

Devin Wyman Bio



On Sundays, when the television screen would fill up with big men, playing football and looking like true heroes, Devin Wyman made a promise to himself that he would be in their place someday, beamed from an NFL stadium back into the family living room in East Palo Alto. Many adolescent males do the same, but Wyman's vow had weight, literally, behind it.

He came into the world exceptionally large, 10 pounds of baby destined to boost his mother's grocery-store bills for years. She would go off to work, thinking she had provided properly for her four sons, and then Devin's brothers would place an emergency call at mid-shift.

"Mom," they'd say, astonished and frustrated, "he ate a whole loaf of bread!"

In his teens, he devoured opponents in football and wrestling. He reached 6 feet, 7 inches. He drove scale needles in mad circles, to 300 pounds and beyond. He felt justified in promising that he would soon be on television.

But while Wyman's body grew in the right direction, his mind was a prodigal. Aimlessness took him into lawlessness, crack-dealing on the streets of East Palo Alto. He says he spent at least a year in the illicit business before accountability arrived at his doorstep.

On an August morning in 1992, police and federal agents surrounded his mother's house, bringing dogs, a helicopter and a warrant for a massive 18-year-old named Devin Wyman, one of about 60 suspects rounded up that day in a vigorous sweep of the city, where drug-dealing had contributed to a soaring homicide rate. The evening news shows ran the footage of Wyman in handcuffs. And that was how he made his television debut, not by keeping a grandiose promise to his family, but by breaking a covenant with his mother, not as a hero, but as a villain, the symbol of a community's disarray. Wyman would make a second TV appearance.

It happened four years after the bust. This time, instead of handcuffs, he wore a helmet. Devin Wyman, Inmate No. 1006062 in the corrections system of San Mateo County, had become Devin Wyman, No. 72 for the New England Patriots.

He wasn't a villain anymore, but then again, he never really had been. Shoulder pads didn't transform him into a hero, but then again, they probably never could. Wyman fell somewhere in between the two extremes. He was a work-in-progress, the beneficiary of a spectacularly fruitful second chance - part given, part hard-earned and, most definitely, part thrust on him by caring and willful elders.

On November 6 at 7 PM at the Skillman Church, we invite you to come and hear Devin's story...his first half was full of struggles...his second half has been full of opportunities.