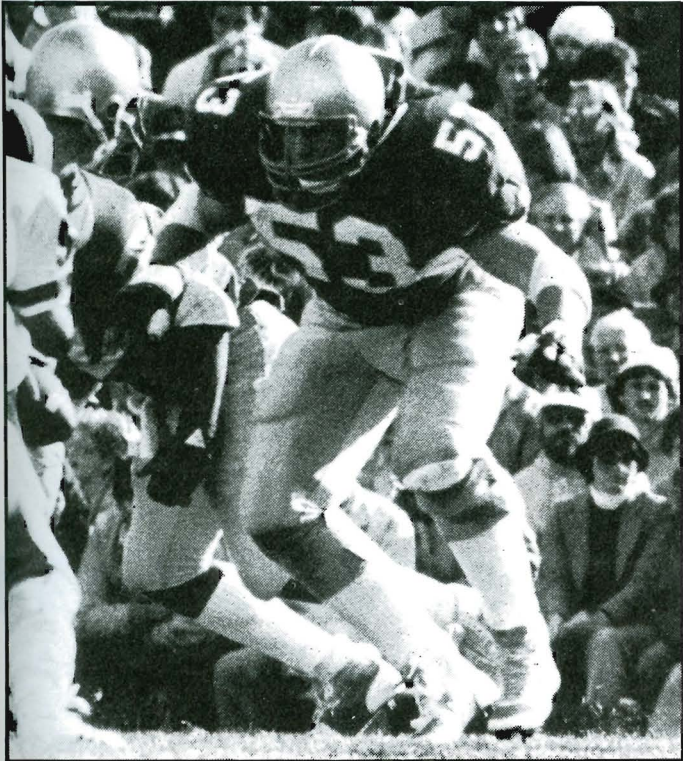


TOM DOERGER

By
Greg Shepard



Tom Doerger: N.S.C.A. Strength Athlete of the Year and offensive tackle for Notre Dame.



Coach Shepard, Tom Doerger and Notre Dame Strength Coach Gary Weill.

FAMILY – TRAGEDY – LOVE

I first met Tom and his strength coach Gary Weill this past summer at the N.S.C.A. Convention where Tom had just been awarded the N.S.C.A. Strength Athlete of the Year Award. We all went to lunch for an interview and Tom's inspiring story put a lump in my throat.

Tom was a two sport athlete in high school but football was clearly his sport not basketball. Tom started playing football in second grade. "For me it was OK, most guys would have burned out," stated Tom. He continued "Sports for me has given me a way to channel my life into something positive. It's given a direction to go which is meaningful." Tom will get his degree next spring in Psychology with a teaching certificate. "When pro football is over, I'll be OK. I'd like to go into football or strength coaching. I would also have the option of going into business with my Psychology Degree. You know only 2% of scholarship players will play pro ball, so I worked hard for my degree. One reason I went to Notre Dame was for the business connections after graduation. You've got to have something to fall back on. If you've got a shot at playing college ball – get your attitude right. Work hard on your G.P.A." Tom reasoned. It was apparent now that Tom Doerger had things in their right perspective.

Tragedy struck during Tom's sophomore year. During two-a-days, he got a phone call. Mom said, "Dad has a malignancy in his lungs." I said "What's malignant mean?" Mrs. Doerger responded tenderly, "Tom, they can't stop it. It's a rare form of cancer. He's only got 6 months to live."

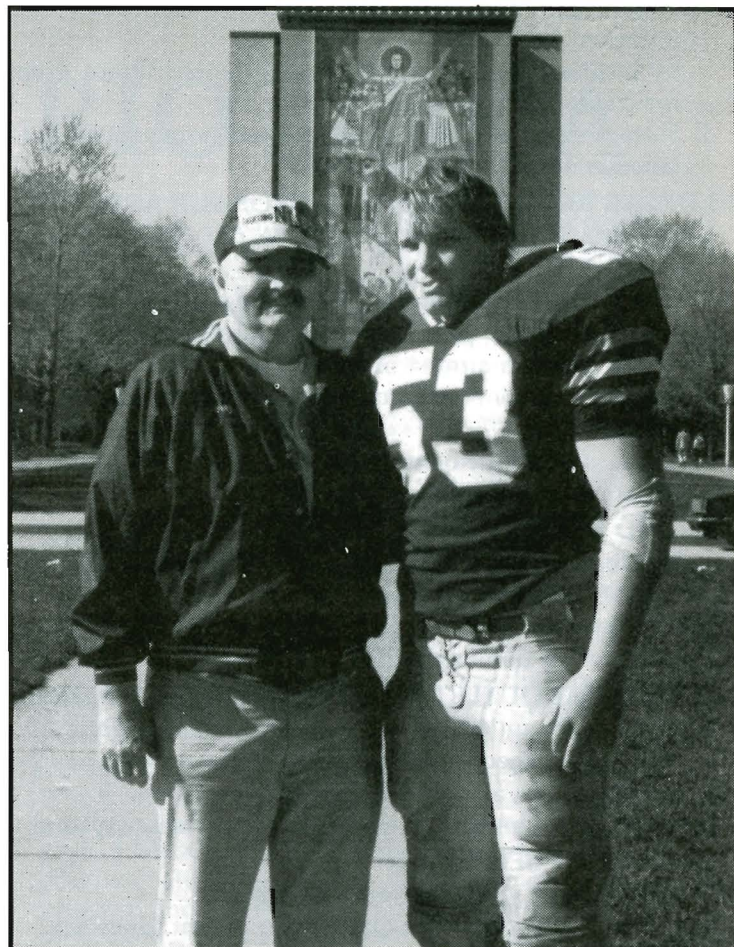
I talked to my Dad. I told him that I was really shook up about this and asked him what I should do. With great courage and love his Dad said, "Don't worry about me. You go and do your best at Notre Dame. I'll be OK." Coach Faust told me to go home if I needed to and that the coaches would work with me. But Dad wanted me to stay. He had treatments. His hair fell out and his weight went down to 120 pounds. He couldn't walk up stairs which prevented him from coming to our games under normal conditions. So Coach Faust got him a special pass to sit in the press box and special parking. My Dad took his chemotherapy treatments during the away games. He finally died last February. The doctor said it was a miracle that he survived so long. "His will kept him going another 3 years." Tom reflected quietly.

"Now, when I look back on it, whenever I'm confronted by problems or my friends problems, I think about my Dad. His inner strength was far greater than anything in the weight room. It brought our family closer together. Families are of utmost importance. My Mom is 5'2" and petite. However, she has a great resilience and has been a great inspiration to me. She helped me to not get distracted." Tom continued reverantly.

At the beginning of all this, I questioned, "Was there really a God?" Why would he let this happen, if he really loved people? But this was a selfish attitude. We had a gift of having him those three extra years."

"For the funeral, 22 players got on a bus from Notre Dame to attend services in Cincinnati. The players along with Coach Faust gave me tremendous support. Many players had to be turned down that wanted to attend. A lot of teammates have told me, "Because of your experience I appreciate my father more and I'm making an effort to get closer and express my feelings of love towards him," concluded Tom thankfully.

We thank Tom and Coach Weill for their special spirit which reminded us once again of the sacredness of family relationships. Good luck to you both and continued success.



Tom with his very special dad at Notre Dame.

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GARY "TROLL" WEILL Strength Coach Notre Dame University

"This is my 4th year at Notre Dame. When you see the changes physically, mentally and spiritually in a person, it is an incredible experience to be a part of that change. Tom Doerger came in with great desire, overcame great obstacles with his knee surgery and then with his father. When you can get a fine person like Tom with great desire and talent it makes coaching all worthwhile. Tom Doerger is one of my closest friends."

TOM DOERGER'S PROGRESS CHART

	15	16	17	18	FR	SOPH	JR	SR
HT.	6-0	6-0	6-2	6-3	6-4	6-4	6-4½	6-5
WT.	185	200	210	230	240	265	277	278
40	X	5.2	5.15	4.95	Knee Sur.	5.2	5.0	4.95
Bench	175	200	220	250	300	385	415	435
Squat	X	X	X	X	X	545	595	615
Incline	X	X	X	X	265	305	340	360

TOM ALSO HAS A 325 CLEAN TO HIS CREDIT!