned University of Illinois.

However enticing college may be, though, Sahakian is looking forward to those Friday night lights more than anything. He wants nothing more than to go out onto George Gattas Memorial Field and bring home a winning season alongside the men he's come to call his brothers.

"They're all my family now and they're all just great guys," Sahakian said. "I'm thankful for what the coaching staff has done for me and I just want to thank God for giving me this opportunity." 🏈



**WATER BREAK**

**ATHLETE: KENZIE WOODLAND**

**YEAR: JUNIOR**

**SPORT: DIVING**

**Q** What made you want to pursue diving?

**A** I was a swimmer when I was younger and watched the divers and I thought it looked like more fun, so I started taking lessons.

**Q** How do you feel you're progressing this season after dedicating your spring to playing water polo?

**A** The beginning of this season was about getting my harder dives back, and now I'm back to focusing on improving each dive.

**Q** What is the goal for you and the rest of the team going forward?

**A** The upperclassmen have been focusing on making a tighter team bond as we continue.

*(Photo by Abby McKenna, Interview by Ryan Barich)*