



Pashos Achieving Excellence Off the Field

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Editor's Note: NFL PLAYERS, the NFL Players Association and James Brown will honor Pashos and 15 other standout players for their off-the-field achievements at the NFL PLAYERS Gala Featuring the JB Awards on April 16 in Washington, D.C. Leading up to the event, NFLPLAYERS.COM will profile several JB Award winners.



Tony Pashos' family is living the American Dream.

His parents arrived in the United States from their native Greece in the early 1970s, looking for the land of opportunity that America has long represented. They worked hard raising him, his two older brothers and younger sister.

Pashos, now 28 years old and the starting right tackle for the Jacksonville Jaguars, is using his success not only to give back to his family, but to help others as well.

"My father worked in a steel factory in Chicago," Pashos said. "It was hard work and long hours. [As I got older] my dad worked, my mom worked and both of my brothers worked; I was able to babysit and help raise my sister."

His own road to success began to take shape when he earned a football scholarship to the University of Illinois. He was subsequently selected by the Baltimore Ravens in the fifth round of the 2003 NFL Draft, but ended up on injured reserve in his rookie season. After getting allocated to NFL Europe, Pashos returned to the Ravens in 2004 and played in only six games.

That, however, was just the beginning. With unwavering focus and hard work, Pashos improved steadily. Soon, his skill, technique and raw talent all came together. In 2006, he started all 16 games for the Ravens and quickly appeared on the radar of several NFL clubs looking for offensive line help. At the close of that season, Pashos was rewarded for his efforts when Jacksonville signed him to a lucrative free-agent contract.

The signing was a milestone and an emotional moment for members of the entire Pashos family, who were together at the family's home in Illinois when the news came.

"My dad is this guy who never cries," Pashos said. "He's a big, tough guy and he got teary-eyed saying, 'I'm so proud of you.' It was nice how excited he was for me. Whatever success I attain, it's success for them and for the whole family. They laid the foundation."

Upon arriving in Jacksonville, Pashos knew that it was time to reach out and help not only his family, but others in need. While he had always been a prominent participant in community activities, he was not satisfied with irregular and occasional appearances. He wanted something with which he could become wholly involved, and really make an impact. Thus Pashos' Pals was born.

With the help of Jaguars PR director Ryan Robinson and his staff, they began to build a very special program.

"I wanted to develop something where I could have a group of kids and be their buddy," Pashos explained. "I don't want a kid who already has the world; give me a kid who doesn't have a thing. If I can show him that I am him, that I am a normal person like him, and instill in him the hope, the desire, the passion. A lot of kids have had it so hard."

Pashos has worked with the local chapter of the Florida Children's Services Council, a group consisting of about a dozen boys, all ages 9-13. He wants the boys to see a light at the end of the tunnel in their lives.

Part of his goal is to offer them a variety of experiences that they might not otherwise have had such as going to museums and broadening their overall knowledge of everything from history to politics to the arts. Those are all things about which Pashos himself is passionate.

Within a short amount of time, as businesses in the community started to hear about what Pashos was doing, they stepped in to help, with one sporting goods chain offering discounts on shopping trips for the boys.

"I had some hard times in high school," Pashos said, "and I don't know why; I was smart, my parents loved me to death and when I messed up they [punished me]. I guess I had a smart mouth and it got me in trouble. But I had the most amazing people in my life who put out their hands and helped me out — coaches, teachers, family members. So I've told the kids that this is our little family. I like to help people because somebody did that for me and I know what it meant to me."

With his family taken care of, Pashos is now working hard to see that others have a chance at that same American dream.

- Lisa Zimmerman, Red Line Editorial

For information on tickets or sponsorship of the NFL PLAYERS Gala Featuring the JB Awards, please contact Cassandra Nicaisse at Cassandra.Nicaisse@nflplayers.com or 202-572-7485.