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Klein's Shugarts the big man on campus

By Ed Huber

Offensive lineman J.B. Shugarts is one big reason for Klein football fans to be enthused about the 2007 season.

Shugarts, a 6-foot-7, 305-pound tackle, is the Bearkats big man on campus after spurning 30 other Division I scholarship offers to commit to play college football at Ohio State University.

"He is a very good athlete with good strength, quickness and enormous size," said Klein Coach Stan Labay. "He has the potential to be a great college player. OSU has been very impressed with him, and expect him to become an important player for them very quickly."

Buckeyes Coach Jim Tressel was so interested in Shugarts that he made a special visit to watch him play during Klein's Spring Game on May 17 at Klein Memorial Field.

"I couldn't talk to Coach Tressel then, but a week later I called him in his office to make my verbal commitment," Shugarts said.

Shugarts has been big news at Klein for the past two years. During that span, he played as an offensive tackle/tight end, and averaged 11 pancake blocks per game.

His work those seasons earned him a pair of All-District nods, First-Team All Greater Houston recognition and All-American status from Rivals.com.

In addition, coaches and fans have been impressed with some of Shugarts highlight-reel plays, like one versus Klein Oak in Klein's final game of the 2006 season. With the Bearkats leading 17-14 at halftime, Klein opened with the ball on their 20-yard line. On the first play from scrimmage, running back Chad Bauman took the handoff, and followed Shugarts around right end. Shugarts pancaked the defensive end, then flattened the linebacker. Another 45 yards down the field, Shugarts mowed down the safety, and Baumann ran safely into the end zone for what proved to be a key touchdown in a 31-24 victory.

"One of Shugarts strengths is his ability to block in open space," said Klein Collins coach Mike Konicki. "He is fast enough to run with a running back down the field, and has loads of potential with his size and strength."

Already this season, Shugarts has been selected to play in the Army All American, and ESPN All American games scheduled in January of 2008. In addition, ESPN.com has ranked him the No. 3 offensive tackle in country, and Shugarts was recently honored by the Houston Touchdown Club as a First-Team All Greater Houston pick.

"J.B. has worked real hard in the classroom, and on the football field to get where he is today," said Brett Shugarts, J.B.'s dad. "He will graduate this fall, and plans to play Spring football at OSU."

Until then, Shugarts will contribute to Klein's success by playing tackle, defensive end, and deep snapper for the Bearkats.

"We have a really good team this year, and an opportunity to win district," said Shugarts. "I am really excited for my senior year. People underestimate us, but I think we can make a deep run into the playoffs."

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